Jointly organised by DAAD and GIZ Georgia

Cooperation between Higher Education and the Labour Market

Strengthening Employability and Implementation in Curriculum Development

19-20 October 2026

Rooms Hotel Tbilisi, 14 Merab Kostava St, Tbilisi 0108, Georgia

DAY 1: October 19

13:00

Event ROOM

MODERATION

Dr. Thomas Lichtenberg
Accreditation Agency for Degree Programmes in Engineering, Computer Science, Natural Sciences and Mathematics (ASIIN e.V.)

WELCOME ADDRESSES

Daniel Busche
Country Director
German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ)

Silvia Schmid
Director
DAAD Regional Office Tbilisi

13:30

KEYNOTES

Event
ROOM

Employability by Design – Institutional Approaches at German Universities of Applied Sciences

Speaker 1: *Prof. Dr.-Ing. Klaus Kreulich, Vice President for Innovation and Quality in Higher Education, Hochschule München*

The keynote links employability to the experience of German universities of applied sciences. Its central argument: employability cannot be achieved through isolated practical components or short-term programme adjustments, but must be institutionally embedded in curricula, teaching, assessment, university structures and cooperation with business and society.

The keynote shows how application-oriented curricula, lecturers' professional experience, practical phases, project-based learning and applied research work together. By tackling real-world challenges, students gain expertise, problem-solving skills and independence.

Dual study programmes and entrepreneurship education illustrate two institutional approaches: one links academic learning directly with the workplace, the other offers space to develop initiative and test innovative ideas.

The German model is not presented as directly transferable. Instead, the keynote offers design principles and instruments for Georgian stakeholders to develop their own solutions. A follow-up workshop will turn these into concrete next steps.

How do Georgian graduates transition from university to the labour market? Factors for success and challenges?

Speaker 2: *Prof. Dr. Irina Darchia, Classicist, Higher Education and Quality Assurance Expert, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University*

The relationship between higher education and the labour market remains a major challenge in Georgia and has been the subject of extensive discussion and research by different internal and external stakeholders, academic society, national and international experts. Georgia's legislative and quality assurance frameworks provide a supportive basis for strengthening this relationship, requiring labour market research and envisaging the involvement of labour market stakeholders, broadly understood, in curriculum design, development, and internal and external quality assurance. Nevertheless, graduates' transition from university to employment continues to present significant challenges.
This presentation explores the factors that influence Georgian graduates' transition to the labour market, examining both barriers and conditions for success, identifies possible approaches to strengthening the links between higher education and employment and facilitating graduates' entry into professional life.

Discussion

15:00 **Break**

15:20

3 PARALLEL WORKSHOPS

Event
ROOM

1. *Strengthening Employability: A Maturity Framework for Developing Degree Programmes*

A World Café exploring programme strengths, development priorities and next steps in Georgian higher education

Prof. Dr.-Ing. Klaus Kreulich, *Vice President for Innovation and Quality in Higher Education, Hochschule München*

How can Georgian universities strengthen their degree programmes and identify worthwhile next steps? Building on the keynote, this 90-minute workshop introduces a maturity framework that supports structured reflection on programme strengths, development needs and opportunities for cooperation.

The framework connects six dimensions: regional and industry relevance; applied research, innovation and emerging technologies; practice-oriented teaching and enterprise cooperation; curriculum design; international exchange and language skills; and graduation projects linked to enterprise needs. Employability is an important outcome across these dimensions.

In a guided World Café, participants will explore selected aspects through concrete examples from their own degree programmes. What already works well, and what evidence supports this view? Which improvements would benefit students, universities and external partners? What could be addressed internally, and where could an external expert assessment add value?

Participants will leave with shared summaries of their initial reflections on programme strengths, development priorities and possible first steps. They will also identify questions to explore through an expert assessment and conditions that would make it useful. These provisional findings provide a basis for further institutional dialogue and cooperation.

Central
ROOM

2. Integration of Theory and Practice

Prof. Kay Wilding, *former Dean of Studies Electrical Engineering*
Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University

This workshop aims to discuss the challenges of integrating theoretical course content with practical learning experiences. Where are specific competencies taught? What teaching methods can support this process? How can this be implemented in a holistic manner? To what extent should practical experience influence the design of theoretical content? Using a World Café format, participants will work in groups on five topics, discuss the related questions, and conclude with presentations.

- *How can learning content from the university and the workplace be meaningfully linked?*
- *Which competencies can be developed particularly well in the workplace and which at the university?*
- *How can the transfer between theoretical knowledge and professional practice be supported?*
- *Which tasks or projects are suitable for linking theory and practice?*
- *How can we ensure that practical phases are academically challenging and aligned with the curriculum?*

Master ROOM

3. Bridging the Gap – how Georgian Universities can better serve Economy and Society.

***Dr. Niclas Rüffer**, GIZ Office Tbilisi, Project Director, The international cooperation programme*
***Tornike Jobava** (Captain Abkhazia), Deputy Chairman of Georgia's Innovation and Technology Agency, Professor of Business and Technology University*

The workshop discusses the topic of collaboration between universities and the local and regional economy. We tackle questions such as what are the methods already in use in Georgian universities, what are the gaps, what is the way forward, and how GITA can better support. Thereby we will tackle not only the support for startups and spinoffs but also different ways of collaborative research with existing companies. The discussion will be supported by international best practices.

17:00

PANEL DISCUSSION

Employability in Practice: Structures, Standards and Partnerships

Event ROOM

Participants:

- ***Prof. Dr.-Ing. Klaus Kreulich***
  Vice President for Innovation and Quality in Higher Education
  Hochschule München
- ***Prof. Nino Enukidze***
  Rector of the Business and Technology University (BTU)
- ***Assoc. Prof. Rusudan Sanadze***
  Head of Department of Educational Science
  Iv. Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University
- ***David Zgudadze***
  Country Manager Georgia and Armenia
  Mastercard

19:00

Networking dinner

DAY 2: 20 October

09:00

MODERATION

Recap of Day 1 (Dr. Thomas Lichtenberg)

Event
ROOM

Accreditation Agency for Degree Programmes in Engineering, Computer Science, Natural Sciences and Mathematics (ASIIN e.V.)

09:15

KEY NOTE

Event
ROOM

Dual by Design – Cooperative Education in Higher Education

Speaker 1: *Prof. Kay Wilding, former Dean of Studies Electrical Engineering Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University*

Since dual study programmes were introduced 50 years ago, this type of higher education has become firmly established in Germany. The collaboration between companies and universities in the tertiary sector significantly complements the German education system. Originally from the state of Baden-Württemberg, this system has become firmly established nationwide in various forms across all areas of higher education.
This presentation focuses on collaboration with companies. As well as staffing the dual education committees, cooperation in implementing degree programmes is key to student success. Examinations on both sides require intensive cooperation between the training partners. Relevant elective courses enable rapid adaptation to technological advances and practical requirements. New degree programmes can be introduced as required, in accordance with accreditation requirements.
Quality control was introduced in 2001 through collaboration with the Open University in London, enabling the university to become a system-accredited institution at an early stage.
Following the transition to a dual university model, various dual degree programmes were introduced in almost all federal states. Currently, around 140,000 students are enrolled on dual degree programmes. Similar models have also been implemented abroad.

Knowledge and Technology Transfer in Germany and Beyond

Speaker 2: *Dr. Niclas Rüffer, GIZ Office Tbilisi*
Project Director, The international cooperation programme

Dr. Niclas Rüffer will guide the audience through the various methods used to bridge the gap between science and business in Germany and other central European countries. He will discuss the cooperation networks between universities and businesses, and the options for collaboration in teaching, such as joint seminars and master's and PhD theses. He will also touch upon entrepreneurship support as a means of contributing to innovation ecosystems in universities, before focusing on Technology Transfer Offices as an important means of stimulating collaborative research between universities, the wider research community, and businesses.

PANEL DISCUSSION

From Cooperation to Co-Creation: Making University–Business Partnerships Work
Participants:

- ***Prof. Kay Wilding***
  Former Dean of Studies, Electrical Engineering
  Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University
- ***Dr. Niclas Rüffer***
  GIZ Office Tbilisi
  Project Director, The international cooperation programme
- ***Tornike Jobava*** *(Captain Abkhazia)*
  Deputy Chairmann of Georgia's Innovation and Technology Agency;
  Professor in Business and Technology University

10:45 **Break**

11:00 **2ND ROUND OF PARALLEL WORKSHOPS**

Event
ROOM

1. ***Strengthening Employability: A Maturity Framework for Developing Degree Programmes***
   A World Café exploring programme strengths, development priorities and next steps in Georgian higher education

Prof. Dr.-Ing. Klaus Kreulich, Vice President for Innovation and Quality in Higher Education, Hochschule München

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Participants will leave with shared summaries of their initial reflections on programme strengths, development priorities and possible first steps. They will also identify questions to explore through an expert assessment and conditions that would make it useful. These provisional findings provide a basis for further

institutional dialogue and cooperation.

Central ROOM

2. Understanding competencies and needs:

Prof. Kay Wilding, former Dean of Studies Electical Engineering, the Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University

This workshop focuses on the development of students' competencies. What specific competencies should students acquire in a dual study program? What are the practical and theoretical requirements for this, and how can we bridge the gap? If there are differences, can existing skills be integrated into a dual degree program?
Using a World Café format, five topics will be addressed in small groups, and the questions will be discussed and finally presented.

- *What subject-specific, methodological, social and interpersonal competencies should students acquire on a dual degree programme?*
- *What competencies do graduates need today, and which ones will become more important in the future?*
- *How do the competency requirements of the university and industry partners differ?*
- *How can we highlight and specifically foster cross-disciplinary competencies?*
- *What competencies do students already possess, and how can these be incorporated into the programme?*

Map ROOM

3. Bridging the Gap – how Georgian Universities can better serve Economy and Society.

Dr. Niclas Rüffer, GIZ Office Tbilisi, Project Director, The international cooperation programme Tornike Jobava (Captain Abkhazia) - Deputy Chairman of Georgia's Innovation and Technology Agency, Professor in Business and Technology University"

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12:30 **Event ROOM**

WRAP UP: REPORT FROM THE WORKSHOP AND CONCLUSIONS (MODERATOR)

13:00 Networking lunch