

# Summary report on the accreditation of the Bachelor programme “International Relations” at University of International Business (UIB), Almaty, Kazakhstan

Upon the request for accreditation of the University of International Business from 4<sup>th</sup> November 2015, AQ Austria conducted the accreditation procedure of the Bachelor programme “International Relations”. In accordance with the “Guideline for International Accreditation of Bachelor, Master and PhD Programmes” adopted by the Board of AQ Austria in July 2013, AQ Austria publishes the following summary report.

## 1 Accreditation decision

At its 33<sup>rd</sup> meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2016 the Board of AQ Austria decided to grant accreditation to the Bachelor programme International Relations for a period of six years, subject to conditions.

The fulfilment of these conditions must be documented in writing within nine months (i.e. until 17<sup>th</sup> December 2016) and is subject to assessment by AQ Austria. In case of non-fulfilment, the accreditation will be withdrawn immediately.

## 2 Short information on the application for accreditation

Name of the programme	International Relations
Academic degree awarded	Bachelor in International Relations
Date of introduction	2010
Regular study period	8 semester/ 4 years
Number of ECTS credits	251ECTS credits / 138 Kazakh credits
Full time/Part time	Fulltime

## 3 Short information on the accreditation procedure

University of International Business (UIB) submitted an application for accreditation of the study programmes in November 2015.

In the meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2015, the Board of AQ Austria passed the proposal for experts for the review and assessment of the study programmes.

### Members of the Expert panel

Name	Institution	Role
<b>Dorota Pietrzyk-Reeves</b>	Associate Professor at the Institute of Political Science and International Relations, School of International Studies, Jagiellonian University in Krakow	Head of the expert panel Expert from academia
<b>Yerbol Modakassimov</b>	JSC 'Information-Analytical Center' under the Ministry of Education and Science of Kazakhstan	Expert with professional practice Expert from Kazakhstan
<b>Michael Schabmüller</b>	University of Graz	Student Expert

A site visit at UIB took place in Almaty on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2015, which was attended by the expert panel and the coordinator from AQ Austria.

The Board of AQ Austria took the accreditation decisions in its 33<sup>rd</sup> meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2016. The accreditation of the Bachelor programme is subject to conditions and is valid until 16<sup>th</sup> December 2022.

## 4 Subject matter of the application

### The University

UIB is a private university, funded mainly by students' fees. The Ministry of Education also awards grants to students and further grants are allocated through sponsorship of major Kazakh national companies (e.g. KAZENERGY, National Bank) and means of national public funds (e.g. Yerzhan Tatishev Foundation, Bilim – Central Asia educational fund). Further financial contributions come from the UIB's president's family as well as the Nazarbayev Educational Fund.

UIB has three faculties (IT and Finance, Economics and Accounting, Postgraduate studies), and seven departments within these faculties offer study programmes on Bachelor, Master and PhD-level. More than 190 faculty teach at these departments, twelve out of them are professors (which corresponds to the academic degree of a "doctor of science") and 86 are docents (with either the academic degree of a "candidate of science" or a lower degree plus longstanding experience in university teaching).

More than 2900 students are enrolled at UIB on campus, further 1300 students study in UIB's distance learning programmes, correspondence and evening training courses.

The name „international“ in UIB's name does not derive from the university's internationality, but the understanding of „international economy“ vs. „state economy“ at the time of the foundation of UIB. UIB has contracts of different quality and content with approx. 25 universities, mainly in CIS countries, Europe and Asia.

UIB focuses on economics, but offers study programmes in the humanities as well as in technical disciplines in the three level cycle Bachelor – Master – PhD. The university is strongly involved in distance learning studies. Due to the size of the country this kind of study has been well accepted in Kazakhstan and is very popular especially with working students and students with special needs.

### The study programme

The Bachelor programme International Relations established in 2010 is defined by the applying institution as playing a vital role in the future development of the University of International Business (UIB). Its aim is to provide a university degree that should be widely sought in today's Kazakhstan with its resource-based-economy and strategic position in Central Asia (UIB is aiming at establishing a leading position in certain degree programmes/university disciplines in Kazakhstan). The four year-long programme is skill-oriented and aims at providing not only theoretical, but also practical knowledge of international relations and global processes as well as various types of trainings (internships). The strategy of UIB development includes building strong linkages with business and industry, as well as focusing more and more on academic research, international cooperation and a broad curriculum that reflects major concerns of today's world. The UIB objectives include focus on students' development in terms of both knowledge and wide-ranging and professional skills as well as research and learning competencies.

## 5 Summarizing results from the assessments of the expert panel

### 5.1 Standard 1: Study programme and programme management

#### **(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.
2. 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".

The UIB should also consider fulfilling the above recommendations of the Panel.

#### **Recommendations:**

- The BA-programme would benefit if the University offered a follow-up MA degree in International Relations. If it aims at educating future diplomats, negotiators and IR specialists, the BA-programme can only be treated as a preliminary stage in an international or diplomatic career-building track.
- The revision of the IR programme learning outcomes which UIB plans for 2015-2016 should pay close attention to the requirements of the respective level of qualification framework of the European Higher Education Area. It should aim at providing information on how the accomplishment of each learning outcome is to be checked (exam, presentation, essay etc.).
- Kazakh credit system should be modified at the ministry level to allow easier implementation of the European Credit Transfer System.



UIB should also consider fulfilling the following **recommendation**:

- Elaborate and make publicly available the Student Parliament Constitution or Charter, including membership information, eligibility requirements for the Presidentship, and decision making procedures.

## 5.4 Standard 4: Funding and infrastructure

### (a) Statements

- Transparent documentation of the funding of the study programme is available.
- Adequate rooms, the library, and technical facilities required for the study programme are available.

### (b) Assessments

- The Panel agrees that this standard is *met*.

## 5.5 Standard 5: Research and development

### (a) Statements

- Strategic orientation of the UIB includes strengthening research potential of the institution although there are a number of obstacles that need to be overcome.
- It is teaching rather than research that is priority at the moment.

### (b) Assessments

- According to the Panel, this standard is *met* at the basic level required for BA degrees.

### Recommendation:

The members of staff should aim at strengthening the link between their own research and teaching. Courses taught should better reflect lecturers' expertise in various areas of IR.

## 5.6 Standard 6: National and international co-operations

### (a) Statements

- International cooperation is one of the key strategic directions of UIB.
- UIB has a good network for national internships.
- National and international cooperation are to play significant role in the programme development although there are still financial and other obstacles. Staff and student mobility is of crucial importance for UIB. At the moment only some members of IR staff and students can benefit from mobility.

### (b) Assessments

- According to the Panel, the standard is *met*.

## 6 Decision of the AQ Austria Board

The Board of AQ Austria decided on the accreditation of the programme at its 33<sup>rd</sup> meeting on 17th March 2016 and based its decision on the self-documentation and supporting documents submitted by UIB and the review report of the expert panel. UIB did not give any formal statement to the report.

The Board of AQ Austria considers the conditions for the BA programme formulated by the review team necessary and appropriate. However the Board suggested modifying or rephrasing of particular conditions of the expert panel into recommendations.

Finally, 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, subject to the following conditions.

#### *Condition 1*

All syllabi have to 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. 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 to 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. 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; 8. Expulsion and readmission of students; 9. Awards, distinctions, and disciplinary liability of students; 10. Any additional provisions. (Standard 3.2)

Furthermore, the review team advises that University of International Business considered the following **recommendations**:

The BA-programme would benefit if the University offered a follow-up MA degree in International Relations. If it aims at educating future diplomats, negotiators and IR specialists, the BA-programme can only be treated as a preliminary stage in an international or diplomatic career-building track.

The revision of the IR programme learning outcomes which UIB plans for 2015-2016 should pay close attention to the requirements of the respective level of qualification framework of the European Higher Education Area. It should aim at providing information on how the accomplishment of each learning outcome is to be checked (exam, presentation, essay etc.).

The UIB Moodle online teaching platform could help in the future to develop some forms of e-learning at the UIB.

The UIB should cater to attracting PhDs of Kazakhstani origin who completed their degrees in Europe or North America by offering them desirable salaries comparable to national faculty staff.

Elaborate and make publicly available the Student Parliament Constitution or Charter, including membership information, eligibility requirements for the Presidentship, and decision making procedures.

The members of staff should aim at strengthening the link between their own research and teaching. Courses taught should better reflect lecturers' expertise in various areas of IR.

The fulfilment of these conditions must be documented in writing within nine months (i.e. until 17<sup>th</sup> December 2016) and is subject to assessment by AQ Austria. In case of non-fulfilment, the accreditation will be withdrawn immediately.