

Summary report on the accreditation of the study programmes in Cluster E at al-Farabi Kazakh National University in Almaty: Culturology (Bachelor, Master, PhD), Religious Studies (Bachelor, Master, PhD), Philosophy (PhD), Sociology (PhD)

Upon the request for accreditation of al-Farabi Kazakh National University from July 2013, AQ Austria conducted the accreditation procedure of the study programmes Culturology (Bachelor, Master, PhD), Religious Studies (Bachelor, Master, PhD), Philosophy (PhD), Sociology (PhD). 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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Culturology 2. Religious Studies 3. Philosophy 4. Sociology
Academic degrees	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bachelor of Humanities in Culturology 1. Master of Humanities in Culturology 1. PhD in Culturology 2. Bachelor of Humanities in Religious Studies

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Master of Humanities in Religious Studies 2. PhD in Religious Studies 3. PhD in Philosophy 4. PhD in Sociology
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2 Short information on the accreditation procedure

Al-Farabi KazNU submitted an application for accreditation of the study programmes Culturology (Bachelor, Master, PhD), Religious Studies (Bachelor, Master, PhD), Philosophy (PhD), Sociology (PhD) 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. Ayşe Çağlar	University of Vienna	Peer from academia
Prof. Dr. Martin Rothgangel	University of Vienna	Peer from academia
Prof. Dr. Bärbel Frischmann	University of Erfurt	Peer from academia
Prof. Dr. Roland Verwiebe	University of Vienna	Peer from academia, head of the Panel
Prof. Dr. Aigul Zabirova	L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Astana	Panel member from Kazakhstan
Miroslav Jašurek	Charles University Prague	Student panel member

A site visit at al-Farabi KazNU took place in Almaty from 25-26 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

Bachelor programmes in *Culturology* and *Religious Studies* are offered as full-time four-year programmes providing education based on the combination of theory and practice. Graduates of the Bachelor programmes are equipped with knowledge and skills to progress to Master degree study, or to take up the following careers (source: al-Farabi KazNU website: http://www.kaznu.kz/en/12743/page/Departments/Faculty_of_Philosophy_and_Political_Science/For_prospective_students_2013/).

Graduates of the Bachelor programme 'Culturology' are qualified to work as teachers in institutions of secondary education; at research and management institutions; in administration bodies; in the system of external relations of the state and public movements. They are also employable as specialists in the field of culture, consultants, and art critics in the organizations focusing on the issues of culture (museums, national cultural centres, etc.).

Graduates of the Bachelor programme 'Religious Studies' are qualified to work as consultants and experts for the Ministry of Internal Affairs, National Security Committee and the Prosecutor's office; employees of departments of internal and foreign policy, and the Committee on Religious Affairs; as independent experts of state, religious and public organizations; consultants on the issues of state-legal and church-state, inter-religious and inter-confessional relations; teachers at the institutions of secondary education.

Master programmes 'Culturology' and 'Religious Studies' are full-time two-year study programmes targeted at young professionals with different academic backgrounds, and are also open to graduates from respective undergraduate study programmes offered by al-Farabi University. In addition to the range of career paths open to Bachelor graduates, graduate employment opportunities include entry to higher level jobs in the public, private and non-governmental sectors, in particular junior teaching positions at higher education institutions and junior research positions at scientific research institutions. Graduates of the Master programmes are also qualified to pursue doctoral studies.

PhD programmes 'Culturology', 'Religious Studies', 'Philosophy', and 'Sociology' are full-time three-year study programmes delivered in three languages. The distinctive features of the programmes include cooperation of each PhD student with two academic supervisors (Kazakh and foreign), as well as a study abroad opportunity available to each student at the expense of the Kazakh Government.

Graduates of the PhD programme 'Philosophy' are qualified to teach Philosophy, Ethics, Logic, and other philosophical disciplines at higher education institutions and institutions of vocational education and training; to work in the public service (in the Administration of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Ministries, local administration bodies); in the scientific research and management institutions; in the bodies of analytical services of the National Security Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and the state authorities.

Graduates of the PhD programme 'Sociology' are qualified to work as teachers, specialists in social technology, analysts and managers of social projects; as marketers and researchers in the latest branches of big business and science; specialists in PR-campaigns, international projects and the personnel service; as experts of the public, non-governmental institutions and international funds; get employment in the public service (Administration of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Ministries, local administration bodies), as well as in the international projects and organizations.

4 Summarizing results from the assessments of the peers

Standard 1: Study programme and programme management

The current adaptation of ECTS used by al-Farabi KazNU in parallel with the Kazakh credit system does not fully embrace the ECTS principles of credit allocation and student workload calculation based on learning outcomes. The Diploma Supplement is not issued to the graduates of al-Farabi University.

In all the study programmes the admission requirements are clear and suitable. There is an excellent student-faculty ratio for the students of every study programme in the cluster, which easily matches with the elite universities in Europe. This is an important asset for the supervision of students and/or all the support the students get.

The relationship between the aims, the content, and the learning outcomes of the courses offered within the study programmes need to be harmonized in a better way: the content of the courses should illustrate a systematic encounter with the topic rather than a selection of readings where the logic of their selection remains opaque. In terms of syllabi and reading lists, the Panel observed gaps in terms of international literature.

Special attention should be given to examination methods which currently lack variation (a two hour written exam for all levels). The workload in the PhD programmes is found too heavy; students need more time to work on their individual PhD projects.

The course objectives in **Culturology** programmes are put in very general terms. The Bachelor programme, rather broad at the beginning, becomes clearer in the Modules for Individual Educational Trajectories, especially in preparing the students for a job market of applied culture. The Master programme is more focused in the sense that it provides education and training to the students for a clear job market in Cultural industries. The Master and PhD programmes are built upon an assumption that the students will be coming from the Bachelor programme in Culturology; thus, there are no overview courses on cultural studies to provide a critical stance to the current debates in Cultural Studies. All the Culturology programmes, especially the PhD programme, need more systematic and rigorous methods training. The student-faculty relations are very good in terms of the accessibility of professors for supervision and advice.

At first glance the curricula of the study programmes in **Religious Studies** (especially that of the Bachelor programme) give the impression that they include too much content matter which contributes to a lack of critical thinking. However, the interviews with the students showed an impressive output and reflected thoughts. The students' workload is devised in a way so as to allow them to reach the aspired qualification objectives in the study period specified. The zero-drop-out-rate shows, that the praxis of teaching is better than the first impressions of the theoretical explications of the study programme. On the practical level the study produces highly motivated students. The system has a good structure and there is an excellent cooperation between faculty supervisors and students, small classes etc.

The PhD programme in **Philosophy** aims at dealing with the specificity of Kazakh history and culture to support the understanding and critical reflection of the recent development and

search of the national identity. Thus, the study programme does not follow the Western strategy of providing PhD programmes in Philosophy either historically (main traditions and schools in Philosophy), concerning sub-disciplines (anthropology, ontology, epistemology, ethics, aesthetics, political, social, legal philosophy, etc.), or systematic questions (such as justice, truth, mind, identity, language). The study programme offers rather "Applied Philosophy" than general Philosophy. Due to this orientation al-Farabi KazNU PhD graduates have very good chances to get an adequate employment in research institutions, as teachers or in administrations. The programme may be attractive for students from abroad who are interested in Kazakh culture, history and philosophy.

The PhD programme in **Sociology** is a recognized Sociology school in Kazakhstan; programme is new but well established and active, it educates both researchers and practitioners. However, the Panel identified the following areas that need particular attention: the integration of the students and staff into the international scientific community, integration of students into the research work of the Department, the flexibility of the programme and provision of advanced methods training. Attempts towards the above mentioned are currently being made, and the Panel finds them to be a promising way to go. The faculty passionately care about their student's future and the quality of their education.

Standard 2: Staff

All the study programmes are well-staffed. However, there is no documentation of the mechanism of allocation of the Master and PhD students to supervisors. For this reason it is not possible to see whether or not there is a more or less even distribution.

Almost all the faculty of the Department of Religious and Cultural Studies come from within. In this context, there is need for transparent documentation of hiring procedures and most importantly to have members from other institutions in the hiring committees, which is not the case at al-Farabi KazNU. In theory, researchers have good organisational and financial possibilities for professional development due to well established governmental programmes such as 'Bolashak/Future'. They should try using these programmes more than they did in the past.

Standard 3: Quality assurance

The study programmes are supported by the university quality management system which includes the Center of Accreditation, Ranking and Quality Management. Al-Farabi Kazakh National University has institutionalised a regular evaluation of its study programmes and teachers' performance/courses via student surveys. The site visit provided evidence that the structure and content of study programmes are discussed at the level of Departments. Nevertheless, the Panel finds it essential to emphasize that all the Bachelor, Master and PhD programmes and their course designs need to go through a periodic evaluation.

It is important for quality issues to improve the Faculty and Departments' websites. There is only very little information on staff, research, publications, teaching, etc. available in English and Russian.

Standard 4: Funding and infrastructure

Acknowledging the impressive funding of the PhD programmes through the government investments, the Panel does not have a clear idea how and who deals with the PhD



programmes' funding at the university level: the documentation on the funding of the study programmes was not made available to the Panel.

Regarding the library facilities, positive is the amount of textbooks for students; improvable is the amount of literature in English and other foreign languages in social sciences and **Religious Studies**. There is access to Scopus and Elsevier, though JSTORE, EBSCO, etc. are not available for PhD study at al-Farabi KazNU.

Standard 5: Research

From the European perspective, the amount of research activities and modules that deal with Kazakhstan issues are surprisingly high. Most books/articles are published in the national arena.

The high number of teaching staff makes it possible to integrate students into research projects. Collaboration with two supervisors, Kazakh and foreign, as well as the study abroad opportunities funded by the government opens good chances to learn international standards in research and get access to international publication possibilities. However, the Panel encourages the university to push the idea that PhD students take courses abroad (not just work at library and have few consultations with co-advisors/professors), which could substantially enhance the quality of the research stay abroad.

Standard 6: National and international co-operations

The students of the PhD study programmes under review have interesting placements and research stays abroad. This is very promising. However, international co-operations (number, scope, quality) need to be improved (e.g. via bilateral agreements with similar departments in Western European countries, Russia, Turkey, the USA). Staff inward mobility should be fostered, in particular through a more active use of the opportunities of the governmental programme "Visiting International Professor". This will increase the chances for the staff to get involved in international research projects. Outward mobility of staff should be made regular. The selection requirements should be clear and available.

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 Humanities in Culturology**", "**Master of Humanities in Culturology**" and "**PhD in Culturology**" at al-Farabi KazNU in Almaty, Kazakhstan, do **not 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 denies accreditation to the programmes.

Reasons for denial are founded on content and organisational-wise issues:

- The objectives of the study programmes on all levels are not coherent with the contents in the curriculum. Vice versa this means that the course offers cannot be regarded to meet the objectives of the study programmes "Culturology" (standard 1.2; standard 1.3; standard 1.5).
- The intended learning outcomes on the all levels do not consider the development of the students' competence towards critical analysis. There is no evidence that the courses offered within the frame of the "Culturology" programmes include respective contents (standard 1.2).
- The PhD programme does not correspond to the demands of a corresponding programme due to its narrow specialisation (standard 1.2; standard 1.5).



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

1) The programmes "**Bachelor of Humanities in Religious Studies**", "**Master of Humanities in Religious Studies**" and "**PhD in Religious Studies**" 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. The workload must be defined and calculated.

Condition 2 (standard 1.8)

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

Condition 3 (standard 1.3)

The quality of reading lists must be improved and the share of international literature must be enhanced.

Condition 4 (standard 1.7)

Higher variation of examination methods in the Bachelor, Master and especially in PhD programme must be introduced.

Condition 5 (standard 3.1; standard 3.2)

A concept must be provided of how the department ensures that the Bachelor, Master and PhD programmes and their course designs (the match between the objectives and the course material) are subject to a periodic evaluation to harmonize the curricula and how systematic quality assurance of the course syllabi is guaranteed.

Condition 6 (standard 4.1)

Documentation on the competitive funding allocation between 2011-2013 among the study programmes, departments and funds available to students must be provided.

Condition 7 (standard 1.2; standard 2.1; standard 5.1)



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The department's website must be improved. Adequate information on the pillars of research activities, staff, publications, teaching and the recruitment process of students, etc. (in English and Russian as well) must be published.



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

1) The programme "**PhD in Philosophy**" at al-Farabi KazNU in Almaty, Kazakhstan, **meets 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 programme for a period of six years, i.e. until 13th May 2020.

3) The Board of AQ Austria notes that the programme meets 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.

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Condition 7 (standard 1.2; standard 1.3; standard 1.5)

Modules must be improved concerning a) the philosophical relevance of contents/objectives, b) the adequacy, selection and actuality of the Reading lists, c) the consistency of module-



description, d) the matching between module-title and the description of content and intended learning outcomes.

Condition 8 (standard 1.3)

The quality of the reading lists concerning the matching between objectives/goals and recommended literature, as well as the actuality of recommended literature, must be reviewed and improved.

Condition 9 (standard 1.3)

More English-speaking literature (or even other languages, if appropriate) must be included in the reading offers.

Condition 10 (standard 1.2; standard 1.5)

The philosophical point of view must be strengthened by providing a clearer description with regard to philosophical issues, questions and concepts including epistemological questions, systematic connections and framing, critical reflections of concepts.

Condition 11 (standard 1.2; standard 1.5)

International philosophical developments and traditions must be included into the course contents, not only Turkic philosophy.



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

1) The programme "**PhD in Sociology**" at al-Farabi KazNU in Almaty, Kazakhstan, does **not 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 denies accreditation to the programme.

Reasons for denial are founded on content-wise issues of the study programme:

- The objectives of the study programme do not correspond with the expectations towards a PhD programme in Sociology and respective standards within the Bologna area (standard 1.2; standard 1.3; standard 1.13.1).
- Relevant competences for PhD students are not referred to in the learning outcomes of the programme (standard 1.2).