



**IQAA**

**INDEPENDENT AGENCY  
FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN EDUCATION - IQAA**

**REPORT  
ON EXTERNAL AUDIT  
OF BAKU STATE UNIVERSITY**

**PROGRAM ACCREDITATION**

**7002007 International Law**

**7002012 Conflictology**

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**LEVEL OF COMPLIANCE OF THE SELF-EVALUATION REPORT  
WITH THE ACTUAL STATE OF THE EDUCATIONAL  
PROGRAM7002007«INTERNATIONAL LAW» FOR EACH  
STANDARD**

Standards	Indicate the level 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
<i>Standard 1</i> Quality Assurance Policy and Academic Integrity	<b>X</b>			
<i>Standard 2</i> Curriculum Development, Approval, and Information Management	<b>X</b>			
<i>Standard 3</i> Student-centered learning, teaching, and assessment		<b>X</b>		
<i>Standard 4</i> Student admission, progress, recognition, and certification		<b>X</b>		
<i>Standard 5</i> Faculty	<b>X</b>			
<i>Standard 6</i> Learning resources and student support	<b>X</b>			
<i>Standard 7</i> Public Information		<b>X</b>		

**LEVEL OF COMPLIANCE OF THE SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT  
WITH THE ACTUAL STATE OF AFFAIRS OF EDUCATIONAL  
PROGRAM 7002012 «CONFLICTOLOGY» FOR EACH STANDARD**

Standards	Mark the level 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
<i>Standard 1</i> Quality assurance policy and academic integrity	<b>X</b>			
<i>Standard 2</i> Curriculum Development, Approval, and Information Management	<b>X</b>			
<i>Standard 3</i> Student-centered learning, teaching, and assessment		<b>X</b>		
<i>Standard 4</i> Student admission, progress, recognition, and certification		<b>X</b>		
<i>Standard 5</i> Faculty	<b>X</b>			
<i>Standard 6</i> Learning resources and student support	<b>X</b>			
<i>Standard 7</i> Public Information		<b>X</b>		



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## ***CHAPTER 1***

### ***CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVES OF THE VISIT***

#### ***Introduction***

An external visit by an expert group as part of the international program accreditation procedure to Baku State University took place on March 12-13, 2026. The external audit was conducted in accordance with the Program developed by the IQAA agency 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 within the framework of program accreditation, the composition of the external expert group, the list of interview participants, the guidelines for organizing and conducting an external assessment, the expert code of ethics, The template for the EEG accreditation report was provided to the members of the expert group before they began their work at the educational institution, which ensured that they were able 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 further development of the university.

In accordance with the EEG visit program, a visual inspection was conducted, which allowed the members of the expert group to get a general idea of the organization of the educational, methodological, and research processes, the material and technical base, and to determine its compliance with standards. In addition, meetings were held with the university management, vice-rectors, deans of faculties and heads of departments, teaching staff, representatives of scientific schools, students and master's students, graduates and employers. The experts inspected the structural units, the scientific library, sports, leisure, and medical facilities, catering outlets, and the Student House.

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

The planned activities during the external visit contributed to a more detailed understanding of the university's structure and activities and allowed external experts to conduct an independent assessment of the compliance of the self-assessment report on educational programs with the actual state of affairs at the university and program 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 market, educated in a spirit of patriotism, scientific, pedagogical, and engineering and technical personnel based on the acquisition of fundamental knowledge and innovative research skills in the field of multidisciplinary continuing 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, methodological, and applied scientific research, as well as the implementation of scientific research results into practice, industrial and innovative development of the country.

The highest governing body of the university is the Academic Council.

The academic structure of Baku State University includes 16 faculties that train specialists in 55 specialties at the bachelor's level and 153 specialties at the master's level in various scientific fields; 4 institutes; a rich scientific library; 21 scientific, methodological, and practical journals published by the university; and a university clinic that serves the teaching staff, employees, and students of the university.

Baku State University has a well-developed and functional material and technical base that meets modern requirements. The university has four academic buildings equipped with classrooms and computer labs with modern technical equipment. All university buildings are connected to a single 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 educational and research activities of students. The educational television studio provides additional opportunities for the introduction of innovative forms of organizing the educational process.

**Location of the legal entity:**

AZ1148, Republic of Azerbaijan, Baku, Zahid Khalilov Street 33

Website: [www.bsu.edu.az](http://www.bsu.edu.az)

E-mail: [info@bsu.edu.az](mailto:info@bsu.edu.az)

## ***CHAPTER 2***

### ***EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORT BY THE EXPERT GROUP***

#### ***Introduction***

An external audit was conducted for the Master's degree programs in International Law and Conflictology offered at Baku State University. The objective of the external audit was to comprehensively assess the quality of these programs, their compliance with IQAA Standards and the European Higher Education Area (ESG) Quality Assurance Guidelines, and to analyze the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system.

The structure of the introductory section and the logic of the assessment are consistent with the generally accepted practice of external quality assessment and international approaches to program accreditation.

During the audit, the expert group focused on key aspects identified by the ESG, including: the development, approval, and monitoring of educational programs; student-centered learning, teaching, and assessment; assessment of learning outcomes and the level of development of professional competencies; the organization and results of students' research activities; personnel, logistical, and informational support for programs; stakeholder participation, including employers; and transparency and accessibility of information about educational programs.

Baku State University is one of the leading higher education institutions in the Republic of Azerbaijan and a recognized scientific and educational center in the region. Its educational programs are implemented within a framework of sustainable institutional development, an internal quality assurance system, a developed scientific infrastructure, and a functioning digital educational environment, which generally meets the basic ESG requirements for the educational environment and institutional context for program implementation.

#### ***Compliance with program accreditation standards***

##### **Standard 1. Quality assurance policy and academic integrity**

###### ***Evidence and Analysis Based on Criteria:***

The expert group established that Baku State University has an institution-wide policy framework in the field of quality assurance, which is presented in both self-evaluation reports as an officially approved and university-wide system connected with the work of the Scientific Council, the Board of Trustees, the Quality Assurance Center, the Center for Organization and Management of Teaching, faculty structures, and relevant departments. In both programmes under review, the University describes quality assurance not as an isolated administrative procedure,

but rather as an integrated management mechanism intended to cover educational, research, methodological, and ethical dimensions of programme delivery. In this respect, both the International Law and Conflictology programmes demonstrate the existence of a formalized internal quality culture at institutional and programme levels (International Law, pp. 10-15; Conflictology, pp. 9-12).

At the same time, the expert group notes that, in both programmes, the declared linkage between programme quality policy and the University's broader strategic priorities is described in general terms rather than demonstrated through direct documentary correlation. The SERs repeatedly refer to the Strategic Development Plan and, in the case of Conflictology, also to the Strategic Institutional Plan; however, during the external audit the experts were not provided with the texts of those plans themselves. Consequently, although both SERs assert alignment between programme development and institutional strategic directions, the expert group was not in a position to verify this connection independently and in documentary form (International Law, pp. 10-12; 20-22; Conflictology, pp. 12-14).

With regard to academic integrity, the University has established a more developed and more clearly articulated mechanism. Both SERs describe the functioning of the Anti-Plagiarism Commission, the use of the licensed "StrikePlagiarism" system since 2017, and the later addition of AI-detection tools since 2024. The reports also specify plagiarism thresholds for doctoral dissertations, master's theses, and bachelor's graduation works, as well as the procedure for revision and re-submission in cases of insufficient originality. The Ethics Committee and complaint channels addressed to the Rector, deans, and relevant teaching-management units are likewise presented as operating mechanisms. From the perspective of the expert group, this aspect appears comparatively stronger and more operationalized in practice (International Law, pp. 15-19; Conflictology, pp. 10-12).

The expert group also considers it important that both SERs refer to regular surveys of students, graduates, and employers, as well as to institutional monitoring by the Quality Assurance Center. Nevertheless, the reports contain limited evidence demonstrating how the outcomes of such monitoring are systematically communicated back to stakeholders and translated into traceable programme-level corrective action. Accordingly, while the basic components of internal quality assurance and academic integrity are clearly in place, the evidence concerning feedback loops, measurable programme-level revisions, and documentary demonstration of alignment with institutional strategy remains somewhat less developed (International Law, pp. 14-15; Conflictology, pp. 11-12).

***Positive practice:***

A notable positive aspect, common to both programmes, is the existence of an institutionalized academic integrity architecture combining anti-plagiarism procedures, AI-detection tools, Ethics Committee oversight, and formal complaint mechanisms. This demonstrates that BSU treats academic honesty not as a declaratory principle only, but as a regulated and technologically supported component of programme implementation (International Law, pp. 15-19; Conflictology, pp. 10-12).

Another positive practice is the integrated institutional model of quality assurance, in which central university structures, faculty units, departments, and students are all formally included in the quality assurance process. Such an approach creates a coherent administrative environment for the implementation of educational programmes and reflects a mature understanding of quality culture at institutional level (International Law, pp. 10-15; Conflictology, pp. 9-12).

***Areas for improvement:***

The expert group notes that the strategic anchoring of both educational programmes within the University's strategic-planning documents was stated repeatedly by the University representatives and in the SERs, yet could not be fully verified by the experts because the relevant strategic plans were not made available during the visit; in addition, the documentary presentation of programme-level feedback loops from monitoring to revision would benefit from greater specificity and traceability.

It is recommended that the University ensure, for future accreditation and internal review purposes, the availability of the full institutional strategic-planning documents and provide a clearer documentary mapping showing how the objectives, development priorities, and quality-assurance measures of each educational programme derive from and contribute to the University's strategic goals.

It is further recommended that the University strengthen the programme-level documentation of monitoring outcomes, including the manner in which student, graduate, and employer feedback is analyzed, communicated to stakeholders, and translated into concrete changes in curricula, teaching methods, and programme management.

Overall, despite the positive aspects of the university's quality assurance architecture, there is a need to establish a clearer and more transparent system for quality assurance of educational programmes at the faculty level, as faculties bear ultimate responsibility for the quality of graduate outcomes.

In this regard, the expert panel recommends the establishment of faculty-level quality assurance committees, with the inclusion of students, university staff, and faculty members. These committees could periodically review academic programmes and provide recommendations for their improvement.

In addition, such committees could consider various cases related to quality assurance, both at the faculty level and at the level of individual educational programmes.

**Level of compliance with Standard 1 (specify the level of compliance with Standard 1):** Full compliance.

## **Standard 2. Curriculum Development, Approval, and Information Management**

### ***Evidence and Analysis Based on Criteria:***

The expert group established that both educational programmes are described as developed and approved within a formal regulatory framework based on national legislation, ministerial regulations, state educational standards, and university-level governance procedures. In both SERs, the programmes are presented as aligned with the Azerbaijan National Qualifications Framework, ECTS principles, and the qualifications framework of the European Higher Education Area. The stated programme objectives and intended learning outcomes are clearly formulated in both reports and, at the level of formal design, appear to reflect the academic profile of the respective specializations (International Law, pp. 20-27; Conflictology, pp. 12-17).

The International Law programme demonstrates a relatively more elaborated legal-academic profile, with a clearer emphasis on international legal theory, treaty interpretation, state responsibility, human rights, and the law of international organizations. The Conflictology programme, for its part, is characterized by a distinctly interdisciplinary structure integrating political science, international relations, law, mediation, and social-conflict analysis. The expert group considers this interdisciplinarity to be an important substantive strength of the Conflictology programme. At the same time, in both programmes the link between declared learning outcomes, individual courses, and measurable competencies is described in a generally persuasive manner, although the evidence of programme mapping remains more descriptive than analytically demonstrated (International Law, pp. 21-31; Conflictology, pp. 13-17).

Both SERs indicate that students, graduates, employers, and academic staff are involved in programme development and revision, and the reports also refer to the existence of employer-informed elective or practice-oriented components.

Nevertheless, the expert group notes that the documentary evidence of such stakeholder participation, while present in narrative form, was not always sufficiently detailed in demonstrating exactly which revisions were adopted, at what time, and in direct response to which stakeholder input. The same observation applies to the issue of external expertise or external review: such mechanisms are mentioned, but their practical impact on curriculum redesign is not always sufficiently transparent from the materials reviewed (International Law, pp. 24-31; Conflictology, pp. 14-17).

A further issue, which affected the experts' ability to make a stronger assessment, concerns information management and the evidentiary basis for programme planning. The SERs contain statistical and descriptive data on admissions, student achievement, and graduate pathways; however, during the external audit some data appeared insufficiently consistent across written materials and interviews. This was particularly visible in the Conflictology programme, where the SER refers to five current students, whereas during interviews a different figure was mentioned. Such inconsistency does not negate the existence of information-management mechanisms, but it does indicate that the presentation and verification of programme data require further strengthening (Conflictology, pp. 22-24; International Law, pp. 50-51).

### ***Positive practices:***

A positive aspect of both programmes is that they are presented within a clear national and institutional regulatory framework and are formally aligned with the AzNQF, ECTS, and EHEA principles. This provides the programmes with a structured academic foundation and enhances their comparability within the broader higher education space (International Law, pp. 20-27; Conflictology, pp. 12-17).

The expert group also – judging by the texts in the submitted reports – positively notes the substantive distinctiveness of the two programmes: International Law reflects a coherent specialist legal profile (supported by strong faculty), whereas Conflictology offers an interdisciplinary curriculum combining theory and applied perspectives on conflict analysis and resolution. This differentiation suggests that the programmes are not merely formal duplications of general master's models, but possess recognizable academic identities – a very praiseworthy circumstance (International Law, pp. 21-31; Conflictology, pp. 13-17).

### ***Areas for improvement:***

The expert group considers that, although the curriculum design and approval framework is generally in place and functions satisfactorily, the evidentiary basis concerning stakeholder influence, programme revision history, and the consistency

of statistical information would benefit from greater precision and documentary transparency; this is particularly relevant in light of the discrepancy noted in the current student numbers for Conflictology.

It is recommended that the University strengthen the documentary traceability of programme revision processes by recording, in a more structured way, which changes in curriculum design, course content, and programme outcomes were introduced on the basis of feedback from students, employers, graduates, and other stakeholders.

It is also recommended that the University ensures greater consistency and internal verification of programme-specific statistical data, especially regarding student contingent figures, admissions, progression, and current enrolment, so that the information presented in SERs, interviews, and supporting materials is fully coherent.

It is also recommended to ensure more active engagement of faculty members, employers, and students in the development and approval of educational programmes. At the same time, it is important to note the strong interest of employers in contributing to the enhancement of the university's educational programmes. In particular, positive feedback was received regarding the internships undertaken by students of the International Law master's programme at the Constitutional Court of Azerbaijan.

The expert panel noted that the university does not possess full academic autonomy to independently design its educational programmes due to the requirements of the Ministry of Science and Education of Azerbaijan. At the same time, we consider it essential to advance the issue of granting the university greater academic autonomy, enabling a more flexible and responsive approach to evolving labour market demands and the preparation of graduates who are genuinely needed at both regional and global levels.

Without such academic autonomy, the further development of educational programmes aligned with labour market needs will be significantly constrained. In this regard, under the current circumstances, it is recommended that the university take the initiative in engaging with the Ministry to advocate for the expansion of its academic autonomy. During the interviews, faculty members also noted that individual study plans are currently developed entirely by them, and expressed a desire for more active involvement of students on the International Law master's programme in this process.

**Level of compliance with Standard 2 (specify the level of compliance with Standard 2): Full compliance.**

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

#### *Evidence and Analysis based on criteria:*

Our expert group established that both programmes formally adhere to the principles of student-centered learning and that the SERs describe a teaching process intended to encourage active student participation, academic advising, orientation mechanisms, and the use of various teaching methods. The International Law SER places particular emphasis on seminars, research-oriented work, internships, analytical tasks, and student participation in programme-related decision-making processes. The Conflictology SER likewise refers to student-centered methods, academic support, orientation sessions, and the monitoring of student performance through internal electronic systems (International Law, pp. 39-46; Conflictology, pp. 17-21; 22-24).

The experts note that, at the level of declared teaching philosophy, both programmes move beyond a purely lecture-based model. In International Law, this is reflected in the emphasis on legal analysis, treaty interpretation, practical placements, and work with real international legal materials. In Conflictology, the programme profile itself presupposes interactive and discussion-based formats, and the SER refers to practical, analytical, and interdisciplinary forms of instruction. During interviews, the general impression was that students are treated respectfully and that their academic needs are recognized; this corresponds to the requirements of the IQAA standard regarding student-centeredness (International Law, pp. 39-46; 56-57; Conflictology, pp. 17-21; 50-51).

Assessment procedures in both programmes are presented as transparent and regulated. The SERs refer to publicly communicated criteria, electronic systems of recording academic performance, regular academic advising, and the availability of complaint and appeal procedures. In addition, the University describes support measures for students with weaker performance and identifies broader student-support mechanisms, including psychological and academic support. These elements indicate that the institution has established a formal framework capable of supporting fair assessment and the monitoring of student progress (International Law, pp. 39-46; 51-52; Conflictology, pp. 22-30).

At the same time, the expert group considers that the practical demonstration of flexible educational trajectories, student participation in shaping methods of assessment, and the visibility of systematic follow-up on student feedback could be more clearly evidenced. This observation is not fundamental, but it explains why the standard is better characterized as one of significant rather than full compliance. In addition, given the very small contingent of students in

Conflictology,<sup>1</sup> the operational breadth of student choice and educational flexibility may in practice be more limited than what is described in general terms in the SER (Conflictology, pp. 22-24; International Law, pp. 39-46).

***Positive practices:***

The expert group positively notes that both programmes are supported by academic advising, orientation measures, and internal systems for monitoring student progress, which contributes to a more individualized and student-sensitive organization of the educational process (International Law, pp. 39-46; 50-52; Conflictology, pp. 22-24).

A further positive aspect is the practice-oriented pedagogical orientation of both programmes. In International Law, this is manifested in internships and work with legal materials from real institutions; in Conflictology, it is reflected in the interdisciplinary and analytical design of the curriculum and its orientation toward conflict analysis and applied skills (International Law, pp. 56-57; Conflictology, pp. 13-17; 50-51).

***Comments:***

The expert group considers that the student-centered orientation of both programmes is generally present and supported by relevant procedures; however, the practical evidence of flexible trajectories, traceable use of student feedback, and differentiation of pedagogical approaches could be more concretely demonstrated at programme level, especially in the case of the smaller Conflictology contingent.

***Areas for improvement:***

It is recommended that the University further systematizes the documentation of how student feedback influences teaching methods, course organization, and assessment approaches in each educational programme. It is also recommended by us that the University continues strengthening flexible and practice-oriented learning opportunities, especially in the Conflictology programme, so that the student-centered approach is reflected not only in formal procedures but also in a broader range of visible educational options.

It is also recommended to establish a more systematic approach to student academic support, including through participation in international and academic conferences, as well as academic mobility programmes.

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<sup>1</sup> We as educational experts understand that a high number of students is not to be expected in a non-undergraduate study program; yet the orally voiced number of one student in an entire program for a given year raised a question in the group.

It is encouraging to note that many students at the university do receive such support; however, during the interviews, only a limited number of students were able to clearly demonstrate the specific mechanisms they had used, despite having benefited from this support on multiple occasions.

In this regard, it is recommended that, in designing such support mechanisms, the university ensures transparency and clear communication, so that all students understand that these opportunities are available to them and can be accessed on an equal basis.

**Level of compliance with Standard 3 (specify the level of compliance with Standard 3): Significant compliance.**

#### **Standard 4. Student admission, academic performance, recognition, and certification**

##### ***Evidence and analysis based on criteria:***

The expert group established and clarified that both programmes are integrated into a centralized and formally regulated admission framework based on the procedures of the State Examination Center and the Ministry of Science and Education. The SERs describe published admission rules, orientation measures for newly admitted students, recording of examination results in electronic systems, and subsequent academic monitoring through the University's internal infrastructure. These elements indicate that the student life-cycle, from admission to graduation, is regulated in a structured and legally compliant manner (International Law, pp. 47-52; Conflictology, pp. 21-31).

The International Law programme demonstrates comparatively strong quantitative indicators in the SER. Over the past five years, 53 students were admitted to the programme, admission plan fulfilment reached 100 percent, and the GPA indicators remained high, ranging approximately from 94 to 98. The SER also states that the employment rate of graduates in this specialization reaches 100 percent, which, if sustained and regularly verified, would constitute a strong indicator of programme relevance and graduate competitiveness (International Law, pp. 38-39; 50-52).

The Conflictology programme presents a much smaller contingent and correspondingly narrower scale of activity. According to the SER, over the last four years the planned and actual admission numbers ranged between four and six students annually, while the current number of enrolled students is indicated as five, of whom four study in Azerbaijani and one in Russian. The SER also states that fifteen students have graduated from the programme over the past five years. However, during the interviews the expert group received an inconsistent

indication concerning the current student number, since only one student figure was mentioned in discussion. This discrepancy does not call into question the existence of the programme itself, but it does affect the certainty and consistency of programme-specific information management (Conflictology, pp. 22-24; 30-31).

Recognition and certification procedures in both programmes are described in accordance with national legal requirements, including the issuance of diplomas and diploma supplements, the defense of master's theses before specialized attestation bodies, and the possibility of further doctoral studies. The expert group also notes the existence of academic-progress monitoring and advising systems. At the same time, evidence concerning the operationalization of academic mobility, formal recognition of external credits, and post-diploma tracking could be presented in a more detailed and programme-specific manner, especially for Conflictology (International Law, pp. 45-52; Conflictology, pp. 21-31).

### ***Positive practices:***

A positive aspect of both programmes is the presence of a regulated and transparent student life-cycle framework, beginning with centralized admission and continuing through orientation, internal performance monitoring, thesis defense, and formal certification (International Law, pp. 47-52; Conflictology, pp. 21-31). Furthermore, the expert group also positively notes the strong academic-performance indicators and high employment claim presented in the International Law SER, as well as the existence of sustained admissions and successful graduation outcomes even in the smaller-scale Conflictology programme (International Law, pp. 38-39; 50-52; Conflictology, pp. 22-24; 30-31).

### ***Comments:***

The expert group notes that the general admission, monitoring, and certification procedures are functioning appropriately; however, the consistency and precision of programme-specific statistical information, especially in the Conflictology programme, require further strengthening, while additional programme-level evidence on recognition procedures, mobility, and post-diploma follow-up would improve the analytical completeness of this standard.

### ***Areas for improvement:***

It is recommended that the University strengthen the accuracy, consistency, and verifiability of programme-specific student data, especially with regard to current enrolment, progression, and graduation figures in the Conflictology programme. It is further recommended that the University develop more detailed and programme-specific documentation concerning academic mobility, recognition of externally earned credits, and post-diploma graduate tracking, so that these procedures are more clearly visible within the evidence base of each programme.

As regard to admissions to the “International Law” programme, it should be noted that the programme is primarily oriented towards students funded through the state budget. At the same time, it would be desirable to ensure greater diversity in student intake and a better balance between those studying under state-funded places and those on a fee-paying basis.

It is also recommended that the university strengthen its recruitment of fee-paying students, including international applicants. This will help ensure the long-term sustainability of both the “International Law” and “Conflictology” programmes.

The expert panel also noted that the vast majority of students in the International Law programme receive the highest grade (“excellent”), with an average GPA of 97.43. This raises questions as to how effectively the university’s criterion-referenced assessment system is being applied.

During the interviews, faculty members indicated that this may largely be linked with the fact that many students are state-funded. A similar issue can be observed in other countries where students receive government financial support. However, faculty members should be able to assess students objectively and comprehensively, based on their actual knowledge and competencies.

In this regard, it is recommended that the university review and strengthen the effectiveness of its criterion-referenced assessment system.

**Level of compliance with Standard 4 (specify the level of compliance with Standard 4):** Significant compliance.

## **Standard 5. Faculty and teaching staff**

### ***Evidence and analysis based on criteria:***

The expert group established that BSU has a formal human resources policy and a regulated framework for recruitment, appointment, workload planning, and evaluation of academic staff. Both SERs refer to competitive recruitment procedures, annual individual work plans, performance assessment, participation in research, and institutional support for professional development. The academic staff engaged in both programmes generally correspond to the qualification profile of the respective disciplines, and the evidence reviewed during the external audit does not indicate any fundamental non-conformity with licensing or qualification requirements (International Law, pp. 53-61; Conflictology, pp. 31-37).

The International Law programme is delivered by a relatively compact but academically qualified team, including professors, associate professors, senior lecturers, and part-time lecturers, with three Doctors of Sciences and six Doctors of Philosophy identified in the SER. The programme also benefits from a strong

subject-specific orientation and from the connection of teaching with courts, legal institutions, and international-law-related practice. The Conflictology programme is embedded in the wider Department of Political Science and Sociology, where the staffing base is broader in numerical terms and supported by publication activity, teaching materials, and regular professional-development activities (International Law, pp. 57-61; Conflictology, pp. 34-37).

The expert group positively assesses the documented use of annual individual work plans, internal evaluation of teaching, open classes, publication activity, and faculty participation in seminars and conferences. In both programmes, the involvement of faculty in research and methodological work appears to support the academic character of master's-level instruction. In this respect, the criteria concerning qualification, planning, involvement in internal quality assurance, and research engagement are generally met at a high level (International Law, pp. 58-61; Conflictology, pp. 34-37).

At the same time, during interviews and expert observation, attention was drawn to the fact that a considerable part of the interviewed faculty belonged to the older generation of academics. While this circumstance does not diminish the substantial experience and professional authority of the existing teaching staff, it raises a longer-term question concerning human resources renewal, succession, but also the gradual involvement of younger academics in both programmes. The expert group, however, also recognizes that this issue may be influenced by broader systemic factors beyond the immediate control of the University. Taking the totality of circumstances into account, the standard may nevertheless be assessed as fully complied with (International Law, pp. 57-61; Conflictology, pp. 34-37).

### ***Positive practices:***

A clear positive practice is the use of annual individual work plans and systematic internal evaluation of faculty performance, including teaching, research, methodological, and organizational work. This creates a structured professional environment and supports internal accountability (International Law, pp. 58-60; Conflictology, pp. 36-37).

Another very positive aspect is the strong academic qualification of the teaching staff involved in both programmes, combined with their participation in research, publication activity, conferences, and professional-development events, which supports the master's-level academic profile of the two programmes (International Law, pp. 57-61; Conflictology, pp. 34-37).

### ***Areas for improvement:***

Our expert group notes, as a matter deserving attention in future institutional development, that many of the faculty members interviewed are of advanced age;

although this does not presently undermine the quality of programme delivery and may partly result from wider structural conditions, the issue of generational renewal and the gradual attraction of younger academics remains relevant for the long-term sustainability and that applies to both programmes.

Despite the presence of a highly reputable and experienced faculty members, it is recommended to introduce a differentiated system of academic ranks, including a reduction in teaching load for professors through the allocation of workload credits (ECTS) for research. It is also advisable, where possible, to allocate dedicated funding to support research undertaken by faculty members.

**Level of compliance with Standard 5 (specify the level of compliance with Standard 5):** Full compliance.

## **Standard 6. Learning resources and student support**

### ***Evidence and analysis based on criteria:***

The expert group established that BSU possesses a broad institutional infrastructure for the implementation of educational programmes, including academic buildings, classrooms, computer facilities, library services, dormitory accommodation, student spaces, medical support, and electronic information systems. Both SERs describe this infrastructure in considerable detail and indicate that students and faculty members have access to physical and digital resources necessary for teaching, research, and communication. From the institutional perspective, the resource base of the University appears generally sufficient for the implementation of the two reviewed master's programmes (International Law, pp. 62-74; Conflictology, pp. 37-45).

The International Law programme benefits from access to legal databases and academic resources relevant to its disciplinary profile, including electronic library resources and specialized legal materials. The programme also appears to be supported by practical connections with courts and other institutions, which add to the resource environment in a broader sense. The Conflictology programme, in turn, relies on the wider infrastructure of the Faculty of International Relations and Economics, including classrooms, a computer laboratory, library access, career-support structures, and student-oriented spaces such as the Student Space and Student Development Center (International Law, pp. 57; 62-74; Conflictology, pp. 37-45).

Student support mechanisms are present in both programmes. The SERs refer to academic advisors, orientation procedures, psychological support, direct communication channels with the Rector and administration, career and alumni services, and the availability of dormitory and medical support. The expert group considers that these mechanisms form a generally adequate support environment

for master's students. The University's Scientific Library, access to international platforms, and continuing development of digital resources are also positive factors in this regard (International Law, pp. 37-39; 62-74; Conflictology, pp. 42-45).

At the same time, the expert group notes that the evidence on the programme-specific sufficiency of resources is stronger at general institutional level than at the level of direct linkage to the needs of each programme individually. This is particularly relevant for Conflictology, where the development of additional applied and simulation-oriented components could further strengthen the resource environment of the programme. In addition, while the financing model is described, more programme-specific analytical presentation of resource allocation would make the case for full compliance more persuasive (Conflictology, pp. 37-45; International Law, pp. 62-74).

### ***Positive practices:***

A positive practice common to both programmes is the integration of academic, social, and digital student-support mechanisms, including academic advising (direct questions were asked during the interviews, regarding that aspect), library access, electronic systems, student accommodation, and communication channels with university administration (International Law, pp. 37-39; 62-74; Conflictology, pp. 37-45).

The expert group also positively notes the University's substantial library and digital-information infrastructure, as well as access to international databases and electronic resources, which are particularly important for master's-level research and thesis preparation (International Law, pp. 57; 62-74; Conflictology, pp. 42-43).

### ***Areas for improvement:***

The expert group considers that the overall institutional resource base and student-support environment are adequate and supportive of programme implementation; however, the programme-specific analytical demonstration of resource sufficiency could be strengthened further, especially with regard to the applied and practical-resource dimension of the Conflictology programme.

It is recommended that the University presents, in a more programme-specific manner, the resource base and support services directly linked to each accredited programme, including the way in which infrastructure, library resources, digital tools, and student-support mechanisms are tailored to programme needs. Also, it is recommended that the University continues developing the applied-resource dimension of the "International Law" and "Conflictology" programme, including simulation-based, practice-oriented, and field-related learning opportunities, in order to reinforce the practical side of student training.

**Level of compliance with Standard 6 (specify the level of compliance with Standard 6):** Full compliance.

## **Standard 7. Public information**

### ***Evidence and analysis based on criteria:***

The expert group established that BSU maintains a broad institutional system of public information dissemination through its official website, faculty web resources, social media platforms, brochures, open-door events, media engagement, and public-relations activities. Both SERs emphasize that information about educational programmes, admission procedures, graduate prospects, and university life is made available to applicants, students, graduates, and the wider public in accessible form. At the institutional level, therefore, the University has clearly developed a functioning public-information environment (International Law, pp. 74-76; Conflictology, pp. 45-46).

The International Law SER contains relatively more concrete programme-specific indicators relevant for public information, including student admissions data, graduate count, GPA indicators, and the statement that graduate employment reaches 100 percent. It also refers to dissemination of information through the website, social media, open days, exhibitions, and recruitment campaigns. The Conflictology SER likewise describes public availability of programme-related information, but the evidence appears somewhat more general and less rich in programme-specific public indicators. In particular, although the programme is publicly represented, the available evidence is less detailed with respect to stable publication of programme-specific employment statistics, current contingent figures, and faculty-profile information in a consolidated and verifiable form (International Law, pp. 38-39; 49-51; 74-76; Conflictology, pp. 22-23; 45-46).

A further issue under this standard concerns the consistency and precision of publicly relevant data. As already noted, in the Conflictology programme the experts encountered a discrepancy regarding the number of currently enrolled students: the SER indicates five students, whereas interview data did not fully correspond to this figure. Since the IQAA standard requires public information to be clear, accurate, objective, and up to date, such inconsistencies reduce the strength of the evidence under this standard. The same consideration applies, though to a lesser extent, to the need for more clearly systematized programme-level public reporting in both programmes (Conflictology, pp. 22-24; 45-46).

At the same time, our expert group takes into account that the University has already established the principal institutional channels through which such information is disseminated, and that programme visibility, especially in International Law, appears comparatively strong. The issue, therefore, lies less in

the absence of public information mechanisms than in the need for more precise, programme-specific, and consistently verified publication of key data. On balance, and taking into account our expert group's agreed position, the standard may be assessed as significantly complied with, see further below on p. 23 (International Law, pp. 74-76; Conflictology, pp. 45-46).

***Positive practices:***

In our opinion, a positive practice here is the existence of a diversified institutional communication system, combining the official website, faculty pages, social media, brochures, open-door days, and media outreach, which contributes to the visibility of the University and its educational programmes (International Law, pp. 74-76; Conflictology, pp. 45-46). The expert group also positively notes that the International Law programme, in particular, presents a more developed set of publicly relevant programme indicators, including admissions trends, GPA, and graduate-employment claims, which strengthens programme visibility and attractiveness for prospective applicants (International Law, pp. 38-39; 49-51).

***Comments:***

The expert group notes that the University has functioning public-information channels and an overall culture of openness (especially evident during the interviews at all levels and with all University representatives); however, the programme-specific presentation of public information, especially in Conflictology, requires greater precision, consistency, and regular updating, including with regard to student numbers, employment indicators, and other core programme data.

***Areas for improvement:***

It is recommended that the University strengthens / reinforces the programme-specific segment of public information by publishing, in a more systematic and regularly updated form, key indicators for each programme, including student contingent, admissions dynamics, faculty profiles, intended learning outcomes, and graduate employment data.

Furthermore, it is also recommended that the University introduces additional internal verification of programme data before publication, so that all publicly available figures and all figures presented during accreditation procedures are fully consistent and up to date.

**Level of compliance with Standard 7 (specify the level of compliance with Standard 7): Significant compliance.**

**CHAPTER 3****CONCLUSION**

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**Comments and areas for improvement from the expert group based on the audit results:****Standard 1. Quality assurance policy and academic integrity – Full compliance*****Areas for improvement:***

The expert group notes that the strategic anchoring of both educational programmes within the University's strategic-planning documents was stated repeatedly by the University representatives and in the SERs, yet could not be fully verified by the experts because the relevant strategic plans were not made available during the visit; in addition, the documentary presentation of programme-level feedback loops from monitoring to revision would benefit from greater specificity and traceability.

It is recommended that the University ensure, for future accreditation and internal review purposes, the availability of the full institutional strategic-planning documents and provide a clearer documentary mapping showing how the objectives, development priorities, and quality-assurance measures of each educational programme derive from and contribute to the University's strategic goals.

It is further recommended that the University strengthen the programme-level documentation of monitoring outcomes, including the manner in which student, graduate, and employer feedback is analyzed, communicated to stakeholders, and translated into concrete changes in curricula, teaching methods, and programme management.

Overall, despite the positive aspects of the university's quality assurance architecture, there is a need to establish a clearer and more transparent system for quality assurance of educational programmes at the faculty level, as faculties bear ultimate responsibility for the quality of graduate outcomes.

In this regard, the expert panel recommends the establishment of faculty-level quality assurance committees, with the inclusion of students, university staff, and faculty members. These committees could periodically review academic programmes and provide recommendations for their improvement.

In addition, such committees could consider various cases related to quality assurance, both at the faculty level and at the level of individual educational programmes.

## **Standard 2. Curriculum Development, Approval, and Information Management– Full compliance**

### ***Areas for improvement:***

The expert group considers that, although the curriculum design and approval framework is generally in place and functions satisfactorily, the evidentiary basis concerning stakeholder influence, programme revision history, and the consistency of statistical information would benefit from greater precision and documentary transparency; this is particularly relevant in light of the discrepancy noted in the current student numbers for Conflictology.

It is recommended that the University strengthen the documentary traceability of programme revision processes by recording, in a more structured way, which changes in curriculum design, course content, and programme outcomes were introduced on the basis of feedback from students, employers, graduates, and other stakeholders.

It is also recommended that the University ensures greater consistency and internal verification of programme-specific statistical data, especially regarding student contingent figures, admissions, progression, and current enrolment, so that the information presented in SERs, interviews, and supporting materials is fully coherent.

It is also recommended to ensure more active engagement of faculty members, employers, and students in the development and approval of educational programmes. At the same time, it is important to note the strong interest of employers in contributing to the enhancement of the university's educational programmes. In particular, positive feedback was received regarding the internships undertaken by students of the International Law master's programme at the Constitutional Court of Azerbaijan.

The expert panel noted that the university does not possess full academic autonomy to independently design its educational programmes due to the requirements of the Ministry of Science and Education of Azerbaijan. At the same time, we consider it essential to advance the issue of granting the university greater academic autonomy, enabling a more flexible and responsive approach to evolving labour market demands and the preparation of graduates who are genuinely needed at both regional and global levels.

Without such academic autonomy, the further development of educational programmes aligned with labour market needs will be significantly constrained. In this regard, under the current circumstances, it is recommended that the university take the initiative in engaging with the Ministry to advocate for the expansion of its academic autonomy. During the interviews, faculty members also noted that individual study plans are currently developed entirely by them, and expressed a desire for more active involvement of students on the International Law master's programme in this process.

### **Standard 3. Student-centered learning, teaching, and assessment – Significant compliance**

#### ***Comments:***

The expert group considers that the student-centered orientation of both programmes is generally present and supported by relevant procedures; however, the practical evidence of flexible trajectories, traceable use of student feedback, and differentiation of pedagogical approaches could be more concretely demonstrated at programme level, especially in the case of the smaller Conflictology contingent.

#### ***Areas for improvement:***

It is recommended that the University further systematizes the documentation of how student feedback influences teaching methods, course organization, and assessment approaches in each educational programme. It is also recommended by us that the University continues strengthening flexible and practice-oriented learning opportunities, especially in the Conflictology programme, so that the student-centered approach is reflected not only in formal procedures but also in a broader range of visible educational options.

It is also recommended to establish a more systematic approach to student academic support, including through participation in international and academic conferences, as well as academic mobility programmes.

It is encouraging to note that many students at the university do receive such support; however, during the interviews, only a limited number of students were able to clearly demonstrate the specific mechanisms they had used, despite having benefited from this support on multiple occasions.

In this regard, it is recommended that, in designing such support mechanisms, the university ensures transparency and clear communication, so that all students understand that these opportunities are available to them and can be accessed on an equal basis.

## **Standard 4. Student admission, progress, recognition, and certification – Significant compliance**

### ***Comments:***

The expert group notes that the general admission, monitoring, and certification procedures are functioning appropriately; however, the consistency and precision of programme-specific statistical information, especially in the Conflictology programme, require further strengthening, while additional programme-level evidence on recognition procedures, mobility, and post-diploma follow-up would improve the analytical completeness of this standard.

### ***Areas for improvement:***

It is recommended that the University strengthen the accuracy, consistency, and verifiability of programme-specific student data, especially with regard to current enrolment, progression, and graduation figures in the Conflictology programme. It is further recommended that the University develop more detailed and programme-specific documentation concerning academic mobility, recognition of externally earned credits, and post-diploma graduate tracking, so that these procedures are more clearly visible within the evidence base of each programme.

As regard to admissions to the “International Law” programme, it should be noted that the programme is primarily oriented towards students funded through the state budget. At the same time, it would be desirable to ensure greater diversity in student intake and a better balance between those studying under state-funded places and those on a fee-paying basis.

It is also recommended that the university strengthen its recruitment of fee-paying students, including international applicants. This will help ensure the long-term sustainability of both the “International Law” and “Conflictology” programmes.

The expert panel also noted that the vast majority of students in the International Law programme receive the highest grade (“excellent”), with an average GPA of 97.43. This raises questions as to how effectively the university’s criterion-referenced assessment system is being applied.

During the interviews, faculty members indicated that this may largely be linked with the fact that many students are state-funded. A similar issue can be observed in other countries where students receive government financial support. However, faculty members should be able to assess students objectively and comprehensively, based on their actual knowledge and competencies.

In this regard, it is recommended that the university review and strengthen the effectiveness of its criterion-referenced assessment system.

### **Standard 5. Faculty – Full compliance**

#### ***Areas for improvement:***

Our expert group notes, as a matter deserving attention in future institutional development, that many of the faculty members interviewed are of advanced age; although this does not presently undermine the quality of programme delivery and may partly result from wider structural conditions, the issue of generational renewal and the gradual attraction of younger academics remains relevant for the long-term sustainability and that applies to both programmes.

Despite the presence of a highly reputable and experienced faculty members, it is recommended to introduce a differentiated system of academic ranks, including a reduction in teaching load for professors through the allocation of workload credits (ECTS) for research. It is also advisable, where possible, to allocate dedicated funding to support research undertaken by faculty members.

### **Standard 6. Learning Resources and Student Support - Full compliance**

#### ***Areas for improvement:***

The expert group considers that the overall institutional resource base and student-support environment are adequate and supportive of programme implementation; however, the programme-specific analytical demonstration of resource sufficiency could be strengthened further, especially with regard to the applied and practical-resource dimension of the Conflictology programme.

It is recommended that the University presents, in a more programme-specific manner, the resource base and support services directly linked to each accredited programme, including the way in which infrastructure, library resources, digital tools, and student-support mechanisms are tailored to programme needs. Also, it is recommended that the University continues developing the applied-resource dimension of the “International Law” and “Conflictology” programme, including simulation-based, practice-oriented, and field-related learning opportunities, in order to reinforce the practical side of student training.

### **Standard 7. Public Information - Significant compliance**

#### ***Comments:***

The expert group notes that the University has functioning public-information channels and an overall culture of openness (especially evident during the

interviews at all levels and with all University representatives); however, the programme-specific presentation of public information, especially in Conflictology, requires greater precision, consistency, and regular updating, including with regard to student numbers, employment indicators, and other core programme data.

***Areas for improvement:***

It is recommended that the University strengthens / reinforces the programme-specific segment of public information by publishing, in a more systematic and regularly updated form, key indicators for each programme, including student contingent, admissions dynamics, faculty profiles, intended learning outcomes, and graduate employment data.

Furthermore, it is also recommended that the University introduces additional internal verification of programme data before publication, so that all publicly available figures and all figures presented during accreditation procedures are fully consistent and up to date.

## Appendix 1

### PROGRAM of the external audit by the IQAA expert group at Baku State University for program accreditation March 12-13, 2026

Time	Event	Participants	Location
<i>Day 1: March 12, 2026</i>			
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
<b><i>Day 2: March 13, 2026</i></b>			
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 ADDITIONALLY CONSIDERED BY THE UNIVERSITY**

1. Educational program
2. Working curriculum of the educational program
3. Syllabi for disciplines (courses)
4. Internal education quality assurance policy and system
5. Materials of collegial bodies managing the educational program
6. Materials for systematic monitoring of student progress
7. Student final projects