IQAA

INDEPENDENT AGENCY
FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN EDUCATION — IQAA

REPORT
ON THE EXTERNAL AUDIT
OF BAKU STATE UNIVERSITY

PROGRAM ACCREDITATION

7005001 BIOPHYSICS

Astana, 2026

EXPERT GROUP

Group Leader:

Sagyndykov Utemurat Zulkharnayevich, Associate Professor, Department of Biotechnology and Microbiology, Ph.D. in Biological Sciences, L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University

International Expert:

Marko Marhl, Professor, Doctor of Science, Head of the Quality Assurance Center, Head of the Department of Biophysics, University of Maribor, Slovenia

Employer Representative:

Elimkhan Jafarov, Professor, Doctor of Biological Sciences, Institute of Physics, Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan, employer representative

Student Representative:

Zeynalzade Puste, Master's student, majoring in "Biochemistry," Azerbaijan Medical University

IQAA COORDINATOR

Karlygash Mukharedenovna Jigitcheeva, IQAA, Department of Higher Education Accreditation, Ph.D. in Chemistry, Associate Professor

RESPONSIBLE REPRESENTATIVE FOR EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

Nasibova Aigyun Namig gyzy, Senior Lecturer, Associate Professor, Ph.D. in Philosophy and Biology, Baku State University

DEGREE OF CONFORMITY OF THE SELF-EVALUATION REPORT TO THE ACTUAL STATE OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM 7005001 "BIOPHYSICS" FOR EACH STANDARD

Standards	**Indicate the degree of compliance of the self-assessment report with the actual state of affairs at the university for each standard**			
	Full compliance	**Significant compliance**	**Partial compliance**	**Non-compliance**
Standard 1 Policy on Educational Program Quality Assurance and Academic Integrity	+			
Standard 2 Curriculum Development and Approval, Information Management	+			
Standard 3 Student-centered learning, teaching, and assessment	+			
Standard 4 Admissions, Academic Performance, Recognition, and Certification	+			
Standard 5 Faculty	+			
Standard 6 Learning Resources and Student Support	+			
Standard 7 Public Information	+			

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES OF THE VISIT

Introduction

On March 12–13, 2026, an expert group conducted an on-site visit to Baku State University as part of the international program accreditation process. The on-site visit was conducted in accordance with the Program developed by the IQAA and agreed upon with the university. All materials necessary for the work of the external expert group (EEG)—the visit program, the self-assessment report for program accreditation, the composition of the external expert group, the list of interview participants, methodological recommendations for organizing and conducting the external evaluation, the expert code of ethics, and the template for the EEG's accreditation report—were provided to the members of the expert group prior to the start of their work at the educational institution, which enabled them to prepare for the external evaluation procedure in a timely manner.

The self-assessment report on the educational programs of Baku State University contains sufficient information presented in accordance with program accreditation standards, identifies strengths and weaknesses, and highlights external threats and opportunities for risk management and the university's further development.

In accordance with the EEG visit program, a visual inspection was conducted, which allowed the members of the expert group to gain a general understanding of the organization of the educational, methodological, and research processes, as well as the material and technical infrastructure, and to determine their compliance with standards. In addition, meetings were held with the university administration, vice-rectors, deans of faculties and department heads, faculty members, representatives of academic schools, undergraduate and graduate students, alumni, and employers.

During the external audit, experts reviewed the university's regulatory documentation to gain a more detailed understanding of its document management, educational and methodological, research, and material and technical support, the university's website, its navigation and content, as well as the presentation of the university's educational programs on the pages and tabs of the university's website, in the media, and on other electronic resources.

The activities planned during the external visit contributed to a more detailed understanding of the university's structure and operations and allowed external experts to conduct an independent assessment of the self-assessment report's alignment with the actual state of affairs at the university and program accreditation standards.

As part of the accreditation process, special attention was paid to **the master's program 7005001 – "Biophysics**," offered by the Department of Biology. The program represents an interdisciplinary field that integrates concepts and methodologies from physics, biology, chemistry, and computational sciences to investigate the physical mechanisms underlying biological systems.

The primary objective of the external evaluation was to determine the extent to which the educational program meets **the IQAA program accreditation standards**, including the quality assurance system, curriculum development and implementation, student-centered learning, faculty qualifications, educational resources, and transparency of public information.

The expert panel also assessed the program's alignment with the requirements of modern higher education and scientific research in the field of biophysics. Particular attention was paid to the program's research potential, the qualifications and research productivity of the faculty, student involvement in research activities, as well as the program's relevance to the needs of the labor market and the scientific community.

The evaluation was conducted based on document analysis, interviews with key stakeholders, an inspection of facilities and infrastructure, and a review of supporting materials provided by the university. These activities allowed the expert panel to gain a comprehensive understanding of the educational program and assess its compliance with established accreditation standards.

Key Characteristics of the University

Full name of the educational institution: **Baku State University**.
Year of foundation and establishment: **1919**.

The mission of Baku State University is to train highly qualified, competitive in the domestic and international labor markets, and imbued with a spirit of patriotism, in the fields of science, education, and engineering and technology, based on the acquisition of fundamental knowledge and skills in innovative research in the areas of interdisciplinary lifelong education and scientific research in accordance with international standards.

The University provides education at all levels of higher education, as well as pre-university and continuing education.

In the field of scientific activity, Baku State University conducts fundamental, theoretical, methodological, pedagogical, and applied scientific research, as well as the implementation of research results into practice and the industrial and innovative development of the country.

The university's highest governing body is the Academic Council.

Baku State University comprises **16 faculties** that train specialists in **55 bachelor's degree programs and 153 master's degree programs** across various academic fields; **4 institutes**; a well-stocked academic library; **21 scientific, methodological, and practical journals** published by the university; as well as a university clinic serving the university's faculty, staff, and students.

Baku State University has a well-developed and functional infrastructure that meets modern requirements. The university has **four academic buildings** equipped with lecture halls and computer labs featuring state-of-the-art technical equipment. All university buildings are connected to a unified corporate computer network, ensuring their integration into a common information space. The university library, equipped with electronic reading rooms and providing free access to the Internet, creates the necessary conditions for the effective organization of students' educational and research activities. The educational television studio provides additional opportunities for implementing innovative forms of organizing the educational process.

The Faculty of Biology, which offers **the Master's program** in Biophysics, is one of the university's key academic units in the field of life sciences. The faculty combines educational activities with scientific research and maintains cooperation with national research institutes and scientific organizations. The Department of Biophysics and Biochemistry plays a central role in implementing the educational program and supporting research activities in the interdisciplinary field of biophysics.

Legal entity address:
AZ1148, Republic of Azerbaijan, Baku, 33 Zahid Khalilov St.
Website: www.bsu.edu.az
Email:info@bsu.edu.az

CHAPTER 2

EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORT PREPARED BY THE EXPERT GROUP

Introduction

The external evaluation of the Master's degree program 7005001 – "Biophysics" at Baku State University (BSU) was conducted as part of the international accreditation procedure for educational programs organized by the Independent Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (IQAA).

Baku State University, founded in 1919, is one of the oldest and leading higher education institutions in the Republic of Azerbaijan and the South Caucasus region. The university offers a wide range of academic programs at the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels across many academic disciplines. The university is gaining increasing international recognition and is featured in global rankings such as the QS World University Rankings and Times Higher Education, reflecting its growing research potential and international standing.

The Master's program **7005001 – "Biophysics"** is offered by **the Department of Biology** and is designed as an interdisciplinary program integrating concepts and methods from physics, biology, chemistry, and mathematics. The program focuses on the study of the physical principles underlying biological systems and aims to train specialists capable of conducting scientific research in biophysics and related interdisciplinary fields.

The program complies with **the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)** and consists of **120 ECTS credits spread over a two-year period (four semesters)**. Each semester corresponds to approximately **20 weeks of academic activity**. The curriculum includes theoretical courses, laboratory and practical sessions, research and teaching internships, as well as the preparation and defense of a master's thesis.

The program is designed to develop competencies in the analysis and modeling of biological systems, the application of quantitative approaches in biology, and the use of modern experimental and computational methods in biophysical research. The curriculum includes courses in molecular biophysics, bioenergetics, bioinformatics, environmental biophysics, membrane and receptor biophysics, as well as the thermodynamics and kinetics of biological processes.

Students participate in research activities and present the results of their work at scientific conferences organized at the faculty level and beyond. Such activities contribute to the development of scientific thinking and research skills among students.

According to documentation provided by the university and confirmed during the on-site visit, the academic performance of students enrolled in this program is high: the average grade ranges from 93 to 96 points. Interviews with graduates and employers revealed that many students secure employment while still in school or shortly after graduation, particularly if their internships and thesis projects are linked to external research institutes and applied laboratories.

Overall, the program has a strong research focus and contributes to the training of specialists capable of working in research institutions, universities, medical laboratories, and other scientific or technological sectors. The site visit further demonstrated that the program is implemented through an effective combination of university-based instruction and access to state-of-the-art research infrastructure at collaborating independent institutions.

Standard 1. Educational Program Quality Assurance Policy and Academic Integrity

Evidence and Analysis

The implementation of the "Biophysics" educational program is integrated into the overall quality assurance system established at Baku State University. The university has developed institutional policies and procedures aimed at ensuring the quality of education and the continuous improvement of academic programs. These policies are aligned with **the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)** and integrated into the university's strategic development plan.

The expert group notes that Baku State University has established a comprehensive institutional quality assurance structure that complies with international standards of higher education, including the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

Several organizational units are involved in quality assurance processes, including the university administration, faculty leadership, the Scientific and Methodological Council, and the Quality Assurance Center. Internal monitoring of educational programs includes the assessment of learning outcomes, analysis of student performance, and periodic review of program content.

The university has implemented clear policies and procedures aimed at ensuring the quality of educational programs and maintaining academic integrity. These include the activities of the Quality Assurance Center, the Scientific and Methodological Council, and a special Anti-Plagiarism Commission responsible for verifying the originality of academic works produced at the university.

The university demonstrates a strong commitment to upholding academic integrity. At the institutional level, there is a special **Anti-Plagiarism Commission** responsible for verifying the originality of academic works produced at the university. All academic works, including bachelor's, master's, and doctoral theses, undergo plagiarism detection procedures using specialized software systems.

Clear thresholds for acceptable levels of textual similarity have been established for various academic levels. For example, master's theses must demonstrate a high degree of originality, and works exceeding the established thresholds are returned for revision or rejected. In addition to plagiarism detection, the university has implemented mechanisms aimed at identifying the excessive use of artificial intelligence tools in academic writing.

Procedures for detecting plagiarism and monitoring academic integrity appear to be clearly defined and consistently applied at all levels of study. The university has also implemented mechanisms aimed at detecting the excessive use of artificial intelligence tools in academic writing, which demonstrates an awareness of emerging challenges in the field of academic integrity.

In addition, the university has implemented additional measures to promote transparency and ethical conduct in the academic environment. These measures include the work of the Ethics Committee, formal complaint and appeal procedures, as well as institutional policies aimed at preventing corruption and academic misconduct.

Overall, the expert group considers the quality assurance system to be well-structured and effectively integrated into the university's management and governance system. The institutional framework for quality assurance and academic integrity appears to be well-established and in line with international standards.

Best Practices

- A clearly articulated institutional quality assurance policy aligned with ESG principles.
- Transparent and systematic procedures for detecting plagiarism and ensuring academic integrity.
- University mechanisms for addressing ethical issues and combating academic misconduct.
- The institution's quality assurance system is clearly described and was confirmed during interviews with university leadership, faculty, and support staff.
- The expert group found that feedback from students, alumni, and employers regarding academic programs is collected through regular surveys and discussions and is used in the annual review of programs and the improvement of curricula.

Degree of compliance with Standard 1 **- Full compliance.**

Standard 2. Curriculum Development and Approval, Information Management

Evidence and analysis

The Master's program in Biophysics has been developed in accordance with the legal and regulatory framework governing higher education in the Republic of Azerbaijan. The curriculum is aligned with Azerbaijan's National Qualifications Framework and corresponds to Level 7 qualifications (Master's level).

The program structure complies with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and comprises 120 ECTS credits, distributed among required courses, elective courses, internships, and the master's thesis.

The curriculum reflects the interdisciplinary nature of biophysics and includes courses devoted to fundamental theoretical concepts and applied aspects of the field.

The main areas of study include molecular biophysics, bioenergetics, environmental biophysics, bioinformatics, and the biophysics of membrane and receptor processes.

The program also includes research and teaching internships that allow students to gain practical experience and develop research competencies. During the on-site visit, the expert group confirmed that the practical and experimental components of the program are implemented not only within BSU but also through structured collaboration with independent research institutes that fall under the jurisdiction of the same ministry and are linked to the university by memoranda of cooperation and long-standing working relationships.

The curriculum is developed through a multi-stage process involving academic and teaching staff, representatives of the Ministry of Science and Education, as well as stakeholders from the labor market. The curriculum reflects the interdisciplinary nature of biophysics and integrates theoretical knowledge from physics, biology, chemistry, and mathematics. The inclusion of research internships and a master's thesis contributes to the development of students' research competencies.

The expert panel also notes that the program includes a number of courses devoted to contemporary topics in biophysics, such as molecular biophysics, bioenergetics, membrane and receptor processes, as well as bioinformatics.

Feedback from employers is collected on a regular basis, including through annual surveys, and has contributed to the inclusion of practice-oriented courses in the program aimed at strengthening students' research and analytical skills.

The site visit revealed that the practical and experimental implementation of the curriculum is carried out more effectively. BSU has limited specialized experimental infrastructure for some advanced methods; however, students have very good access to high-level practical training and dissertation research at partner institutions. Although some advanced methods are not directly available at BSU, students have reliable access to high-quality laboratories at partner independent institutions, where most of the experimental work for thesis projects and a significant portion of scientific training takes place. These institutions provide state-of-the-art methods and equipment, including electron microscopy, EPR, methods related to nanobiology, research in drug delivery, and other specialized measurements, and some of them are led by researchers with international experience, including Azerbaijani scientists who have returned from the United States and South Korea.

In addition, the partner institutions include strong research groups and scientists with international experience, which significantly enriches the learning environment and contributes to high-quality practical training. Thus, the main issue is not a lack of practical infrastructure, but rather the insufficient visibility of this advantage in program documentation and materials intended for the public.

Most master's theses within the program are experimental in nature, although theoretical and computational approaches are also presented where appropriate. Therefore, the expert group concludes that the curriculum is implemented in a scientifically sound manner and that the balance between theory and practice is more pronounced than initially suggested by the written self-evaluation materials.

Best practice

- An interdisciplinary curriculum that integrates concepts from physics, biology, and chemistry.
- Inclusion of research internships and work on a master's thesis as key components of the program.
- Alignment of the curriculum with national qualifications frameworks and international educational standards.

The expert group considers the curriculum to be well-structured and appropriately aligned with national standards, the needs of the discipline, and the department's research profile. One of the main positive outcomes of the site visit was the confirmation that students have reliable and meaningful access to external research infrastructure through partner institutions, which significantly strengthens the practical implementation of the program.

Areas for improvement:

- It would be beneficial for the university to describe more clearly how teaching at BSU is linked to laboratory practice, internships, and research work on thesis projects at partner institutions. This would allow prospective students and external stakeholders to better understand the program's actual experimental capabilities and its applied significance.
- More clearly present the program's distributed practical and experimental infrastructure in the program documentation, including the role of collaborating independent institutions, available methods, and typical conditions for completing thesis projects.
- Continue to strengthen and, where possible, formalize cooperation with institutions in the fields of biomedicine, biotechnology, and applied research so that students can take advantage of a wide range of opportunities for research and employment.

Degree of compliance with Standard 2 **- Full compliance.**

Standard 3. Student-centered learning, teaching, and assessment

Evidence and Analysis

The Master's program in Biophysics applies student-centered learning principles in accordance with the Bologna Process and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). The curriculum is organized in accordance with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), which ensures transparency in the distribution of the course load and learning outcomes.

The program demonstrates a commitment to the principles of student-centered learning in accordance with the Bologna Process and European standards for higher education.

Teaching methods include lectures, seminars, laboratory sessions, project-based learning, and independent research work. Students are encouraged to actively participate in scientific conferences and research activities. The program combines theoretical instruction with research activities, enabling students to develop analytical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and independent research skills.

Students are encouraged to actively participate in research activities conducted at the department and in collaborating research institutes. The program provides students with opportunities to present the results of their work at academic conferences and student research events. Such activities contribute to the development of academic communication skills and research methodology.

The university regularly conducts student satisfaction surveys, and the results indicate an overall positive assessment of the educational process and the professionalism of the faculty.

Student feedback is systematically collected through anonymous surveys that evaluate various aspects of the teaching and learning process, including the quality of instruction, the relevance of courses, and the availability of learning resources. According to survey data presented in the self-assessment report, a significant proportion of students expressed satisfaction with the professionalism of the faculty and the organization of academic activities.

The expert group notes that the integration of research activities into the educational process is a positive practice that contributes to the development of students' research competencies. Small class sizes also allow for individualized guidance and the flexible integration of students into laboratory work and the thesis writing process.

The program also provides students with a degree of flexibility through elective courses and the opportunity to choose topics for their master's theses. This approach facilitates the individualization of academic trajectories and encourages students to develop research interests aligned with their academic and professional goals.

Overall, the program demonstrates a focus on research-oriented education and fosters the development of competencies expected at the master's level.

Best practices

- Active involvement of students in research activities and conferences.
- Integration of research components into the educational process.
- Regular assessment of student satisfaction through surveys.
- Availability of elective courses allowing students to customize their learning path.

Degree of compliance with Standard 3 **- Full compliance**

Standard 4. Student Admission, Academic Performance, Recognition, and Certification

Evidence and analysis

Admission to the Master's program in Biophysics is organized in accordance with national regulations governing admission to higher education institutions in the Republic of Azerbaijan. The admission process is carried out through centralized procedures coordinated at the national level and supervised by the State Examination Center. This system ensures transparency and equal access for applicants, as well as establishes uniform national standards for admission to master's programs.

The program admits students who have earned a bachelor's degree in relevant academic disciplines, including biology, physics, biochemistry, medicine, agriculture, and other related natural sciences. During the site visit, the expert group confirmed that applicants may also come from other universities, provided they meet the academic requirements for conducting in-depth interdisciplinary research in the field of biophysics.

Documentation indicates that students enrolled in the program demonstrate high academic performance. The reported grade point averages indicate a high level of academic achievement among students.

Student performance within the program is monitored through a combination of ongoing and final assessment methods. These include written exams, term papers, laboratory sessions, and research projects. In addition, the program includes both research and teaching internships, which allow students to gain practical experience and develop the professional competencies necessary for both academic and applied research careers.

Completion of the program requires the preparation and defense of a master's thesis, which constitutes an important component of independent research work and allows students to demonstrate their ability to apply theoretical knowledge and research methodology to a specific scientific problem. During the visit, the expert panel confirmed that most thesis topics are experimental in nature and are often carried out in collaboration with partner institutions.

According to the documentation presented in the self-assessment report, students enrolled in this program demonstrate high academic performance. The students' cumulative grade point average (GPA) typically ranges from **93 to 96**, indicating a high level of academic achievement and effective monitoring of learning outcomes.

Graduate surveys and interviews conducted during the visit indicate that many students begin their professional careers while still enrolled in the program, while others secure employment shortly after graduation. Graduates are reported to work at research institutes, universities, laboratories, and other scientific or technical organizations. Approximately one graduate per year continues on to doctoral studies. The biophysics student cohort is small, with a typical class size of about four students, which allows for close mentoring and regular monitoring of individual progress.

The site visit confirmed that the program admits students with diverse backgrounds, including biology, medicine, and agriculture, and that the small class size facilitates thorough academic guidance and effective monitoring of individual progress.

Overall, the program demonstrates a structured approach to student admission, monitoring of academic performance, and assessment of learning outcomes, supported by transparent procedures and careful student supervision.

Best Practices

- Transparent admission procedures aligned with national standards in higher education.
- High academic performance among students enrolled in the program.
- Integration of internships and work on the master's thesis into the program structure.
- Evidence of graduates' successful employment or admission to further studies.
- Admission procedures and assessment mechanisms are well-organized and comply with national higher education standards. A key strength of the program is its small class size, which facilitates individualized guidance, careful monitoring of student performance, and their early integration into the research environment.
- The site visit also confirmed that the program attracts students from several related disciplines and that practical internships and thesis work directly contribute to employment.

***Degree of compliance with Standard 4* - full compliance**

Standard 5. Faculty

Evidence and Analysis

The Master's program in biophysics is delivered by qualified academic staff with significant experience in teaching and research in biophysics and related interdisciplinary fields. According to the documentation provided, the department includes professors and associate professors specializing in such fields as molecular biophysics, bioenergetics, physical chemistry of biological systems, and related disciplines.

The department includes several professors and associate professors who are actively involved in research and publications. In particular, the presence of scholars in the faculty who are included in the international ranking of the "top 2% of the world's scientists" attests to the department's high research potential.

Faculty members actively participate in research and publishing activities. Their scientific work contributes to the development of the program and ensures that the curriculum aligns with current scientific knowledge in the field of biophysics.

Faculty members contribute to the development of textbooks, teaching materials, and scientific publications relevant to the program. Their research activities facilitate the integration of research findings into the educational process and the creation of a research-oriented learning environment for students.

A particularly important indicator of the department's research productivity is that two faculty members involved in the program have been included in **the** international **ranking of the "top 2% of scientists worldwide**," which attests to high citation rates and international scientific renown. This recognition indicates that the program draws on internationally recognized expertise in the field of biophysics.

The presence of faculty members actively engaged in research creates favorable conditions for involving students in research activities and for supervising master's theses at a high academic level.

The participation of active researchers in the educational process strengthens the program's research focus and promotes the integration of research and educational activities. The expert group also noted that collaboration with researchers from partner institutions further expands students' opportunities in terms of research guidance and the research environment.

The expert group considers the faculty to be one of the program's main strengths. The presence of internationally recognized scholars significantly enhances the department's academic standing and contributes to the integration of research and educational activities. The visit reaffirmed that students also benefit from academic guidance and collaboration with scholars from partner institutions, which expands the effective research capacity available to the program.

International collaboration has already taken shape through joint work with research groups and institutions in Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkey, Germany, Italy, and other countries. Further expansion of participation in competitive international projects and networks will further strengthen the program's global academic profile.

Overall, the expert group believes that the department's academic and teaching staff provides a solid academic and pedagogical foundation for the program.

Best practices:

- Highly qualified academic staff with extensive experience in scientific research.
- Active participation of faculty members in research and publications.
- International recognition of several faculty members, confirmed by global citation rankings.
- Integration of research activities into the educational process and supervision of students' research work.

Areas for improvement:

- Continue to encourage the participation of foreign scholars and scholars with international experience in teaching, research supervision, and collaborative research.

- Expand participation in international scientific collaborations, joint research projects, and externally funded consortia where possible.
- Support the ongoing participation of faculty and early-career researchers in international academic networks and research consortia.

Degree of Compliance with Standard 5 **- Full Compliance**

Standard 6. Learning Resources and Student Support

Evidence and Analysis

Baku State University provides students with access to a wide range of educational resources and infrastructure that support both teaching and research activities. The university has lecture halls, computer labs, library services, and e-learning platforms.

The university library offers access to an extensive collection of academic literature and provides students with access to electronic databases and academic journals. These resources enable students to obtain up-to-date academic information relevant to their studies and research activities.

Laboratory facilities are available to support practical training and research activities within the program. One of the key findings of the site visit was that the program operates on a distributed infrastructure model: students have access to laboratories in the Department of Biology and, importantly, to modern equipment at collaborating independent institutes thanks to memoranda of cooperation and institutional governance compatibility at the ministerial level. This arrangement gives students access to a significantly broader experimental base than what is available solely at BSU facilities.

In addition to academic resources, the university provides a wide range of student support services. These include psychological counseling, financial aid programs, student housing, and medical services. These services contribute to student well-being and create favorable conditions for academic success.

The university also provides access to digital management systems and electronic resources that facilitate communication between students and faculty and make it easier to access course materials, publications, and learning resources. Students report good access to digital publications and databases, and the expert panel noted that research environments at partner institutions are readily available for internships and thesis projects.

The university demonstrates a commitment to creating an environment that fosters both the academic and personal development of students.

Overall, the existing infrastructure and student support services create a favorable environment for the implementation of the educational program. The expert panel considers the combination of the university’s resources and the infrastructure of partner institutions to be a significant practical advantage of the program.

The site visit confirmed that, in addition to BSU's resources, the program has effective access to modern experimental infrastructure through collaborating independent institutions. This distributed infrastructure model is a genuine strength of the program and contributes to the high quality of practical work and thesis writing.

Best Practices

- Availability of diverse educational resources, including libraries and electronic databases.
- Access to research laboratories and scientific facilities that support students' research activities.
- Comprehensive student support services, including psychological, social, and medical support.
- Digital infrastructure providing access to learning materials and communication with faculty.
- The expert group notes that the university provides a wide range of educational resources and student support services, which positively impacts the educational environment. Access to library resources, laboratories, and electronic databases facilitates both teaching and research activities.
- During the site visit, it became clear that the program has effective access to modern experimental infrastructure through partner institutions; however, this advantage has not yet been described clearly enough in the written and publicly available information about the program.

Areas for improvement:

- Describe the program's laboratory facilities more comprehensively, clearly indicating both BSU resources and the modern capabilities of partner institutions.
- Continue to modernize university laboratory facilities where necessary and maintain existing reliable mechanisms for access to partner institutions.

Degree of compliance with Standard 6 **- Full compliance**

Standard 7. Public Information

Evidence and Analysis

Baku State University provides the public with information about its educational programs through its official website and other institutional communication channels. Information about the "Biophysics" program, including program objectives, curriculum structure, and academic activities, is available to prospective students and stakeholders.

The university also disseminates information about its educational and research activities through institutional publications, academic conferences, and media channels. These communication activities help raise the university's profile and provide general information about academic programs and research activities.

Transparency of program information is an important component of modern higher education systems, especially in the context of internationalization and global academic mobility. In this regard, the availability of information on program objectives, admission procedures, and curriculum structure is a positive aspect.

During the on-site visit, the expert group highlighted a particularly important point: the program's actual experimental strength is based on BSU's own educational environment combined with excellent access to collaborating independent institutions. This provides students with opportunities for internships, practical work, and dissertation research in high-level laboratories; however, this advantage is not yet clearly presented in the publicly available information about the program.

Improving the availability of information in English would further enhance the international accessibility of information about the program and would be particularly valuable for potential international students and applicants from outside BSU.

The expert group notes that basic information about the program is available to prospective students and stakeholders. At the same time, one of the main conclusions of the visit is that BSU should present the program's external research base much more clearly and explicitly, as it constitutes a real competitive advantage of the program.

At the same time, the expert group notes that publicly available information about the program should be expanded to better reflect the actual strengths confirmed during the visit, particularly the program's access to external research institutions, modern laboratories, and a supportive environment for writing dissertations.

In particular, providing more detailed information in English about research activities, laboratory facilities, partner institutions, and typical dissertation topics would significantly enhance transparency and international visibility.

Best practices

- Availability of general information about programs on the university's official website.
- Public coverage of educational and research activities through institutional channels.
- Transparency of key information regarding program objectives and curriculum structure.

Areas for improvement:

- Expand the publicly available information on the website about the program, including detailed course descriptions, research activities, internships, thesis opportunities, and the role of collaborating independent institutions.
- Increase visibility on the website of the program's distributed laboratory infrastructure and research achievements, including examples of available methods and partners' research environments.

- Provide clearer information on the website, including in English, about career opportunities for graduates, partner institutions, and pathways to further research or employment.

Degree of compliance with Standard 7 **- Full compliance**

CHAPTER 3
CONCLUSION

Comments and areas for improvement from the expert group based on the audit results:

Standard 1. Policy on the quality assurance of the educational program and academic integrity – Full compliance

Standard 2. Curriculum Development and Approval, Information Management – Full Compliance

Areas for improvement:

- It would be beneficial for the University to describe more clearly how teaching at BSU is linked to laboratory practice, internships, and research work on thesis projects at partner institutions. This would allow prospective students and external stakeholders to better understand the program's actual experimental capabilities and its practical significance.
- Present the program's distributed practical and experimental infrastructure more clearly in the program documentation, including the role of collaborating independent institutions, available methods, and typical conditions for completing thesis projects.
- Continue to strengthen and, where possible, formalize collaboration with institutions in the fields of biomedicine, biotechnology, and applied research so that students can take advantage of a wide range of opportunities for research and employment.

Standard 3. Student-Centered Learning, Teaching, and Assessment – Full Compliance

Standard 4. Student Admissions, Academic Performance, Recognition, and Certification – Full Compliance

Standard 5. Faculty – Full Compliance.

Areas for improvement:

- Continue to encourage the participation of foreign scholars and scholars with international experience in teaching, academic advising, and collaborative research.
- Expand participation in international scientific collaborations, joint research projects, and externally funded consortia where possible.
- Support the ongoing participation of faculty and early-career researchers in international academic networks and research consortia.

Standard 6. Learning Resources and Student Support – Full Compliance

Areas for improvement:

- Provide a more comprehensive description of the program's laboratory facilities, clearly indicating both BSU resources and the modern capabilities of partner institutions.
- Continue to modernize university laboratory facilities where necessary and maintain existing reliable mechanisms for access to partner institutions.

Standard 7. Public Information – Full Compliance

Areas for improvement:

- Expand the publicly available information on the program's website, including detailed descriptions of courses, research activities, internships, thesis opportunities, and the role of collaborating independent institutions.
- Increase visibility on the website of the program's distributed laboratory infrastructure and scientific achievements, including examples of available methods and partners' research environments.
- Provide clearer information on the website, including in English, about career opportunities for graduates, partner institutions, and pathways to further research or employment.

Appendix 1

PROGRAM
of the external audit by the IQAA expert group at Baku State University for program accreditation March12-13, 2026

Time	Event	Participants	Location
	Day 1: March 12, 2026		
8:45	Arrival at the university	L, EG, C	EG office
9:00-10:00	Briefing, discussion of organizational issues	L, EG, C	EG office Conference link
10:00-10:45	Interview with the University Rector	L, EG, C,Rector	Rector's Office Conference link
10:45-11:00	Exchange of views among members of the external expert group	L, EG, C	EG Office Conference link
11:00-11:45	Interview with the Vice-Rectors of the University	L, EG, C, Vice-Rectors	Rector's Office Link for the conference
11:45-12:00	Exchange of views among members of the external expert group	L, EG, C	EG office Conference link
12:00-12:45	Interviews with heads of structural divisions	L, EG, C, RSP	EG office Conference link
12:45-13:00	Exchange of views among members of the external expert group	L, EG, C	EG Office Conference link
13:00-14:00	Lunch	L, EG, C	
14:00-14:45	Interview with deans, department heads	L, EG, C, Dean of the faculty, Head of the department	EG office Link for the conference
14:45-15:00	Exchange of views among members of the external expert group	L, EG, C	EG Office Conference link
15:00-15:45	Interview with faculty members of the department on the accredited educational program	L, EG, C, teaching staff of the department	EG office Link for the conference
15:45-16:00	Exchange of views among members of the external expert group	L, EG, C	EG office Link for the conference
16:00-16:45	Interview with employers	L, EG, C, Employers	EG Office Conference link
16:45-17:00	Exchange of views among members of the external expert group	L, EG, C	EG Office Conference link
17:00-18:30	Visual inspection of material, technical, and educational laboratory facilities	L, EG, Heads departments	Academic building Conference link

18:30-18:45	Exchange of views among members of the external expert group	L, EG, C	EG office Conference link
Day 2: March 13, 2026			
8:45	Arrival at the University	L, EG, C	Academic Building
9:00-11:00	Academic and scientific support for master's students. Selective attendance at academic exams and practical training bases	L, EG	Academic building Practical training bases
11:00-11:45	Interviews with students	L, EG, C, Students	EG office Conference link
11:45-12:00	Exchange of views among members of the external expert group	L, EG, C	EG Office Conference link
12:00-13:00	Invitation to department heads at the request of experts.	L, EG, C, department heads	EG Office
13:00-14:00	Lunch	L, EG, C	
14:00-16:00	Preparation of external audit reports. Review of documentation on the accredited educational program. Invitation of individual representatives of the department and structural units at the request of experts.	L, EG, Head of Department, HSU	EG office Link for the conference
16:00-17:00	Exchange of views among members of the external expert group. Preliminary results of the external audit	L, EG, C	EG office Link for the conference
17:00-17:30	Meeting with management to present preliminary results of the external audit	L, EG, C	Rector's Office Conference link

Note: L – Leader of EG, EG – Expert Group, C – Group Coordinator, HSU – Heads of Structural Units

Appendix 3

LIST OF DOCUMENTS
ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS REQUIRED BY THE UNIVERSITY

1. Study program
2. Working study program
3. Syllabi for disciplines (courses)
4. Internal policies and quality assurance system
5. Materials from collegial bodies governing the educational program
6. Materials for systematic monitoring of student performance
7. Student Theses