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GEORGIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY SEU

# GEORGIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY SEU RESEARCH STRATEGY PLAN 2020-2026

*Towards Robust Research in the Institutional  
Transformation*

2020  
TBILISI

## Preface

The main objective of the Georgian National University (SEU) Research Strategy is to effectively transform the university from a “Teaching University” towards the status of a “University”. As part of this process, the SEU institutional transformation and enhancement of research will generate a positive impact not only at institutional level but also for the economic and societal development of Georgia.

Enhancing, strategically boosting and enriching research activities and the impact of research are the prime preconditions for the fulfilment of the institutional development goal – **to become one of the top universities in the country.**

Therefore, we will in particular address the following Research Strategic Initiatives:

- Providing adequate financial support for research activities;
- Increasing research productivity;
- Enabling an active research climate;
- Extending the academic portfolio to PhD programmes.

We will predominantly incentivise and support applied interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and cross-disciplinary research that shall meaningfully contribute to national and international needs and challenges. Our research is expected to make a significant impact in a variety of contexts, including public policy, social, economic, cultural and environmental outcomes, in addition to commercial exploitation transformed into consultancy services for public and private sector entities in Georgia and abroad. We aspire to translate our research to the wider society, reaching out to connect our research to the issues that matter to people, the Georgian society, and to help solve real-world problems. We want to be the partner of choice for businesses and other external organisations due to the quality and focus of our research.

During the next years, research will grow into an integral part of all our institutional activities, creating a strong connection between the optimal use of our human, financial, physical, and

knowledge resources, and the economic and societal development of Georgia. We will strategically develop the international dimension of our research activities by enhancing the involvement of our academic staff and students in international research projects and mobility schemes.

We will start the process of obtaining the status of “University” and thus the permission to offer doctoral programmes in selected fields, fully in line with our capacities and strategic portfolio. Our PhD programmes will create a new generation of graduates able to address new research topics and generate new knowledge and scientific data necessary for sustainable economic and societal development of Georgia.

We will provide stable financial support to the SEU research activities by the establishment of the Institutional Research Fund (IRF). It will support our academic staff and students in preparing and managing research activities, whilst also attracting new high-quality academic staff. We will further encourage and incentivise research activities to increase quantity and quality of research outputs. At the same time, we will place greater weight on research achievements and potentials through a revised staff selection process.

By implementing these pillars, we will create and continually improve an institutional research ecosystem that boosts research productivity by embedding a strong research culture in our institutional policies and practices, with the aim of serving the scientific community, economy and society at large.

### ***Providing adequate financial support for research***

With the ambition to improve research infrastructure and funding mechanisms to promote research across all disciplines, to support our teachers, researchers and students in preparing and managing research activities and projects, and to attract excellent teaching and research staff to join SEU, we will establish the SEU Institutional Research Fund (IRF).

Our intention is to provide an appropriate budget for internally-funded research grants, to enhance the number and quality of externally-funded research projects and to support

professional development and performance enhancement of our academic staff. We strive to take active part in international research and innovation collaborations funded under the Horizon Europe and other prestigious programmes.

There are a number of challenges and opportunities of external funding and we will address them with a strategic forward-thinking approach. We look forward to ensure necessary and timely investments to progress and grow activities, and to verify our services and capacities are well aligned with the research strategy. We will develop high quality and up-to-date administrative and technical support to academic staff interested to take active part in national, regional and international research projects and collaborations.

We will encourage and incentivise research activities to increase the quantity and quality of research outputs and increase the number of research papers published in leading international scientific journals with an impact factor. Internal investment will be available to support a range of joint research activities and develop strong partnerships. We will assess the feasibility of opening research positions at SEU and the establishment of research groups and teams, with access to modern research infrastructure and software. We will encourage regional and international scientific cooperation and participation in research networks, industry secondments and fellowships and development of collaborative research with practitioners in the public and private sector and creative industries.

We commit ourselves to provide our staff and students access to adequate research infrastructure, equipment and facilities, including access to printed and electronic journals. In the era of Open Access and Open Research Data, we will support our academic staff with the necessary Library services, funding and support, to ensure we embrace the Open Research agenda. To accomplish these, we will take a proactive approach to the future planning of our research environment. Our ambition is to ensure that investment in research is strategic and targeted, thereby developing our university as an attractive place for highly talented academic staff.

We plan to create an environment that will attract and retain those at the peak of their academic careers, either to take permanent positions or to participate in joint research projects and academic exchange. We will support early stage researchers, including mentoring and support needed to develop independent research careers.

As a socially responsible university we will seek to bring to market the intellectual property arising from our work, and to provide comprehensive support to start-up and spin-off companies, student and alumni enterprises. To support these, we will establish a Business Lab as an incubator of applied research and a hub for development of start-ups and commercialisation of research results. We will train a multidisciplinary university team to manage intellectual property rights that will arise from the research results, to protect IP rights of our staff, students and the university itself, and to plan, generate and manage a cumulative economic impact of our research. We also share an ambitious plan to manage and increase our research revenues. Therefore, we will provide support to our researchers at all levels and in all disciplines to apply for and be successful in winning research grants and securing contracts for research. We will encourage and support high quality grant applications, contract negotiations, and ensure projects delivery in accordance with the requirements endorsed by funding authorities.

### ***Increasing research productivity***

We are assured that the quality of university research is based on the quality, relevance, and impact of research and intellectual contribution by academic staff and students. Therefore, we will place greater importance on research achievements and potentials in the selection of new staff, and provide tailored assistance and support to enhance research interests and productivity of our teachers, researchers and students.

Academic excellence globally is evaluated against success in publication in high quality journals and publication of monographs with leading publishers. We plan to bring the majority of our future research outputs from the collaboration with business and international partners and to publish them intensively. We aspire to increase co-publication, as we strongly believe that international collaboration augments visibility and citations to our research. For that reason, we will start to build and advance our international collaborations at both institutional and individual levels.

To further foster research productivity, we will provide our academic staff with necessary trainings and services to increase their publishing skills and capacities. Our senior leadership

will make a serious commitment to support research and results publication. We will organise and offer high quality assistance in writing and presentation of research results, both in the scientific and technical sense, including language skills, proofreading and text editing. Correspondingly, we will use social media effectively to disseminate the results of their research and to reach audiences through new channels. We encourage our staff to regularly present exciting and innovative case studies that showcase how our research makes a positive contribution to the society. Finally, we will promote the impact of our research by presenting impact case studies on the university web pages, through high quality publications and via impact related events.

### ***Enabling an active research climate***

We strive to increase our national, regional, and international ranking in research by creating and fostering a supportive research environment reflected in attracting, retaining, and rewarding outstanding researchers.

Our institution commits to collaboration and excellence. We recognise talent and ambition, and will nurture the careers of excellent academic staff through a supportive environment for all, with the ambition to become the location of choice for staff at all career stages. We will introduce a culture of research across all disciplines we teach at all study levels. This will be supported through a growing number of Phd holders, also for positions of invited staff. Our ambition is to attract the most talented students and remarkable staff, and continuously develop an encouraging research climate where everyone can reach their full potential.

We will establish research institutes to foster multidisciplinary approaches and exchanges of our academic staff in areas that are building on our key strengths and in line with societal needs and ambitions.

To attract excellent academic staff and PhD students we will strive to provide and make effective use of our facilities and equipment, provide the highest standards of data handling and storage, as well as offer support services.

Our staff is encouraged and supported to collaborate nationally and internationally, including the establishment of new strategic partnerships, co-creation of research and training for mutual benefit. Our administrative support will be integrated, ensuring that the needs of our academic staff and partners are met comprehensively. Special attention is given to building cooperation and partnering with foreign universities and research institutions. Our plan is to gradually grow the number of academic staff participating in mobility schemes, both outgoing and incoming, as well as the number of co-publications and joint research projects developed, applied and successfully implemented.

The professional ambitions of our staff are supported by an academic promotion process that recognises the importance of contribution to innovation, research impact and publication, along with the full range of other academic activities. We will provide incentives, both financial and non-financial, for our staff to conduct high-quality and high-impact research. We will encourage and support the organisation of and active participation in research conferences and research competitions.

We will identify research themes of significance for our university, the local and regional economy and community at large. We will identify and strengthen our key external relationships and manage them strategically for the long-term benefit of the research agenda. We will focus on strengthening digital practises, providing an excellent experience for our staff and students.

Our goal is to deliver impact beyond academia, for the economic, social and cultural benefits of the Georgian society whenever the opportunity arises. We want to enhance cooperative research through collaboration, strategic partnerships, and engagement with industry, business, and government organisations. To support the openness of our university we will establish and maintain networks and platforms where our researchers, students, industry and public sector will interact and derive knowledge and understanding by working together in a flexible and responsible manner.

### ***Extending the academic portfolio to PhD programmes***

We aspire to enhance the quality of existing study programmes in terms of research capacity and to introduce the third cycle. We will extend our academic portfolio with doctoral

programmes based on global trends and addressing the local and regional market needs. In this sense, we aim to grow our PhD student base by attracting students of the highest quality nationally, regionally and internationally to involve them in the processes of innovation, new knowledge creation and interpretation, and application of existing knowledge in novel ways. We plan to recruit outstanding students through scholarships and awards from internal as well as external sources.

We will offer an innovative curriculum design strongly linked to research projects and assignments, aiming to enhance synergies between higher education and research. We will explore key research themes and global challenges, and operate in areas of strategic importance nationally, regionally and internationally.

We will progressively grow the number of PhD programmes we offer in line with our capacity. Our strategic plan is to design high-quality research-based doctoral programs starting from Business, Economic and Management fields, and expanding to Law and Medicine, which represent three leading fields of our expertise.

New doctoral studies will enable PhD students to organise their research tasks as an integral part of a larger research project, which would ensure that doctoral students will have continual support from both teaching and research advisors. Students will have irreplaceable opportunities to gain research experience, engage in and experience research and contribute to knowledge generation.

We will explore the idea of industry-academic research fellowships at postgraduate level to ensure that our talented staff and students have the skills and experience to thrive in careers outside academia. We will encourage research mobility, short-term scientific missions, secondments, collaborations and long-term partnerships. As we recognise the need to work with industry, public organisations and third sector entities more extensively, we will look further to build existing partnerships and develop new partnerships in order to undertake innovative research closely linked to the doctoral programmes.

The introduction of doctoral programmes will also make a strong positive impact on the research productivity, as all PhD candidates will be required to publish their research results in peer-reviewed academic journals. By nurturing an innovative culture, we will provide the



highest quality learning opportunities for our students continually enriched by the new knowledge we discover.

## **Research Expectations**

Our staff is invited to take a proactive role in the design of research ideas and join some of the specific interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research activities which we will establish. These contributions include initiating new scientific partnerships and collaborations, proposals to join already established research networks, and activities which enable the number of scientific publications, staff mobility and externally funded projects to expand. Our academic staff are expected to propose ideas for research initiatives and projects, and to explore potential research funding. For this transition to becoming a more research intensive university, it is essential that our academic staff increase publishing achievements, individually or through co-publications, and to get more deeply involved in the dissemination of research results. Finally, the input from our staff will be crucial for the planning and delivery of relevant trainings and support services, which are important for the improvement of personal and group research and publication capacities.

Similarly, administrative staff is expected to improve familiarity with requirements and rules about administration and management of collaborative research projects under different funding schemes, to understand legal and practical aspects of intellectual rights protection on national and international level to be able to provide guidance and assistance, and to organise language and technical support to academic staff in writing and submission of scientific papers to peer-reviewed journals. Finally, our administrative staff will organise and run smoothly recruitment actions aiming to attract excellent academic staff and the best students, and to provide support for the mobility of researchers, teachers, students and administrative staff.

After a transitional period of two years when all plans, policies, tools, mechanisms and support services are estimated to be set up and tested, the academic staff will be expected to publish at least one peer-reviewed research paper per academic year, while potential research groups will be expected to initiate participation in at least one research project per academic year, applying to a grant scheme or as a market driven industrial/public partnership.

## Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

We will rate our success by measuring values of tailor-made KPIs:

### Research KPI 1 – Funding of research

The ratio of the research budget to overall budget will gradually grow from 0.75% in 2020 to 1.5% in 2026;

### Research KPI 2 – Quantity of research publications

The overall number of research papers will be increased by 75% until the end of 2026 (baseline year 2019 – 76);

### Research KPI 3 – Quality of research publications

The overall number of research papers in international journals with impact factor will be at least 50 by the end of 2026;

### Research KPI 4 – Internationalisation of research – joint project proposals

Participation in the submission of at least three Horizon Europe project proposals with at least one successful application by the end of 2026.

### Research KPI 5 – Internationalisation of research – research mobility

Cooperation with foreign research institutions – the annual number of academic staff participating in mobility schemes (incoming and outgoing) will gradually grow and be higher than 15 in 2026

## Supporting Activities

We will further agenda our research agenda through concrete activities:

### Research Support Activity 1 – Organisation of scientific conferences

Organisation and hosting of a large international scientific conference to be held biannually starting from 2022. with the participation of at least 150 domestic and foreign researchers and full lengths conference papers published in peer-reviewed open access proceedings

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**Research Support Activity 2 – Research and innovation competition**

Organisation of a research and innovation ideas competition for students and early stage researchers – to be launched in 2023 and organised annually

**Research Support Activity 3 – Commercialisation of research**

1. Establish business incubator to support research results commercialisation by the end of 2021;
2. Five start-ups or spin-offs established by the end of 2026.