

Accreditation of study programmes

KIMEP University

Journalism

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

"Bachelor of Journalism"

"Master of International Journalism and Mass Communication"

at KIMEP University in Almaty, Kazakhstan for a period of five years, **under the following conditions**. The fulfilment of these conditions 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 In case of non-fulfilment, the accreditation will be withdrawn immediately.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 1

For each curriculum course descriptions according to the ECTS, the definition of students' workload and learning outcomes must be made available. Learning agreements and diploma supplements must be prepared and provided.

Condition 2

KIMEP must prove that the Lisbon Recognition Convention is published in the relevant documents as well as on the website and that its principles will be applied in relevant cases.

Condition 3

1.5 additional permanent faculty members must be appointed to the Department of International Journalism and Mass Communications through an adequate selection procedure.

Condition 4

The examination system for both programmes must be described in a handbook or a comparable document with respect to the forms and load of each exam.



Agency for
Quality Assurance
and Accreditation
Austria

Report of the review team

Bachelor of Journalism
Master of International
Journalism and Mass
Communication

KIMEP University

July 2013

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1 General information

KIMEP University mandated AQ Austria with the accreditation of the Bachelor programme in Journalism and the Master programme of International Journalism and Mass Communication. 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 assessment of the Bachelor and the Master programme is strictly separated.

1.1 Basic principles of the procedure

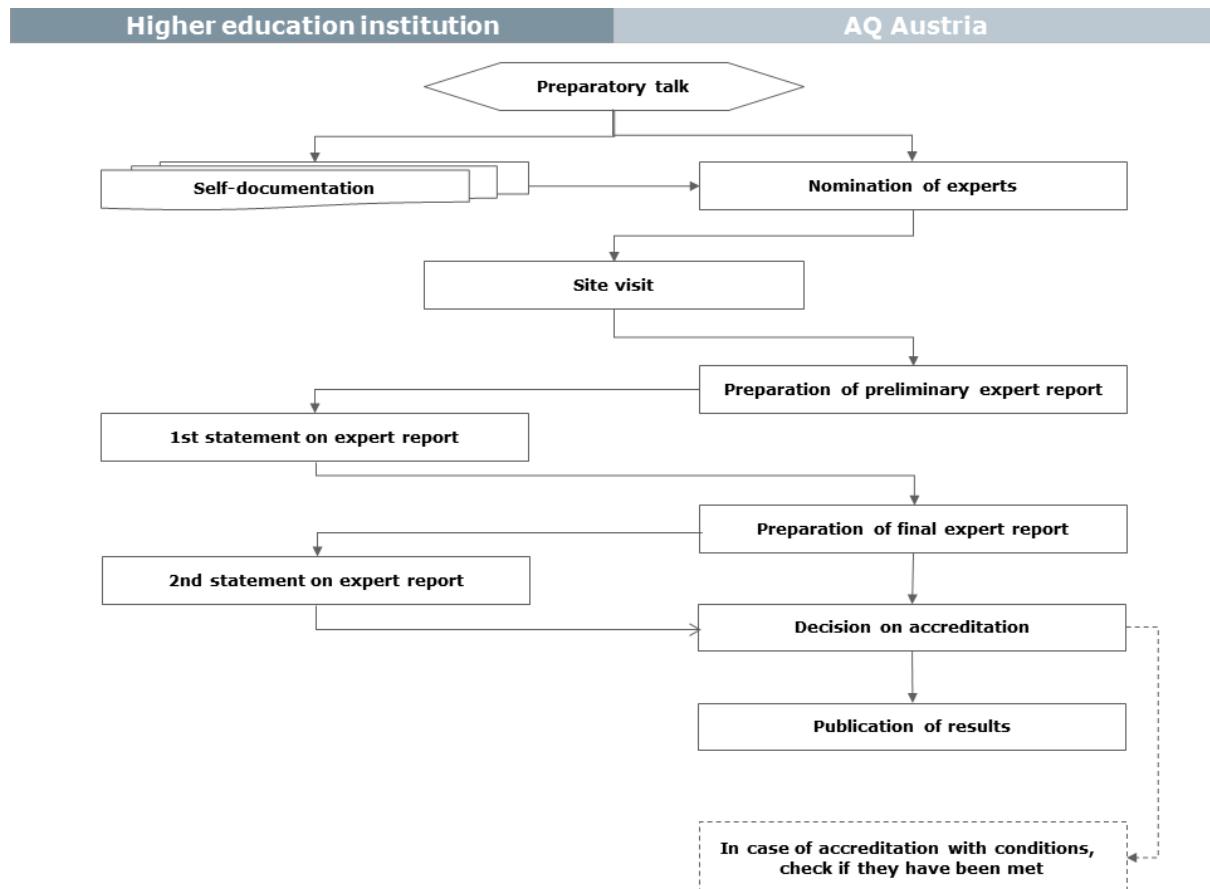
AQ Austria is the Austrian agency for quality assurance and accreditation in higher education. The agency is operating in Austria and other countries of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). It is committed to serving the common good and is based on the values of the European Higher Education Area, 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 of the programme
- Standard 2 Content and design of the programme
- 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 or Journalism

Date of introduction:	August 2003
Regular study period:	8 semesters
Number of ECTS credits:	240
Majors:	Media Management Public Relations

Objectives of the programme:

- to promote knowledge and skills needed to perform in public, non-governmental, and private mass communication, public relations, broadcasting, and journalism organisations;
- to provide students with both conceptual and practical communication knowledge and skills for successful careers in private, public, and non-governmental sectors of professional communication; and
- to educate students on constructive and ethical service to national, regional and international communities.

Students who graduate with a BAJ degree will be prepared to enter employment in mass and online communication fields including journalism, public relations, or broadcasting. This preparation is based on developing understanding and practical skills, including the abilities to:

- comprehend the role of professional communication in Kazakhstan and the world;
- investigate and become skilled at the practices of media and mass communication;
- study and apply major ethical standards related to the practices of professional communication;
- learn and apply legal issues related to the practice of communication in Kazakhstan;
- understand the impact of new information technologies on the practice of Public Relations, Management,
- Broadcasting and Journalism;
- comprehend historical and contemporary practices in CIS and Kazakhstan and in other regions of the world, as well as major social, economic, and political issues affecting those practices;
- develop the analytical skills to critically evaluate verbal and visual communication;
- gain the analytical skills to conceive and produce professional and/or academic communication materials;
- enhance practical skills for effective traditional and online communication;
- learn the skills and understanding needed to conduct journalistic research, using a variety of method; and
- gain practical experience as an intern in a professional communication workplace.

Master of International Journalism and Mass Communication

Date of introduction:	August 2002
Regular study period:	3 resp. 4 semesters (for students having to take extra English language classes)
Number of ECTS credit points:	90 ECTS

Majors: Journalism and Media Management
Public Relations and Advertising

The MAIJ program has the following objectives:

- to enable students to understand and be able to put into practice the major principles of quality journalism, media management, and professional PR;
- to provide the knowledge and communication skills necessary to make them competitive employment prospects in different areas of mass communication;
- to develop the technical skills to allow them to compete in journalism and mass communication industries;
- to develop the critical thinking skills to allow them to analyze trends and issues in journalism and mass communication;
- to develop the professional skills required to enter the workplace in a variety of communications-related industries, as well as in research, consulting, education, and in the communications, policy and regulatory agencies of government, and
- to pursue doctoral studies in journalism and mass communication or other related disciplines.

Upon completion of the required courses, MAIJ graduates will have demonstrated the ability:

- to grasp the substantial, theoretical and empirical dimensions of the structure of Kazakhstani media systems;
- to develop a research proposal; employ in-depth research methods in an area of scholarly interest;
- to develop communication, team work, decision-making, analytical, and other professional skills; and
- to write summaries, various types of essays and reports in English, and to appropriately present in-text and post-text references.

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 to 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.

The following information was provided by the review team:

Information about the media system in Kazakhstan

Today, 2765 mass media outlets function in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Of them 439 are state-owned and 2326 non-governmental mass media. The overwhelming majority is represented by newspapers (1666) and magazines (848), 238 electronic mass media (51 TV companies, 48 radio companies, 133 cable TV providers, 6 satellite service providers) and 13 information agencies. Thus the need for media specialists is fairly high.

Characterizing the development of the information market in Kazakhstan beginning from the time of acquiring independence in 1991, we may outline several nominal stages. The first stage is post-soviet, mainly state monopoly to mass media (up to 1992) when practically no independent (private) mass media existed. The second stage – stage of formation and development (1992 - 1996), brought a certain departure of the state from absolute dominance in information space and development of non-government (private, corporate and etc.) mass media. The third stage (1996-1997) is further characterized by qualitative and quantitative changes in mass media market through mass privatization of former government-owned mass media, establishment of printing enterprises, transfer from the state funding of mass media and allocating investment support to so called 'State social bid' for conduct of national information policy.

It is obvious that state-owned mass media supports government policy and official representatives of different levels of authorities. The government and all regional (oblast) akimats (Governor Offices) as well as akimats of major Kazakhstan cities, all have their own mass media outlets. About 80-85% of Kazakhstan editions and electronic media are classified as private. At this stage, private mass media are mainly owned by major financial and industrial groups and first of all serve their corporate interests. Apart of that during the last years the common practice to allocate the State social bid in mass media has gained wide application thus also restricting complete independence of media participating in such process. Hence in fact there are no independent media in Kazakhstan in full sense of this word, invoked to raise public awareness in an unbiased manner.

According to research conducted recently by the International Media Center MediaNet (in which about 350 journalists, editors, media owners, publishers, representatives of state authorities, NGOs and institutes training media specialists took part) 71% of the those questioned consider that mass media in Kazakhstan have no freedom. Another 17.5% consider that mass media possess relative freedom and 11.5% consider mass media to be a free structure. As related to the role of fourth power in society, 35.5% are sure that mass media play no role in society, 46.5% consider that this role is insignificant and only 18% of the questioned responded that mass media play significant role in society.

The overwhelming majority of private media to one extent or another also support the main course of the country's leadership. There are few really oppositional mass media in Kazakhstan and they feel certain pressure from the government. Partly this is brought about by the fact that activity of oppositional media is funded by Kazakhstan disfavored oligarchs hiding abroad which use media to destabilize situation in the country.

The Constitution of Kazakhstan guarantees freedom of speech and creativity, prohibits censorship, assigns right of every person to get and disseminate information by any mean not prohibited by law. In fact, Kazakhstan mass media may criticize anyone and express their position. But there are certain "rules of the game" in the Kazakhstan information space which are familiar to any media specialist and which are supported by all chief editors of public editions and TV channels. The main of which is not to explicitly criticize the president of the country.

The profession of a newsperson in Kazakhstan is fairly in-demand and prestigious although it is not well paid. In soviet times and first post-soviet years talent foundry for journalism was Kazakh National University named after Al-Farabi. When education in Kazakhstan became a business, since all institutes along with servicing of the state grants started to practice paid form of study, faculties of journalism were opened in many higher education institutions of the country. But all of them suffer from high deficiency of qualified teaching staff. Besides, the Kazakhstan educational system which inherited a lot from the soviet one, has such a problem as significant predominance of theoretical part accompanied by weak practical implementation of knowledge. And for faculties of journalism this problem is especially vital. As a result of all that, sufficiently low level of Kazakhstan media specialists' educational background is noted and many young specialists have to gain additional knowledge and skills in the course of practical activity after being hired by one or another media. That is why, when speaking of Kazakhstan mass media, development experts constantly emphasize necessity for improving the educational system and training of professional personnel in journalism.

To a certain extent the establishment of the faculty of social sciences and journalism and mass media at KIMEP improved the situation, as it introduced the western practice and standards of education in journalism to the country. As the first western-style Bachelor of Journalism degree offered in Kazakhstan, the undergraduate programme in Journalism was designed as it is stated on KIMEP University website 'to satisfy a recognized need: to provide Kazakhstan with professional citizen communicators with the Western-style knowledge, skills, and values considered necessary to provide competent and ethical communication leadership at a time of socio-economic and political transition.' The Department of Journalism at KIMEP University succeeded to establish new modern standards of journalism education in the country. KIMEP practice of educating journalists serves as a model for many local HEIs in terms of internationalisation and balance between theory and practice.

Summarizing, it is worth noting that the profession of a newsperson in Kazakhstan has reasonably good prospects for further development, which is associated with the great number of registered and existing mass media in the country, active development of internet-media and such trend as public relations. Besides that, Kazakhstan aims for strengthening of its internal information space and its protection from overwhelming influence of Russia's mass media market thus producing new requirements to the quality of local journalism, relevance and actuality of editions and TV programs and professional level of all the participants of this market.

1.3 Accreditation procedure at KIMEP

KIMEP University mandated AQ Austria with the accreditation of the Bachelor programme in Journalism and the Master programme of International Journalism and Mass Communication 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	25-26 April 2013
1 st draft of the report of the review team	31 May 2013
Formal statement by KIMEP	14 June 2013
Final report of the review team	2 July 2013
Statement on the final report by KIMEP	15 July 2013
Accreditation decision by board of AQ Austria	3 September 2013

Members of the review team

Name	Institution	Role
Prof. Dr. Beatrice Dernbach	University of Applied Sciences Bremen	Reviewer from academia
Èva Réka Fazekas	University of Szeged	Student reviewer
Andrey Kukushkin	Infores Agency	Reviewer with professional experience
Prof. Dr. Barbara Thomäß	Ruhr University Bochum	Reviewer from academia, head of the review team

AQ Austria Coordinator

Dietlinde Kastelliz

2 Assessment results

2.1 Standard 1: Qualification objectives

KIMEP University declares in its self-evaluation report (SER), that it is its mission to develop well-educated citizens and to meet the highest levels of international educational standards. The Bachelor of International Journalism and Mass Communication is supposed to educate professional citizen communicators with – as it is underlined several times – “western style” knowledge, skills and values. Students should at the end of the programme have the ability to gather, select, analyse, organize and communicate information, have problem-solving, proactive attitudes and skills. These qualification objectives are stated for the field of Public Relation as for Journalism. The main goals of the programme are according to the SER:

- to promote excellence in the study and practice of mediated communication by building and strengthening the practical skills as well as analytical, problem-solving, and leadership capacities of graduates;
- to provide students with:
 - fundamental understandings of contemporary media principles and skills;
 - production and management abilities, to facilitate employment and/or advanced education; and
- to prepare graduates for ethical service to their society, organizations, and the international regional and international community.

Furthermore the curriculum is supposed to aim at

- cross-disciplinarity, embracing aspects of sociology, psychology, technology, ethics, philosophy (especially the philosophy of the social sciences), research methods, and professional skills;
- comparative analysis of messages, audiences, and the media industries;
- practical skills and writing competence;
- internships, so students can improve their understanding through work experience;
- social competency development, such as oral and written English communications skills, interpersonal communication and presentation skills, and inter-personal group working skills; and
- personal development, through internships and opportunities to study abroad.

Thus, the study programme includes subject-related and interdisciplinary aspects as well as the acquisition of communication and media studies’ specific disciplinary and methodological skills and competencies. These descriptions of learning outcomes in the SER are elaborated on a meta-level, and not consistently specified for every single module. This is especially true for the intended learning outcomes of the internships which are described in a very general way and were it is unclear how to be assessed. Concerning the courses “Reporting and writing for Russian language media” and “Broadcasting in Russian” the learning outcomes are not defined clearly towards the strong language bias of these courses. The specific way of how learning outcomes are assessed is handled individually by faculty members and may change from term to term. However, the interviews with the teaching faculty as well as with students and alumni and the insight in the presented theses on Bachelor and Master level made it obvious, that as well the soft skills and attitudes as well as the disciplinary competencies are realized and achieved on a high level. The KIMEP programmes in International Journalism and Mass Communication provide knowledge and skills, but also teach to work under pressure, to work under deadlines and to follow self-education.

At the same time, the review team discovered that the Master programme profile is not clear enough: the gap between expectations from the labour market and the outcome of the study programme is big. According to the students' opinion, this is due to the expectations from the labour market the receive employees who are capable of doing everything at the same time.

In the Bachelor programme it is not clear which role physical education plays – how does it contribute to the qualification of a journalism graduate. This requirement should be left to the individual decision of the students, but is imposed by the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) for every study programme in the country. The "general education courses" which have to be taken by each first year Bachelor student and where physical education is one of them, are a requirement equal to all universities in Kazakhstan. Thus, subject specific courses can be offered only from the second year of study onwards.

The learning outcomes of Bachelor and Master programme meet the requirement of the difficulties of the labour market to a certain extent, but as a clear positioning of a well-designed programme, they are not precisely enough defined on the Master level. As the overall strategy of where to go with the Master programme – PR and/or journalism and is it a research orientated master or a professional master – is missing, this is a challenge also for faculty. The amount of credit points which are obtained by internships and work which could be qualified as independent studies is too high (see also standard 2).

The self-documentation reveals some confusion due to mixture of American system (as KIMEP was set up originally) and European system (KIMEP is moving to due to Ministry decision pro Bologna) – which should be made more coherent in the near future. The programme reaches goals of "capability of taking up adequate employment, contribution to the civil society and of developing the students' personality" to a high level.

Students learn to critically analyse events, people and actions, they learn to investigate and to make a good presentation, which is a major advantage of the study programmes. They receive a deeper understanding of what is going on in the media market in Kazakhstan, which sources are used in Journalism etc. According to students' opinion, the Master programme is more focused on practical side, and the Bachelor more on the theoretical side, but also with practical aspects.

The programmes partly comply with the standard.

2.2 Standard 2: Content and design of the programme

First of all, it must be considered that in Kazakhstan no national qualification framework exists yet. That is still the most important task for the government and the Ministry of Education and Science (MES). Therefore, it is impossible to evaluate whether the study programmes comply with this framework. With regard to the "learning outcomes" and "competences" as defined in the European Qualification Framework (Bologna Framework), the content and design of the programmes promise knowledge, skills, personal, social and methodological abilities. The combination of theory, applied sciences and practical experience is balanced.

According to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and the Guidelines for the European Higher Education Area (Bologna Process) the following remarks can be made:

The credit point system seems to be a combination of the American system of teaching hours (called the western-style) and the conditions from the Kazakh Ministry of Education and

Science. The most influential variable is the capacity of staff. Every lecturer has to teach four sections per year (12 hours per week); in the faculty for the Bachelor and Master programme in journalism five and a half lecturers are involved. The basis for one section is a 5 ECTS course. The calculation adds up to 15 teaching hours per credit. As a result, the workload for students is 27 hours for one ECTS. A 5 ECTS course includes 135 learning hours, 45 in class, 90 hours at home for self-study.

The Master programme is a 90 ECTS three semester programme. The review team learned from the interviews during the site visit that the three semester idea was developed by KIMEP administration for marketing reasons, to attract more students. Still, the ECTS system in the Master programme is not consequently implemented: the duration for students who have to do extra English classes is four semesters instead of three. English language competences are required as entry qualifications (see standard 3) and students who do not yet have the required level of English language competences need to take language courses. Students, who were admitted to the programme but do not yet have the required English language level, first have to achieve the required language competences, although they have already been enrolled, but can at the same time not take regular classes in their main subjects and are thus not able to study in the regular three semester time. Actually, they are part-time students and this has to be clearly marked in the curriculum.

Applicants from the Bachelor programme at KIMEP have already earned 240 ECTS credits in the undergraduate programme. When they study in the Master programme, which amounts to 90 ECTS credits, they will upon graduation finally have earned 330 ECTS, which is 30 ECTS more than the minimum amount of 300 ECTS for admittance to PhD programmes according to Bologna. KIMEP has not yet defined what graduates can do with these extra 30 ECTS.

But this is just mathematics or statistics because the main focus does not really lie on the students' workload and the learning outcomes but on the faculty's capacity (which derives from the American system according to which KIMEP had been set up originally), the amount of tuition fees, and the formalities prescribed by the MES. Teaching load is 12 hours per week for lecturers. General courses (which are a Ministry requirement) are taught by lecturers from the General Education Department. Every course with a JMC code in the curriculum is taught by Journalism faculty.

In the self-evaluation report of the Bachelor programme the objectives and learning outcomes are described in general (Standard 1). But there is no explanation of the learning outcomes of each course regarding the overall educational objective of these general education courses offered due to requirements from the MES. There is no doubt that general education is very necessary for journalists. But the courses the MES requires vary from history of Kazakhstan, Kazakh language to life security, business computing applications, philosophy, political sciences, the legal system, and geography. That could be justified in several cases. But it is not understandable that the Bachelor students in journalism have to take required physical education courses over eight semesters and that they receive 8 ECTS for this. What is the learning outcome of this course with regard to the academic education of a journalism student? Even if one sees sports as a kind of personality building and training for key competences it is not understandable in journalism education and it does not play a role for the employability of graduates. Employability is otherwise absolutely guaranteed by the courses offered by the journalism faculty. The lecturers all have scientific and practical experiences which they integrate into their teaching and projects.

Looking at the curriculum, students in both programmes seem to have a large variety of courses to choose from individually. But because of the required courses by the MES, the

decreasing number of students, the interrelated decrease of intake from tuition fees, and the stagnant number of lecturers not all courses take place every semester or every year. Therefore, students have to study with the risk that they cannot take the exams after eight semesters. However, faculty take the responsibility and offer "independent studies" for those single students so to save them from the threat and every student manages to do the necessary courses in the envisaged study period. That boosts the workload of the faculty in an unacceptable way (see standard 5).

Both programmes distinguish between Journalism and Media Management on one side and Public Relations and Advertising on the other. These combinations are not acceptable from an expert point of view. Journalism should not be confounded with management (as a business task), and public relations is different from advertisement. Media sell journalism, public relations, and advertisement in coexistence. In this sense they only provide information, entertainment, and other products to earn money. KIMEP might consider clearly dividing the Bachelor and the Master programme just into journalism and public relations because these communication forms have different functions and tasks for their recipients, target groups, and the whole society. To give an explanation: Journalism should investigate carefully, should put important topics on the agenda, should be critical, and control the authorities. PR is a management task and the communication strategy lies only in the interest of the communicator. Media management is more or less a task for business studies, advertisement needs more competences in design, psychology, and also business.

Necessary for journalism and also PR-students are knowledge, competences, and skills in self-marketing as freelancers, calculation etc. – the so called key competences. Such courses are missing in the curriculum. Positive is the integration of practical internships in both programmes. But obviously the amount of credit points dedicated to internships in the Master programme is too high with regard to the overall sum of ECTS credits, also for the reason that most students already do have years of experience in practice.

Focusing on the Master programme, it is obvious that the profile is not as clear as it should be: Is it a more applied or a more research-oriented programme? By now, it seems to be a more student-driven programme and so far more oriented towards application.

It is not completely obvious where the "international" aspects of the programme are included: There are many classes about the Kazakhstani Media Market, Broadcasting in Russia etc. Half of the faculty come from English speaking countries, mainly the US and Great Britain, and all classes – also those provided by local faculty, where everybody had received education in English speaking countries as well – are taught in English language. So it can be assumed that their inputs contribute to a western oriented point of view and they provide students with journalism ethics and different cultural backgrounds. With regard to standard 1, students are mainly educated for the local and regional (Central Asian) labour and media market. So the special "international" view should be strengthened in the titles and the content of the curriculum – or the title of the Master programme should be changed.

Looking again at ECTS key documents, main and important ones are missing: Indeed, there is a catalogue available for the whole university, which includes important and relevant information, but there is no special, separate course catalogue for the Bachelor and Master programmes in journalism and mass communication. The Department of Journalism does have detailed descriptions for single courses, but this catalogue should be a kind of a handbook or module manual which gives general and special information about the whole programmes, qualification level, admission requirements, key learning outcomes, but also the description of the individual course units: the type and the level of course, the number of credits, the course contents, the assessment methods and criteria etc.

Students are provided with Learning Agreement and Transcript of Records, but there is no overall awareness of the existence of these documents at KIMEP University. Mobility is not a compulsory part of the curriculum and therefore it is difficult for students to go abroad or to come to KIMEP, although there is positive experience with study periods and recognition of credits earned abroad as well. There need to be clear rules according to the Lisbon Recognition Convention. A very important tool in the Bologna Area is the Diploma Supplement. Focussed on the aim that all degrees should be comparable and recognised, KIMEP must implement this tool for all its programmes.

The programmes partly comply with the standard.

In its first statement KIMEP placed the following comment:

1. KIMEP University's graduation requirements are under its various program 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.
2. The General Education program provided in the first year of study is entirely specified by the MES, and KIMEP University would be in breach of its program licensing conditions if it did not provide that prescribed program of study, including physical education.
3. The MES requires KIMEP University to have an MES-prescribed standardized contract with its students. The MES has not adopted Learning Agreements. KIMEP University is, however, considering the adoption and phasing in of Learning Agreements in parallel with its Student Contracts
4. Outbound student internship mobility is constrained by MES requirements for local supervision of internships by KIMEP University academics.
5. Inbound student mobility is constrained (1) by the MES Russian-language proficiency admission requirements even for those with native or otherwise acceptable English proficiency who are seeking admission to an English-language program of study; and (2) by student visa requirements that require the nostrification and apostilling of foreign higher education qualifications and evidence of the degree-granting foreign universities' licenses and accreditation, even if those universities are in the European Higher Education Area.
6. The MES has no policy on Accredited (Approved) Prior Certified Learning. KIMEP University's policy is to assess all such applications on a case-by-case basis at the departmental level, although such applications from within Kazakhstan are rare because the language of tuition of the courses for which recognition is sought must be English.

The review team wishes to emphasize that the recommendations made with regard to these issues remain valid.

2.3 Standard 3: Academic feasibility

The entry qualifications required for admittance are clear at programme level. The entrance exam is highly selective, the institution has established standards of academic quality and achievement. The department's entry requirements (in addition to the state required entry examination) include an essay which proves the creativity of students, which is essential in a Journalism and Mass Communication programme. The requirement of writing an essay and going through an interview is true both for Bachelor students and also for Master students.

Applicants are ranked according to results from the entry exam. KIMEP has not been in the position to select applicants (because of low numbers of applicants), but this does not mean that any applicant is taken, but perspective students need to prove some qualification already: certain English language knowledge, essay writing, standing an interview. KIMEP needs to follow state rules which exist for admission to higher education institutions. All potential students have to take the UNT (unified national test) by national testing center.

The Master programme is also open for Bachelor graduates from different universities, which is very important also for the proof of academic feasibility, for example with regard to mobility in the Bologna area and the recognition of degrees. It is however essential that applicants have sufficient English language knowledge before enrolment already, so they don't lose time for brushing up their English once they have become students. If students have to take extra English classes to reach a certain competence level, they do lose time as they can start with classes only later after having reached a certain level of language. Thus, if English is an entry requirement students should be given the opportunity to acquire the required language knowledge before actually starting the academic study programme. However, the KIMEP English placement test students have to take when entering KIMEP is useful. They are then placed in the language course accordingly – there are 6 levels and only after completing one they can move to the higher level. In the language course academic reading and writing, academic note taking etc. in English are offered.

It has become evident from the Self Evaluation Report and the interviews during the site visit that KIMEP's Academic Council annually reviews the recommended entry qualifications of applicants.

A student admitted to the programme on a full-time basis is expected to undertake 1,620 learning hours of study each academic year, which means 27 learning hours for each ECTS credit. In a regular semester a full-time student is expected to study no more than 45 hours a week over 18 learning weeks, which means six courses. This is satisfactory and students are not overloaded with work, they also have their individual choice according to the curriculum, as there are elective courses (however, this offer should be enlarged, so students will be able to have a wider variety of elective courses where they can chose from according to their personal interests and their future plans).

It does not occur that students do not have enough ECTS credits and fail to finish their study in time for this reason, as the department checks which courses a student needs for graduation and then sets up the timetable accordingly. Faculty and the department are very flexible in this regard. If however a course cannot be offered officially because KIMEP administration will not accept it due to too small student numbers, faculty voluntarily teach full course load plus independent studies without getting compensated for it. This is one example which very well shows the engagement of KIMEP staff.

Internships, which are required for each student can also place an additional demand on both scheduling and workload. The department has a dedicated internship supervisor who is experienced in anticipating and preventing problems, according to the SER and information gained at the site visit.

It is appreciated that KIMEP wants to have a clear vision of creating the curriculum and at the same time the institution is rather open to students' wishes. There are generic skills and "entrepreneurial skills" students can acquire. The curriculum is updated yearly.

Students are satisfied with communication possibilities they have with teachers through office hours, email or just ad-hoc meetings, and especially the freshmen week at the beginning of

the year. During this week, all faculty present their courses, including necessary assignments, working methods, requirements etc., and students very much appreciate the opportunity to get a picture of the person and his or her style first before enrolling into the course.

The Bologna workload concept is not completely familiar yet to students.

With regard to support services, it can be stated that student counselling is satisfactory. KIMEP cares for students in special situations, but there are no set regulations for this. A clear rule regarding needs and support for students in special situations is required (if there is something like a classroom behaviour rule why not have a rule for issues of students in special situations?).

In case of emotional, family-related problems or other challenges, such as for example maternity leave, the university offers a rather personal, informal approach which does not follow set rules but is based on direct communication between the professors and the students. Thus, students cannot refer to any written regulations, but they have to rely on the lecturers' decision. However, lecturers usually fully understand the situation as long as students can prove it with documentation for example from the hospital or by other means. The evaluation team has seen that the students fully trust their lecturers in this matter and they haven't complained about these issues. Nevertheless it would be an excellent step towards the institution's improvement to design rules for these issues and put them on paper.

KIMEP provides merit-based scholarships and 90% of Master students receive at least 50% scholarships.

A student union is working at KIMEP. It would however be good to set up a legal advisory team by student union members, as this offered a great opportunity for students to learn more about their rights.

The situation of the institution is rather difficult when it comes to the different criteria of the Ministry of Education in Kazakhstan, which are very different from European standards or Bologna process. E.g. on 16 March in 2013 all licences of KIMEP were cancelled (for two weeks), as for example the Ministry did not accept KIMEP's extensive electronic library basis as library stock. Nevertheless, the institution is successful in fulfilling the students' needs, the staff's needs and it's a unique island in the Central Asian Higher Education Area.

The team met really mature and committed students during the site visit and learnt that interdisciplinary guidance is provided for students. However, it is regarded a bit problematic that due to the financial situation of journalists, journalism students tend to rather choose the PR direction, because it's easier for them to find a well-paid job in this field.

KIMEP operates its own intranet "L-Drive", where students can access all class material provided by all KIMEP faculty. This allows them to compare classes, to prepare themselves for classes and examinations, and to receive diverse perspectives from different faculty members.

One résumé of the site visit is the observation, that the lecturers care about their students and that there are a lot of informal communication channels. Faculty are dedicated to their work with students and students are very satisfied.

The programmes comply with the standard.

2.4 Standard 4: Examination system

The examination system is clear from oral explanations, but the team hasn't found any written regulations for it. The KIMEP catalogue offers some information about behaviour rules at exams, plagiarism, etc. but no information about examination rules.

Exam assignments include different methodologies (like for example quizzes, essays, projects) and they are defined at the beginning of the semester. There is also continuous assessment throughout the study year, which supports continuous studying: essays, in-class tests, mid-term examinations, oral presentations, final assessment: comprehensive final examination, internship project reports, or final term paper. The review team knows from the SER that final assessment is not mandatory at the Master's level in Kazakhstan under existing Master's degree rules, but KIMEP nevertheless conducts final assessment exams.

Flexible treatment is provided for students in special situations, but again this is done on an ad hoc basis and no clear written regulations were available.

The team has learned from the meetings that KIMEP does not tolerate corruption, there is no exam buying, and transparency is absolutely important.

According to the examination system, there is a method of continuous assessment – which is based on requirements of the Ministry – with two midterm assessments and one final exam, worth each 30% - 30% - 40%. The team learned during the meetings that exams are scheduled by the registrar office and the exact dates are announced in advance on the academic calendar, which is openly accessible. Each lecturer completes course management forms at end of each course which include different information, such as exam questions, mark, and assessment.

There are two midterm assessments in the forms of tests, group projects, presentations or other assignments. The final exam usually is a test, which includes both open questions and questions about the course contents in detail. Every faculty member develops his/her own exams and structures assessment for his courses individually. The general education courses have less flexibility in designing the exams.

Exams and course attendance are important. Any of the two midterm exams is worth 30% of the whole semestral assessment – this is regarded positive by students, as they do not have to rely on one exam only. Exams are not "traditional", but can include creative projects like presentations. It depends on the courses which type of exam has to be taken. The final portfolio students have to present in some classes also is a good way to assess students, as creativity is needed in this study programme.

The system of two midterm exams and one final has been existing from this year onwards, but it has not yet been introduced to all classes. From next semester onwards it will be valid for all courses, which is a Ministry regulation. It is appreciated by students, as it allows them to divide the workload on the whole semester and not only on one single examination.

There is also an "early intervention system" especially for students at risk in place, which works via monitoring attendance and performance. Students are monitored in certain cases, if their performance is below a certain GPA, and receive individual support.

There is nothing like a "module" exam which proves the acquired knowledge of a number of interrelated courses (=modules) together. Exams are related to single courses in the study programmes. Necessary assignments for examinations are included into the syllabus which is given to students at the beginning of each semester.

A complete transition from the American credit to the ECTS system would be beneficial for students, as KIMEP does have cooperation with European universities also on the level of the Journalism programmes, and offers Erasmus Mundus Scholarships.

Students are informed about the exam criteria when they receive the syllabus – type of exam, what needs to be done, etc., so they are well informed in time and to not experience surprise just before the exam.

Students have all information about each course, which they receive via L-Drive, the KIMEP database. This includes information about course content, literature, exams, grades, etc. In addition, each lecturer explains all relevant information about the specific course at the beginning of each semester, so students can chose which course fits them best. They always know the course and examination requirements in time. There is an “orientation week” (or “freshmen week”) during the first 7 days per semester, and it is then still possible to change the course originally chosen.

The programmes comply with the standard.

2.5 Standard 5: Resources

The necessary amount of teaching is delivered with the given amount of resources only with an overstretch of workload of faculty. This is a burden on the quality of teaching and supervising the students and as well on the possibilities of the individual teacher to raise the quality of teaching by own research. The decision to supress the sessional teachers from the profession, who cannot support the curriculum any more contributed to this difficult situation. This is especially true when the recommendations which we formulated for the Master – the elaboration towards a more clearly cut programme with less credit points from internships and independent studies – were be realised. Therefore it is a condition that the planned augmentation of faculty members by 1,5 people should be realised.

Also professional sessional teachers should again be admitted - in accordance with the ministry's requirement for professional sessional teachers of having at least a Master's degree. The administration of KIMEP should provide financial support for this purpose. The representation of sessional teachers of the profession in the curriculum is needed in order to guarantee employability, direct contact to the labour market and practical orientation.

The review team also appreciates the honest answers from staff during the interviews, who didn't hide the institutional problems. KIMEP staff can be regarded interested and rather open for changes and improvement.

International incoming experience which is given by the high amount of professors from the USA, Australia and United Kingdom is very much appreciated, but for sustainable development of the department building academically qualified human resources from Kazakhstan and/or Central Asia is absolutely necessary. Promoting young academics to form part of the faculty in the long run is indispensable.

Technically, the department is very well equipped in principle, but it's not big enough for both Bachelor and Master students. There is also need for an extra studio with green screen and a computer studio. Also a sound-proof cabin for speakers and more professional voice recorders are required, also semi-professional videos and camcorder are recommended. Other software – professional cutting software to produce video and audio and also Photoshop (instead of Microsoft Publisher) is necessary to provide a high standard professional education.

The library of KIMEP and the department is very well equipped and excellently accessible.

Given the mentioned considerations about lack of faculty, the review team states that the programmes do not comply with the standard.

2.6 Standard 6: Transparency and documentation

All in all, nearly everything at KIMEP is very well documented and transparent. At the beginning of their studies students get the syllabi of the Bachelor and Master level. Also an orientation week takes place, where students can visit every course and can decide afterwards which courses to choose.

In the university-wide catalogue information about academic policies and procedures, student affairs, financial aid services, and all the departments, like for example the International Relations Office is given. All this information is also openly accessible on the webpage of KIMEP University.

There is however a lack of detailed examination requirements for the Bachelor in Journalism and the Master in International Journalism and Mass Communication (Standard 4). These examination requirements are to be distinguished from the existing exam rules written down in the catalogue. In general, it should be clear from the very beginning of the study process which kinds of assessments are to be done at which step in the study process, which is the grading scale. For every course the exact kinds of assessments and exams should be settled and all assessments should be oriented towards the learning outcomes and competences of the respective course. It is also important in which relation single assessments, midterm exams and final exams will be counted for the entire graduation (not only the semester).

According to the Lisbon Recognition Convention, two elements should be implemented, which have not yet been set up at KIMEP: The first one is a regulation how to accept and recognise students' achievements from other universities or from other educational institutions as equivalent. The second one is a code of conduct for students in special situations (with children, taking care of relatives, handicapped persons etc.) (see also standards 3 and 8).

The programmes partly comply with the standard.

2.7 Standard 7: Quality assurance and development

At KIMEP a Department of Institutional Research (DIR) is well established and it operates under the President of KIMEP. "The purpose of the DIR is to support quality assurance systems by developing practices of evaluation and reviews that highlight areas for attention and improvement." (KIMEP Catalogue 2012/13, p. 97). Quality assurance is very much focussed on the students' evaluation of the lecturers. Every semester students have to fill in a questionnaire for every lecturer on a voluntary basis. The response rate is below 50 percent. Lecturers receive their results personally and in detail, and the dean knows them as well. The department and also students get to know only the aggregated data. Thus the whole process is transparent, but at the same time data protection is provided.

Also faculty, alumni, and employers are surveyed regularly. So the university handles its responsibility for quality assurance itself and professionally. Nevertheless, DIR should also observe the quality and improvement of all study programmes, regarding their curriculum, their design and content, and the students' workload. There are no reports about the way how

the quality management for the programme is integrated into the quality management system of the entire University and vice versa. There is no information how the results of the analyses are incorporated into programme development, staff recruitment, admission modalities, course assessments etc..

DIR operates under the President but no other structures for quality assurance seem to be installed. To institutionalize the systematic development of the study programmes, the departments, and at least for the entire university some more structures are necessary, e.g. deans for study in the departments, and a centralised body for quality management on university level, in which the experts of DIR, lecturers, students, and administrators discuss how to use the collected data to improve.

What should be mentioned as well: The Bachelor and Master programmes in journalism have been externally evaluated by the American Communication Association and received conditional accreditation for one year (2012-2013).

The programmes partly comply with the standard.

2.8 Standard 8: Equal opportunities

The evaluation team has found out that there is no problem in the practical sense of equal opportunities in KIMEP, but there is a lack of written policy. It's not an excuse that there are not so many students with special needs or disabled students and therefore there is no need for written policy at the moment. It works well in practise due to direct and informal communication of students and faculty, but there should be determined regulations, people can refer to.

It was noticeable that international faculty at KIMEP (which makes up to 45% of all faculty) is predominantly male. It should be considered to approach more female applicants in the future with regard to gender balance.

By inviting so many distinguished professionals from the West a clear orientation to internationalisation is evident. Still, KIMEP sees to an equal balance of "international" and local faculty members to keep active contact to the local academic surroundings.

Discrimination is not tolerated at KIMEP, only qualification matters. No discrimination, be it for religious, gender or ethic reason is tolerated.

Salaries are much higher than usually in Kazakhstan and equally high for local and for international staff.

When new faculty is to be appointed, the department checks the hiring list first and ranks candidates according to those who should be invited for interviews, those for the waiting list and those who will be rejected. A first interview with candidates is conducted at the College of Social Sciences, where the Department of Journalism is located, and only then with KIMEP management. There has not been a case that management rejected a department proposal of a candidate.

There are flexible "rules" for students with special needs at the institution, but it's more like an unwritten law, a custom. If deadlines cannot be met because of some incident and students talk to teachers, they usually allow other forms of assignments or deadlines. This again is an example of great flexibility at the department.

The review team noticed the lack of existence of a Lisbon Recognition Convention paper, for example for students in special situations. Existing regulations cover mostly issues of student enrolment and financial support resp. the relevant departments. Certain informal rules exist on KIMEP level, so students and faculty member communicate directly if a student needs extra support or more flexibility in the assessment period.

As mentioned in standard 3 already, a number of student support services are set up at KIMEP. A medical center directly on KIMEP campus provides support to students not only with physical, but also with psychic problems. Orphans get first priority when they need a dormitory placement directly on KIMEP campus. There is freshmen center, a graduate center, a financial aid center, and the admission department which advises students as well. Students are directed to the particular offices for personal assistance for their specific concern. It has become evident that the College Student Support Center helps students who consider themselves to be in need of advice or mentoring, who wish to withdraw from a study programme, who are at risk of academic withdrawal because of their poor academic performance or who are high academic achievers in need of greater challenges to achieve their highest possible academic level.

Students who have unexpected family or medical demands, get help from KIMEP to adapt and continue their academic trajectory. Many students work part time while attending courses and the review team found out during the site visit that this also doesn't cause any problems.

Students with physical disabilities or other special needs, once they have been identified by the Undergraduate Admissions Office and confirmed by the Medical Center, are all interviewed by the College Student Support Center. They get specific learning support and they are provided with personal development plans. There is no problem with special assessment, particularly with respect to final examinations. The classrooms, offices, and meeting rooms that need to be accessed by students are barrier-free.

There are no gender issues or other inequality problems amongst KIMEP staff or students. Journalism in post-soviet countries is different from what journalists and professors from "Western" countries understand, and KIMEP is a Western style university. Thus it helps to have both international and local lecturers, as this mixture contributes to a sound understanding of different doctrines and also the social background in Kazakhstan. If faculty consisted of Western people only, contact to reality might be lost, and if it were only Kazakh faculty this would not contribute to the improvement of the education offered. The mix between international and local faculty is definitely good and helps to know how to apply knowledge in Kazakhstan but also how to use it abroad. Lecturers teach not only Journalism in the narrow sense but they also share their mentality which then contributes to widening the horizon. A sound balance between international and local perspective is necessary and KIMEP is very good at accomplishing it.

The programmes comply with the standard.

2.9 Standard 9: Programme-related co-operation

As review team members learned from a number of meetings with professors and students at KIMEP University, programme-related co-operation activity is traditionally well organized at KIMEP due to the international character of the University. KIMEP has a well-established International Relations Office, which is responsible for promoting internationalisation and mobility, providing information and rendering practical help to both students and professors.

At the same time, not all documents about and regulations for programme-related co-operation are in place or publicly available.

International Relations

The review team has been informed by KIMEP management that being the first Western-style academic institution in Central Asia, KIMEP since 2003 has been offering students and professors of the Department of Journalism a wide range of possibilities to participate in international exchange courses and programmes.

KIMEP states that MOUs have been signed with academic institutions in 74 countries in order to internationalize the university's educational environment by creating and developing partnerships with international universities, starting from student exchange programmes, International Summer Programmes, jointly sponsored international conferences, seminars and other scholarly events, and also faculty mobility programmes.

There is a list of institutions KIMEP cooperates with published on the university's website, but MOUs are not openly available and there are no regulations on how cooperation agreements should look like.

Programme-related Cooperation

Existing co-operation with other higher education institutions outside Kazakhstan is well organized. These collaborations entail student exchange programmes, dual degree programmes, joint international summer schools, faculty mobility programmes, and joint research opportunities. KIMEP has agreements with over 90 higher educational institutions in Europe, North America, and East Asia. All these HEIs are listed on a KIMEP website and have links to websites of these institutions.

Despite this large number of international activities and cooperation agreements, a strategy for international cooperation which is laid down in a document highlighting the objectives for this cooperation and main directions of its development, is not evident. The review team recommends KIMEP to develop and publicize a strategy for international cooperation.

Also the review team states that the research collaborations with local higher educational institutions are not well developed. The only information the review team could find on this topic was a passage on KIMEP website stating that 'The creation of research centers and increased research output will play a key part in raising our global profile'. The reason for this partially is that KIMEP is still rather a learning-oriented institution and that research programmes are not well developed in Kazakhstani HEIs in general, which derives from the status of universities in soviet times. At the same time, KIMEP has a potential to act as a leader of this process in the country bringing western research approach to local ground. KIMEP is one of few universities in Kazakhstan which is licensed to offer PhD programmes.

It's also important to state that KIMEP offers workshops about Bologna introduction and also offers help to other universities (to organise workshops or conferences etc.). The review team encourages KIMEP to continue this cooperation in the future.

Co-operation with companies and other institutions in the region is well established. Cooperation with companies is established mostly in the sphere of employment and about internships, which is useful. The review team learned about a number of signed MOUs with international and local companies, for example Coca-Cola, but there is no relevant information on that on KIMEP website. Boards with announcements for job and/or internship opportunities for KIMEP students and graduates are attached to walls around KIMEP campus.

Co-operation with other institutions, like international organizations and funds is well developed as well. As the review team understood from the meeting with representatives of

these organizations, KIMEP used to have a number of joint projects with UNESCO office in Almaty, with Eurasia Foundation, Internews, USIS office in Almaty and others. But again, no information about these contacts and what particular benefits the individual cooperation brings to students is published widely, but solely on Department blackboards.

Student Exchange Opportunities

As it is stated in the KIMEP self-evaluation report, the university offers exchange programmes and dual degree programmes for undergraduate and graduate students, joint forums and research opportunities, faculty visiting and exchange programs, summer schools, and study abroad programs.

The review team found evidence in a number of meetings that student exchange programmes are well organized, despite the lack of transcripts of record, learning agreements or diploma supplements. Many students have participated in different exchange programmes and are satisfied with type and scope of these programmes as their recorded feedbacks demonstrate. Also students may find information on international exchange places for the coming summer and autumn on a special section of KIMEP website, which is informative and helpful.

Internships

Students have the opportunity to take their (mandatory) internship in Kazakhstan or abroad. Each student has his or her own internship coordinator, who is responsible for finding suitable professional internship opportunities. As the review team learned in meetings with KIMEP students and representatives of companies and organizations providing internship opportunities, this activity works well at KIMEP University. Many KIMEP students have declared themselves well conducting their internships in professionally related organizations across Kazakhstan.

International Mobility Opportunities

A description of the promotion and support of the international mobility of students and teachers is available on KIMEP website. Agreements with partner institutions are also listed. By this means applicants have a good opportunity to get comprehensive information on the exchange programmes with foreign higher education institutions.

As the review team understood, the international mobility process is well organized, though there are no mandatory mobility windows in the study programmes. KIMEP University is a member of consortia that won Erasmus Mundus grants from the European Commission to implement its mobility flows. KIMEP also is partner of the Tempus project "QUADRIGA", which is aimed to provide background for modernization of curricula, promote closer cooperation and understanding between universities and employers (enterprises, industries, public sector) what is finally aimed to be beneficial for graduates of the university. The project is implemented in the context of the Bologna Process.

The review team recommendations are to set up a strategy for programme-related cooperation, including research cooperation and make all related documents openly available.

The programmes comply with the standard.