



Agency for
Quality Assurance
and Accreditation
Austria

Accreditation Report of the Panel Cluster E

Culturology (Bachelor, Master, PhD)

Religious Studies (Bachelor, Master, PhD)

Philosophy (PhD)

Sociology (PhD)

Al-Farabi Kazakh National University

March 2014

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1 General information

Al-Farabi Kazakh National University mandated AQ Austria with the accreditation of the following study programmes: Culturology (Bachelor, Master, PhD), Religious Studies (Bachelor, Master, PhD), Philosophy (PhD), and Sociology (PhD). These programmes are assessed in the present report.

Bachelor and Master programmes of the same discipline as well as PhD programmes (where applicable) are assessed in one report, but include different statements, which have to be assigned to the relevant programme. Where deviations require different statements and assessments, these are made.

1.1 Basic principles of the procedure

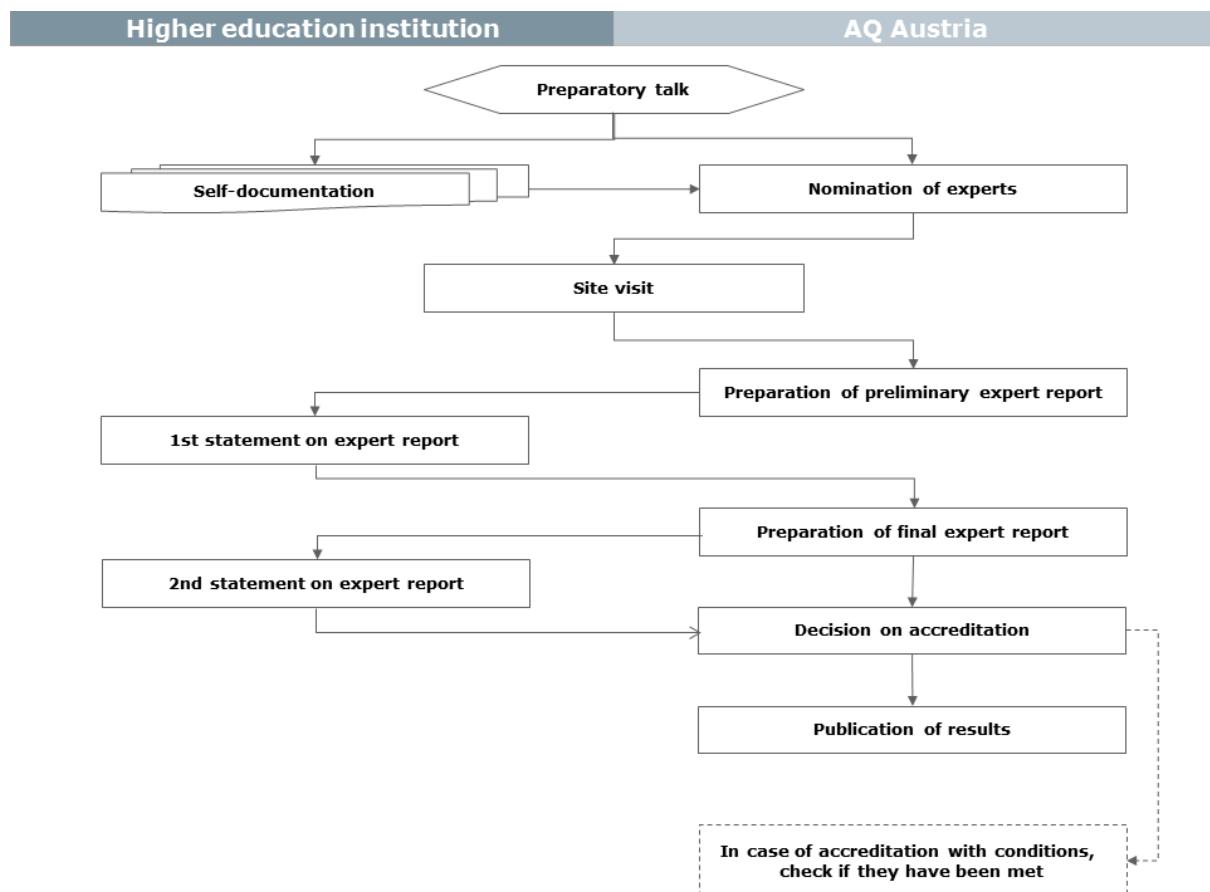
AQ Austria is the Austrian agency for quality assurance and accreditation in higher education. The agency is operating in Austria and other countries of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). It is committed to serving the common good and is based on the values of the European Higher Education Area, 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 out accreditation procedures of study programmes at higher education institutions in Kazakhstan.

By granting international accreditation to a study programme, AQ Austria confirms the compliance of the study programme 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 Study programme and programme management
- Standard 2 Staff
- Standard 3 Quality assurance
- Standard 4 Funding and infrastructure
- Standard 5 Research and development and appreciation of the arts
- Standard 6 National and international cooperation

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



The accreditation report of the Panel 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 on the basis of expert opinion are supposed to help the higher education institution to continuously develop the study programme. The agency grants the accreditation for a period of six 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 Listing of study programmes and brief description of al-Farabi Kazakh National University

The following information on the study programmes derives from the self-evaluation documentation submitted by al-Farabi Kazakh National University.

Name of the programme:	Culturology
Academic degree awarded:	Bachelor of Humanities in Culturology
Year of introduction:	2001
Regular study period:	4 academic years
Number of ECTS credits:	243
Number of Kazakh credits:	146
Name of the programme:	Culturology
Academic degree awarded:	Master of Humanities in Culturology
Year of introduction:	1999
Regular study period:	2 academic years
Number of ECTS credits:	99
Number of Kazakh credits:	59
Name of the programme:	Culturology
Academic degree awarded:	PhD in Culturology
Year of introduction:	2008
Regular study period:	3 academic years
Number of ECTS credits:	125
Number of Kazakh credits:	75
Name of the programme:	Religious Studies
Academic degree awarded:	Bachelor of Humanities in Religious Studies
Year of introduction:	1999
Regular study period:	4 academic years
Number of ECTS credits:	242
Number of Kazakh credits:	145
Name of the programme:	Religious Studies
Academic degree awarded:	Master of Humanities in Religious Studies
Year of introduction:	2001
Regular study period:	2 academic years
Number of ECTS credits:	98
Number of Kazakh credits:	59
Name of the programme:	Religious Studies
Academic degree awarded:	PhD in Religious Studies
Year of introduction:	2011
Regular study period:	3 academic years
Number of ECTS credits:	125
Number of Kazakh credits:	75

Name of the programme:	Philosophy
Academic degree awarded:	PhD in Philosophy
Year of introduction:	2010
Regular study period:	3 academic years
Number of ECTS credits:	125
Number of Kazakh credits:	75

Name of the programme:	Sociology
Academic degree awarded:	PhD in Sociology
Year of introduction:	2010
Regular study period:	3 academic years
Number of ECTS credits:	125
Number of Kazakh credits:	75

Brief description of Al-Farabi Kazakh National University

The following information derives from al-Farabi Kazakh National University website <http://www.kaznu.kz/en/>, the website of the Eurasian Universities Association (EAU) <http://www.eau-msu.ru/heis/view/34/education>, the website of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan <http://www.edu.gov.kz/en/>, as well as from the self-documentation and other evidence provided by the university before and during the site visit.

Al-Farabi National University (Al-Farabi KazNU) was founded on 5 January 1934 as Kazakh State University. In 2001 the University obtained the special status of a national university and was renamed into its current name.

Al-Farabi KazNU is the largest academic and research centre of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The university structure includes 14 faculties, 62 departments, 9 research institutes and 25 research centres, and a TechnoPark. The university currently offers more than 180 majors at the Bachelor, Master and PhD levels. The courses are run in Kazakh, Russian and English language. The total student population exceeds 20,000. The number of academic staff is over 2,500 including 400 doctors of sciences, more than 800 candidates of sciences, and 200 holders of PhD degrees.

Al-Farabi KazNU mission is to form, through provision of relevant, elite quality higher education, a corps of competitive professionals prepared for solving problems associated with the intensive development of key areas of economy, science and public life of the country.

In line with its mission, the University developed its vision and strategic goals.

The special National University status granted to al-Farabi KazNU by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2001 provides considerable autonomy for the university's administrative and financial governance, and higher academic freedom as compared to Kazakh higher education institutions of other types.

According to the State Programme of Education Development in The Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011–2020, approved by the decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan on 7 December 2010, a staged process of granting autonomy in academic, financial and management activities to higher education institutions of Kazakhstan will start in 2015. Since 2015 autonomy will be granted to the national research universities, since 2016 to higher education institutions with the *national* status, and since 2018 to HEIs of other types.

The University's governance structure comprises the Academic Council, a consultative advisory body bearing responsibility for institutional decision-making and strategic planning,

Rector, Rector's Office, and the University Administrative Department. The Board of Trustees and the Council of Seniors are advisory bodies that also participate in the university strategic planning and bring external perspectives on issues related to institutional governance.

Al-Farabi KazNU was the first university in Kazakhstan and Central Asia to join the Magna Charta Universitatum (2003, Bologna) and to adopt the three-cycle system of higher education. The University launched its first PhD programmes in 2005.

Al-Farabi KazNU is currently the largest provider of PhD programmes in Kazakhstan; since 2005 more than 200 faculty members of foreign universities have been engaged as external co-advisors in the preparation of Al-Farabi KazNU PhD students.

Since 2009 al-Farabi KazNU delivers double degree programmes with universities of France, Russia, and Spain. Since the academic year 2010/11 Al-Farabi KazNU Master students can enrol in double degree programmes offered by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Network University (SCO Network University) and by the Commonwealth of Independent States Network University (CIS Network University).

Al-Farabi KazNU uses the Kazakh credit system, different from the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). According to the Regulation of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan On the Organisation of Educational Process on the Basis of Credit Technology of Training (2011), one Kazakh credit corresponds to 45 learning hours for Bachelor degree programmes; 60 learning hours for Professional Master degree programmes, 75 learning hours for Research and Teaching Master degree programmes, and 105 learning hours for PhD programmes. Al-Farabi KazNU equates one ECTS credit to 27 learning hours.

Distance learning opportunities at al-Farabi KazNU are provided for the students of the Law Faculty and Higher School of Economics and Business, for continuing education, and for students doing their internships or exchange programmes abroad. Moodle is used as a basis for distance learning.

The University has implemented a credit system based on the extensive use of INTRANET technology. A corporate network UNIVER is used by all faculty and students as a tool for daily monitoring of the academic process. (<http://www.kaznu.kz/en/3562/page>)

Al-Farabi KazNU has established close relationships with the business community; the University's Board of Employers includes representatives of the largest national companies such as Kazatomprom, National space agency, KazMunaiGaz, Eurasian bank etc. Employability of the university's graduates is reported to exceed 95 per cent.

Al-Farabi KazNU has partner relationships with 418 foreign HEIs and with a number of international organisations including the UN, the NATO, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the British Council, Alliance Française, Confucius Institutes, USAID. Joint research projects are conducted in cooperation with international research centres and laboratories. (<http://www.kaznu.kz/en/13589/page>)

Al-Farabi KazNU is a member of the International Association of Universities (IAU), Eurasian Association of Universities (EAU), European Society for Engineering Education (SEFI), International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience (IAESTE), International Federation of Engineering Education Societies (IFEES).

1.3 Accreditation procedure at Al-Farabi Kazakh National University

Al-Farabi Kazakh National University mandated AQ Austria with the accreditation of the study programmes mentioned above in July 2013.

Timetable of the accreditation procedure

Procedural step	Date
Delivery of self-evaluation reports by al-Farabi KazNU	22 November 2013, later submittals on 19 December 2013 and 5 February 2014
Decision on Panel members by the Board of AQ Austria	30 October 2013
Preparatory skype meeting of the Panel	15 January 2014
Site-visit to al-Farabi KazNU by the Panel	12-13 February 2014
Draft report of the Panel	28 March 2014
Formal statement by al-Farabi KazNU	none
Final report of the Panel	7 April 2014
Statement on the final report by al-Farabi KazNU	9 April 2014
Accreditation decision by the Board of AQ Austria	13 May 2014

Members of the Panel

Name	Institution	Role
Prof. Dr. Ayşe Çağlar	University of Vienna	Peer from academia (Culturology)
Prof. Dr. Martin Rothgangel	University of Vienna	Peer from academia (Religious Studies)
Prof. Dr. Bärbel Frischmann	University of Erfurt	Peer from academia (Philosophy)
Prof. Dr. Roland Verwiebe	University of Vienna	Peer from academia (Sociology); head of the Panel
Prof. Dr. Aigul Zabirova	L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Astana	Peer from Kazakhstan (Sociology)
Miroslav Jašurek	Charles University Prague	Student peer (Public and Social Policy, Sociology)

AQ Austria coordinator

Zhanna Kuzminykh

2 Assessment results

2.1 Standard 1: Study programme and programme management

The study programmes under review are offered by the al-Farabi KazNU Faculty of Philosophy and Political Science. Below are the issues relevant for all the study programmes with regard to Standard 1.

The principles and ideas of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) are not fully implemented at al-Farabi KazNU. The Kazakh credit system which is stipulated by the Regulations of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan (MES RK) "On the organisation of educational process on the basis of credit technology of training" (2011) is used as a base. This system has been used as a starting point. In a second step it was transformed in a way to make it compatible with ETCS, the old system is still in place. This creates specific challenges: It is not clear from the available material (self-evaluation reports etc.) whether (or not) in this process adoptions (e.g. dropping/adding of courses, changes in the workload etc.) to the ECTS system have been implemented. Thus, the current KazNU adaptation of ECTS does not fully embrace the ECTS principles of credit allocation and student workload calculation based on learning outcomes. The Diploma Supplement is not issued to the graduates of al-Farabi University. These issues are very important for incoming students concerning recognition of ECTS credits, as well as for the internationalisation of the study programmes in general.

The Bachelor programmes at the Faculty of Philosophy and Political Science cover 4 academic years, the Master programmes 2 academic years. The Bachelor in Religious Studies has 243 ECTS points and the Bachelor in Culturology 242 ECTS. The Master programmes have 98 ECTS points and 99 ECTS points respectively. The assessment criteria for these programmes are clearly stated, e-learning is not provided.

The PhD programmes under review cover 3 academic years (six semesters). The mode of PhD study is full-time education; all PhD students receive a government grant which covers their tuition fees and allows a study abroad opportunity. Each PhD programme under review has 125 ECTS credit points. The PhD programmes feature five different modules: a) the state compulsory module (5 ECTS); b) the compulsory professional module (25 ECTS); c) a Module for individual educational training (30 ECTS); d) a module for additional training (57 ECTS); e) a module for finale attestation (8 ECTS).

The first 2 years of PhD studies are used for intensive training in specialised classes/courses, which cover all together 15 weeks per semester. Students take 4 to 5 classes per semester during the first two years of study. Only the last year is mainly used for conducting individual research and finalizing the PhD thesis.

PhD-students can freely choose the theme of the doctoral thesis; it is independent from the PhD study curriculum. All PhD students have two supervisors (one at home, one foreign academic/researcher), and work on in their theses in collaboration with both supervisors. Additionally, to 'distant' cooperation, every al-Farabi PhD student goes to the university/research centre of his/her international supervisor twice during the PhD study time

(up to two months each time). During the mobility periods, the students work at the libraries; do their research under the guidance of the foreign co-advisors.

The final examination includes the Dissertation Fulfilment and Defence which requires the proof of a minimum of seven national and international publications: three in journals approved by the Kazakh Higher Attestation Commission, one academic paper in a journal registered in Scopus or Thomson-Reuters databases, and three publications in international conference proceedings¹.

The Panel finds the course work in the PhD programmes too heavy, leaving little time for the students to work on their individual PhD projects. It is a standard of PhD programmes in the international arena that PhD students can trade classes for the successful publication in international journals or participation at international conferences². In other words: Al-Farabi Kazakh National University should incorporate output orientation, allow some flexibility and incorporate/enhance participation in the international scientific community into its PhD programme. Besides, the coursework during the first 4 semesters means that students can only go abroad during their last year of study, while it would be more beneficial for students to do it earlier, at least during the second year of study.

The number of Government grants allocated annually for PhD studies is rather low which determines the small student population in every PhD programme under review. Though the students are the beneficiaries of the remarkable good student-faculty ratio there might be a down side to this, particularly for the PhD programmes: the relatively low number of students fail to build a critical mass which could have a negative impact on the discussions in classes and seminars and the scientific environment for PhD students in general.

2.1.1 Culturology

Evaluating the study programmes in Culturology it is important to take into account the discipline's anchoring in social sciences as well as its relation to historical legacies of the disciplinary landscape in Kazakhstan and former Soviet Union. Cultural Studies is a relatively new area of study in several countries and had very different trajectories in different countries reflecting the different disciplinary historical backgrounds in these places (UK, Germany, Scandinavian countries, as well as Eastern European countries) in terms of their relations to different disciplines (sociology, anthropology, media studies, folklore studies, philosophy, etc.). For this reason the new title *Culturology* for the study programmes at al-Farabi KazNU is a more appropriate term than *Cultural Studies* in order not to confuse this program with *Cultural Studies* in US or in UK or with anthropology departments in Europe and US. It is closer to those former folklore studies in continental Europe (including Eastern Europe and Scandinavian countries), which were very often renamed as *Europäische Ethnologie* or *Cultural Studies* after the second half of the 1980s, or at the very beginning of the 1990s. This name is also congruent with the study programmes' strong focus on the topics related to their own society (in this case Kazakh society and culture). The title *Culturology* is also more

¹ The Panel finds the publication requirements prior to the PhD thesis questionable given the fact that the students are not native speakers of the languages in which they are expected to publish, and peer reviewed journals have a long publication waiting time.

² A successful publication in an international journal should be granted with a higher number of ECTS points (e.g. 10 points).

appropriate to relate the elements of the study programmes to the disciplinary background of the Soviet Union (like in semiotics, philosophy, etc.).

These points about the name of the study programmes under review are very important in evaluating their objectives, the content and the specified learning outcomes. Otherwise it would be very misleading to evaluate these study programmes as if they were in anthropology or cultural studies in the sense of US or UK cultural studies programmes.

(a) Statements

The Bachelor programme reflects this historical legacy and the difficulties that come along with it very well. The students are exposed to courses addressing several disciplines (*Psychology of Interpersonal Communication, Applied Sociology, Human Life Safety, Ecology and Sustainable Development, Fundamentals of Economics, Kazakhstan Law*) and to courses that address culture in relation to very different times and areas (*Primitive cultures, Culture of the Ancient World, Culture of the Medieval, Management in Culture, or as Mass Culture, and Cultural Anthropology*). The content of these very diverse courses covers limited areas leading to a mismatch between the broad and general objectives and the content of the courses, especially in terms of the reading material. The assigned readings are very selective and are very uneven for teaching the students the state of the art in these areas with a critical perspective. Very often the classics in these areas (like V. Turner, for example in the course *The Myth and the Ritual in Culture*) are missing. This is the result of a lack of a coordinated focus for the study programme in relation to the selected topics for teaching.

In the Modules for Individual Educational Trajectories, the study programme becomes clearer, especially in preparing the students for a job market of applied culture (to be employed at cultural policy institutions, in tourist and advertisement industries or as cultural operators). *The Theorist Culture* is also clearly geared to Kazakh (national) institutions as the job market for the graduates.

In terms of methodological training, the Bachelor programme is weak. A kind of a research methods course comes almost at the end of the study programme.

The Master programme in Culturology is better content-wise coordinated than the Bachelor programme. It is more focused in the sense that it provides education and training to the students for a clear job market in Cultural industries (in Cultural Management, Cultural Policy). The Theoretical methodological research track is less focused than the other two but clearly aims to train the students to work in the national institutions (including research institutions with a national and/or regional focus). However, the programme is built upon an assumption that the Master students will be coming from the Bachelor programme in Culturology (thus in that sense closed to the "new comers"). There are no overview courses on cultural studies (neither *Ecology of Culture*, nor *Postmodernism's Philosophy of Culture* could provide such a general orientation on the debates in "cultural studies"). *Theory and Methodology of Typology of Culture* course will not provide a critical stance to the current debates in "Cultural Studies" either. Despite of a course on "Organization and Planning of Scientific Research" relatively at the beginning of the study programme, there is not a clear methodological training course where students are trained in different methods (like narrative interview, ethnographic interview, fieldwork techniques, oral history, etc.). Acquisition of such methodological skills would be very important for Master students of the Department of Culturology.

The PhD programme, like the Master programme, is built upon the assumption that the students would be coming from *within* that they will build upon their Master programme at al-Farabi KazNU. Given the fact that having a PhD cohort coming from different institutional backgrounds is important for a critical PhD training, this design could be a limitation for a programme striving for internationalisation. The early specialization in tracks (The national Culture and Cultural Anthropology tracks in the 1st term) hinders having a critical overview of the history of "Cultural Studies" as a discipline, different schools within and an overview of current debates in the discipline.

Moreover, the logic for the selection of the course topics in the specializations is not clear. The Cultural anthropology track, for example, is a combination of some courses on cultural anthropology and fails to provide a systemic training. It is not clear in the study programme when and in which courses the students will be encouraged to acquire a critical stance vis-à-vis cultural anthropology including the current debates in this area.

There are Research Seminars (1 Credit) built in 1st and 2nd terms and then Research Practice, however the curriculum does not entail a course for a rigorous methods training, which is *crucial* for a PhD programme.

In all the study programmes in Culturology, the admission requirements are clear and suitable.

The workload for students is heavy in all the programmes (too diffuse in the Bachelor programme, too many courses at the PhD level and the harmonization of the curriculum is needed so that it is not heavily dependent on the specialization of the available staff).

The examination methods are not very clearly specified though at the site visit it was clearer.

In all the study programmes, the course objectives are put in very general terms and neither the content of the courses nor the learning outcomes are geared towards these general objectives and towards critical thinking.

The student-faculty relations are very good (in terms of student-faculty ratio and the accessibility of professors for supervision and advise).

(b) Assessments

In all the study programmes (Bachelor, Master and PhD) there is definitely a need for courses to provide the students with an overview of critical perspectives and different schools in "cultural studies" as well as a course on the history of "cultural studies" with systematically gathered syllabi.

All the study programmes need more systematic and rigorous methods training (other than simply research seminars). The PhD course work has to be definitely reduced especially in the second and the third years.

Before the early division into individual tracks in the Master programme, the students need to be able to have some courses, which will introduce them into the key issues and debates in cultural studies (beyond the tracks). This would be particularly important for the incoming foreign students.

There should be space in the Master and PhD programmes for the training of the newcomers. This will be important for the internationalisation of the study programmes.

The relationship between the aims and the contents of the courses need to be harmonized in a better way. The content of the courses should illustrate a systematic encounter with the topic (rather than a selection of readings where the logic of their selection remains opaque). Reading the original texts is more important than reading about these authors in textbooks. This should be encouraged in the syllabi.

2.1.2 Religious Studies

(a) Statements

The Bachelor, Master and PhD programmes in Religious Studies are aligned with the objectives of the university and are logically connected with its strategies and goals.

The qualification objectives (learning outcomes) of the study programmes have been defined and meet the technical, scientific and professional requirements and are widely in accordance with the respective levels of the qualification framework of the European Higher Education Area (e.g. see the basic distinction between knowledge, skill, and competence in the study programmes).

The contents, structure and scope of and teaching methods applied to the curriculum and the modules of the three study programmes meet the technical, scientific and professional requirements and are suited to achieve the intended learning outcomes. However, Module 1 („Religion in the ancient world“) of the Bachelor programme contains two problematic parts which are evident from their titles: „Primitive beliefs“ and „National religions“. The concept of „primitive beliefs“ includes partially some outdated literature. Is „8. Taylor E. the Primitive culture – M, 1989. (in Russian)“ „8. Tyler E. ...“ who wrote that book in English 1871? Furthermore it was said, that the term „National religions“ is a result of a problematic translation. It is obvious that mentioned religions like manichaeism are not national.

The study programmes are structured consistently with regard to formulated qualification objectives.

The students' workload required for the study programmes is devised in a way so as to allow them to reach the aspired qualification objectives in the study period specified. The zero-drop-out-rate shows, that the praxis of teaching is better than the first impressions of the theoretical explications of the study programme. On the practical level the study produces highly motivated students. The system has a good structure and there is an excellent cooperation between faculty supervisors and students, small classes etc.

The examination methods in the Bachelor, Master and PhD programmes are partially suitable to assess whether the defined learning outcomes have been achieved. There is no variation of examination methods during the Bachelor, Master and PhD programmes (source: the self-evaluation report):

“1st interim control: attendance, in-class discussion, problem solving, testing
2nd interim control: attendance, in-class discussion, problem solving, testing
Final examination: written, 2 theoretical questions, 1 practical question.”

Admission requirements for the study programmes are clearly defined, meet the statutory requirements and contribute to achieving the educational goals of the study programme.

Regarding the PhD programme, a well-established research environment is in place at the university level, which ensures a very close contact between doctoral students and scientific research staff as well as the opportunity for intra-university and non-university co-operation.

For the PhD programme under review, the number of permanent scientific staff possessing the relevant qualifications, having carried out recognised research activities and having gained experience in tutoring doctoral students is sufficient. In any case, a teaching qualification (venia docendi) in the scientific subject is required for independently tutoring doctoral students.

In terms of interdisciplinary of the PhD programme, all the subjects involved are covered by scientific staff possessing sufficient qualifications.

In addition to any other teaching, research and administration work, the permanent scientific staff is able to handle the teaching and tutoring responsibilities within the scope of PhD programme, in accordance with the number of doctoral students.

(b) Assessments

At first glance the curricula of the study programmes in Religious Studies (especially that of the Bachelor programme) give the impression that they include too much content matter which contributes to a lack of critical thinking. However, the interviews with the students showed an impressive output and reflected thoughts. Furthermore it is the wish of the students to get so much information in the different modules of religious education. The recommended literature in English is partially too old (see for example E. Tyler above) and certain concepts of Religious Studies like "primitive", "national religion", and "sects" are outdated. One reason is that there are some problematic English translations of the curricula.

The examination methods are one-sided (a two hour written exam). Special attention should be given to appropriate examination methods for PhD students. They need special writing skills e.g. to produce papers for international journals and also enough individual time for their thesis.

2.1.3 Philosophy

(a) Statements

The PhD programme in Philosophy was introduced in 2010. It is pointed at issues related to the younger development of Kazakhstan (nation-building-processes after becoming independent). The study programme aims at dealing with the specificity of Kazakh history and culture. It wants to support the understanding and critical reflection of the recent development, the establishing of a national identity and its political and social approaches. It does not follow the Western strategy of providing PhD programmes in Philosophy either historically (main traditions and schools in Philosophy), concerning sub-disciplines (anthropology, ontology, epistemology, ethics, aesthetics, political, social, legal philosophy, etc.), or systematic questions (such as justice, truth, mind, identity, language).

Because of this orientation al-Farabi KazNU PhD graduates have very good chances to get an adequate employment in research institutions, as teachers or in administrations. It could attract such students from abroad who are interested in Kazakh culture, history and philosophy.

The study programme is aligned with the objectives of al-Farabi KazNU and the Faculty of Philosophy and Political Science.

The PhD programme offers four paths ("individual educational trajectories") of studies: two of them are teaching-oriented, the other two are research-oriented.

(b) Assessments

The study programme is not focused on fundamental questions of philosophy and its traditions, but directed at philosophical questions regarding social, cultural and religious developments, national history, Kazakh philosophical tradition, philosophical anthropology and education. The study programme offers rather "Applied Philosophy" than general Philosophy.

About the Modules

- The Module-section "Professional Practice" is a good support for students, for those who want to become teacher as well as for those who are interested in a research carrier.
- Methodological seminars are held twice a month by professors. They seminars deal with academic writing and other skills for research.
- There is an inadequacy between general qualification objectives and concrete modules.
- The reading-lists are not in all cases relevant; the literature is often old, partially inappropriate.
- Module "Philosophy of Culture" (FK 7206): The Reading list mostly doesn't fit the objectives and content of the module.

The examination methods in the single modules are suitable.

2.1.4 Sociology

(a) Statements

The PhD programme in Sociology was introduced in 2010. The head of the PhD study programme is Professor Doctor of Social Sciences Gulmira Abdiraiymova. She works at this programme together with the staff of the Department of Sociology and Social Work. This is medium size/large size department with circa 20 full-time staff (permanent positions) and several part-time positions.

The PhD programme in Sociology at al-Farabi Kazakh National University is a recognised Sociology school in Kazakhstan. The study programme is new but well established and active, it educated both researchers and practitioners.

The PhD in Sociology features five different modules. It covers 3 academic years (six semesters). The first 2 years of the programme are used for intensive training in specialised classes/courses, which cover circa 15 weeks per semester. The last year is mainly used for

conducting individual research and finalising the PhD thesis. Students take 4 to 5 classes per semester during the first 2 years of study.

The first enrolments were in the academic year 2010/11. Two students started their PhD in Sociology. Another 3 students started in 2011/12, two started in 2012/13 and 2013/14. The total number of PhD students in the programme was 7 at the time of the site-visit. This is a relatively small number of PhD students for a department of this size.

The department has had a small number of international scholars visiting for teaching and research purposes (from Germany, the US, Russia and Ukraine). 10 researchers of the Department of Sociology had some form of academic mobility (mostly participations at international conferences) between 2010 and 2013. PhD students are more active in terms of academic mobility. 5 out of the currently enrolled 7 PhD students spend several months researching abroad: in the US, in France and in Korea.

(b) Assessments

The study programme is aligned with the objectives of the institution and is connected with its goals. The general objectives (GO) and learning outcomes (LO) of the study programme (the reviewer refers to Paragraph 5.3 of the Self Evaluation Report) have been clearly defined. However, they do not meet the scientific and professional requirements of a PhD programme within the European Higher Education Area yet. Please rewrite and rethink page 12 to 15 of the Self Evaluation report, the next paragraphs provide some ideas of how to do this.

Regarding general objectives and learning outcomes, one should think in terms of contributions to the international scientific community; some examples: PhD students should be able to publish in international scientific journals (English-speaking) on their own and as part of research groups (those at Al-Farabi Kazakh National University and those which exist with colleagues from other universities (potentially abroad)), they should be trained to write proposal for research grants, they should be trained to participate in international conferences of the International Sociological Association, the British Sociological Association, the American Sociological Association and other international scientific networks. The Department of Sociology and Social Works should consider incorporating training elements, which promote and support such objectives into the PhD programme.

The integration of PhD students into existing research projects at the Department of Sociology and Social Works should be improved (existing attempts in this area work very well). This is a promising way to go, telling from various interviews during the site visit.

The Department of Sociology and Social Work should also consider cutting classes/course work to one year (or 1.5 years) in order to enhance the available time for individual research. In addition, the PhD programme in Sociology has less methods training than one would expect considering international standards. The quality of training in advanced statistical methods should be improved, new international trends should be considered (e.g. event history analysis) and the use of statistics software (STATA, SPSS, MPLUS etc.) should be part of the training of PhD students in a more systematic way.

In terms of the structure of the programme as well as GO and LO, the Department should consider formulating specific pillars (e.g. *Globalisation and the welfare state* or *Challenges for*

contemporary central Asian societies, Social inequality in contemporary central Asian societies) for the PhD programme.³

GO and LO do not meet international standards. This means that existing examination methods as well as the contents, structure and scope of teaching methods need to be improved. PhD students have to pass a 2 hour written exam in all modules (there is zero variation in the forms of the exam, why?). PhD students should improve their writing skills (in writing essays and research papers), gain critical thinking and apply their knowledge in practical ways, always oriented on standards of the international scientific community (e.g. use articles in European Sociological Review as blueprint).

In terms of syllabus and reading lists, the expert panel observed gaps in terms of international literature. The Department of Sociology and Social Works and the Faculty of Philosophy and Political Science should invest a part of their budget to improve the quality of available books and scientific journals. It is very important to use more journal articles from highly ranked journals (e.g. American Sociological Review, Social Forces, International Migration Review etc.) for reading lists.

The content, structure, scope and teaching methods of the study programme partially meet the technical, scientific and professional requirements.

The university tries to build the existing staff into the programmes through ECTS. Thus, the idea of al-Farabi KazNU credit system is not based on the workload of students. The issue is important for recognition of ECTS and incoming students.

A final argument: the current system has its own quality/strengths: zero drop-out rate, individualized trajectories for students, excellent cooperation between faculty supervisors and students, small classes etc. The number of available permanent scientific staff is very high, the staff is well qualified and certainly able to handle teaching responsibilities. Admission is highly selective. On the practical level this produces highly motivated students.

³ Compare for example with the University of Bremen (<http://www.bigsss-bremen.de/academic-program/overview.html>), the University of Bamberg (<http://www.uni-bamberg.de/bagss>), the EUI in Florence (<http://www.eui.eu/DepartmentsAndCentres/PoliticalAndSocialSciences/Index.aspx>), the University of Stanford (<http://www.stanford.edu/dept/soc/programs/areas.html>) or other successful PhD schools.

2.2 Standard 2: Staff

The university staff is not entitled to sabbatical. The Panel believes that a sabbatical scheme for the scientific staff would improve the scope and quality of research as well as the quality of teaching at the PhD level.

2.2.1 Culturology

(a) Statements

All the study programmes in Culturology (Bachelor, Master and PhD) are well-staffed. There is an excellent student-faculty ratio for the students, which easily matches with the elite universities in Europe. This is an important asset for the supervision of students and/or all the support the students get.

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

Though the students are the beneficiaries of the kind of over-staffed programmes, there might be a down side to this, particularly for the PhD programme: 1) the low number of students fail to build a critical mass (especially given the separate tracks in the Master and PhD programmes) which would have a negative impact on the discussions in classes and seminars; 2) the high number of staff might result in a large number of courses with very low number of students and/or in a number of classes which might distract the focus of the programmes and inflate the number of courses the students have to take without really contributing to the logics of the programmes.

(b) Assessments

The department of Religious and Cultural Studies should re-evaluate its staff-student ratio to assure that there is a critical mass in the classes (especially in the Master and the PhD programmes) which is important for critical discussions.

The mechanism of allocation of students and supervisors should be made explicit. It is important to see these distributions regularly. These could also be evaluated together with the results of student evaluations.

There should be incentives to attract additional students and/or attract international students to the Master and PhD programmes. This does not have to go together with acquiring lower quality students. One way of attracting such students and expanding the student body at the Master and PhD levels will be through externally funded research projects.

Almost all the faculty of the cultural studies department come from within. In this context, there is need for transparent documentation of hiring procedures and most importantly to have members from other institutions in the hiring committees. This is not the case at al-Farabi KazNU.

2.2.2 Religious Studies

(a) Statements

A sufficient number of scientific teaching and research staff is available for the Bachelor, Master and PhD programmes. The staff members are scientifically qualified, have adequate vocational experience and are qualified in terms of their teaching methods.

The composition of the faculty meets the requirements of a profound scientific education and ensures adequate student support.

The teaching and research staff have access to human resource development and further education measures.

(b) Assessments

The interviews with the teachers of Religious Studies proved their convincing competence in the different areas of religious studies and the students of Bachelor, Master and PhD demonstrated an impressive output of the teaching. The students are very reflexive about the different subject matters of religious studies. There is a very good student-teacher ratio and it is used intensively for collaboration with students.

2.2.3 Philosophy

(a) Statements

The self-evaluation report "PhD Philosophy" declares the following staff contributing to the study programme: 9 Full Professors, 15 Associated Professors, 4 Assistant Professors. Most of them are full time positions.

Staff members are highly qualified (3 of all hold Master's degrees all other with higher qualifications: PhD, Candidate of Sciences, Doctor of Sciences).

Additionally, international visiting professors gave/give lectures in the study programme during their stay (mostly some days) at al-Farabi KazNU.

Currently, 14 students study in the PhD programme Philosophy.

The average number of participants in the courses amounts to 3-4 students.

The teaching workload of professors is distributed by the Head of the Department.

The staff recruitment is the responsibility of the Dean. The procedure is formalized.

(b) Assessments

The number of staff is remarkable. The teacher-student ratio is extraordinary, excellent supervision is possible.

The research-fields of staff are wide spread (historical, systematic, European, Asian, Anglo-American). This offers good possibilities to promote the students in their different research interests.

There are good possibilities for the staff members to improve English (English Language Center) and to get research scholarships for research abroad and to gain international research experiences.

2.2.4 Sociology

(a) Statements

The Department of Sociology has a total of 20 academic staff, 17 researchers have a full-time position (permanent positions) and 3 researchers have a part-time position. In addition, the department has 2 employees working in technical jobs. This information can be found on the last page of the Self Evaluation Report. Page 4 of this report says that the department has all together 31 teaching staff.

There is a very good student-teacher ratio at the Department of Sociology and Social Work of Al-Farabi Kazakh National University. It is even better than at most elite US or UK universities.

10 researchers of the Department of Sociology and Social Work had some form of academic mobility (mostly participations at international conferences) between 2010 and 2013.

(b) Assessments

There is a (more than) sufficient number of teaching/research staff available, they are highly motivated and well trained in terms of methodological and theoretical expertise. The composition of the Faculty meets the requirements of a profound training programme.

In terms of training and further education measures, the number of staff who participate in international conferences and who spend research stays abroad should be enhanced. In theory, researchers at the Department of Sociology and Social Work have many organisational and financial possibilities for professional development due to well established Government programmes such as "Bolashak/Future". They should try using these programmes more than they did in the past.

Having in mind the relatively large faculty at the Department of Sociology and Social Works and the relatively low number of PhD students, the exact mechanisms by which PhD students cooperate with certain PhD supervisors is not clear (who can choose whom?).

2.3 Standard 3: Quality assurance

(a) Statements

The recent change of the university mission into becoming a research university has also changed its internal quality management, which now includes result-oriented ranking of the staff, departments and faculties within the university. The new internal management system is aimed at increasing competitiveness among the faculty members. The ranking criteria are based on key performance indicators which cover research output (publication of academic papers in journals with high impact factor), application of research results (patents), participation in international conferences and seminars, social engagement and academic output. The salary of the faculty members, as well as the budget of Faculties/departments is linked to the ranking outcomes.

The study programmes are supported by the university quality management system which includes the Center of Accreditation, Ranking and Quality Management. Al-Farabi Kazakh National University has institutionalised a regular evaluation of its study programmes and teachers' performance/courses via student surveys.

PhD students are engaged in the reflection on the study programmes, including the assessment of their supervisors. There are student evaluations of teachers' performance, regular online surveys, peer observations. According to the First Vice-Rector, about 100 student organisations participate in the management processes through their representatives sitting on 'every university committee'. The institutionalisation and formalisation of the students' participation (including the feedback process) is not totally clear, but their feedback on the study programmes have already had effects on the curriculum: for example, the different tracks (individual learning trajectories) students can choose in studying at the Bachelor, Master and PhD levels are an instructive model that matches the different interests of students and the different needs of the employment market. The students feel that their voices in such critiques are mostly heard, but on the other hand several students – especially at the PhD and Master levels - desired more methods (and fieldwork) courses. There should be a clear mechanism in place for conveying such desires in relation to the curriculum.

At the level of each Faculty there is a Methodological Bureau which is responsible for consulting on the issues of curriculum development, and teaching materials.

At the departmental level, before designing the curriculum, a group of staff members at the Department look for similar programmes across the world and study their curricula, especially the curricula of global leadership universities. Then the curriculum design group reviews the Bachelor and Master level curricula in order to avoid any duplication of courses. Suggestions from employers and needs of the labour market are taken into consideration when designing the curriculum. The heads of Departments are responsible for the development and realization of study programmes.

(a) Assessments

The Panel was positively impressed by the effort which is made towards student support services. There is a very high number of student organisations which provide a vivid student and academic life at al-Farabi Kazakh National University.

Due to the lack of information on quality assurance issues in the self-evaluation reports of the study programmes, it was not quite clear before the site visit whether there is a clear and formalised procedure at the departmental level for revising the curriculum, revising learning outcomes, revising course sequence and revising course content. Thus, there is no documentation on the mechanisms which assure the quality of the courses, the match between the objectives and the contents. It is not clear whether there is a regular check on this and who will do it, and if there is one and whether or not there is a self-evaluation process to revise the study programmes. Who and at which level determines the curricula is not clear either. The quality of the course designs, as well as their suitability to the overall program objectives need to go through re-evaluation. If there is a need for a new course, which office decides on it? Where does such a course suggestion go through a quality assurance check?

The site visit provided some evidence that the structure and content of study programmes are discussed at the level of Departments. All courses offered during the semester, the demands of teaching, and the themes of graduation works are also regularly discussed at Department meetings.

Nevertheless, the Panel finds it essential to emphasise that all the Bachelor, Master and PhD programmes and their course designs need to go through a periodic evaluation. This is of special importance for the study programmes in Culturology, where the relationship of the courses to the overall objectives of the programmes – this is less of a problem for the Master programme than it is for the PhD and the Bachelor programmes – the match between the aims of the courses, their contents and the learning outcomes as well as the harmonization of all the courses with each other within a program pose a problem.

This should be the instance where the option of dropping some of the courses (especially in the Bachelor and the PhD programmes) and adding new ones could be discussed; the course design could be altered, the instructors are asked to update the syllabi. External experts could be used as resource people. OSI (Open Society Institute) provides curriculum development programmes and grants scholars elaborate support programmes. It would be advisable to use such support programmes to reach out to international scholars for course designs, updates, and producing updated systematic syllabi. This is necessary for all study programmes under review, and the need more acute for the Bachelor and the PhD programmes in Culturology.

It is important for quality issues to improve the Faculty and Departments' websites. There is only very little information available in English and Russian. This is important for incoming students and international relations/exchange. It is equally important for every Department's corporate identity and its strategic orientation and the corresponding visibility in the public sphere. The existing website has only very limited information on staff, research, publications, teaching etc.

2.4 Standard 4: Funding and infrastructure

(a) Statements

The financial situation of Al-Farabi Kazakh National University is very stable. Fund-raising has been centralized and is directed to state programmes and offers. In terms of funding the budget to the departments is allocated on an intra-university competitive basis (based on ranking between the departments). The research and publications establish the main criteria for these allocations but the documentation of this allocation was not available to the Panel. Due to the introduction of inter- and intra-departmental competitive funding within the university, transparent documentation of this funding becomes crucial. The university administration gives examples of success mostly from the engineering and natural sciences. In this context, the situation of funding for the social sciences becomes even more important. This will be important for promotion procedures.

The Faculty offering the study programmes under review receives financial means from the leadership of the university as well as from the ministries and research agencies (e.g. through national or international research projects).

Especially impressive is the government funding of the PhD programmes. All PhD students have got scholarships (state educational grants for PhD study) but the number of PhD grants is very limited nationwide.

Regarding the infrastructure of the study programmes, adequate rooms and technical facilities required for the study programmes are on the way to improve. The new university library is still under construction and does not provide the full scope of library services yet, though students seem to use other library facilities. In addition to the central university library, each Faculty has its own library in the building where it is located. At the University level there are several computer rooms with more than 2,000 computers, but there are no computer facilities in the building of the Sociology and Social Work Department.

There is an intranet UNIVER system which is used for administration of the teaching and learning processes. The University also supports students intensively by service institutions.

(b) Assessments

Acknowledging the impressive funding of the PhD programmes through the government investments, the Panel does not have a clear idea how and who deals with the PhD programmes' funding at the university level: the documentation on the funding of the study programmes was not available to the Panel. PhD students are aware of the possibility to go to the university (research centre) of their foreign academic co-advisor twice during their study time. No budget exists for students' own field work. If students are expected to generate their own fieldwork money, then this should be specified together with the university services to facilitate this.

There is a need for a clearer documentation of allocation of resources (budget) between the departments and within the department (on the basis of the recently introduced performance based salaries). This will give more transparency to the current ranks of the faculty, which are not easily correlated with their publication and research records in the documents provided to the panel members. For example, how are the numbers of the student allocations to

Culturology decided? At what level (at the university or at the Ministry of Education and Science) are such decisions made?

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

The Panel raised the question several times where students of the various programmes work on their projects. Do they use the library, other study facilities? It is not clear from the self-evaluation reports and it was not explained during the site visit.

Nevertheless, there is a huge PhD research centre and a new quite impressive central library under construction, which the Panel could visit during the site-visit. Thus, conditions will improve substantially in the mid run. For example, the new university library includes a special room for foreign literature in social sciences and computer labs which will offer the students good opportunities for study.

2.5 Standard 5: Research and development and appreciation of the arts

The entire Faculty of Philosophy and Political Science is in the middle of a substantial change process, mainly driven by policies of the university leadership towards the establishment of a research university. There is also a growing orientation towards internationalisation. This implies substantial changes and challenges for individual researchers (e.g. in terms of salary (up to 50% of the salary is now based on research output). It is impressive to observe the Departments' staff efforts in shaping and contributing to this transformation process. The staff members feel a relatively high pressure in the process of the transition towards a research university. However, they try to meet these challenges and are adapting quite well to changing conditions in teaching and research.

It is important for the sustainability of this process to enhance academic freedom for the department and individual researchers. It is equally important that the leadership of the university recognizes the great potential of the Faculty of Philosophy and Political Science in contributing to the societal change in Kazakhstan.

2.5.1 Culturology

(a) Statements

The PhD programme in Culturology provides the students with very good conditions in terms of further development of their skills especially through the short term residence abroad (through their international co-advisers). The students definitely benefit from these schemes. This is an important mechanism in place.

Most of the research funding for the Culturology programmes comes from national agencies. Despite the availability of resources for research, this has its down side too. The incentives for collaborative international research remained low regarding the Culturology programmes though this is the most desired form of work environment by the students and the faculty (as the staff and students expressed during the site visit). The share of externally funded projects in Cultural Studies is low. Collaborative and externally funded projects will help to internationalize the Culturology programmes; put the students into contact with international colleagues and will provide them focused methodological and theoretical training through the projects.

(b) Assessments

The relations with the students' international second advisers could be used further during the PhD students' residence period abroad. In addition to working with their second advisors one to one, they should be allowed to take courses at these universities (the department staff should put pressure on the university higher administration) and these courses should be counted as part of the PhD students' course work at al-Farabi KazNU. This will allow the students to benefit from their residence abroad months in a more systematic fashion.

2.5.2 Religious Studies

(a) Statements

The objectives and perspectives for research and development defined for the study programmes are consistent with the national as well as the international orientation of the university.

The scientific staff is involved in the university's research activities. For example Ainur Kurmanalyeva conducts the project "The role of religion in modern Kazakhstan" (30.000.000 tenge) or "All Kazakh is one Kazakh: religious and cultural aspects" (9.000000 tenge). The interaction between research and teaching is ensured.

To the extent required by the Bachelor, Master and PhD of Religious Studies, students will be integrated into research projects.

The organisational and structural framework conditions are sufficient and suitable to implement the scheduled research activities.

(b) Assessments

From the European perspective, the amount of research activities and modules that deal with Kazakhstan issues are surprisingly high. However, the reason behind is becoming clear, when one recognizes on the one hand that Kazakhstan is a very young state and on the other hand that there is a consequent effort to get an international alignment. In total the national focus is balanced with international research and teaching activities.

2.5.3 Philosophy

(a) Statements

The goal of the PhD programme in Philosophy is to provide theoretical and methodological knowledge and research skills to enable students to master modern philosophical research and to specialize in a particular subject of research work. Further objectives are the encouraging of creativity and critical reflection, the development of skills to apply philosophical methods for the analysis of the social and cultural situation; the ability to deal with fundamental concepts of social and philosophical theories, to understand the meaning of moral values, traditions and innovations. These issues of philosophical studies aim at applied research in the field of social and cultural philosophy and also the implementation of research activities in educational processes.

Research projects of staff in Philosophy have been developed concerning the social, political and cultural orientation of Kazakhstan as well as personal interests.

(b) Assessments

The high number of teaching staff makes it possible to integrate students into research projects. Collaboration with two supervisors, Kazakh and foreign, as well as the study abroad opportunities funded by the government opens good chances to learn international standards in research and get access to international publication possibilities.

PhD students can freely choose the theme of the PhD theses concerning their interests, this supports autonomy of research.

2.5.4 Sociology

(a) Statements

From the interviews during the site visit and from the available material one can clearly derive that the teaching staff is involved in various research activities.

The Department of Sociology and Social Work had four international research projects between 2012 and 2013.

The strategic orientation and the research profile of the department is less clear than their efforts in teaching. The staff handbook provides an overview on the publication of the researchers at the department. Most books/articles are published in the national arena. There are only few international publications.

(b) Assessments

The self-evaluation materials available to the Panel materials give too little information on such issues as the strategic orientation of the Department of Sociology and Social Work, their contribution to the societal change of Kazakh society. Unfortunately, the Department's website is not very useful in this regard either which needs to be improved.

The interaction between teaching and research should be improved as well. From the interviews and the available material one can clearly derive that the teaching staff is involved in various research activities. However, the Department of Sociology and Social Works should enhance its efforts in gaining research grants from independent third party funding organizations. Through such efforts, the extent of integrating PhD students into research projects could be improved. Existing experiences in this area are quite promising (interviewed PhD students spoke very highly of existing/past opportunities in this regard). It is clearly the way to go for the Departments future.

Another, equally important step for the Departments development (in regard research and teaching) is the attempt to systematically increase the number publications in international journals and international publishing houses.

2.6 Standard 6: National and international co-operations

(a) Statements

Internationalisation is one of the big goals of al-Farabi KazNU. Contributions are expected from and honor for all faculties, departments and members of the university. Several student's organisations and societies help to build up international contacts.

Mobility fund for PhD students is impressive. PhD students of all the doctoral study programmes under review are very active in terms of academic mobility. The Panel emphasises that their short term residence abroad and institutionalisation of cooperation with international co-advisers are very important mechanisms that provide the students with good conditions in terms of further development of their skills. However, the Panel encourages the university to push the idea that PhD students take courses abroad (not just work at library and have few consultations with co-advisors/professors). Thus, students would be integrated

into the student body and would also improve contacts with the scientific staff of foreign universities. This will substantially change the person's perspectives and enhance the quality of the research stay abroad.

Visiting professors come to give lectures in the programme, though the visits are mostly short stays (10-14 days). Thus, for the last four years four foreign professors came to teach in the PhD programme in Sociology (three courses out of four were conducted in Russian, one in English).

Culturology

As in the most of the study programmes under review, the international cooperations of the Culturology programmes are not based on collaborative projects and are rather personalised. Though these personalised relations yield into mobility benefits for the students (like the Zurich possibility that came through Prof. Finke) there are no formalized bilateral agreements with these institutions. International cooperations are mostly with Theology departments (in Turkey particularly) rather than cultural studies, despite the fact that Cultural Studies (media studies) in these universities are very much present and more prominent. Mimar Sinan University in Turkey does not have a theology department. With which department KazNU has a bilateral agreement has to be clarified.

Religious studies

In line with the profiles of the study programmes, national and international co-operation projects with higher education institutions have been established. Visiting professors from abroad enrich the study of Religious Studies. The majority of the visiting professors are from Turkey, some individuals are from Russia, Spain, and Korea. The co-operation projects encourage and support the advancement of the study programmes and the mobility of students and staff. The focus of the contracts is on universities in Turkey (e.g. theological faculties of Marmara University Istanbul, Mimar Sinan University of Fine Arts and Kastamonu University), but there was also a student stay in Donguk University, Republic of Korea. Students have the possibility for an exchange.

Philosophy

The staff of the PhD programme is engaged in international research activities and cooperation. There are regular cooperations with foreign universities based on MoUs (universities of Texas, Ohio, Berlin, Düsseldorf etc.). Also agreements are concluded between al-Farabi KazNU and international universities. The staff members are involved in several international cooperation activities regarding their interests in research and personal connections (Russia, Germany, France, USA, Turkey, Korea etc.). Some of them are teaching abroad occasionally.

Sociology

According to the Self-Evaluation Report, there is only one international co-operation agreement in place. There is little sign of institutionalised national co-operation (for example with other universities). However, telling from the site visit, the department co-operates with the National Academy of Science, with the Centre of Public Opinion Study and with the Kazakh Research Institute of Culture, to name only three national partners.

The PhD students of the Department of Sociology and Social Work are very active in terms of academic mobility. 5 out of the currently enrolled 7 PhD students spend several months researching abroad, for example in the US, in France and in Korea.

Academic staff has been less mobile. Circa 10 researchers went to international conferences over the course of the last years.

(b) Assessments

The students of the PhD study programmes under review have interesting placements and research stays abroad. This is very promising. International exchange of students should be enhanced.

International co-operations (number, scope, quality) need to be improved (e.g. via bilateral agreements with similar departments in Western European countries, Russia, Turkey, the US).

In particular, the number and scope of international cooperation partners need to be increased for the Culturology programmes, but most importantly there is a strong need for cooperation with cultural studies departments particularly in Europe (due to the similar disciplinary and historical trajectories of "cultural studies" in Europe which is closer to "Culturology"). The collaborations need to be diversified to different areas of scholarship than "religion". Such cooperations will help to attract more international students to the Department as well as put the Culturology Master and PhD students into contact with students coming from different academic backgrounds.

Regarding the PhD programme in Religious Studies, it is understandable that cooperations with theological faculties in Turkey play an important role. However, Religious Studies are different from Theology. Therefore it is important that there is an ongoing process to get contacts on the one hand with Divinity Faculties of different religions in different countries and on the other hand with institutes of religious studies at other universities.

Staff inward mobility should be fostered, in particular through a more active use of the opportunities of the government programme "Visiting international Professor". This will increase the chances for the staff to get involved in international research projects.

Outward mobility of staff should be made regular; the selection requirements should be clear and available.

There is a big effort to offer courses in English: for example, last year five courses were delivered in English at the Faculty.

Internationalisation is not an easy task. However, it is important for the Departments' future and it should be supported by the leadership of the university.