INTERNATIONAL BLACK SEA UNIVERSITY LLC
QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM DOCUMENTS

RESEARCH POLICY
(2018-2025)

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Approvals

The signatures below certify that this quality manual has been reviewed and accepted
and demonstrates that the signatories are aware of all the requirements contained
herein and are committed to ensuring their provision.

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CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS / DEFINITIONS

COST   European Cooperation in Science and Technology

IBSU   International Black Sea University

HEI   Higher education institution

EU   European Union

EC   European Commission

Faculty   Major academic unit at IBSU (School, e.g. Faculty of Business Management)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. General

Two of the basic functions of International Black Sea University (IBSU) is knowledge transfer and conducting scholarly inquiry. The academic staff members can only actualize these functions under certain conditions and be held accountable for their output. This document provides the basis for the conditions IBSU lays as foundation for research.

The research activities at the International Black Sea University are directed by the Vice Rector for Science and Research (VRSR) who is responsible for scientific events, research centers, promotion of research and coordination of university scientific journals and publications. The Vice Rectorate also looks into funding opportunities for research and informs the corresponding staff members accordingly. All these activities are carried out in relation to the 7-year Strategic Plan and reflected in the 3-year Action Plan. The Strategic Plan identified the following areas to be improved in accordance with the current situation at IBSU and the new Authorization Standard:

Goal 2.1.   Emphasizing multidisciplinary research that contributes to the society

Goal 2.2.   Blending research with education

Goal 2.3.   Enhancing the quality of research

1.2. Mission of IBSU

IBSU's mission is indicated in the Strategic Plan (2018-2025) based on R1 – Internal Regulation. The mission statement of IBSU states that "International Black Sea University focuses on professionally-oriented high-quality education and applied research emphasizing innovation, internationalization and lifelong learning. IBSU strives to promote intercultural dialogue, sustain a high employment rate of graduates in domestic and international labor market and contribute to the development of a democratic civil society". Therefore, developing *applied research* is one of the high priority areas in IBSU's activities.

1.3. Vision of IBSU

IBSU's vision identifies quality applied research as one of the main targets:

IBSU will be recognized for its teaching and management excellence, applied research output, internationalization, competitive alumni, and societal integration having the necessary environment for its students and staff to be advocates of global human values, and lifelong learning.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1. Research Approach

The main research methodology at IBSU is *applied research*. Applied research "aims at finding a solution for an immediate problem facing a society, or an industrial/business organisation, whereas fundamental research is mainly concerned with generalisations and with the formulation of a theory"

(Kothari, 2004, p.3). Applied research is considered to be non-systematic inquiry and it is usually launched by a company, agency or an individual in order to address a specific problem (Bajpai, 2011). Applied research is the practical application of science. Therefore, the Research Centers have been geared towards addressing the practical aspects of the theoretical knowledge offered in the classrooms.

2.2. Framework

The Authorization Standard, as well as major quality frameworks in the world, asks the external and internal issues to be identified before developing a framework for the process in question.

The internal documents will be cited throughout the document. The external ones that helped form the research strategy of IBSU are as follows.

1. Law of Georgia on Higher Education;
2. Law of Georgia on Science, Technology and Their Development
3. The Socio - Economic Development Strategy of Georgia "Georgia 2020"
4. Georgia - EU Association Agreement
5. Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia. The Unified Strategy of Science in 2017-2021

Law of Georgia (2018a) sees research activities as a means for development and its preamble states:

> "This law creates legal basis for state policy in the field of science and technology, which is the prerequisite for the country's intellectual and technological progress and well-being. The state recognizes that scientific-technological progress is one of the main factors in community development, prosperity and spiritual prosperity and contributing to the intellectual possibilities of the country and the advancement of the economy. It provides humanitarian, natural sciences and technical sciences as an integral part of national culture and education, development and scientific research as a form of creative activity".

Social – Economic Development Strategy of Georgia (2018) mentions that the research ranking of Georgia is low (73rd in 2012) (p. 24), but the Government will pay special attention to promoting "applied research by increasing state funding and introducing various instruments to do so" (p. 26). It is not totally clear how / if private HEIs can benefit from funding yet, however this statement communicates the idea that *applied research* is a country priority.

Europe 2020 Strategy (2018) envisages research and development budget to be 3% of the EU's GDP. Georgia – EU Association Agreement does not bring about novelty to the topic of research, only referring to the existing EU policies which are *open innovation, open science,* and *open to the world* (EC, 2018). The *open innovation* goal refers to the importance of applied research through which it is possible to involve experienced non-academic people in research, circulate accumulated knowledge, and reach new markets. *Open science* goal encourages the higher education institutions to involve interested parties in research right from the beginning and at every phase by sharing research results obtained at each stage through open access platforms and the like. This intention automatically leads the way to the next goal *(open to the world)* which focuses on international cooperation.

Law of Georgia also explicitly points at the importance of research in the higher education sphere and defines scientific research as one of the cornerstones of high quality teaching and learning. It also mentions the issues of integrating research into education, knowledge transfer and innovation. The law encourages the HEIs to spread the research activities to all three cycles of education and prepare a conducive environment for research. The Law pays attention to strengthening of the human resources necessary for the purpose.

It is worth mentioning the importance of international collaboration and funding, such as Horizon 2020 and COST, the necessity of accessing international scientific-research infrastructure and e-databases and the fact that 21 public HEIs are connected to ELSEVIER through Shota Rustaveli Georgian National Scientific Foundation, which leaves private universities out. IBSU strives to improve its rules and regulations as well as research infrastructure as the Law requires.

2.3. Institutional Data Related to Research

IBSU has recently developed a system where all the relevant institutional data is kept including research related ones. Very soon, IBSU will be able to track the trends through dashboards and take decisions accordingly.

Research related information is now being collected under the following titles:

- IBSU journals (publications, accepted papers, rejected papers, co-authored ones and their countries)
- Publications (other publications and their types, the ones co-authored with international researchers, year of publication, publisher, etc.)
- Research Center staff
- Research Centers' action plans
- Research Centers' activities
- Information about board members of IBSU journals
- Conferences (name, year, number of attendees, type, venue, etc.
- Conference sessions
- Budgetary issues
- Academic incentives offered

3. PRINCIPLES of RESEARCH

The Academic Board of International Black Sea University confirms the following principles related to research:

3.1. Academic Freedom

Article 8 of Law on Science, Technology and Their Development explains the issue as follows:

The scientist has the right to:

A. conduct scientific research without any external interference and publish the results of the research without prejudice, except when the restriction is taken into account by the contract or they contain state secrets;

B. independently determine the contents of scientific research, research methods and means;

3.2. Ethics

Ethics is a significant issue in the scientific world, an IBSU provides guidelines for the staff and students to avoid plagiarism and promotes honesty and integrity, health, safety, objectivity, privacy, carefulness, openness, respect for intellectual property and other personal rights, confidentiality, responsible publication, and legality.

3.3. Environment

IBSU should provide an environment conducive to research. It is obvious that the resources are limited and the university cannot provide funding for all research demands, however, IBSU should provide office space, equipment, and access to relevant resources.

3.4. The Role of Research in Academic Promotion

The issue of research plays an important role in academic promotion (R1F52 – Evaluation of Academic Staff Performance Form; R19 – Regulation for Recruitment and Selection of Academic and Invited Personnel). The academic staff are encouraged to publish high quality research to accumulate points for promotion and to renew their contracts.

4. RESEARCH

4.1. Academic Incentives

IBSU has had a Regulation for Academic Incentives (R14) since 2013 and revised it in 2018. A list of incentives is separately produced to make it easier for staff to see all of the incentives on one page (R14L1).

The regulation basically provides financial incentives for affiliated academic staff members to benefit from a "personal" budget. The budget covers expenditures for attending conferences locally and abroad to a certain extent, publishing articles in journals with high impact factor, receiving patents, proof-reading, publishing books and book chapters. The other non-affiliated academic, invited and administrative staff members also benefit from academic incentives if they publish in IBSU Scientific Journals.

The incentives are offered twice a year through the Publications Committee (approved by the Rector's order) led by the Vice Rector for Science and Research that identifies the amount of incentives for publications the information of which is provided by the Faculty Boards.

4.2. Research Output

The faculties have their own research focus as stated in their 'research focus' websites. The faculties have a long tradition of organizing international scientific events. The Silk Road Conference Series, for instance, is held under the auspices of a faculty each year.

4.3. Research Centers

Following the ever-increasing focus on the issue of 'research' in Georgia and willing the enhance the quality of research, IBSU set up ten research centers in order to boost its research output and blend research with education around three years ago. However, not all the Centers could meet the initial expectations, therefore the number of research centers was brought down in October, 2017. In order to meet the requirement of improving innovation and research (Law of Georgia, 2018b, p.44), IBSU started a Research and Innovation Hub under the Center for Interdisciplinary Research.

There are currently two Research Centers under VRSR:

1. Center for International Studies
2. Center for Interdisciplinary Research

The *Center for International Studies* works in the following areas:

- American Studies
- China Studies
- EU Studies
- Geopolitics and Black Sea Region

The *Center for Interndisciplinary Studies* focuses on:

- Teaching and Learning Research
- Research and Innovation
- Economic Research

The main aims of the Research Centers are as follows:

- doing applied research in their respective field(s)
- producing quality publications
- creating blogs to help with writing skills of graduate students
- integrating research into education, especially contributing to the development of doctoral students by:
  - o offering them topics of research
  - o helping them refine and narrow down their dissertation topic
  - o funding for research: writing project proposals
  - o authoring joint articles with IBSU staff members and/or international researchers when/if possible
  - o encouraging them to author article(s) for IBSU journals
  - o organizing scientific events for your researchers, thus contribute to the development of their dissertation and network

o helping them find international opponents, supervisors as well as reviewers whenever possible

o involving them in the Research Center activities on a voluntary basis and/or fee-based assistants

IBSU also provides funding for a few selected doctoral students to spend around a semester abroad to increase the quality of their research.

In order to sustain the level of standardization, IBSU developed guidelines and templates for graduate students to comfortably start writing their research work.

The research centers collaborate with other administrative units at the university as well. The best example of such cooperation is the one in which the students do market research with the initiative of the Career Planning Office and the outcomes are utilized by the Center for Interdisciplinary Research for scientific research purposes.

Collaborating with international research centers is another aim set for Research Centers. For instance, IBSU has secured an agreement with University of International Business and Economics ("UIBE") and set up SINO – Georgian Competence Center (which is now Chinese Studies Direction under Center for International Studies) to develop research projects and support the development of the academic relationships, including joint conferences and diverse projects, between Georgia and China.

4.4. Projects

Project applications are crucial to attract funding for research. Although not being about pure research, IBSU participated in 3 TEMPUS projects, as well as Black Sea Basin and Visegrad projects so far. The experience from the EU projects helped produce R34 - Regulation for Projects where the process related to handling a project have been clarified.

LEPL - Shota Rustaveli National Foundation offers grants to HEIs in 10 directions. The following are appropriate for IBSU:

1. Humanitarian, Economic and Social Sciences;
2. Engineering, high-technology materials;
3. Information Technologies, telecommunication;

Proper funding is crucial in quality research. The young researchers are encouraged to take part in projects, a skill that is vital for their future career.

4.5. Publications

Scientific Journals

Faculties of International Black Sea University has been publishing scientific journals (https://journal.ibsu.edu.ge/). They are:

- Journal of Education in Black Sea Region (https://jebs.ibsu.edu.ge)
- Journal in Humanities (https://jh.ibsu.edu.ge/)
- Journal of Social Sciences (https://jss.ibsu.edu.ge/)

- Journal of Technical Science and Technologies (https://jtst.ibsu.edu.ge/)
- Journal of Business (https://jb.ibsu.edu.ge/)

Although one of the objectives of IBSU faculty journals is to involve more doctoral students in research activity and provide them with a medium to publish their articles, the journals receive many articles from both national and international researchers. However, we are now observing the article flow, the number of accepted and rejected papers for each journal and will see what we need to do to improve the quality of them and sustain their timely publication (actions such as merging some, cancelling some, etc.)

Books and Proceedings of Conferences

Publishing books and proceeding is part of research output IBSU produces. Below is a chart that renders the type of publications and the numbers since 2012.

Faculty/Institute	Book	Journal	Proceeding	Grand Total
Faculty of Business Management		5		5
Faculty of Computer Technologies and Engineering		5		5
Faculty of Education and Humanities	22	10	1	41
Faculty of Law	3			3
Faculty of Social Sciences	5	5		10
Silk Road Institute			7	7
Grand Total	**30**	**25**	**8**	**63**

We join book fairs (such as the one organized by the National Georgian Library every year) to promote IBSU publications and organize events in or out of IBSU to introduce our newly published books.

4.6. Scientific Events

Silk Road Conference Series

The Sill Road Conference Series (SRC) started in 2003 (with the word "Symposium" in the title changing to "Conference" in 2011). There have been 13 Silk Road events so far, organized by the Silk Road Research Institute which was closed in 2017. The conference series will continue under the Vice Rector for Science and Research organized by a faculty each year. The list below renders the SRC events so far:

- 1st International Silk Road Symposium
- 2nd International Silk Road Symposium BSEC Studies
- 3rd International Silk Road Symposium "The Black Sea Region Countries and Prospective Relationships with European Union"
- 4th International Silk Road Symposium "New Trends in Higher Education"
- 5th International Silk Road Symposium "Via Egnatia: Peoples and States – Cultural, Political, Regional Identities in the Past and Today"
- 6th Silk Road International Conference "Globalization and Security in Black and Caspian Seas Region"

- 7th Silk Road International Conference "Challenges and Opportunities of Sustainable Economic Development in Eurasian Countries"
- 8th Silk Road International Conference "Development of Tourism in Black and Caspian Seas Regions"
- 9th Silk Road International Conference "Business, Economics, International Relations and Education"
- 10th Silk Road International Conference "EU Association Agreement: Perspectives and Challenges"
- 11th International Silk Road Conference "Innovations in Business, Education and Sciences"
- 12th International Silk Road Conference "Contemporary Challenges of Democracy and Human Rights through Politics and Security"

The forthcoming 13th one in May, 2018 is on "Economic Development Perspectives in the Globe and New Challenges"

HALC

HALC Conference Series is a new initiative. HALC stands for History, Art, Literature and Culture in Black Sea Region and South Caucasus. There have been 2 HALC conferences so far. HALC is successful in bringing researchers in the field together and help promote Georgia (the country today, its past, and the culture) in the international arena.

IRCEELT

International Research Conference on Education, Language and Literature is another conference series that has turned into a traditional one. It is one of the most famous international conferences in the region that attracts researchers from many different countries of the world.

5. CAPACITY BUILDING

5.1. Young Researchers

IBSU has a tradition of producing its own staff (capacity building) out of its graduates. Starting from the Rector, there are 60 IBSU graduates working at IBSU. Therefore, it is more important than ever to pay special attention to young researchers because some of them will most likely become our colleagues.

Conferences

IBSU organizes many international conferences as indicated in the Self Evaluation Report. The conferences are great opportunities for the young researchers to keep up with recent developments in their fields, expand their network and find researchers to work on joint projects.

Below is a list of conferences organized (and will continue to be held) for the development of young researchers and all of them are international:

- Annual International Research Conference on American Studies (AMSC) (organized 10 times)
- Student conference - Caucasus at the Crossroad: Challenges to Regional Stability (organized 5 times)
- Annual Student Conference (Education and Humanities) (organized 5 times)
- Student Conference (Social Sciences) (organized twice)

Journal Articles

IBSU has 5 faculty journals published regularly.

- Journal of Education in Black Sea Region (https://jebs.ibsu.edu.ge)
- Journal in Humanities (https://jh.ibsu.edu.ge/)
- Journal of Social Sciences (https://jss.ibsu.edu.ge/)
- Journal of Technical Science and Technologies (https://jtst.ibsu.edu.ge/)
- Journal of Business (https://jb.ibsu.edu.ge/)

The thesis / dissertation supervisors of the graduate students encourage the young researchers to publish as part of their degree program requirement as well as for their academic development.

Teaching Assistantship: Successful researchers are offered teaching assistantship, a process which not only helps them improve their skills but also develop their understanding of administrative issues as well.

Projects: Faculties and Research Centers run small-scale projects. One of the aims is to involve students at all cycles in the projects.

Administrative Assistantship: Some of the students also work part-time at various units of IBSU.

Training: IBSU offers graduate students and study process administrators trainings related to Academic Writing, thesis/dissertation writing, ICT skills, and citation/referencing.

5.2. Trainings

Capacity building activities are an integral part of developing young researchers and keeping the current academic staff up-to-date. A series of trainings have been offered to a group of staff members from various faculties under the following headings:

- Project Writing, 2014-2015
- Academic Design, 2014-2015
- Academic Writing, 2016-2017
- Using EndNote for Citation, 2015-2016
- Using Microsoft Word in Academic Publications, 2016-2017
- Other seminars from international researchers

Another way to imbue skills in young researchers is to take them as teaching assistants (TAs).

They are also involved in administrative tasks as well to witness that side of doing research as well.

5.3. Staff Recruitment

The Law of Georgia (2018b, p.32) stresses the importance of recruiting young people for research in order to overcome the problem of aging among the current researchers in the country.

IBSU recruits staff for research in three ways:

1. Academic staff to teach in graduate programs based on their qualifications in the field.
2. Researchers for Research Centers
3. Graduate assistants for Research Centers

The qualifications for academic staff are listed in R19 – Regulation for Recruitment and Selection of Academic and Invited Personnel and follows a rigorous process including HR, QA, and a recruitment board.

6. INTERNATIONALIZATION / EXPANDING RESEARCH NETWORK

Article 24 of Law on Science, Technologies and their Development defines the right of the organisations to set the partnership frameworks in agreements with foreign partners within their competence.

The fact that all its doctoral programs are in English helps IBSU improve its level of internationalization quite a strongly. Here is how we enhance our internationalization:

- IBSU employs international researchers in Research Centers
- Strives to find international opponents and supervisors
- Looks for exchange possibilities
- Invites international researchers to teach short term and/or long term
- Look for joint program opportunities
- Involves international researchers in editorial boards of faculty journals
- Organizes international conferences and enhances its network
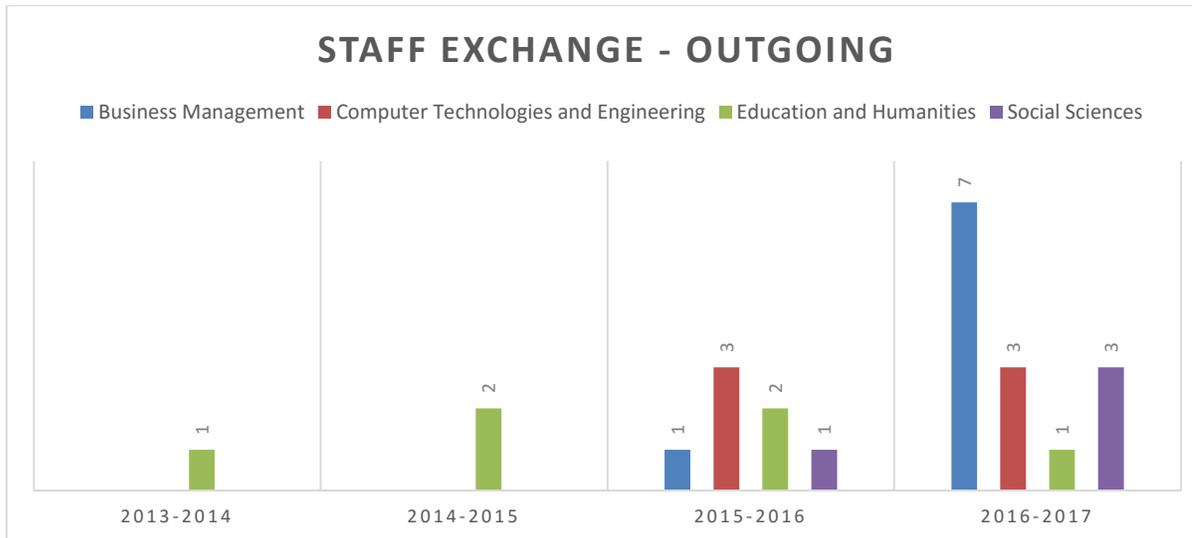- Signs memorandums of understanding with higher education institutions abroad

6.1. Collaboration Efforts in Scientific Events

IBSU strives to organize all the scientific events in collaboration with national and international public and private HEIs, thus strengthening its network this way and allowing researchers and young researchers share their research output and initiate new joint research work.

6.2. Exchange that Paves the Way for Research

Exchange opportunities are valuable in establishing ties of academic affairs and funding plays a significant role in actualizing exchange activities. IBSU promotes more exchange now and there are more and more externally funded exchange opportunities every year.

During their exchange trips, IBSU staff members conversed collaboration ideas including but not limited to inviting host university to become members of the editorial boards and/or reviewers of IBSU journals, producing joint scientific events and publications, being opponents and/or supervisors for doctoral students, etc. Below is a chart that shows the number of outgoing staff members abroad.

6.3. Subscriptions to e-databases

Libraries seem to have lost their previous glamour leaving their place to electronic ones. IBSU is a subscriber to a set of e-databases (Web of Science, EBSCO, JStore, Polpred), and planning to extend the coverage of them to serve the researchers and students better.

6.4. Memberships

International organizations, such as European University Association (EUA - eua.be), aim to get institutions of interest together in order to raise quality of higher education and research. IBSU is about to complete the requirements for application to EUA as well as becoming a member of EUA Council for Doctoral Education (eua-cde.org) in order to improve its doctoral programs.

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