

Fulfilment of the conditions – International Accreditation of the Bachelor-Programme „International Relations“

University of International Business, Almaty (Kazakhstan)

At its 33rd meeting on 17th March 2016, the Board of AQ Austria **decided to grant accreditation** to the

Bachelor-programme “International relations”

at University of International Business in Almaty, Kazakhstan for a period of six years (i.e. 16th March 2022), **under the following conditions:**

Condition 1

All syllabi have been checked carefully when it comes to core literature/reading lists used for each course to ensure that the list given includes not only relevant academic textbooks and articles, but also those which are up to date and recognized internationally (especially textbooks in English). They must strictly correspond with the content of the course. Accordingly, the list of all core readings have to be revised and updated in the syllabi, and library access to classical subject textbooks by world-recognized scholars studied internationally have be provided. The lists of core readings have to also include academic articles accessible through electronic journals databases already available at UIB. (Standard 1.3)

Condition 2

UIB has to make available Study Regulations in all languages of instruction for students and teaching staff. It should be a single document stipulating all rules and conditions applicable during the whole process of studying at the UIB for all programmes of studies (BA, MA, PhD), binding to all students and members of teaching staff. The regulations have to include general provisions on, for example: 1. Rights and obligations of students; 2. Duration of studies; 3. Learning outcomes and credits; 4. Forms of assessment and grades; 5. Organisation of

classes and semesters; 6. Changes in curricula; 7. Diploma theses, dissertations, final examinations, and graduation; 9. Expulsion and readmission of students; 9. Awards, distinctions, and disciplinary liability of students; 10. Any additional provisions. (Standard 3.2)

Fulfilments of these conditions have been documented in writing and were subject to assessment by a member of the expert panel. At its 40th meeting on 23rd May 2017 the Board AQ Austria **regarded the conditions as fulfilled.**



Agency for
Quality Assurance
and Accreditation
Austria

Statement on the fulfilment of the conditions

International Accreditation of the Bachelor-Programme „International Relations“

University of International Business,
Almaty (Kazakhstan)

May 2nd 2017

1.1 Information on the study program

Name of the programme	International Relations
Academic degree awarded	Bachelor
Date of introduction	2010
Regular study period	8 semester/ 4 years

1.2 Accreditation procedure at University of International Business

Timetable of the accreditation procedure

Procedural step	Date
Delivery of self-evaluation report by UIB	4 November 2015
Decision on Panel members by the Board of AQ Austria	2 October 2015
Preparatory Skype meeting of the Panel	20 November 2015
Site-visit to UIB by the Panel	2-3 December 2015
Draft report of the Panel	21 December 2015
Formal statement by UIB	18 January 2016
Final report of the Panel	03 February 2016
Statement on the final report by UIB	18 February 2016
Accreditation decision by the Board of AQ Austria	17 March 2016
Deadline for the fulfilment of the condition	17 December 2016
Provision of the documents to prove the fulfilment of conditions	8 February 2017
Decision to accept the belated transmission of the materials by the Board of AQ Austria	15 March 2017

1.3 Verification

Name	Institution	Role
Ass. Prof. Dr hab. Dorota Pietrzyk-Reeves ,	Institute of Political Science and International Relations, Jagiellonian University in Krakow	Peer from academia and head of the Panel

2 Assessment results of the Panel report (February 2016)

Standard 1: Study programme and programme management

(...)

- 1.3 The contents, structure and scope of and teaching methods applied to the curriculum and the modules meet the technical, scientific and professional requirements and are suited to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

(...)

1.3. The Curriculum of the programme is to a large extent determined by the state regulations, especially all fundamental and core subjects defined by the Ministry of Higher Education and Science, but the UIB department of IR takes a lot of effort to introduce new courses that respond to students' interests and needs when it comes to knowledge of contemporary international processes and challenges (eg. courses: Oil Factor in IR, Management of Energy Resources, and Process of Global Integration). Course syllabi are well developed and detailed. They include short course description ("the aim of the module"), intended learning outcomes (which, however, seem not to differ too much between different courses), content of the module, learning and teaching methods, assignments, assessment, core literature, and supplementary literature. This consistency definitely helps the students to achieve their learning outcomes.

It was suggested during interviews that the teaching methods allow not only acquiring knowledge, but also various skills and that they are adequate to the content of their modules. However, **the major problem that we have noticed concerns core and additional literature that is included in the syllabi, which leads us to formulating our first condition (see below).**

Graduation requirements include a bachelor thesis whose form and requirements are broadly defined by the University, state examination and defence of the bachelor thesis. They should be more clearly defined in the BA-programme description. Only upon several interviews it was possible to determine how exactly the process of the final graduation works.

(a) Statements

- This standard is of crucial importance for the assessment of the whole programme.
- Most of its components are implemented to a relatively good standard; however, there are some aspects of the study programme that require improvement.
- Programme management seems to be satisfactory; its content is slightly more problematic due to stiff state regulations that limit further development of the core subjects taught and thus specializations.

(b) Assessments

- The Panel agree that the standard is *partially met* subject to the following

condition 1:

All syllabi should be checked carefully when it comes to core literature/reading lists used for each course to ensure that the list given includes not only relevant academic textbooks and articles, but also those which are up to date and recognized internationally (especially textbooks in English). They must strictly correspond with the content of the course. The current syllabi include hardly any academic articles which for an IR programme are a necessary sources of knowledge on current international processes and challenges.

Accordingly, the list of all core readings should be revised and updated in the syllabi, and library access to classical subject textbooks by world-recognized scholars studied internationally should be provided. The lists of core readings should also include academic articles accessible through electronic journals databases already available at UIB. This is necessary if UIB aspires at bringing in international level knowledge and “globalizing its curriculum”.

(a) Statement on evidence for the fulfilment of the conditions (April 2017)

The condition stipulates that all course syllabi should be revised as regards core and additional literature which normally includes textbooks, chapters from textbooks and monographs as well academic articles and official data (eg. official documents, statistics etc.). International Relations programmes are particularly demanding in this respect as a discipline that deals with current affairs and tries to find an adequate theoretical and methodological framework to analyse the international system, its actors, policies, conflicts and other issues. Teaching IR requires reference to sources that are up to date and of good quality, especially if the programme is supposed to be recognized internationally, and is conducted in English.

Careful examination of all syllabi provided by the UIB as ‘Appendix 2 Standard 1.5 Syllabi_BA.pdf, a document entitled indicates that some revision has indeed taken place and I analyze it in detail below.

1. Some syllabi now have expanded core and supplementary reading lists in comparison with the previous version. Examples: Modern foreign policy of developed countries (literature list expanded), Modern foreign policy of developed countries (literature list expanded), Political forecasting and modeling (added one textbook published in 2016), Management of energy resources in Central Asia (literature list significantly expanded), Politics and diplomacy in ensuring security (literature list expanded), Fundamentals of the Law (one title added to core literature), Modern Conflicts and the Methods of Their Settlement (new titles added), The modern international systems (different core readings, supplementary literature expanded).

2. In some cases reading lists in the syllabi have been updated. Examples: Multilateral Diplomacy (literature in English updated and expanded); The National Regional Security (reading list expanded and updated), Management of energy resources in Central Asia (literature significantly updated), Color revolutions: theory and practice (literature significantly updated and expanded).

3. Journal articles have been added to the reading lists only in several syllabi despite clear indication of the Review Panel that it should be standard. Even if the UIB library resources are limited in this respect access to journal articles online and free of charge is very wide today and should facilitate such improvement. Examples where journal articles have been added: General Psychology, Diplomatic and consular services (core readings now include several journal articles), International Organizations, Foreign Policy Analysis.

4. Specific cases such as the syllabus for Modern Conflicts and the Methods of Their Settlement where three new titles have been added to the supplementary reading list in the following way (p. 38):

7. Dunne T. The end of International Relations theory?

8. Wolf R. Respect and disrespect in international politics: the significance of status recognition

9. Thomson S. Law, Power and Justice: What Legalism Fails to Address in the Functioning of Rwanda's Gacaca Courts.

There is no indication that these are journal articles (which they are) because no bibliographical date was provided. There are several similar cases like this.

In general some syllabi contain literature lists that have been prepared chaotically; sometimes there is a full bibliographical reference given, sometimes only the author and the title without any indication of the publisher and the year of publishing or whether it is a journal article or a book. This should be avoided.

(b) Final Assessment (April 2017)

Condition 1 may be regarded as fulfilled, leading to a positive assessment for standard 1.

Standard 3 Quality assurance
<p>(...)</p> <p>3.2 The study programme is part of a regular quality assurance and enhancement process which takes into account the curriculum, the study conditions and the programme organisation, and which involves all relevant groups as well as external experts.</p> <p>(...)</p>

3.2. The QA process with regard to the curriculum, study conditions and program organisation is implemented by involving the wide range of internal stakeholders (Academic Council, Academic-Methodical Council and everyday operational meetings) as well as external ones (employer feedback, internships). Obligatory course and lecturer evaluation procedure is in place. However, the lack of clarity in the way the Quality Assurance Office functions does not make it totally clear who should report to whom and how this information is used to enhance the academic quality. According to the UIB Self-evaluation Report (p. 27) one of the functions of the QAO is to develop normative documents for all levels of the organization, including reporting systems. The point is about closing the whole Q-loop with the QAO expected to play the central role in this process.

In addition to that, no study regulation is mentioned or provided to inform students comprehensively on what are the formal requirements/rules regarding the whole process of studying which they must follow and what they should expect if something is (not) done etc.

(a) Statements



In general, all of the quality assurance elements are present and functioning as required. However, they are sometimes not well-aligned and coherent to each other.

(b) Assessments

According to the Panel this standard is *partially met* subject to the following **condition 2:**

Prepare or compile and make available Study Regulations in all languages of instruction for students and teaching staff. It should be a single document stipulating all rules and conditions applicable during the whole process of studying at the UIB for all programmes of studies (BA, MA, PhD), binding to all students and members of teaching staff. The regulations should include general provisions on, for example: 1. The rights and obligations of students; 2. Duration of studies; 3. Learning outcomes and credits; 4. Forms of assessment and grades; 5. Organisation of classes and semesters; 6. Changes in curricula; 7. Diploma theses, dissertations, final examinations, and graduation; 9. Expulsion and readmission of students; 9. Awards, distinctions, and disciplinary liability of students; 10. Any additional provisions. The Study Regulations should be available in all languages of instruction, published on the University website and known to students and members of teaching staff.

(c) Statement on evidence for the fulfilment of the conditions (April 2017)

The UIB has provided a document called "Provision on Study Regulations" approved by the President of UIB in 2016. Length: 88 pages.

The provision contains general information about the University of International Business and the regulations concerning the whole process of education as well as the rights and responsibilities of students and regulations for academic staff. The document has been developed according to existing legal regulations and requirements including the State General Education higher education standard.

The document starts with detailed General provisions (point 1) which contain information about the UIB itself (including number of study programmes and students, 'Building', 'IT systems', 'Learning resources' etc.) which normally is not included in this kind of internal document.

Regulations are specified under the following headings:

2. Terminology, definitions and abbreviations
3. Credit technology education
4. Educational curricula and studying plans
5. Educational process
 - 5.1 The Moodle online platform
 - 5.2 Learning outcomes
 - 5.3 Professional internship
 - 5.3.1 The organization of the place of the professional practice
6. Kazakhstan system of credits' transfer according to ECTS
7. The Academic mobility under Kazakhstan model of transferring the ECTS credits
8. Forms of assessment and grades
 - 8.1 Diploma theses, dissertations, final examinations, and graduation
 - 8.2 Examination system
 - 8.3 Examinations in practice
 - 8.4 State Exam
 - 8.5. Defense of thesis/dissertation

- 9. Academic Leave
- 10. Expulsion readmission and reinstatement of students
- 11. Student life
 - 11.1 Awards, distinctions, and disciplinary liabilities of students
 - 11.1.1 Awards and distinctions (discounts)
 - 11.1.2 Support
 - 11.1.3 Cheating/plagiarism
 - 11.2 Disciplinary Committee
 - 11.3 Student Governance
 - 11.4 Students Organizations within the University
 - 11.4.1 'Zharasym'
 - 11.4.2 Enactus UIB
 - 11.4.3 GForce
 - 11.4.4 Literature club 'Leviathan'
- 12. The rights and obligations of students
 - 12.1 Code of honor of a student
- 13. Regulations for academic staff
 - 13.1 The Moodle online platform
 - 13.2 Special responsibilities

The scheme of the document is appropriate and sufficient as it covers all important areas of the whole educational process. But there are some weak points. For example, Part 5 (as all other parts) provides information rather than simply rules in a very descriptive way which could be avoided as the whole document is meant to be accessible to students and not just to the administration. For instance, it includes the list of legally binding documents that UIB follows. This part of the document provides a lot of information on different study plans, class organization, teaching methods etc. again in a descriptive rather than regulatory manner.

Point 5.1 'The Moodle online platform' provides examples (screen shots), but only in Russian, as well as a clear instruction on how to use the platform. Similarly, Learning outcomes, point 5.2 are presented in the same descriptive manner. This point also stipulates the structure of 'modular educational' and different types of modules. Detailed information is provided on rules, goals and requirements of obligatory internship in 5.3 followed by the Kazakh system of credit transfer and its reference to the ECTS, provisions concerning student mobility, forms of assessment and grades as well as all other issues listed above. The list of student's rights and obligations is included on pp. 75-76

A close analysis of all provisions indicates that a great effort has been taken to put all this information together in a single document even if the information provided is not as concise as it normally is in similar documents. Study regulations that the document provides follow complex state regulations and at the same time reflect the aspiration of the UIB to meet standards of the Bologna process. They cover all areas of the process of studying and indicate what rules and procedures are implemented and need to be observed.

The language of these provisions is extremely complex and at times difficult to follow also due to stylistic and grammatical errors of the translation¹ and due to the structure of the document which is not divided into numbered paragraphs and points for each provision. However, all necessary information seems to be included for all areas covered in the

¹ Example: 'Final certification doctoral held as foreseen in the academic calendar and curricula of specialties in the form of delivery of complex examination and protection of the doctoral dissertation in accordance with legislation' (p. 54).



Regulations. The amount of information provided and the manner it is provided (descriptive) makes it difficult to find quickly what specific rules apply to a given case (for example it is difficult to find such basic information as how many times a failed exam can be retaken and in what manner and at which period) therefore there is still much room for improvement in this respect. The document also contains additional information which should not be included, for example on p. 67-68 we read: 'During 2015-2016, no students of Bachelor/Masters in Economics were caught cheating in exams. Those that failed assessment components did so for other reasons (untimely submission, inadequate quality of work)'. Detailed description of student organizations (which are probably subject to change) is also beyond the subject matter of university regulations pertaining to the learning process. Similarly, an instruction for members of academic staff on how to navigate on the Moodle platform should be excluded. Finally, the UIB should consider proof-reading and language revision of the current document in English.

(d) Final Assessment (April 2017)

Condition 2 may be regarded as fulfilled, leading to a positive assessment for standard 3.