

Summary report on the accreditation of the study programmes in Cluster B at al-Farabi Kazakh National University in Almaty: Journalism (BA, MA, PhD), Publishing (BA, MA)

Upon the request for accreditation of al-Farabi Kazakh National University from July 2013, AQ Austria conducted the accreditation procedure of the study programmes Journalism (BA, MA, PhD) and Publishing, (BA, MA). In accordance with the "Guideline for International Accreditation of Bachelor, Master and PhD Programmes" adopted by the Board of AQ Austria in July 2013, AQ Austria publishes the following summary report.

1 Short information on the application for accreditation

Information about the institution	
Institution (applicant)	Al-Farabi Kazakh National University (KazNU)
Location of the institution	Almaty (Kazakhstan)
Information about the study programmes	
Name of the study programmes	1. Journalism 2. Publishing
Academic degrees	1. Bachelor of Social Sciences in Journalism 2. Master of Social Sciences in Journalism 3. PhD in Journalism 4. Bachelor of Art in Publishing 2. Master of Art in Publishing

2 Short information on the accreditation procedure

Al-Farabi KazNU submitted an application for accreditation of the study programmes Journalism (BA, MA, PhD) and Publishing, (BA, MA) in July 2013. Place of delivery of the study programmes is Almaty.

In a circular resolution on 30 October 2013, the Board of AQ Austria passed the proposal for peers for the review and assessment of the study programmes.

Name	Institution	Role
Prof. Dr. Christoph Bläsi	University of Mainz, Germany	Peer from academia; head of the panel
FH-Prof. Dr. Reinhard Christl	University of Applied Sciences St. Pölten, Austria (until 12/2013)	Peer from academia and with professional experience
Andrey Kukushkin	Infores Agency, Kazakhstan	Panel member from Kazakhstan
Suvi Eriksson	University of Oulu, Finland	Student panel member

A site visit at al-Farabi KazNU took place in Almaty from 12-13 February 2014, which was attended by all peers and a coordinator from AQ Austria.

The Board of AQ Austria took the accreditation decisions in its meeting on 13 May 2014. The accreditation decisions are valid as of 13 May 2014.

3 Subject matter of the application

All Bachelor programmes are full-time four-years-programmes. All Master programmes are full-time two-years-programmes. All PhD programmes are full-time three-years programmes.

The following information in this chapter derives from the supplementary self-documentation by al-Farabi KazNU.

Journalism:

The mission of the Journalism Department is to provide excellence in education on fundamental concepts, values and skills in journalism that focus on problem solving, critical thinking, innovation and communication. Programme also promote an understanding of ethical and legal implications of media and the importance of cultural and intellectual diversity, civic engagement and social responsibility in preparing students for leadership roles in journalism.

Goal: The formation of a national model of continuous journalism education, integrated into the world educational space by matching with foreign educational programs meeting the needs of the individual and society in the specialty 5B050400 – Journalism.

Objective:

- *Develop a plan for recruiting volunteers, including incentives and guidelines*
- *Develop a training program for media center volunteers*

- *Implement plan and asses after one year*

Publishing:

The sphere of professional activity of the bachelor in the specialty 5B042200 - publishing are: areas of preparation, processing and release of actual book editions, prepress preparation (design, imposition, editing); printing replication of newspapers, magazines, books, calendars, brochures, booklets, leaflets, forms; promotion of printed materials; as a whole polygraphy and publishing, printing services, production of packing, information and communicative spheres (publishing houses, press services, advertising and PR agencies).

Goal: ensuring professional knowledge and practical skills in the field of publishing, design and editing. PD include publishing and editorial skill and disciplines of specialization. They give to students an idea of modern equipment and technology of printing production, allow them to study bases of economy and the organization of publishing process, a management and marketing of publishing, advertising and communications with an obkashchestvennost, in laboratory of the press to issue newspapers, books, broshur and electronic editions.

Objectives:

- *education in the spirit of patriotism, friendship of the people of the Republic of Kazakhstan, respect for various cultures, traditions and customs;*
- *formation of universal and social and personal values of the graduate;*
- *formation of ecological, physical, ethical, legal culture, culture of thinking;*
- *language preparation of the bachelor;*
- *formation of the fundamental knowledge necessary for assimilation of professional disciplines;*
- *formation of theoretical and practical knowledge, skills necessary for their realization in professional activity.*

4 Summarizing results from the assessments of the peers

Standard 1: Study programme and programme management

Journalism

The history of the Bachelor of Journalism at al-Farabi Kazakh National University dates back to the early Soviet era. The first "journalism" programme was established in 1934. After the country's independence in 1991 it was changed from a Marxist-leninist study programme including loads of communism-related ideological and philosophical topics to a more western-style Bachelor. The Master programme was established in 1996, the PhD programme in 2005¹.

For the panel it is obvious that the English version of the module handbook handed out is the result of a difficult translation process from Kazakh into English. Therefore, the panel stated some problems of inconsistency and inaccuracy in the module handbook. Additionally, in some cases the module descriptions are in a way unspecific. The structure of the study programme is not clearly defined. There is no clear definition between elective and obligatory courses. The issuance of a diploma supplement is not guaranteed yet.

¹ Kazakhstan entered the Bologna process in 2010. The study programmes have consequently been adapted to the Bologna system. The process has not been finished yet.

A lot of the problems regarding the modules and contents are due to translation problems, but most elements of the module handbook definitely meet European standards, namely the basic structure, the credit point calculation and its transfer into the ECTS system; the lecturers and people responsible are clearly defined, the students' workload is defined clearly and students are not overloaded with work. The examination system is clear and appropriate. Admission requirements are appropriately defined.

Giving a general evaluation of the Journalism programmes of al-Farabi KazNU, one fundamental issue of all three programmes (BA, MA, PhD) is the definition of "Journalism": journalism as it is understood by the students, the faculty and the university is not compatible with the definition of journalism in western society and in Europe. As a result of these different definitions, the contents of the study programmes do not meet the professional standards of journalism in Europe.

This does not mean that the programmes do not meet general modern standards of media education in general. It only means that it is based on a different understanding of the role of journalism and of journalists in society in Kazakhstan on the one hand and in Europe on the other hand. There are a lot of media related study programmes in Europe that feature similar topics as the reviewed programmes, but none of them is called "Journalism".

Publishing

Building on a long tradition of a Journalism programme dating back to the early Soviet era (1934), the Bachelor (4 years) and the Master (2 years) programmes in Publishing were introduced at what is now known as the al-Farabi KazNU in 2010. At the time of this evaluation, there is no PhD programme in Publishing.

Most of the courses in the Bachelor as well as in the Master programme are provided in a Kazakh as well as in a Russian language version, to be chosen individually by the students. In both programmes, there is a good mix of obligatory and elective courses. Presence in courses, for which a student has registered, is obligatory in any case (this in cases causes conflicts with professional activities etc. on the side of the students).

Again there are problems of inconsistencies and inaccuracies in the self-documentation that are mainly due to translation during the self-documentation process. During the on-site visit most of the problems could be put into the right perspective. Many elements of the programmes do meet the required standards (such as the credit point system, the students' workload, the balance between the modules with different subjects and the system of examinations). Shortcomings mainly refer to the reading list and the contents and titles of single modules for the Bachelor programme as well as for the Master programme. Marketing and management skills are missing. The issuance of a diploma supplement is not guaranteed.

Standard 2: Staff

Journalism

The panel states that the number of permanent academic staff (52 full-time, 4 part-time) is impressive, especially in relation to the small number of students. Their formal qualification is sufficient.

During the on-site visit the panel learned that English competences of faculty, teachers and students are often poor. Without improving them, the faculty will hardly be able to develop their study programmes according to the changes of the international media.

There is a personnel development plan and system in place, but participation could be better.

Although many members of the staff are experts in non-media-related fields like history, philosophy or language studies, their qualifications allow serious academic teaching required for the PhD programme. Nevertheless it has to be stated, that for the future there is a lack of media and especially new media know-how.

Publishing

Teaching staff (16 full-time, no part-time staff) in Publishing represents a good mixture of people with a classical academic career (mostly philological) and of people that also had worked outside the university, mostly in editorial departments of newspaper and magazine publishers. The members of the teaching staff show rather impressive publishing activities. The number of permanent scientific staff possessing the relevant formal qualifications is sufficient. Their qualifications allow serious academic teaching, although it is stated, that for the future there is a certain lack of linguistic skills (mainly English), of international networking, and in digital / media convergence issues.

There is a personal development plan and system in place, but participation could be better.

Standard 3: Quality assurance

The university has a QA system put in place and it is clearly reflected in the faculty and on programme level. Both the staff members and the students stated several different QA mechanisms.

The QA system of the university and of the programmes is very output-oriented. It is based on quite strict procedures, on objectives set at the beginning of each period and on the monitoring and evaluation of the performance with the help of key performance indicators. It was stated that the performance of the staff members is reflected also in their salaries.

The panel thinks that it would be beneficial to move towards a more enhancement-led QA system in a way that the requirements for the assessment of individuals should move more towards stimulation and improvement-orientation instead of punishment.

It was stated by the students that they see their role as active parts in the procedures and they are mostly satisfied with the way their opinions are taken into account. The opinion of the students is valued, especially in the evaluation of the staff.

Standard 4: Funding and infrastructure

The two main funding sources of al-Farabi KazNU are the state budget and tuition fees. The overall budget of al-Farabi KazNU is 17 million Kazakhstan tenge (kzt). In Euro this makes 3,400 Euro per students on average. Plans of the government and the university agree to extend these expenses in the future. Budgeting is a top-down process. There is no department budget. Profit centres or budgeting divisions on department level do not exist.

Financial resources are sufficient and backed by the funding of the Kazakhstan state budget. Research activities are funded predominantly by the overall university budget, research activities financed by private companies and organisations are not made attractive by the centralised budgeting process.

Auditoriums and seminar rooms meet the standards. The equipment for radio, TV and publishing is appropriate considering that the groups of students are small. The new library gives the students access to work stations and meet their needs for access to international journals. The library's opening hours are sufficient and meet the needs of the students. The possibilities for students' recreation and sports offered in the facilities of the university campus are appropriate, in some sports outstanding.

The panel concludes that financial resources and funding is guaranteed during the whole accreditation period. Adequate rooms and technical facilities required for the study programmes are available.

Standard 5: Research

After having been a teaching university in the past, al-Farabi KazNU now sees itself as a research university.

The state of the research situation related to the programmes of al-Farabi KazNU is quite remarkable. In spite of the top-level strategic transition to a research university and the principal dedication to support this on the side of the department, research aspects (including applied research), however, still do not seem to have high actual relevance compared with the vocational aspects. A main clue for this judgement is the missing link to contemporary research beyond the university and the country. Research topics of the teaching staff members are not inspired sufficiently by the international discourses, eg. about the future of the media industry.

Students are involved in at least some of the research work, especially in the Master programmes (both Journalism and Publishing).

The panel states that the teaching staff of Publishing is able to dedicate an appropriate amount of its time to the research work.

Standard 6: National and international co-operations

The panel states that the University is engaged in several national and international co-operations, eg. co-operation agreements with universities from Kazakhstan and abroad, co-operations with companies as regards internships, co-operations with international organisations and participation in joint projects. It has an International Relations Department and offers international exchange courses and programmes for teachers and students.

The panel states that al-Farabi KazNU should pay attention to setting up a strategy and a concrete plan for those co-operations. Also it states that research co-operations with local higher educational institutions are not well developed. Currently international co-operation is very extensive and should rather be reduced to a number of reliable partners. The information policy on co-operation activities is not sufficient.

5 Accreditation decisions and statements of grounds

At its 20th meeting on 13th May 2014, the Board of AQ Austria decided:

- 1) The programmes "**Bachelor of Social Sciences in Journalism**", "**Master of Social Sciences in Journalism**" and "**PhD in Journalism**" at al-Farabi KazNU in Almaty, Kazakhstan, meet the standards of the „Guideline for International Accreditation of Bachelor, Master and PhD Programmes“ ("Guideline...") adopted by the Board of AQ Austria in July 2013.
- 2) Pursuant to 3.5 of the "Guideline..." the Board of AQ Austria grants accreditation to the programmes for a period of six years, i.e. until 13th May 2020.
- 3) The Board of AQ Austria notes that the programmes meet some of the standards only partially. Pursuant to 3.5 of the „Guideline...“ accreditation is therefore granted subject to fulfilment of the following conditions. The fulfilment of these conditions must be documented in writing within nine months (i.e. until 13th of February 2015) and is subject to assessment by AQ Austria. In case of non-fulfilment, the accreditation will be withdrawn immediately.

Condition 1 (standard 1.4)

ECTS must be implemented in compliance with the ECTS Users' Guide to reflect the real workload.

Condition 2 (standard 1.8)

A standardized "Diploma Supplement" must be issued to all graduates.

Condition 3 (standard 1.3; standard 1.5)

The titles of the three study programmes (BA, MA, PhD) have to be changed in a way WITHOUT USING the term "JOURNALISM".*

Condition 4 (standard 1.2; standard 1.3)

The module descriptions for the three programmes have to be revised in order to meet international standards: (1) A new module handbook has to be provided, that puts emphasis especially on logical consistence of the modules and on appropriate content descriptions. (2) In the module handbook appropriate English translation has to be provided on an international standard, especially concerning (2a) the module objectives/intended learning outcomes and (2b) the content descriptions.

Condition 5 - for the Bachelor and Master programmes (standards 1.3 and 2.1)

The university has to set up a system that forwards the learning and using of foreign languages, especially English, considering the recommendations below (two language groups, 20% to 40% of the courses in English) or other adequate measures.

Condition 6 – for the PhD programme (standards 5.2 and 5.3)

The university has to provide evidence on how research is integrated and carried out in the PhD programme.

* As the panel cannot accept the programme title "Journalism", one of the following three titles for all the programmes is recommended. Any of them describe the study programmes as well as the research activities in a much more appropriate way than the term "Journalism":

- a. - "Kazakhstan and International Media",
- b. - "National and International News Media",
- c. - "Media Management".

At its 20th meeting on 13th May 2014, the Board of AQ Austria decided:

- 1) The programmes "**Bachelor of Art in Publishing**" and "**Master of Art in Publishing**" at al-Farabi KazNU in Almaty, Kazakhstan, meet the standards of the „Guideline for International Accreditation of Bachelor, Master and PhD Programmes“ ("Guideline...") adopted by the Board of AQ Austria in July 2013.
- 2) Pursuant to 3.5 of the "Guideline..." the Board of AQ Austria grants accreditation to the programmes for a period of six years, i.e. until 13th May 2020.
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Condition 1 (standard 1.4)

ECTS must be implemented in compliance with the ECTS Users' Guide to reflect the real workload.

Condition 2 (standard 1.8)

A standardized "Diploma Supplement" must be issued to all graduates.

Condition 3 (standard 1.3)

A more academic approach and a strengthened research orientation have to be implemented throughout the programmes, covering especially theories and methods (see report); this is obviously more central to the Master programme than it is to the Bachelor programme.

Condition 4 (standard 1.2; standard 1.3)

The module description has to be revised in order to meet international standards, this especially includes

- revised reading lists, including relevant international titles
- revised goals/aims of modules/learning outcomes.

Condition 5 (standard 1.3; standard 2.1)

The university has to set up a system that forwards the learning and using of foreign languages, especially English on the side of the teaching staff; the recommendation (20% to 40% of the courses in English language) is connected to this condition, other adequate human resource management measures (pay or career incentives) are conceivable.

Condition 6 - for Bachelor programme (standard 1.3)

The module line-up and structure has to be rearranged extensively (see chapter 2.1.2 (b) in the report on comprehensive details).

Condition 7 - for Master programme (standard 1.3)

The module line-up and structure has to be rearranged: at least one (new) module (in exchange to one to be removed or with two others merged) should explicitly be dedicated to theories and methods in (international) publishing research.