IQAA

INDEPENDENT AGENCY
FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN EDUCATION - IQAA

REPORT
ON THE EXTERNAL AUDIT
BAKU STATE UNIVERSITY

PROGRAM ACCREDITATION

7005006 GEOCHEMISTRY

Astana, 2026

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ASSESSMENT OF THE LEVEL OF CONFORMITY OF THE SELF-EVALUATION REPORT WITH THE ACTUAL STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM "7005006 – GEOCHEMISTRY" ACCORDING TO 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**
Standard 1 Quality Assurance Policy and Academic Integrity	+			
Standard 2 Curriculum Development, Approval, and 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	+			

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CHAPTER 1
CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVES OF THE VISIT

Introduction

The external expert group's visit to Baku State University as part of the international program accreditation process took place from March 12 to 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 for program accreditation, the composition of the external expert group, the list of interview participants, the guidelines for organizing and conducting the external evaluation, the expert code of ethics, and the EEG accreditation report template were provided to the members of the expert group prior to the start of their work at the educational institution, which ensured timely preparation for the external evaluation procedure.

The self-assessment report on the educational programs of Baku State University contains a sufficient amount of information presented in accordance with program accreditation standards; it identifies strengths and weaknesses, as well as 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 university's material and technical resources, and to assess their compliance with standards. In addition, meetings were held with university leadership, vice-rectors, deans of faculties and department heads, faculty members, representatives of academic schools, undergraduate and graduate students, alumni, and employers. The experts inspected the university's structural units, the academic library, sports, recreational, and medical facilities, dining areas, and the student dormitory.

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

The planned activities for the external visit facilitated a more detailed understanding of the university's structure and its operations, and allowed external experts to conduct an independent assessment of the alignment of the data in the self-assessment report on educational programs with the actual state of affairs at the university and the standards of program accreditation.

Key Characteristics of the University

The full name of the educational institution is Baku State University. Year of founding 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 patriotic spirit, in the fields of science, education, and engineering and technology, based on the acquisition of fundamental knowledge and innovative research skills in the area of multidisciplinary lifelong education and scientific research in accordance with international standards.

The university conducts educational activities 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 research results into practice and the 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 comprises 16 faculties, which train specialists in 55 undergraduate programs and 153 graduate programs across various academic disciplines; 4 institutes; a rich academic library; 21 scientific, methodological, and practical journals published by the university; and a university clinic that serves the faculty, staff, and students of the university.

Baku State University has a well-developed and functional infrastructure that meets modern requirements. The University comprises four academic buildings equipped with lecture halls and computer labs featuring state-of-the-art 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 Internet access, creates the necessary conditions for the effective organization of students' academic and research activities. The educational television studio provides additional opportunities for implementing innovative forms of organizing the educational process.

Location of the legal entity:

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CHAPTER 2

Introduction

Baku State University conducts active research activities aimed at fundamental, theoretical-methodological, and applied research, as well as the implementation of scientific results into practice and the innovative development of the country.

The university's material and technical infrastructure ensures the high-quality delivery of the educational process. The academic buildings are equipped with modern lecture halls, computer labs, and multimedia equipment, while the library provides access to electronic resources and international scientific databases.

The university places special emphasis on developing the scientific potential of its faculty and students. The faculty of the Department of Geology and Geochemistry is distinguished by a high level of professional and scientific training. The department's laboratory facilities enable both faculty members and master's students to conduct research.

The university provides financial support for the research activities of the faculty. Research results are published in highly ranked scientific journals indexed in Web of Science and Scopus, and faculty members' publication activity is incentivized through differential payments based on the journal's ranking and its citation impact.

Master's students in the "7005006 – Geochemistry" program are provided with opportunities to complete research internships at specialized scientific and industrial organizations. The department collaborates, in particular, with the Azerbaijan International Mining Company and the Geological Research Institute of Azerbaijan. These cooperation agreements enable students to conduct research and develop practical professional skills.

An important focus of the program's development is international cooperation and academic mobility for master's students. Under existing memorandums and agreements, students have the opportunity to study and complete internships at foreign universities.

An analysis of the outcomes of the program shows a high employment rate among graduates of the "7005006 – Geochemistry" program. Most graduates find employment in their field at geological companies, research institutes, and industrial organizations. The department maintains strong ties with employers, which positively impacts the quality of specialist training.

Overall, the activities of Baku State University are characterized by positive trends in the development of educational programs, improvements to its infrastructure, the advancement of scientific research, and the strengthening of international cooperation.

Standard 1. Policy on Educational Program Quality Assurance and Academic Integrity

Baku State University views education as a comprehensive and continuous process aimed at the all-round development of the individual in the interests of the person, society, and the state. Ensuring high-quality education is one of the university's priority tasks and is achieved through the interaction of the educational, scientific, and industrial spheres.

The implementation of the educational program in the "Geochemistry" specialization involves the university administration, the Dean's Office of the Faculty of Geology, the faculty of the Department of Crystallography, Mineralogy, and Geochemistry, employers, and students. The goal of the quality assurance system is to train qualified specialists in accordance with international standards through the integration of education, research, and industry.

The university places special emphasis on issues of academic integrity and adherence to ethical standards. The Ethics Committee plays a key role in this work, with its activities aimed at fostering a culture of integrity, transparency, and accountability within the academic community. The Committee's main areas of activity include improving codes of ethical conduct, promoting ethical principles among faculty, staff, and master's students, as well as reviewing violations and making appropriate decisions.

The Ethics Committee provides transparent and accessible mechanisms for submitting inquiries and complaints. Graduate students, faculty, and staff can submit inquiries in writing, via official email, or through the university's online platforms. This fosters effective feedback and strengthens trust among participants in the educational process. Interviews with university leadership and faculty members confirmed the practical implementation of these mechanisms.

To improve teaching and methodological activities, the university has established a Scientific and Methodological Council, which coordinates the work of faculty methodological councils, the implementation of modern educational technologies, and the development of inter-faculty collaboration. The Council also participates in the development and publication of educational and teaching materials.

One of the key elements in ensuring academic integrity is the plagiarism prevention system. The university has an Anti-Plagiarism Commission that reviews research papers and teaching materials submitted by faculty members, doctoral candidates, master's students, and undergraduates. The checks are performed using StrikePlagiarism software. If plagiarism is detected, the work is returned for revision; works that do not pass the final check are not permitted for defense or publication.

Monitoring of compliance with the principles of academic integrity also extends to dissertation research. In accordance with national regulatory requirements, dissertations for PhD and Doctor of Science degrees undergo mandatory plagiarism checks. The Anti-Plagiarism Commission systematically reviews various categories of scientific and educational materials, including

textbooks, monographs, doctoral and PhD dissertations, conference proceedings, and master's theses. The documents and works submitted under the "Geochemistry" educational program confirm the functioning of an effective academic integrity monitoring system.

The university implements a systematic anti-corruption policy. In 2023, an Action Plan to Strengthen the Fight Against Corruption was approved, providing for a set of organizational and preventive measures. As part of the plan's implementation, informational and educational events are held to foster a culture of legal compliance among students and staff, raise their awareness of the principles of academic integrity, and prevent corruption risks. The reviewed regulatory documents and interview results confirmed the practical implementation of the anti-corruption policy and its significance for ensuring the transparency of the university's activities.

The analysis shows that BSU has established and operates a system for ensuring quality and academic integrity based on regulatory documents, institutional control mechanisms, and a culture of academic responsibility.

Level of compliance with Standard 1 (Full compliance).

Standard 2. Development and Approval of the Educational Program, Information Management

The development and implementation of the educational program in the "Geochemistry" specialization are carried out in accordance with strategic documents at the national and institutional levels. The BSU Strategic Development Plan is based on the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On Education," the Law "On Science," the State Strategy for the Development of Education, and other regulatory acts governing the development of higher education and science.

The program has been developed in accordance with national legislation, state educational standards, the Regulations on the Content and Organization of Master's Degree Programs, and international academic practices. The program's objectives and expected learning outcomes are aligned with the National Qualifications Framework of the Republic of Azerbaijan (AzNQF) and correspond to Level 7 of the national qualifications framework.

The educational program defines the professional competencies of graduates, the content of training, and teaching and assessment methods. Its structure includes provisions for human and infrastructure resources, practical training, as well as opportunities for future employment and the pursuit of an academic career.

The program structure complies with the requirements of the credit-based education system and ECTS. The total program load is 120 ECTS credits and is designed for two years of study. The course load is distributed evenly and amounts to 60 credits per year. The program includes a required set of courses, courses developed by the university, an internship, and a master's thesis.

An important element of the program is the organization of internships. Master's students complete research and teaching internships at specialized scientific and industrial organizations, including the National Geological Service, research institutes of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences, AzerGold CJSC, Azerbaijan International Mining Company, and other enterprises in the geological sector. This contributes to the development of professional skills and strengthens the program's ties with the real sector of the economy.

The educational process is supported by a qualified faculty that regularly undergoes professional development and actively participates in research activities, as evidenced by the certificates and relevant documents provided. Modern educational and information resources are used to implement the program, including Scopus, Web of Science, as well as specialized software (Geochemist's Workbench, PHREEQC, R, SPSS, GIS).

Internal monitoring and evaluation of the program's implementation are conducted at several levels, including the department, the faculty, the Academic Process Management Center, and the Center for Quality Assurance in Education. The submitted assessment journals, master's students' transcripts, and other academic documents demonstrate consistent learning outcomes and a high level of academic preparation. Certificates confirming master's students' participation in scientific conferences, seminars, and research projects indicate the development of their research competencies.

At the same time, during the audit, the VEG experts found that the university conducts surveys of master's students to assess their satisfaction with the quality of the educational process and also fosters interaction with graduates through the Alumni Network. However, the expert group was not provided with a sufficient number of supporting documents and analytical materials regarding the results of the surveys and the activities of the Alumni Association, which prevented a full assessment of the effectiveness of these mechanisms.

Over the past five years, 13 master's students have successfully completed the Geochemistry program. Graduates find employment at research institutions, geological exploration companies, in the oil and gas industry, at environmental organizations, and at educational institutions. According to interviews with graduates, most of them rate their education positively and note its practical relevance. More than 70% of graduates have participated in scientific conferences and internships, as evidenced by the certificates and diplomas they have submitted.

The analysis conducted indicates that the "Geochemistry" educational program largely meets the criteria of Standard 2 and is focused on ensuring the quality of training for specialists who meet the modern requirements of science and the labor market.

Comments

It has been established that the university conducts surveys of master's students to assess their satisfaction with the quality of the educational process and fosters interaction with graduates through the Alumni Network. However, the expert group was not provided with a sufficient volume of supporting documents

and analytical materials regarding the survey results and the functioning of the Alumni Association, which prevented a full assessment of the effectiveness of these mechanisms.

Areas for Improvement

In this regard, it is recommended to strengthen the system for documenting and presenting the results of monitoring student satisfaction and the activities of the Alumni Network, as well as to ensure the availability of relevant reporting materials.

Level of compliance with Standard 2 – significant compliance.

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

A student-centered approach is one of the key principles guiding the organization of the educational process at BSU. Within the Master's program in Geochemistry, the student is regarded as the primary participant in the educational process, and their academic interests, educational needs, and professional expectations are taken into account in the development, implementation, and evaluation of the program.

Student-centered learning is implemented in accordance with the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On Education," the principles of the Bologna Process, and ESG standards. This approach aims to ensure transparency in the educational process, individualize learning, and encourage active student participation in shaping their own educational trajectory.

The educational process is organized using modern pedagogical approaches aimed at developing master's students' independence, research skills, and critical thinking. Course content is designed with students' research interests in mind and includes research projects, laboratory and field studies, as well as participation in research work. The application of these pedagogical methods is evidenced by the submitted reports, field journals, and master's students' research projects.

The program employs an interdisciplinary approach that integrates disciplines such as mineralogy, petrology, isotope geochemistry, environmental geochemistry, geophysics, and applied geology. This enables master's students to develop a comprehensive understanding of geochemical processes and apply the knowledge gained to solve scientific and applied problems.

The practical orientation of the program is ensured through laboratory and practical classes using modern analytical methods. Master's students conduct research related to determining the chemical composition of minerals and rocks, studying isotopic composition, spectral analysis, and geochemical modeling. The materials presented and the results of the visual inspection showed that the laboratories of the university and partner organizations are equipped with modern equipment and meet the requirements for conducting research work.

Fig. 1 **APEX-II Advance X-ray** diffractometer

Fig. 2 **S8 TIGER** X-ray fluorescence analyzer

Within the credit-based education system, master's students have the opportunity to design their own individual educational path. With the support of an academic advisor, an individual study plan is developed annually for each master's student, as evidenced by the submitted documents. Master's students can choose elective courses and, where possible, instructors, which ensures flexibility in the educational process and fosters the development of academic independence.

The system for assessing learning outcomes is based on the principles of transparency, objectivity, and fairness. Assessment criteria are communicated to master's students in advance and are reflected in course syllabi. Various forms of assessment are used, including tests, written assignments, projects, lab reports, independent assignments, and oral discussions.

An important element of student-centered learning is receiving feedback from master's students. The university regularly conducts anonymous surveys and discussions aimed at evaluating the quality of teaching and the organization of the educational process. The results are analyzed and used to improve the program.

The educational program also implements mechanisms for academic mobility. Master's students have the opportunity to study at other universities, including partner universities abroad, in accordance with the principles of ECTS and the Bologna Declaration. Credit recognition is based on an analysis of course content and learning outcomes achieved.

Analysis of materials and interview results showed that master's students actively participate in research activities, present research findings at conferences and seminars, and take part in the department's research projects. This contributes to the development of their research competencies and enhances the quality of professional training. Graduates of the program successfully find employment in research organizations, geological exploration companies, and specialized industrial entities.

The analysis conducted shows that the "Geochemistry" educational program implements the principles of student-centered learning, ensures transparent teaching and assessment procedures, and creates conditions for the development of

individualized educational pathways and research competencies among master's students.

Best Practices

A positive factor is the use of modern laboratory methods and analytical tools that contribute to the development of master's students' practical and research competencies. It is also worth noting the transparent assessment system, the availability of appeal mechanisms, and the regular collection of feedback through a survey system. The implementation of academic mobility in accordance with the principles of the Bologna Process and ECTS contributes to improving the quality of professional training and the integration of the program into the international educational space.

Level of compliance with Standard 3 – full compliance.

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

The admission process for the master's degree program in Geochemistry is carried out in accordance with the current legislation of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The main regulatory documents are the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On Education," relevant decisions of the Cabinet of Ministers, the Rules for Admission to Master's Programs, and regulatory documents of the State Examination Center (SEC).

The admission process is based on uniform state regulations, ensuring transparency of procedures, equal opportunities for all applicants, and objective evaluation of results. Entrance exam results are recorded in the SEC's electronic system, and the allocation of applicants to universities is based on their scores, eliminating subjective interference in the admission process.

Information about the "Geochemistry" specialization is available on the university's official website, the faculty's information resources, and the university's social media pages. This allows prospective applicants to obtain the necessary information about the program's content, study conditions, and future employment opportunities.

The enrollment of master's students in the "Geochemistry" specialization is characterized by stability. Over the past six years, 13 master's students have been admitted to this specialization, with the annual admission quota being met 100% every year. This stability in enrollment is due to the specialization's demand in the labor market, the university's well-developed research infrastructure, and the modern laboratory facilities of the Department of Geology.

Admission of international students is conducted in accordance with established regulations and international agreements. International applicants may submit their documents through the centralized electronic system of the Ministry

of Science and Education. Additionally, the portal.edu.az platform ensures the transparency of the admission process.

To enhance the international appeal of Azerbaijan's higher education system, the government is implementing the "Study in Azerbaijan" initiative, which aims to attract international students and foster international academic cooperation.

Throughout their studies, the academic performance of master's students is systematically monitored and analyzed. Data on course registration, credit accumulation, exam results, and academic performance are recorded in the university's electronic information system. Academic advisors maintain constant contact with master's students and provide guidance when difficulties arise.

The recognition of qualifications and learning outcomes obtained abroad is carried out by the Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (AQAE), which ensures official recognition of students' academic achievements and promotes academic mobility.

Master's students' research activities are an important component of the educational program. Each master's student is assigned a research advisor who coordinates the completion of the master's thesis. Regular meetings with the research advisor allow for monitoring the progress of the research and ensure the successful preparation of master's theses.

To earn a master's degree, students must fulfill all curriculum requirements, successfully complete the required credits, prepare a master's thesis, and defend it before the state examination committee. Upon successful defense, graduates are awarded the academic degree of Master. Diplomas are issued in accordance with the current legislation of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

An important element in improving the quality of the program is cooperation with employers. The university maintains strong ties with relevant organizations in the geological industry, which contributes to the development of practice-oriented education and improves graduate employment rates. Taking into account employers' recommendations, the curricula for several courses in the "Geochemistry" specialization have been updated to strengthen the practical component and incorporate modern technologies. Industry representatives are also invited to deliver lectures and conduct scientific seminars.

The analysis conducted shows that the system for admissions, monitoring of academic performance, recognition of learning outcomes, and certification of graduates of the "Geochemistry" educational program operates in accordance with current regulatory requirements and ensures transparency, objectivity, and the quality of specialist training.

Best practices

Among the university's strengths is a transparent and centralized system for admitting master's students through the State Examination Center, which ensures objectivity and equal opportunities for applicants. Another positive factor is the stability of the student body and the high enrollment rate. It is also worth noting the effective system of academic support for master's students, including the work

of academic advisors and research supervisors, as well as the university's active collaboration with employers, which reinforces the practical focus of the program.

Level of compliance with Standard 4 – full compliance.

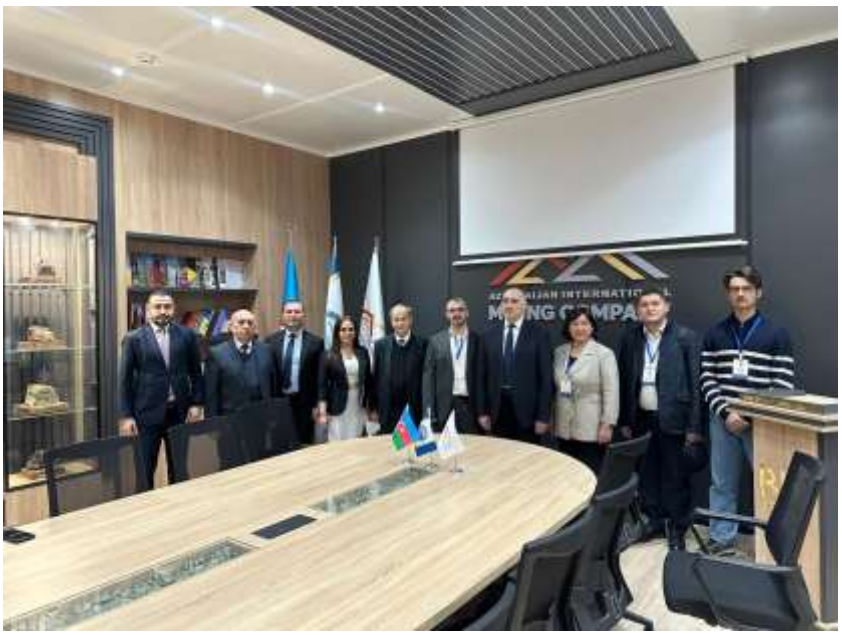
Standard 5. Faculty

The competence, qualifications, and scientific and pedagogical potential of the academic staff are key factors in ensuring the quality of the "Geochemistry" master's program. The analysis showed that Baku State University's personnel policy is implemented in accordance with the current legislation of the Republic of Azerbaijan and is based on the principles of transparency, objectivity, and competitive selection.

The procedures for hiring professors, associate professors, senior lecturers, and lecturers are carried out in accordance with the regulatory requirements of the Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The submitted documents, which regulate the competitive selection process, requirements for candidates, and compliance with established procedures, confirm that the personnel selection system meets the requirements of the standard.

The university's personnel policy provides for open competitions, the publication of job postings, and the evaluation of candidates' professional qualifications, scientific achievements, teaching experience, and disciplinary expertise. Interviews with the administration and the faculty confirmed the practical implementation of these provisions.

The "Geochemistry" educational program is taught by both full-time faculty and visiting specialists who possess the appropriate qualifications, academic degrees, and practical work experience in relevant scientific and industrial organizations. Information on the composition of the faculty, their scientific specializations, education, work experience, and the disciplines they teach showed that the qualifications of the faculty generally correspond to the program's profile.



The submitted information on academic degrees, certificates of professional development, lists of publications, and individual work plans of the faculty members indicate a sufficient level of staffing. The alignment of the faculty members' qualifications with the profile of the disciplines was also confirmed during interviews with the faculty members and department heads.

An important element of the program's implementation is the involvement of external specialists from relevant organizations, including the Institute of Geology and Geophysics, the Geological Exploration Agency, the State Geological Information Fund, the National Aerospace Agency, and the Institute of Ecology. The contracts, agreements, and other materials provided confirm the practice-oriented nature of the master's program.

An analysis of publication lists, certificates of participation in seminars and international events, as well as materials confirming the recognition of faculty members for their publication activity, allows us to conclude that the faculty's research activity is at a high level. It is also worth noting the practice of integrating the results of faculty and master's students' research into the educational process, which contributes to updating course content and developing research skills.

Materials on the distribution of teaching loads, individual plans, and documents confirming the evaluation of their implementation indicate a balance between faculty members' teaching, methodological, and research activities. Interviews with academic staff confirmed the regularity of open classes, peer observations, and teaching quality assessments.

The reviewed materials also demonstrate systematic support for faculty members, including measures to encourage research activities, professional development, and the consistent improvement of working conditions.

Thus, the "Geochemistry" master's program is staffed by qualified academic personnel, and the university's practices regarding staffing, professional development, and evaluation of faculty members meet the criteria of Standard 5.

Best Practices

Among the program's strengths is the presence of a transparent and legally regulated system for the competitive selection of academic staff. It is also worth noting the high level of faculty research activity, publications in international scientific journals indexed in Web of Science and Scopus, as well as the existence of incentive mechanisms for research achievements. An additional positive factor is the integration of research results by faculty and master's students into the educational process.

Level of compliance with Standard 5 – full compliance.

Standard 6. Learning Resources and Support for Master's Students

Baku State University fosters a modern educational and research environment that supports the academic, scientific, and personal development of master's students. An analysis of the submitted materials, the results of a visual inspection, and interviews with master's students, faculty, and administration confirmed that the university has sufficient material, technical, informational, and social resources to implement the "Geochemistry" master's program.

The educational program is equipped with specialized classrooms, laboratories, analytical equipment, computer technology, and the necessary teaching and methodological resources. The Department of Crystallography, Mineralogy, and Geochemistry and the relevant laboratories create conditions for reinforcing theoretical knowledge and developing practical research skills among master's students. It has been confirmed that access to laboratories, equipment, instruments, reagents, and experimental materials is provided on a systematic basis.

The university's financial policy is aimed at supporting the quality of the educational process, developing laboratory infrastructure, and strengthening the department's scientific potential. It has been established that the program is funded through the state budget, revenue from paid educational services, research projects, grants, and other lawful sources.

The material and technical resources of the Faculty of Geology include classrooms, research laboratories, and access to equipment in other university departments. Master's students in the "Geochemistry" program also utilize the research capabilities of the Center of Excellence for Research, Development, and Innovation, the laboratory for comprehensive geological and geophysical research, as well as relevant laboratories of the BSU Departments of Chemistry and Physics. A visual inspection confirmed the presence of modern analytical equipment, including instruments for X-ray diffraction, X-ray phase analysis, atomic absorption analysis, and mass spectrometry.

During the audit, the experts noted that the submitted materials did not provide sufficiently comprehensive information regarding the frequency of updates to the laboratory equipment and software used in the educational process.

In addition, the submitted materials lacked complete documentation confirming the actual use by master's students in the educational program of all the declared international electronic databases and digital educational resources.

A key resource supporting master's students is the BSU Research Library, which features a well-developed infrastructure, electronic catalogs, access to international databases, and a substantial collection of academic literature. It has been confirmed that the library provides access to electronic resources, including EBSCOHost, Ongoing Research Index, JoVE, and other platforms, which contributes to the high-quality information support of the program.

It has been established that the university provides master's students not only with academic resources but also with social, psychological, and cultural resources. BSU operates psychological support services, social support services, cultural and sports facilities, as well as a dormitory. Interviews with master's students confirmed the availability of educational resources, library services, counseling support, and digital infrastructure, including the internet and e-learning platforms.

The teaching and research processes are supported by modern IT infrastructure, a learning management system, a local network, and high-speed internet.

Thus, the "Geochemistry" master's program is equipped with the necessary educational resources and a support system for master's students that generally meets the criteria of Standard 6.

Best Practices

Among the program's strengths is the presence of a well-developed laboratory and research infrastructure, enabling master's students to conduct scientific research using modern analytical equipment. A positive practice is the broad access master's students have to library and electronic resources, including international databases, electronic platforms, and specialized information systems. It is also worth noting the availability of a system of social, psychological, and academic support for master's students and the development of a digital educational environment.

Comments

1. It has been established that the "Geochemistry" master's program is generally equipped with the necessary educational resources, laboratory facilities, and library and electronic information resources. At the same time, the submitted materials do not provide sufficiently detailed systematic information regarding the regularity of updates to the laboratory equipment and software used in the educational process.

2. Furthermore, documents demonstrating the use of all declared international electronic databases and digital educational resources directly by the master's students of the program were not submitted in full.

Areas for Improvement

It is recommended to continue efforts to further update the laboratory equipment and specialized software used in the "Geochemistry" educational program, with the aim of strengthening the practical and research components of master's students' training.

It is also advisable to systematize and expand the practice of monitoring master's students' use of electronic library resources and international scientific databases, which will allow for a more effective assessment of their level of involvement in research activities.

Level of compliance with Standard 6 – significant compliance.

Standard 7. Public Information

Baku State University ensures the transparency and accessibility of information regarding its educational programs, research activities, and academic life. Information about the "Geochemistry" master's program is systematically communicated to prospective students, current master's students, employers, and other stakeholders through various information channels.

The primary source of public information is the university's official website, which features details on educational programs, the university's structure, faculty, admission requirements, research activities, and international cooperation. The website's design and supporting materials demonstrate that information is regularly updated.

In addition, the university actively uses modern digital communication platforms, including LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and its official YouTube channel. These resources allow the university to promptly inform the public about scientific achievements, educational initiatives, international projects, and events in university life.

The university's information policy is coordinated by the Public Relations and Information Department, whose activities are aimed at ensuring the transparency of the university's operations, interacting with the media, and disseminating information about scientific and educational achievements.

Information about the "Geochemistry" specialization is also available on the Faculty of Geology's website. The materials include details about the faculty's structure, departments, laboratory facilities, research areas, and employment opportunities for graduates. This allows prospective students to gain an understanding of the program's content, research opportunities, and career prospects.

The publishing activities of BSU play a particularly significant role in the system of disseminating public information. The university's publishing house prepares and publishes textbooks, teaching materials, scientific monographs, and other printed materials. It has been established that the publishing house is

equipped with modern printing equipment and plays an important role in providing educational and scientific literature to support the educational process.

The newspaper "Baku University," which serves as the university's official publication, plays a significant role in the university's information policy. The newspaper regularly covers events in university life, the scientific achievements of faculty and students, changes in the educational process, international projects, and scientific conferences.

An additional channel for disseminating information is the university's media platform, BSU TV, which covers the university's academic, scientific, and social events. The platform serves both informational and educational functions: it provides students in the "Journalism" program with the opportunity to gain practical skills in media production and helps popularize the university's scientific achievements.

One element of the university's communication strategy is cooperation with the media, including television channels. Agreements concluded with leading television companies allow for extensive coverage of the university's scientific and educational initiatives and help raise public awareness of BSU's activities.

The results of the analysis indicate that Baku State University has implemented an effective system for informing the public about the university's activities and the "Geochemistry" master's program, which meets the requirements of Standard 7.

Best practices

Among its strengths is a multi-tiered information dissemination system that includes the university's official website, social media, print publications, and media platforms. It is also worth noting the use of university media resources, such as the newspaper "Baku University" and BSU TV, which help popularize scientific achievements, cover educational activities, and strengthen the university's public image.

Level of compliance with Standard 7 – full compliance.

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSION

The external expert group conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the "7005006 – Geochemistry" master's program at Baku State University in accordance with the international program accreditation standards of the IQAA. The evaluation was based on an analysis of the self-assessment report, a review of the submitted documents, a visual inspection of the university's infrastructure, as well as interviews with university administration, faculty, master's students, graduates, and employers.

The results of the analysis indicate that the educational program is implemented in accordance with the current regulatory requirements of the national higher education system and generally complies with international quality assurance standards.

The university has established an institutional system for ensuring the quality of education and academic integrity. Relevant structural units and internal control mechanisms are in place, including the Ethics Committee, the Anti-Plagiarism Commission, and scientific and methodological bodies responsible for managing the educational process. The implementation of anti-corruption policies, the use of software tools to verify the originality of research papers, and the existence of a regulatory framework ensure transparency and adherence to the principles of academic integrity.

The "Geochemistry" educational program has been developed in accordance with the requirements of the national qualifications framework and international academic practice. The program structure complies with the principles of credit-based learning and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). The content of the educational program is aimed at developing the professional and research competencies of master's students, while also taking into account the needs of the labor market and the development of the geological industry.

The educational process is organized on the basis of a student-centered approach and provides for the active participation of master's students in shaping their individual educational trajectory. The use of modern teaching methods, conducting laboratory and field research, carrying out research projects, and master's students' participation in scientific conferences contribute to the development of students' research competencies and the formation of their professional skills.

The faculty of the educational program is characterized by a high level of qualification among the teaching staff. Faculty members actively participate in scientific activities, publish research results in international scientific journals, and integrate the results of scientific research into the educational process. An important factor is the involvement of practicing specialists from relevant scientific

and industrial organizations, which strengthens the practical focus of the master's program.

The university's facilities and resources provide the necessary conditions for the implementation of the educational program. Master's students have access to modern laboratories, analytical equipment, library and electronic information resources, as well as digital educational infrastructure. The university provides students with academic, social, and counseling support, which contributes to the effective organization of the educational and research process.

The system for admitting master's students, monitoring academic performance, recognizing learning outcomes, and awarding degrees operates in accordance with national legislation and ensures the transparency and objectivity of the educational process. The university's collaboration with employers and relevant organizations contributes to the development of practice-oriented education and improves graduate employment rates.

The university also implements an effective system for informing the public about its educational and research activities. The use of the official website, social media, print publications, and university media resources ensures that information is accessible to prospective students, master's students, and other stakeholders.

At the same time, the external evaluation identified certain areas requiring further improvement. In particular, it is recommended to strengthen the system for documenting and presenting the results of monitoring master's students' satisfaction with the educational process, as well as the activities of the Alumni Association. In addition, it is advisable to continue updating the laboratory equipment and specialized software used in the educational program, and to systematize the monitoring of master's students' use of electronic library resources and international scientific databases.

Overall, the results of the external evaluation show that the master's program "7005006 – Geochemistry" at Baku State University demonstrates sustainable development, possesses sufficient human, scientific, and material-technical resources, and provides high-quality training for specialists who meet the modern requirements of science and the labor market.

Based on the analysis conducted, the external expert group concludes that the "7005006 – Geochemistry" educational program generally meets the standards of international program accreditation.

Comments and areas for improvement identified by the expert group following the audit:

A serious concern is that most of the submitted documents were prepared in Azerbaijani, whereas the international accreditation procedure was conducted in English. During the review, this created certain difficulties for the expert group, as additional time was required to translate and analyze each document. It should be noted that, thanks to the work of the translator, it was possible to ensure an understanding of the content of the submitted materials.

Standard 1. Quality Assurance Policy and Academic Integrity – Full Compliance

Areas for improvement: continue to develop mechanisms for promoting the principles of academic integrity and ethical standards among master's students and faculty.

Standard 2. Development, Approval of Educational Programs, and Information Management – Significant Compliance

Comments: The expert group was not provided with a complete set of supporting documents reflecting the results of the master's student survey and the activities of the Alumni Association.

Areas for improvement: systematize the collection and analysis of data on the results of student surveys and the activities of the Alumni Network, and ensure that monitoring results are documented.

Standard 3. Student-centered learning, teaching, and assessment – full compliance

Areas for improvement: expand master's students' participation in research projects and international academic mobility.

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

Areas for improvement: continue to develop collaboration with employers to further improve the content of the educational program and strengthen its practical focus.

Standard 5. Faculty – Full Compliance

Areas for improvement: continue to support faculty publication activity and expand academic staff participation in international research projects and academic mobility programs.

Standard 6. Learning Resources and Student Support – Significant Compliance

Comments: There is insufficient information regarding the frequency of laboratory equipment updates and the use of international electronic resources by master's students.

Areas for improvement: Continue to update laboratory equipment and specialized software, and strengthen monitoring of master's students' use of electronic library resources and international scientific databases.

Standard 7. Public Information – Full Compliance

Areas for improvement: Continue to develop the university's digital information resources and expand the international visibility of the educational program in the information space.

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 ADDITIONALLY STUDIED AT THE UNIVERSITY

1. Educational Program
2. Working curriculum of the educational program
3. Course syllabi
4. Policy and System for Internal Quality Assurance in Education
5. Materials from collegial bodies governing the educational program
6. Materials on the systematic monitoring of student progress
7. Master's theses
8. Reports on master's students' research work
9. Documents confirming the professional development of the faculty.