



Accreditation of study programmes KIMEP University Economics

At its 16th meeting on 3rd September 2013, the Board of AQ Austria **decided to grant accreditation** to the programmes

"Bachelor of Arts in Economics"

"Master of Arts in Economics"

at KIMEP University in Almaty, Kazakhstan for a period of five years, **under the following condition**. The fulfilment of the condition must be documented in writing within nine months (i.e. until 3rd of June 2014) and is subject to assessment by AQ Austria. In case of non-fulfilment, the accreditation will be withdrawn immediately.

Condition

Two additional permanent faculty members must be appointed to the Faculty of Economics through an adequate selection procedure.



Agency for
Quality Assurance
and Accreditation
Austria

Report of the review team

Bachelor of Arts in Economics

Master of Arts in Economics

KIMEP University

8 July 2013

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1 General information

KIMEP University mandated AQ Austria with the accreditation of the Bachelor and Master programmes in Economics.

These two study programmes of the same discipline are assessed in the following report. The report includes statements on the Bachelor resp. the Master programme, where deviations require different descriptions.

The assessments of the Bachelor and the Master programmes are strictly separated.

1.1 Basic principles of the procedure

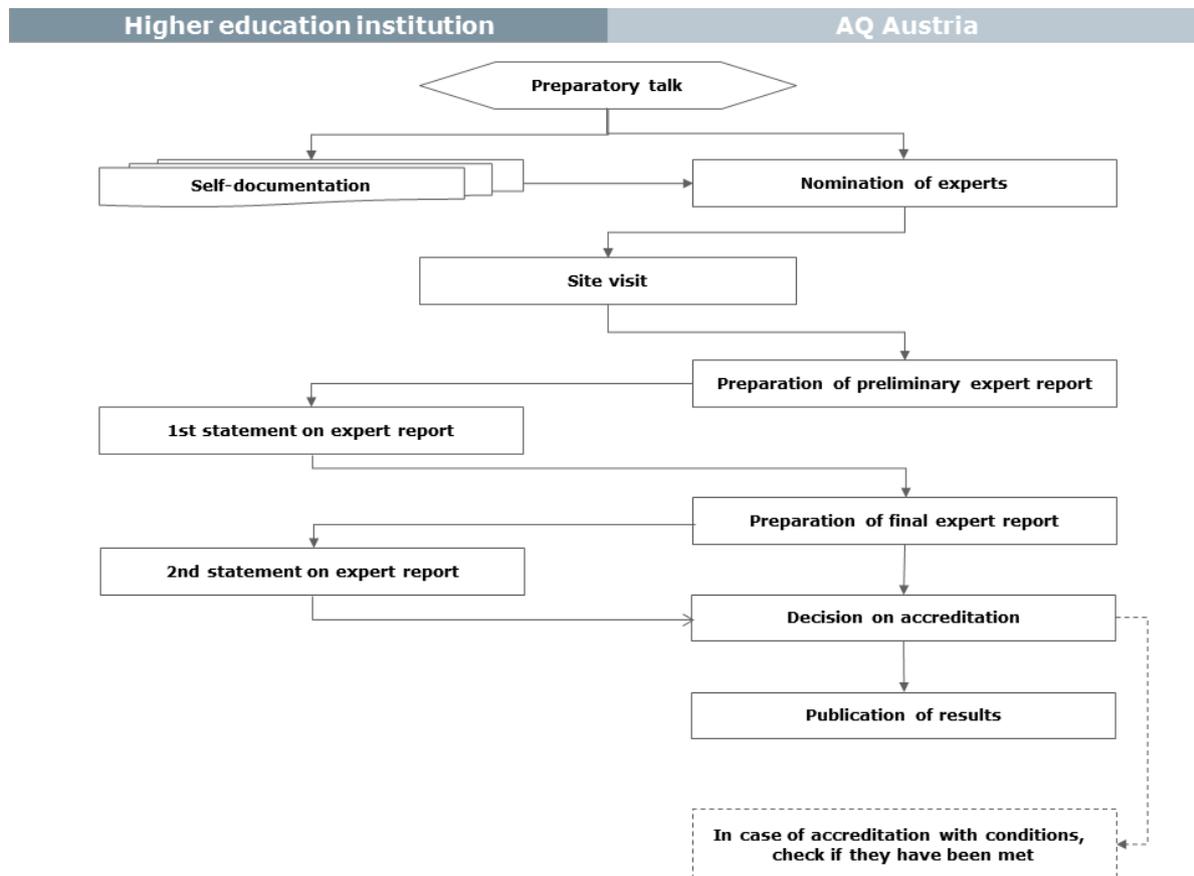
AQ Austria is the Austrian agency for quality assurance and accreditation in higher education. The agency is operating in Austria and other countries of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). It is committed to serving the common good and is based on the values of the European Higher Education Area, in particular the autonomy and diversity of higher education institutions and independent quality assurance.

AQ Austria has been admitted to the "Register of accreditation agencies" by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan to carry through accreditation procedures of study programmes at higher education institutions in Kazakhstan.

By granting international accreditation to a study programme, AQ Austria confirms its compliance with European quality standards. These standards are derived from the principles laid down in the Bologna Process and the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG).

Standard 1	Qualification objectives
Standard 2	Content and design
Standard 3	Academic feasibility
Standard 4	Examination system
Standard 5	Resources
Standard 6	Transparency and documentation
Standard 7	Quality assurance and development
Standard 8	Equal opportunities
Standard 9	Programme-related co-operation

The accreditation pursues the principles of a peer-review and follows the procedural steps:



The expert report and the higher education institution's statement constitute the basis for the accreditation decision, which is taken by the 14-members-board of AQ Austria. There are three options for the decision:

Accreditation without conditions

The quality requirements are being met. Any recommendations given in the expert opinion are supposed to help the higher education institution continuously develop the study programme. The agency grants the accreditation for a period of five years.

Accreditation with conditions

Deficiencies have been detected which are likely to be corrected within nine months. The higher education institution proves that the conditions have been met, and this will be verified by AQ Austria.

Denial of accreditation

Serious deficiencies have been detected which are not likely to be corrected within nine months.

If the accreditation decision is positive, AQ Austria will issue a certificate to the higher education institution.

1.2 Profile and concept of the study programmes and brief description of KIMEP

The following information derives from the self-evaluation report of KIMEP resp. its website.

Bachelor of Arts in Economics

Date of introduction:	August 1999
Regular study period:	8 semesters
Number of ECTS credits:	240
Majors:	Business Economics Financial Economics

Goals of the programme:

- to teach students how to analyse social and economic systems;
- to give students flexibility in thinking;
- to give students flexibility in their career choice.

The programme's objectives are to ensure that graduates have:

- knowledge of core concepts and theories of economics sciences and the ability to put them into perspective, that is to compare their predictions and to critically assess their applicability in different circumstances;
- ability to structure and analyse situations and to critically assess and evaluate solutions;
- relevant practical skills to establish relationships between economic variables;
- ability to communicate ideas and information clearly and effectively in oral and written English;
- ability to work effectively with others in the pursuit of common objectives.

Upon successful completion of the programme, graduates will be able to:

- describe the core threshold concepts and basic economic principles;
- use economic concepts and techniques and apply them to solve problems and make decisions;
- describe the standard approach to human behaviour in economics and derive predictions;
- describe and apply economic concepts and techniques to evaluate and compare the welfare effects of policy alternatives and of institutions which govern social interactions, support arguments and viewpoints;
- describe economic theories relating to the behaviour of economic aggregates and derive predictions;
- describe and apply economic concepts and techniques to recommend policies and institutional arrangements which govern macroeconomic variables and support arguments and viewpoints;
- critically reflect on the problems and conditions of the Kazakh and Central Asian Economies;
- formulate a research question, empirically implement it and statistically evaluate the results;
- independently undertake research or scholarly enquiry.

Master of Arts in Economics

Date of introduction:	August 1992
Regular study period:	3 semesters
Number of ECTS credits:	90

The objectives of the programme are:

- to provide its graduates with a strong foundation in economic knowledge, both theoretical and applied, that is required to advance their professional careers or to continue their studies in doctoral programmes in economics or in related disciplines;
- to ensure its graduates possess the analytic skills that are necessary in the workplace whether as managers or as economic analysts for business, government, and non-profit organisations.

Upon completion of the programme, graduates will have:

- understanding of how a free market economy organises production and exchanges between competing entities;
- understanding of how the national economy works and how its performance is measured;
- ability to evaluate macroeconomic policies;
- analytical reasoning skills;
- effective problem solving skills;
- understanding of the economic issues of Kazakhstan and Central Asia.

KIMEP University

KIMEP was founded as the Kazakhstan Institute of Management, Economics, and Strategic Research by a resolution of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, in January 1992. In February 2012 the Institute was granted university status. A non-profit joint-stock company, KIMEP University is overseen by an independent Board of Trustees elected by its shareholders.

KIMEP University is the largest American-style coeducational higher education institution in Central Asia serving a multicultural, multinational student body. Students at KIMEP University come from 25 different countries, including Kazakhstan, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, the USA, the UK, Germany, China and Korea. Current annual enrolment on all programmes is about 4,000. Approximately 85% of currently enrolled students are undergraduates (Business, Economics, Public and Municipal Administration, Journalism, International Relations and Regional Studies, Jurisprudence), with 15% studying on Masters (Business Administration, Economics, Public Administration International Law, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, International Journalism and Mass Communication, International Relations) and Doctoral (Business Administration) programmes. All degree programmes at KIMEP are delivered in English.

According to the American-style credit system, originally adopted by KIMEP University, one credit-hour (a KIMEP credit) is equal to 15 teaching hours with the expectation that a further 30 hours will be spent by students on independent study. Thus, the graduation requirement for a Master's degree varies between 36 and 60 KIMEP credits, depending on programme duration. To harmonize the University's credit system with the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), it was determined in 2011 that one ECTS credit equals 27 learning hours, i.e. the workload of a 3 KIMEP-credit course is equal to a 5 ECTS-credit course.

In March 2010, Kazakhstan became the 47th state to join the Bologna Process, and for the last few years the country has been modernizing its higher education system by applying the

main principles of the European framework including the three cycle degree system and a credit accumulation system.

1.3 Accreditation procedure at KIMEP

KIMEP University mandated AQ Austria with the accreditation of the Bachelor programme in Economics and the Master programme in Economics in January 2013 after preparatory discussions during autumn 2012.

Timetable of the accreditation procedure

Procedural step	Date
Delivery of self-evaluation reports by KIMEP	8 February 2013
Decision on review team members by the board of AQ Austria	12 February 2013
Preparatory skype meeting of the review team	5 April 2013
Site-visit at KIMEP by review team	2-3 May 2013
1 st draft of the report of the review team	5 June 2013
Formal statement by KIMEP	21 June 2013
Final report of the review team	8 July 2013
Statement on the final report by KIMEP	20 July 2013
Accreditation decision by board of AQ Austria	3 September 2013

Members of the review team

Name	Institution	Role
Prof. Dr. Christian Arndt	University Nuertingen-Geislingen (HfWU)	Reviewer from academia
Liliya Ivanova	University of National and World Economy, Sofia	Student reviewer
Zhanat Kumisbekuly Myrzakhmet	Eurasian National University, Astana	Reviewer with professional experience
Prof. Dr. Hans-Michael Trautwein	Carl von Ossietzky University Oldenburg	Reviewer from academia, head of the review team

AQ Austria Coordinator

Zhanna Kuzminykh

2 Assessment results

2.1 Standard 1: Qualification objectives

The study programmes for the Bachelor of Economics (BAE) and the Master of Economics (MAE) at KIMEP University are comparable and compatible with the standard BAE and MAE programmes at European universities in the Bologna Process. As a four-years programme with a total of 240 ECTS and a three-semester programme with a total of 90 ECTS, respectively, the programmes are comprehensively oriented towards enabling graduates to analyse social and economic systems, to perform empirical research with a focus on the economies of the region, and to apply the results of their learning and research to the assessment of problem solutions and policy strategies.

The first year of the BAE programme offers a relatively broad range of subjects, compared to standard European BAE programmes. It contains elements of general education and language courses that appear to be well motivated with regard to the educational background and multilingual environments of the region. The course programme in all four years is characterized by a well-founded and generous combination of required courses and electives. The approach is multidisciplinary rather than interdisciplinary. While it is possible for students to do some "independent studies", there is little room for subject-related research-oriented learning across disciplines and subdisciplines. The MAE programme contains relatively few electives, yet the range of subjects is sufficient and adequate for Master level studies. The contents and the modes of teaching in the modules ensure that students of the BAE and MAE programmes can acquire the theoretical, methodical and communicative skills that help them to develop their capacity for independent analysis, critical thinking and self-responsible time management.

In the interviews, BAE and MAE students and alumni have emphasized the aforementioned aspects as a distinctive motive for their choice of studying at KIMEP. Other motives for MAE students and alumni were the compatibility of their studies with simultaneous employment in local companies, authorities or other institutions. It has also been pointed out that, in the perspective of many graduates from Kazakhstani or other Central Asian universities the MAE programme at KIMEP provides an adequate substitute for graduate studies at universities in North America and Europe. Both BAE and MAE students and alumni expressed a high degree of satisfaction with KIMEP's layout of qualification objectives. The self-selection bias in such panels notwithstanding, the responses of all interviewees have made it obvious to the review team that the qualification objectives of KIMEP's BAE and MAE programmes are not just lofty words. They are consequently pursued by KIMEP's faculty members, management and other staff.

The study programme of KIMEP's BAE is constructed in such a way that, whatever the student's individual choice of courses, it should confer the competencies required for taking up employment as an economist, not only in Kazakhstan but also in other parts of the world. Since its inception, KIMEP appears to have oriented its study programmes towards international standards, both in terms of academic training and in terms of career orientation outside academia. Internships are a substantial part of the BAE programme, and they provide various channels for communication with the regional business communities, authorities and other potential employers. In many cases they appear to lead to later recruitment in the company, authority or other organisation in which the placement was done.

The MAE programme at KIMEP confers the competencies required for employment as an economist in Kazakhstan as well as in other parts of the world. Many of the MAE students have already found employment by the time when they take up their studies. They wish to improve their knowledge and career perspectives by taking the MAE degree.

The impressive employment record of KIMEP graduates provides clear evidence for well-focused BAE and MAE programmes that reduce the risks of mismatch in the relevant segment of the regional labour market.

The BAE programme complies with the standard.
The MAE programme complies with the standard.

2.2 Standard 2: Content and design

The study programmes of BAE and MAE at KIMEP comply with the national educational legislation. However, it is not possible to assess the degree of the programmes' compliance with the National Qualification Framework (NQF) at this point of time. Although the NQF was approved jointly by the Ministry of Education and Science and Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan in November 2012, it is still not publicly available. But KIMEP has shown to be willing and able to react to changes in the national requirements in due time. Recently, even during this accreditation process, KIMEP has adjusted parts of its MAE programme to changes in the national requirements that have been issued by the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) for the 2013 License Grant. Nevertheless, frequent changes of national requirements have been reported in the interviews. The review team observes that this is complicating the achievement of compliance with national requirements and therefore is also raising the adjustment costs for KIMEP. The valuable resources consumed within this process could be used elsewhere (see subsection 2.5).

Kazakhstan joined the European Higher Education Area in 2010. In general, content and design of the core economic part of the BAE and MAE programmes meet the recommendations of the European Commission with regard to the use of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). However, KIMEP University's graduation requirements are under its various programme licenses specified in MES credits, which are largely, but not entirely, specified in terms of teaching hours. KIMEP University cannot unilaterally adopt the ECTS under its institutional license.

At KIMEP, one ECTS credit equals to 27 learning-hours, fitting well in the required range between 25 and 30 working hours per ECTS credit. Furthermore, KIMEP has introduced a Harmonization System in order to be able to freely interchange the American-style teaching-hours-credits traditionally used at KIMEP with the ECTS credits. Three KIMEP credits, each equal to 45 learning-hours, are exchanged with five ECTS credits, each equal to 27 learning hours. Finally, KIMEP complies with the European standard to assign ECTS credits to internships, since internships are compulsory parts of the BAE and MAE curricula.

Unfortunately, the Diploma Supplement (DS) is not provided by KIMEP, on the grounds that it is not required by the Ministry of Education and Science. It is strongly recommended that KIMEP provide a proper DS for the BAE and MAE programmes in order to comply with the recommendations of the European Commission. A proper DS accompanies a higher education diploma, providing a standardized description of the nature, level, context, content and status

of the studies completed by its holder (http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/ds_en.htm).

There are different approaches to allocating ECTS credits that have been recommended: KIMEP is currently using the one in which the teaching staff defines the learning outcomes of each programme component and then expresses the estimated workload in ECTS credits. An alternative to this procedure consists in standardising of the size of educational components, which are then typically called *modules* and are allocated the same credit value each (e.g. 5) or multiples of it. This second approach can facilitate mobility within nation states and in exchange with European universities. KIMEP may consider proposing such a modularized system to the other Kazakhstani universities.

The share of the non-economic part of the BAE programme is relatively high, as noted already in subsection 2.1. This high share is due to requirements of the Ministry of Education and Science and KIMEP's dual strategy of following the American system alongside with the European. A reduction of the share of the non-economics part would conflict with national educational legislation, as mentioned above. The total workload implied by the overall 240 ECTS credits of the BAE programme ensures that the economic content is sufficient in absolute terms.

The BAE programme partly complies with the standard.
The MAE programme partly complies with the standard.

In its first statement KIMEP placed the following comment: "The issuance of Diploma Supplements has yet to be mandated by the MES, however, KIMEP University will be providing its graduates with Diploma Supplements from 2013-14". The review team regards this comment as a helpful clarification but would like to emphasize that the recommendation given with regard to the issue concerned remains valid.

2.3 Standard 3: Academic feasibility

English test results are of utmost importance in the expected entry qualifications, and this is fully justified with regard to the key role that English plays in teaching and all communication at KIMEP. However, for the KIMEP English Entrance Test (KEET) requirements for national and international students differ considerably, with a minimum score of 35 for local applicants and 60 for international applicants. KIMEP should either present concise arguments for such differential treatment and make these reasons transparent, or apply the same minimum standard.

The design of the BAE and MAE curricula is generally suitable, in particular with regard to enhancing the self-responsibility and research skills of students. The workload is plausible, also in regard to the number and organisation of examinations. The mentoring system mentioned in the self-evaluation materials is not to be confused with continuous academic tutoring, but it provides guidance on demand with regard to the choice of electives and other academic issues. Faculty members are easily accessible for students during office hours and otherwise, more than in other higher education institutions in the country. This has been especially emphasized by BAE students and alumni in the interviews.

In the interview with the review team MAE students confirmed that the workload is feasible even for those students who work full-time besides their studies. Course schedules are

adjusted to their needs and, due to the fee-per-credit system, there is sufficient flexibility for extending the duration of studies if required. Faculty members are easily accessible for students, and they provide sufficient guidance in academic matters.

Support services are quite comprehensive, in particular with regard to financial matters and career guidance, which is strength of KIMEP, emphasized by staff, and highly valued by students and alumni.

The overall share of regular students from other countries enrolled at KIMEP is about ten per cent, with a strong weight of students from neighbouring countries (Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan) as well as South Korea. This underlines KIMEP's strength as a leading institution in business- and economics-related higher education in the region. On paper, international student exchange appears to be well-organised and relatively well established, with many cooperations in a large number of countries (meticulously documented in the Factbook vol. 7 of Fall 2012, pp. 20-23). The overall ratio of outgoing to incoming students is acceptable at 131:80 in 2011-12. All of this appears to hold proportionally for the BAE programme. However, greater degrees of symmetry and sustainability could be reached by creating a more welcoming atmosphere for incoming students. This could be achieved by transparent and efficient routines for course assignments (e.g. by way of learning agreements) and by Buddy programmes.

The overall ratio of outgoing and incoming students appears to hold as well for the MAE programme, even though the short duration of the programme and job duties makes it difficult for many Master's students to go abroad. It is therefore all the more important that KIMEP offers incentives for internationalization by way of dual degree programmes with Humboldt University (Berlin), Yonsei University (Seoul) and other partners. In dual degree programmes course assignments tend to be preorganised, but there may be a need for a more transparent course organisation for other incoming students and personal support, e.g. by Buddy programmes.

The BAE programme partly complies with the standard.
The MAE programme partly complies with the standard.

2.4 Standard 4: Examination system

The teaching staff of KIMEP is assigned with the responsibility to assess the students in light of the intended learning outcomes (ILO) grid designed for each of the two programmes, BAE and MAE. The methodology used for assessment is extensively and clearly described in the syllabi of the two programmes, which are accessible and understandable for the students as confirmed by them. The syllabi themselves and the course assessment methodology are reviewed on a regular basis as part of the internal QA system functioning in KIMEP.

The main aim of both MAE and BAE programmes is to develop independent thinking and research skills. Therefore, the programmes contain research methodology-related courses that are designed with the aim to build these skills. In most of the courses students write term papers based on small projects with empirical research components and statistical data analysis. An essential part of the BAE curricula are the academic writing and methodology courses since, after completion of secondary education, school leavers do not usually possess any research skills. The research skills are finally assessed through the Bachelor and Master theses that students prepare at the end of the corresponding study cycles. The Master thesis

is defended in front of a defence committee, consisting of a committee chair, the faculty advisers and two other faculty members. The assessment criteria and the thesis writing regulations are regarded as clear and transparent by the students. Plagiarism is still a challenge that the programme management takes measures to overcome by checking contents in the Web as well as by introducing a policy for combating academic dishonesty.

The examination organisation is administratively supported by the Office of the Registrar. Normally one final examination is conducted in each course. It covers the entire course content and has a weight of 40% when forming the final mark. The remaining 60% are formed on the basis of other course assessment components like participation, attendance, midterm exams, presentations and other assignments. KIMEP has a coherent policy against examination cheating. Definitions of cheating and the respective punishments are outlined in the annual KIMEP University Catalogue, which is accessible for the students and they are aware of it. KIMEP also has developed a transparent appeal procedure, which students are familiar with. Exam records are kept and students are able to receive extra clarifications on them.

The review team considers that the examination system of KIMEP is overall adequate. However, a certain inconsistency is created by the obligatory state exam which is conducted every five years as a compulsory part of the state attestation procedure. The content of the exam is partly inconsistent with the aims and objectives of the two programmes. In the interviews it has become evident that it is common at KIMEP (as well as in the other universities in Kazakhstan) to submit the students to special trainings for this procedure, which is imposing additional pressure and workload on students and is not aimed at the core qualification objectives. Finally, this additional stress is distributed unevenly across the cohorts of the students. The appeal procedure here is also unclear.

Another problematic issue for the students is the uncertainty in terms of the assessment of intended learning outcomes (ILO) in elective subjects, occurring mostly in the BAE programme. After each year students have several elective subjects to choose in between for the next year. The elective courses are delivered only if the required minimum of students attending them is ensured. Hence students cannot be sure if they will have the subjects they have selected. Also, if a student fails the final exam in a certain elective subject it is not clear if he/she will be able to retake the exam during the next term since this particular course might not be available then. An option for the students in this situation is to go into independent form of study in this subject. In the BAE programme this can happen only once, whereas in MAE two opportunities are given for all courses (not only electives). This might eventually lead to a prolongation of the study period and increase the financial burden of the students. It is recommended that at the end of each semester, both in the MAE and BAE programmes, administration conduct surveys about the courses students plan to attend during the next semester, and then propose only these courses as elective subjects. Thus students will be sure that the courses they select will be delivered. Furthermore, an option for retaking an exam in the elective subjects should be ensured if the student has attended the course, regardless whether or not the course will be delivered during the next semester.

The BAE programme partly complies with the standard.
The MAE programme complies with the standard.

2.5 Standard 5: Resources

The funding of the BA and MA Economics programmes at KIMEP University is entirely based on tuition fees. In general, the fees appear to be sufficient for providing high-quality teaching, the required technical facilities and premises, an excellent library, and a substantial share of financial support to students in need. Even though the numbers of enrolled students dropped significantly in recent years due to a confluence of demographic change with the great financial crisis, the high standards have been sustained. To bridge the gaps, but largely also to compensate for inflation, tuition fees have been increased at substantial rates in annual intervals. Students' problems in coping with these raises have been eased by instalment options and financial support. In the interviews, students have nevertheless complained about the lack of transparency with regard to the pricing policies of KIMEP. It is strongly recommended that the planning uncertainty at the outset of the students' study period is reduced by the introduction of inflation-adjustment clauses and other information that makes KIMEP's fee policy more transparent and reliable.

An outstanding aspect of the Economics study programmes at KIMEP is the research orientation of learning at all levels. In this regard it is highly recommendable that KIMEP follows its plan of setting up the research centre CEPD. This will serve to coordinate and intensify research inside the economics department and in cooperation with other partners. It should also help to make economic research at KIMEP more visible at the domestic and international levels, increasing the attractiveness of the institution for internationally active researchers. All this is expected to have beneficial effects on the quality of teaching at Bachelor's and Master's level, not to speak of the PhD programmes that are envisaged.

In this context it should also be mentioned that KIMEP has made research qualification a decisive criterion in the recruitment of academic staff. The records of publications and other activities bear positive evidence for the selection procedures. In recent years KIMEP has also made it mandatory to acquire an internationally recognized doctoral degree for being employed as full-time senior academic staff. Teachers without such degrees have been reduced to the status of adjunct lecturers and encouraged to take study leave for earning their PhD degrees at universities in North America and Western Europe. Currently three out of twelve faculty members in the Department of Economics are on study leave.

This observation leads to the weak point in the resource endowment of the BAE and MAE programmes at KIMEP. Currently there are only six full-time, one part-time and two adjunct faculty members involved in the regular teaching. The standard teaching load is four courses with 45 hours each per term, adding up to an annual teaching load of approximately 360 hours. In addition to the regular semesters it is expected that faculty members – at least some of them for some of the time – teach (with extra remuneration) in the optional intensive summer semesters. A few reductions of the teaching load are in place as remissions for administrative duties, but the overall teaching load is far too high, approximately 50 per cent higher than the standard in European universities with research-oriented study programmes. In addition, considerable time of the teaching staff – probably above the European average – is invested in office hours, supervisory activities and other supporting service for students. A further burden for faculty members is frequent course rotation at short notice, due to the organisation and cancellation of courses at short notice. This puts an extra strain on the teaching staff, especially on the younger faculty members who do not have a large teaching portfolio yet and need relatively more time to build their research careers. It is obvious that

the current faculty members have had to struggle very hard in recent years to keep up the high quality of teaching, not to speak of their research.

The current excess burden on the teaching staff may be a situation to be accepted temporarily. It is largely caused by the study leave of a quarter of the staff (though this could have been compensated by the temporary hiring of additional staff) and by the recent drop in student numbers, which also reduces the teacher/student ratio and hence alleviates the burdens of examination and supervision. However, in view of the challenges of transforming into an institution that is even more research-oriented than it has been in the past, the present situation is not sustainable. KIMEP management has announced that procedures have been started to hire two additional professors (full and/or associate), and it is expected that at least two of the faculty members currently on study leave will return to their positions at KIMEP after earning their PhD degrees (then being promoted to the status of assistant professors). If the number of active faculty members is thus raised to the range of 11-14 in the very near future, the teaching load will be sustainable and compatible with the required capacity for research – otherwise not.

In order to assure a high quality of continuous research and teaching it is set as a condition that the teaching loads for the members of the Department of Economics are substantially reduced, in particular through the planned augmentation of the Department's staff by two permanent faculty members. It is strongly recommended that the standard teaching load be reduced to three courses. This would be more in line with comparable institutions in the European Union. If this cannot be achieved as a standard, at least the effective teaching load (over an average of three years) should be reduced to three courses by way of teaching remissions, research sabbaticals and other measures. Junior faculty members should be given some priority since they need relatively more time to build their research careers. There should be a plan for remissions, sabbaticals etc. that permits an assessment of compliance with the effective three-course target over a three-years period. The plan should make a clear incentive-compatible link between reductions in teaching and corresponding augmentation of research and research-related "management" (e.g. time required for applications for external funding and extra communication duties in terms of reports, extra-mural presentations etc.).

Besides the time to be set aside for research there is also the need for more financial resources to enable faculty members at all stages to participate more intensively in international conferences and research cooperations. Currently faculty members have budgets that suffice, at best, for only one conference participation per year. This is far too little to become and stay competitive and cooperative by international standards. Given that the present teaching burdens make it well-nigh impossible to draft project applications for drawing in external funding, some extra endowments from KIMEP management in favour of the Department of Economics may be required in the first period. Once the CEPD research centre is established and larger research time budgets allow for the attraction of project funding, faculty members may be better equipped to finance travelling expenses and other research-related activities from subsidiary sources in the department or the research centre.

The BAE programme partly complies with the standard.
The MAE programme partly complies with the standard.

2.6 Standard 6: Transparency and documentation

KIMEP has a transparent documentation system that is aiming adequately at different target groups. First of all, the website provides a thorough documentation. An impressive collection of diverse data issues such as statistics on the student body (admission, enrolment, graduation and participation in the KIMEP Student Association, KSA), faculty body (number, research activity), financial aid and fees, and university finances, is regularly compiled in the so called Fact Book (Volume 7 from fall 2012 is the most recent version). However, it would be good practice for KIMEP to publish not only names but also contact details of students elected to student representative bodies in the KSA section of the KIMEP web site, and to update this section annually after every student body elections. In addition to this, information should be provided on which particular university body/committee each KSA representative sits on behalf of the student cohort.

For students seeking information about syllabi or course material there is a storage drive that is simply accessible from the campus LAN. It is commonly called "L-Drive" after the drive letter assignment in the MS OS. KIMEP staff is storing learning material, examination criteria etc. in folders on this drive. Students said in the interviews that they are making intensive use of this source of information and also proved that they know how to access it. More channels of communication have been established (Student Support Center, International Student Association, clubs).

The fact that there are no student observers present on the committees that are responsible for the allocation of scholarships and the hiring of new professors, is not in line with the European standard. The outcomes of the scholarship allocation are nevertheless disclosed regularly. In this regard, transparency of the process of grant awarding and the hiring of new professors should be improved by allowing student observers into the committees responsible for scholarships allocation and the hiring of new professors.

The BAE programme complies with the standard.
The MAE programme complies with the standard.

2.7 Standard 7: Quality assurance and development

Developing a culture of quality to support the key processes in a higher education institution is a difficult and demanding task. In the context of the Kazakhstani higher education system, external influences play a major role. The National Education Law sets some important conditions related to the alignment of the national legislation with the Bologna process without fully succeeding in implementing it so far while at the same time significantly restrict academic freedom. This inconsistency of the legislative framework forms some obstacles for the development of quality culture on institutional level. Nevertheless in the case of KIMEP, the overall spirit of the quality assurance (QA) experts and the QA department is clearly such of improving the institution and striving for excellence. The institutional management and QA experts have invested a lot of efforts into developing an internal QA data collection centre, Department of Institutional Research (DIR). The current version of the QA manual demonstrates that an overarching system that encompasses all core processes has been created. Thus the quality management mechanisms of the BAE and MAE programmes have been successfully integrated into the quality management system of the entire university.

At present, the internal institutional quality assurance system is strongly relying on the feedback processes the outcomes of which are collected and analysed by DIR. The unit was originally set up as a research centre but in 2005 reorganised into DIR. KIMEP started using self-assessment surveys as a main tool in the internal QA system following the American experience. DIR conducts an online student survey of teaching four times per year (Spring, Fall, and two Summer semesters). Each questionnaire consists of three parts: faculty member teaching performance, syllabus quality, quality of class sessions. The response rate reaches 30-60 %. Surveys are conducted on a voluntary basis and are anonymous. The department also conducts student satisfaction surveys – once a year, to assess quality of services (dormitories, library, registrar office work); faculty satisfaction survey - once a year. Employers' survey is also conducted once in four years. Alumni surveys are annually organised for graduates an year after their graduation. The later ones are conducted with assistance from the Corporate Development Department and reach 50-60 % response rate. The collected data reflects critical comments and suggestion from the respondents (students, staff, alumni, employers). The survey results are directly presented to faculty members by the Heads of Departments, which are expected to take measures for ensuring a proper follow-up of the issues raised by the DIR report.

All questionnaires are developed by DIR and later on their content is discussed at the Academic Council and also consulted with the KIMEP Student Association (KSA). After DIR has collected and analysed the data, an official report is prepared which is then published on KIMEP website in a generalised form with no personal details about the faculty members. The results of the data collection are directly reported to the Vice President of Strategic Planning, Development and Research in addition to the report to Heads of Departments. Regular conduction of focus groups is used as a tool for monitoring the effects from the internal QA system (Bachelor and Master students, academic staff, and administration).

The establishment of a performance-based reward system with corresponding appeal procedures that ensure its fairness could further increase the effectiveness of the internal QA system.

The KIMEP students who met the review team were satisfied with the overall communicative atmosphere related to the quality enhancement of the two programmes and generally confirmed that the official evaluation forms are effectively used in this regard. Some students were not sure, however, whether and how the feedback outcomes are used. In order to ensure the balance between the internal and external QA system, it is essential that the outcomes of QA interventions continue to be communicated to staff and students regularly so that feedback loops are closed and the QA system is demonstrated to be effective as well as meaningful.

The BAE programme complies with the standard.
The MAE programme complies with the standard.

2.8 Standard 8: Equal opportunities

The gender ratio of students of the BAE and the MAE programmes, as shown in the student profiles provided by KIMEP, as well as observed on site in the talks with the students and alumni, is well-balanced. It is at a level of around 50% and has been stable in the last years. This also applies to the KIMEP staff in general. But since there is no single woman among the (admittedly small number of) full professors in the Economics Department, initiatives should

be taken to attract qualified candidates and increase the number of women among full professors, when hiring new professors, as stipulated in subsection 2.5.

Students have attested that students with disabilities are well integrated, from part of the students as well as from part of the university. E.g. it is possible to call a number for help in case of need of special attention. However, even though students with health-related impairments are cared for, this seems to be organised on an individual base only. There is no official, clearly advertised policy in place.

One strong point with regard to the integration of foreign students is the ubiquity of English, which reduces disadvantages of foreign students in terms of language. Likewise, the review team could not detect any problem of integrating immigrant students, during the on-site visit and from the analysis of the self-documentation. This is a clear merit of KIMEP, turning the general experience of heterogeneity in the Kazakhstan society and the strong tradition of meritocracy at KIMEP into a visible asset.

For gifted students the equality of accessibility of scholarships is definitely given. KIMEP has shown that its Financial Aid office collects relevant documents that verify the family's financial need. This also applies to the different firm scholarship programmes. Once the company defines its selection criteria, the Department of Corporate Development at KIMEP works with Financial Aid unit to provide lists of students meeting the company's needs.

Further, no discrimination of students from less educated families was detected. Given the comparably high level of tuition fees, for less gifted students from lower income households access is nevertheless more difficult than for equally less gifted ones from more affluent families.

The BAE programme complies with the standard.

The MAE programme complies with the standard.

2.9 Standard 9: Programme-related co-operation

KIMEP has a large number of well-established relationships and links with external partners including foreign higher education institutions (HEIs) and national as well as international corporations. KIMEP has cooperation agreements with consulting companies from the *Big Four* and main national commercial banks as well as branches of foreign banks in Kazakhstan, also with such trading and manufacturing international companies as *Procter & Gamble*, and *Samsung*. These companies are the main employers for KIMEP graduates, and they also sponsor many activities at KIMEP. This facilitates the transition of KIMEP graduates into working life and provides many opportunities for interesting careers.

Even though mobility of academic staff and students is relatively high, it is recommended to support increased participation in international conferences (for students and faculty) in order to enhance research skills and the international status of the institution.

It is also recommended to develop stronger networks with local universities. By more intensive relations with the Kazakh HEIs where most of Kazakhstani students study, especially students from provinces and rural districts, KIMEP may set an example for these traditional universities to change their education system and to become more open to teaching and research at international standards. At the same time, KIMEP could recruit the best graduates

from other universities to the MAE programme or even further studies, and thus profit from those networks.

The planned centre for development research could help to strengthen programme-related cooperation with other HEIs as well relevant state agencies and other organisations in the economy and the society.

The BAE programme complies with the standard.
The MAE programme complies with the standard.