

## **Accreditation Report**

### **Kazakh-American Free University in Ust-Kamenogorsk Republic of Kazakhstan**

**“Law” (Bachelor), “Law” (Master: 1-year Professional Orientated Training and 2-year Scientific and Pedagogical Oriented Training), “Law” (PhD), “Law and Customs Affairs” (Bachelor), “Law and Legal Enforcement” (Bachelor), “International Relations” (Bachelor), “International Relations” (Master: 1-year Professional Orientated Training and 2-year Scientific and Pedagogical Oriented Training)**

#### **I Procedure**

**Date of contract:** 25 March 2021

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**Attendance by ACQUIN office:** Yuliya Balakshiy

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The **Assessment Report** of the peer-review experts is **based on** the self-assessment report of the Higher Education Institution (HEI) and extensive discussions with the HEI management, deans and/or heads of the departments, heads of the study programmes, lecturers, staff representatives, students, and alumni.

The basis of the **Assessment Criteria** is part 1 of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) in the current official version. At the same time the national context, particularly the national regulations regarding the establishment of study programmes, are taken into account.

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## II Introduction

The experts would like to thank the representatives of the HEI as well as its students for taking part in the discussions and willingly sharing information and their views during the on-site visit. The discussions are valuable not only for the assessment of the institution but also for a better understanding of the legal and sociocultural context of the local higher education system.

The evaluation basis for the peer-review experts is the self-assessment report of the HEI as well as intensive discussions during the on-site visit with the HEI management, deans and/or heads of the departments, heads of the study programmes, study programmes coordinators, teachers, lecturers, administrative staff, students, and graduates.

The main objective of the accreditation procedure is to assess the quality of the study programmes and compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). The ESG standards are applied as the main assessment criteria in the international accreditation procedure. In addition, the respective country-specific criteria and standards are taken into account.

A group of experts is set up to ensure that all areas relevant to the accreditation procedure (e.g., legal, structural, social, etc. aspects) as well as the ESG and national criteria are considered. The peer-review experts include representatives of academia, a representative of the professional practice, and a student representative. A certificate with the ACQUIN seal is awarded upon accreditation of the study programmes.

## 1 Short profile of HEI

The Kazakh-American Free University is a significant private HEI of international cooperation in the Republic of Kazakhstan. It is aimed at training leaders with local and international outlook by providing high-quality study programmes in a unique and culturally varied learning environment. The university offers 26 undergraduate majors, twelve Master majors, and two Ph.D. programmes. The university has currently 4,500 undergraduate and graduate students enrolled.

In line with the objective of executing a multilingual programme, the university organises educational process according to one of the three models: the Kazakhstani programme track (in Kazakh or Russian language of instruction), the American programme track (in English), and the multilingual programme track (in Kazakh, Russian, and English).

In July 2005, the KAFU registered its first research publishing journal, KAFU Bulletin, with the Book Chamber of the Republic of Kazakhstan. In 2008, the university registered another research magazine in English, KAFU Academic Journal, with the Library of Congress of the United States. These developments reflect a stronger integration of the educational process with scientific research and the growth of specialisations in graduate programmes.

The University is a member of the following national and international organisations and consortiums: the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) in the United States, Erasmus+, the Independent Agency for Quality Assurance in Education, the Association of Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Association of Asian Universities, and the Association of Universities and Consulting Agencies of the Silk Road. In 2010, KAFU, one of the first in the Republic, had all of its business educational programmes globally certified by ACBSP.

The KAFU collaborates with more than 33 foreign universities and educational organisations in the realm of academic and scientific cooperation by working systematically on aspects of internationalisation of education. The Platonus Information System for Higher Education Institutions has been implemented within the university since 2013.

Employers are involved in the establishment and upgrading of study programmes, as well as serving on attestation commissions. Annual job fairs, employer presentations, training are organised to encourage work opportunities for senior students. On top of which, open house days of companies and organisations in Ust-Kamenogorsk for graduates are used to support recent graduates in securing jobs.

In order to position itself in the regional educational market, the institution follows the University - Community paradigm in its operations. The Centre for Career Development functions within the framework of the institution. The major programmes of the Centre are designed to address the needs of the

region's population, school instructors, industry and government personnel, and students interested in additional training opportunities and business education, advanced education, and retraining.

The study programmes are offered by one of the four departments: Pedagogics and Psychology, Foreign Languages, Business, or Law and International Relations. The programmes undergoing accreditation in this bundle are offered at the Department of Law and International Relations.

**2 General information on the study programmes:****6B04201 Law**

Location	Ust-Kamenogorsk, Republic of Kazakhstan
Date of introduction	1.09.2004 1.09.2018 (updating the state standard of education)
Faculty/department	Faculty of Business, Law and Pedagogy Department of Law and International Relations
Standard period of study (semesters)	4 years (8 semesters)
Number of ECTS credits	240
Number of study places	80 (per year)
Number of students currently enrolled	244
Average number of graduates per year	29 (2017-2022)
Target group(s)	Graduates of schools, colleges
Admission requirements	School certificate; certificate confirming the passing of the United National Test
Form of study	Full-time
Tuition fee	380,000 tenge (per year)

**6B04205 Law and Legal Enforcement**

Location	Ust-Kamenogorsk, Republic of Kazakhstan
Date of introduction	1.09.2021
Faculty/department	Faculty of Business, Law and Pedagogy Department of Law and International Relations
Standard period of study (semesters)	4 years (8 semesters)
Number of ECTS credits	240
Number of study places	30 (per year)
Number of students currently enrolled	27
Average number of graduates per year	-
Target group(s)	Graduates of schools, colleges
Admission requirements	School certificate; certificate confirming the passing of United National Test
Form of study	Full-time
Tuition fee	380,000 tenge (per year)



**6B04204 Law and Customs Affairs**

Location	Ust-Kamenogorsk, Republic of Kazakhstan
Date of introduction	1.09.2021 (Law and Customs Affairs); 1.09.2011-1.06.2021 (previously titled Customs Affairs)
Faculty/department	Faculty of Business, Law and Pedagogy Department of Law and International Relations
Standard period of study (semesters)	4 years (8 semesters)
Number of ECTS credits	240
Number of study places	20 (per year)
Number of students currently enrolled	19
Average number of graduates per year	5
Target group(s)	Graduates of schools, colleges
Admission requirements	School certificate; certificate confirming the passing of United National Test
Form of study	Full-time
Tuition fee	380,000 tenge (per year)

**7M04201/7M04202 Law**

Location	Ust-Kamenogorsk, Republic of Kazakhstan
Date of introduction	1.09.2004 2018 (updating the state standard of education)
Faculty/department	Faculty of Business, Law and Pedagogy Department of Law and International Relations
Standard period of study (semesters)	1 years (2 semesters) - profile Master 2 years (4 semesters) - scientific and pedagogical Master
Number of ECTS credits	60 - profile Master 120 - scientific and pedagogical Master
Number of study places	36 (per year)
Number of students currently enrolled	39
Average number of graduates per year	38 (2017-2022)
Target group(s)	University graduates
Admission requirements	Undergraduate degree or above; comprehensive testing certificate
Form of study	Full-time
Tuition fee	450,000 tenge (per year)

**8D04201 Law**

Location	Ust-Kamenogorsk, Republic of Kazakhstan
Date of introduction	1.09.2011; 1.09.2018 (updating the state standard of education)
Faculty/department	Faculty of Business, Law and Pedagogy Department of Law and International Relations
Standard period of study (semesters)	3 years (6 semesters)
Number of ECTS credits	180
Number of study places	5 (per year)
Number of students currently enrolled	3
Average number of graduates per year	2 (2017-2022)
Target group(s)	Graduates of Master programmes
Admission requirements	Master; work experience of at least 9 months; international certificate confirming knowledge of a foreign language (B2); certificate confirming the passing of the entrance exam
Form of study	Full-time
Tuition fee	1,307,000 tenge (per year)

**6B03101 International Relations**

Location	Ust-Kamenogorsk, Republic of Kazakhstan
Date of introduction	1.09.2011; 1.09.2018 (updating the state standard of education)
Faculty/department	Faculty of Business, Law and Pedagogy Department of Law and International Relations
Standard period of study (semesters)	4 years (8 semesters)
Number of ECTS credits	240
Number of study places	20 (per year)
Number of students currently enrolled	30
Average number of graduates per year	9 (2017-2022)
Target group(s)	Graduates of schools, colleges
Admission requirements	School certificate; certificate confirming the passing of United National Test
Form of study	Full-time
Tuition fee	380,000 tenge (per year)

**7M03101/7M03102 International Relations**

Location	Ust-Kamenogorsk, Republic of Kazakhstan
Date of introduction	1.09.2013; 2018 (updating the state standard of education)
Faculty/department	Faculty of Business, Law and Pedagogy Department of Law and International Relations
Standard period of study (semesters)	1 years (2 semesters) - profile Master 2 years (4 semesters) - scientific and pedagogical Master
Number of ECTS credits	60 - profile Master; 120 - scientific and pedagogical Master
Number of study places	24 (per year)
Number of students currently enrolled	8
Average number of graduates per year	5 (2017-2022)
Target group(s)	University graduates
Admission requirements	Undergraduate degree or above; comprehensive testing certificate
Form of study	Full-time
Tuition fee	450,000 tenge (per year)

### III Implementation and Assessment of the Criteria

#### 1 ESG Standard 1.1: Policy for quality assurance

**Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.**

##### 1.1 Implementation

The quality assurance system of the Kazakh-American Free University is based on international education-related treaties, legal acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and internal university papers issued on these grounds. Based on mandatory regulations, KAFU developed and is implementing the University Development Strategy and Guidelines for the Internal Quality Assurance System, a document that covers the university's quality assurance and policy in regard to all relevant areas: programme development and approval, student-centred learning, teaching and assessment, student admission, academic performance, recognition, certification, faculty, educational resources, and so forth. The manual for the internal quality assurance system is posted on the official website of the university and is in the public domain.

The Quality Assurance Policy outlines in detail the key procedures of the internal quality assurance system, taking into account the activities of the university as a whole, the staff's authority and responsibility distribution, the customers' needs, and the resources required to satisfy those requirements, as well as the management and documentation structure. In other words, a quality assurance system has been developed and is in operation, and it is supported by all structural university units.

The policy on internal quality assurance is reviewed and adopted during the KAFU Academic Council meetings. The related entry is made in the Academic Council meeting minutes. Employees actively engage in the improvement of the internal quality assurance system, attend seminars, and as a result, the policy is understood by employees at all levels of management. The university personnel of all structural divisions are made aware of the established policy in the field of internal quality assurance. It is also available on the university website.

The Academic Council is one of the college administrative structures at KAFU. The Academic Council is governed in its actions by the legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Regulations on the Academic Council, and the University Charter. The Academic Council consists of all structural unit leaders, department heads, undergraduates and postgraduate student representatives, and employers. When

considering quality assurance policies at the departmental level, an extended discussion is organised in which students and representatives of employers participate.

Supervision over policy implementation in the field of quality assurance is multi-level: at the university level, the Academic Council of KAFU reviews and approves the university's annual reports on the internal quality assurance system, and at the structural unit level, through annual reports, monitoring of the commission for quality assurance, questionnaires, and so on.

The KAFU Development Strategy, the Quality Assurance Guide, and the regulations on activities and job duties all outline the obligations of managers at various levels, including those for assuring the quality of specialised training. The job descriptions and rules specify the duties, tasks, and responsibilities of the university structural unit leaders and personnel in terms of quality assurance.

The Academic Council for Quality makes decisions on the content and conditions for the implementation of study programmes, on the assessment policy, and on other academic issues of the department. In collaboration with the Centre for Institutional Research, the Academic Council for Quality organises a survey of students to assess the quality of study programmes and disciplines/modules and to identify violations of academic honesty and integrity. Administrative and management personnel (seven representatives), academic staff (two representatives), and four chairpersons of quality assurance commissions serve on the Academic Council for Quality, which is authorised by the Academic Council on an annual basis. The Academic Council for Quality convenes at least once a quarter.

The policy in the field of quality assurance establishes a culture of quality that is dictated by the shared values not only of the whole team but also of each employee who makes a personal contribution to collective memory and passes on the traditions of the institution from generation to generation. The history of the country's first private university of international collaboration, the institution's performance and achievements, its staff, students, and graduates, and the professionalism of leaders and faculty all have an influence on the establishment of a quality and values culture at the university.

## **1.2 Assessment**

The expert panel is convinced that the policy for quality assurance at KAFU university has not only been implemented very well and is well organized structurally (cf. point 1.1) but is also the actual practice of all people involved.

In the interviews with the university administration, it became clear that the university makes high demands on the quality of research and teaching and has implemented a system that covers all areas and is suitable for ensuring these requirements in breadth and depth.

After the interviews with the university administration, lecturers, employees, and students, the expert group has no doubts that the freedom of research and teaching is guaranteed, regardless of the strict requirements of the state, and that KAFU and all its employees stand for freedom of speech, tolerance, and diversity. Without exception, the experts gained the impression that these values are unconditionally practiced and lived by all actors at KAFU.

In addition to the understanding of values explicitly conveyed in the classroom, there are also sufficient organisational structures (i.e., code of conduct, collective agreement, information at the beginning of the programmes, reporting systems, etc.) to prevent any form of intolerance and discrimination and to effectively counter corruption. As a result, the collaborative learning and research environment is perceived positively by everyone at KAFU.

It should be noted that the existing structural guidelines for the protection of research and teaching are consistently accessible and well known to the university faculty, students, and staff. All people are involved in the necessary processes through various institutions and can bring in their thoughts and ideas for improvements.

With the Academic Council for Quality, a body has been created that implements and monitors jointly agreed standards and regulations, also by means of an effective reporting management. At the same time, the committee is also a functioning contact point for internal and external (feedback) reports, which are then also made known to the university management in the course of the reporting system.

A positive aspect is that students in particular have the opportunity to provide direct feedback on teaching content and the learning environment through regular evaluations and can thus initiate improvement processes. In the experts' opinions, the cooperation with the Centre for Institutional Research guarantees a professional and transparent handling of the results of surveys and evaluations.

In addition to other positive aspects, there is also a compensation system that rewards special efforts in research and teaching with salary bonuses and thus provides specific incentives for teaching staff to contribute to research and teaching and to receive sufficient further training, whereby the university understandably places a clear emphasis on internationality. Accordingly, additional training in foreign languages or research activities and publications with international relevance are particularly encouraged and rewarded.

Only in a supplementary manner did the expert group recommend that the topic of didactics in teaching be given even greater attention and specific support in the future. For this purpose, the establishment of a teaching prize was suggested, which would be awarded by the students. It would honour and promote good teaching based on didactic concepts.



It is the experts' conviction that the university provides the teaching staff with sufficient opportunities for personal research and further education, which is also perceived as such by the teaching staff themselves. In general, faculty members themselves perceive the opportunities for personal research and teaching as very good, which is reflected in internal and external university engagement.

The involvement of external stakeholders is of great importance to KAFU and is promoted in a targeted and effective manner. Lecturers are enabled to conduct research abroad on a broad basis through partnerships in other countries, which brings external influences directly to the faculty. The same is true for students, who are able to participate in numerous exchange programmes. Due to the effective support, the offers are actively used by students and lecturers. The existing opportunities and targeted support continue to exceed the expected ESG standard baselines, particularly when measured against the size of the university.

Another part of the external quality management is the participation of students in student competitions as well as the involvement of external lecturers from companies, the police, and the judiciary, which permanently ensures a high practical relevance, even if this point still seems to be expandable. In addition, there is a lively exchange with graduate students and the associated feedback.

Finally, the university management was consistently open to suggestions during the accreditation process and emphasised the importance of external inputs for achieving its own high ambitions. Correspondingly, a great willingness to further develop the existing high standards was evident among all involved. Against this background, the ESG standard is fully met in every respect.

### **1.3 Conclusion**

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

## 2 ESG Standard 1.2: Design and approval of programmes

**Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.**

### 2.1 Implementation

The National Qualifications Framework, Dublin Descriptors, and the European Qualifications Framework serve as the foundation for the development and execution of the KAFU mission. The Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Education, State obligatory standards of higher and postgraduate education, Model rules for the activities of organisations of higher and postgraduate education, Rules for organising the educational process with a credit-hour approach to education, professional standards, and so on form the intranational regulatory framework of university study programmes.

All KAFU study programmes at the three levels strive to achieve the primary goals for higher education defined by the Council of Europe. First, they prepare students for sustainable employment by providing graduates with practical skills linked to future professional activities, which are developed via the study of subject area specific disciplines as well as the completion of professional internships. Every year, students take part in specially organised events with representatives of various companies holding guest lectures, as well as Open House Days, with the goal of enticing students to take on employment.

On top of that, study programmes encourage personal growth and educate students for engaged citizenship. KAFU maintains a Student Development Centre with 13 student associations that follow the concepts of voluntary participation and student self-government. Students involved in this centre participate in the university socio-political, volunteer, and cultural life, forming active citizenship and promoting personal development.

Moreover, by subscribing to foreign scientific journals through the KAFU electronic database accesses, the library creates a broad advanced knowledge base. Annually, 10% of the library fund is replenished by acquiring appropriate scientific, instructional, and methodological books based on applications from instructors of the relevant departments. In addition, the faculty's internal teaching materials and the publishing of their full-text articles keep the library database up to date. In this context, the KAFU

administration promotes research and innovation through organisational, non-financial, and financial incentives.

A small scientific community has evolved at the department, whereas experienced instructors involve novice lecturers in scientific activities. Teacher-mentors provide scientific advice to Ph.D. students of the department, which results in cooperative scientific publications. The university has a system of incentive schemes for scientific outcomes, publishing of articles in peer-reviewed journals with a non-zero impact factor, involvement in initiatives that define the successful development of the university, victories in different competitions, and so on.

The approach for designing a study programme for each speciality is carried out cooperatively and transparently, taking into consideration instructors' scientific interests and employers' requests submitted via official letters. Representatives of interested organisations, enterprises, and government bodies take part in the work of the educational and methodological sections of the departments on a regular basis, making suggestions and giving recommendations for improving the study programmes, which is recorded annually in the protocols of the educational and methodological meetings of the departments.

The passport, the content, the matrix of the attainability of the defined learning outcomes, and a summary table on the volume of a study programme comprise the structure of the study programme. The information is available in the printed form and on the KAFU website. The study programme content is executed using internal educational and methodological documents such as modular catalogue, catalogue of elective disciplines, curricula, individual study plans, and syllabi.

The undergraduate programme normative length of study adheres to the State educational standards of the Republic of Kazakhstan and is defined by the number of mastered academic credits. The educational programme of higher education is deemed complete after achieving the stipulated number of academic credits and meeting the required learning objectives for acquiring a bachelor's degree. The accumulation by students of at least 240 academic credits for the whole duration of study, encompassing all sorts of student learning activities, is the primary requirement for completion of studies in undergraduate programmes.

The study programme content is geared at learning objectives in the form of a collection of comprehensive and professional competences including academic knowledge, skills, and abilities that are adaptable and contribute to their application in the professional sector.

When studying a cycle of general educational disciplines (Modern History of Kazakhstan, Philosophy, Culturology, Sociology, Political Science), key competencies (general education, social and ethical competencies, economic, organisational, and managerial skills, requirements for readiness to change economic roles, personal development, etc.) are formed.

When studying the basic and fundamental disciplines (e.g., Civil Law, Criminal Law, Labour Law for Law programmes and International Law, Diplomatic Etiquette and Protocol, Technique of the Negotiation Process, Foreign policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, International Organisations and their Representations in the Republic of Kazakhstan, State Border for international Relations) special competencies are formed; these are important in a professional career, willingness to change professional roles, be able to independently improve their qualifications, find the best ways to solve problems and make decisions related to the implementation of tasks in professional activities, etc. Moreover, practising professionals are invited as guest lecturers on a one-off or constant basis.

The working curriculum includes 56 credits for general education, 112 credits for fundamental disciplines, 60 credits for major disciplines, and 12 credits for final examinations for a total of 240 credits (ECTS). One academic year's full academic load is 60 ECTS or 1800 academic hours. The academic year is divided into academic periods, which include two 15-week semesters, examination sessions, internships, holidays, and a final examination period in the final year. The individual curriculum is created using the modular programme and the catalogue of elective disciplines.

All in all, 96 credits out of the 240 credits that an undergraduate student must master are assigned for the disciplines of the elective component, i.e., around 40%. This division provides students with a variety of options for developing their curriculum, which they do with the support from advisers.

In the research and pedagogically focused Master programme, the standard length of study is at least two years; in the profile programme, the normative length of study is at least one year. The content consists of theoretical education, which includes the study of fundamental and major discipline blocks; practical training for graduates: various types of internships, scientific or professional internships; research work, which includes the implementation of a master's thesis for a research and pedagogical oriented Master programme, or experimental research work, which includes the implementation of a master's project for a specialised profile Master programme. The disciplines of the university component and the elective component are included in the blocks of fundamental and major disciplines.

The study programme for the preparation of Doctors of Philosophy has a scientific and pedagogical focus and includes fundamental educational, methodological, and research training as well as in-depth study of disciplines in relevant areas of science for the scientific field system of higher and postgraduate education. Doctoral training is completed over the course of at least three years.

Theoretical training accounts for 45 academic credits of the total amount of the doctoral study programme and is comprised of cycles of fundamental (23 credits) and major disciplines (22 credits), which include disciplines from the university component and the elective component, as well as an internship (at least 10 credits).

A required component of a student's education is a number of different internships, which are completed to solidify the theoretical information acquired during the learning process, develop practical and academic skills, and establish professional competences and experience relevant to the taught study programme. The Rules for organising and conducting professional internships for KAFU students, adopted by the KAFU Academic Council, establish the criteria for methodological support, as well as the organisation and conduct of all sorts of internships for all study programmes at the university.

All study programmes are subject to annual review and adaptation based on the formalised principles and processes established at the university with engagement of stakeholders as well as external audit procedures.

## **2.2 Assessment**

### Law (Bachelor), Law (Master: 2-year Scientific and Pedagogical Oriented Training), Law (PhD)

The KAFU offer consists of four educational programmes that provide students with the possibility to study law, and all the programmes – 6B04201 Law, 7M04201 Law, 7M04202 Law, and 8D04201 Law – focus on a general approach to law. All three levels of the study programmes in Law allow for solid training opportunities for its student body as they are well conceptualised and undergo cyclical revision which involves feedback from all relevant stakeholders.

These programmes are designed to differ in terms of the academic advancement. They are specified as a study programme to train bachelors, two programmes that lead to a master's degree, and one study programme for a PhD. This specification refers not only to the national Framework of Qualifications of the Republic of Kazakhstan, but also to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

Both the national and European Qualifications Frameworks in combination with Dublin Descriptors are among the international educational standards that have informed the design of these programmes, which are intended for well-differentiated undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral studies. These programmes serve as the foundation for the development and implementation of the KAFU mission.

According to the information provided by the university representatives, the intranational regulatory framework of the university programmes is the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan On Education dated July 27, 2007, No. 319-III, State obligatory standards of higher and postgraduate education (order of

the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated October 31, 2018 No. 604), Model rules for the activities of organisations of higher and postgraduate education (order of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated October 30, 2018 No. 595); Rules for organizing the educational process with credit-hour approach of education (order of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated April 20, 2011, professional standards, etc.

The national framework and the European framework both use the same schema of differentiation to design study programmes in accordance with academic progress of the students. When it comes to the four educational programmes in Law, the mission is the training of competitive lawyers with a high level of competence and multilingualism. The programmes differ in advancement. The two programmes for the master allow graduates to advance further in the direction of practicing lawyers that are able to make independent decisions. The PhD programme builds on the previous levels and is aimed at training lawyers who share a scientific and pedagogical interest in law. The design fits into the development strategy of the KAFU, which is stated as ‘training leaders of the 21<sup>st</sup> century for the benefit of sovereign Kazakhstan.’

The KAFU has designed these study programmes by integrating into (a) the international practice and theory of law, into (b) the national framework, and (c) into the mission statement of the KAFU. As in international theory and practise, the national framework for a study programme of law defines the subject of the study programme, which in these cases are national and international laws. As in most countries, the national legislation structures affect the design of those study programmes through a framework. The KAFU provided the information of its impact on the design of the programmes in detail.

The various groups of stakeholders, students included, are involved in several ways, e. g. by being represented in the Academic Committees of KAFU, which consist of leading teachers, students, employers, each representing the interests of their group. The report and the discussion showed the vivid interest and active role those representatives play at KAFU.

The main objectives and learning outcomes of the study programme adequately reflect the requirements from the professional field as well as the demands on Bachelor/Master/PhD level. Those objectives and learning outcomes are laid down in the curricula. Case in point, the objectives and learning outcomes reflect the requirements. The curriculum contributes to meeting the defined objectives in an effective way.

The study programme reflects the four purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe which include preparation for sustainable employment, personal development, preparing students for active citizenship, and creating a broad advanced knowledge base and stimulating research and innovation.

The curriculum should include up-to-date topics from the fields of digitisation, emerging technologies, and Islamic law that goes beyond the needs of the local labor market.

#### Law and Customs Affairs (Bachelor)

The educational programme 6B04204 Law and Customs Affairs for the 2021-2022 academic year was developed based on the Academic Policy of the university, more specifically article 9 on the procedure for developing modular educational programmes approved by the decision of the KAFU Academic Council, minute No. 10, dated May 22, 2020.

The mission of this educational programme is the satisfaction of society's needs for highly qualified professionals in the field of Law and Customs Affairs, capable of ensuring compliance with customs legislation at a high-quality level. The objectives also include the implementation of the acquired knowledge in practice, their application in the field of professional activity, the ability to logically and competently express and justify one's point of view on state-political and socio-economic issues, operate freely with relevant concepts and categories, possess knowledge of computer methods for collecting, storing, and processing information used in the field of professional activity, understand the essence and social significance of one's future profession, the main problems of the disciplines that determine the specific area of the activity, and the vision of their relationship in an integral system of knowledge.

Curricula are formed based on a modular educational programme and an individual curriculum of a student. In turn, the individual curriculum is compiled based on the modular educational programme and the catalogue of elective disciplines. Elective disciplines, forming blocks of the elective components, are included in the blocks of general education, fundamental, and major disciplines of the curricula. The content of the educational programme is aimed at learning outcomes in the form of a set of key and special (professional) competencies including academic knowledge, skills, and abilities that are flexible and contribute to their application in the professional field. The curricula allow to achieve the goals of the study programme.

In order to further optimise the educational programme, it is recommended to consider the possibility of supplementing it with disciplines that consider information security, digital economy, and big data processing skills.

The learning outcomes assessment matrix is two-level. The first level is the matrix of the attainability of the formed learning outcomes in the educational programme with the help of academic disciplines,

and the second level, directly related to the development and evaluation of learning outcomes of the academic discipline, is reflected in the discipline syllabus.

The learning outcomes of the educational programme in Law and Customs Affairs reflect the requirements of the professional activity of future graduates. This is expressed in a whole range of learning outcomes which state that students should be able to analyse and maintain customs statistics of foreign trade and customs specific data, demonstrate an understanding of the concepts and categories used in the border and tariff regulation of foreign economic activity, monitor the achievement of goals, fulfilment of tasks and planned indicators of customs authorities, predict the results of their activities, demonstrate the skills of applying the basic rules for interpreting the commodity nomenclature of foreign economic activity and exercising control over the reliability of the classification of goods in accordance with the commodity nomenclature of foreign economic activity, determine the country of origin of the goods, apply methods for determining the value and control of the declared customs value of goods transported across the EAEU, evaluate the correctness of the calculation, completeness and timeliness of payment of customs duties, anti-dumping, special and countervailing duties to the budget, apply the skills of working with technical means of customs control and operation of equipment and instruments, skills in assigning and using the results of examinations of goods for customs purposes, exercise control over compliance with prohibitions and restrictions established in accordance with the applicable legislation, apply the skills related to filling in and control of the customs declaration, performance of customs operations and application of customs procedures in respect of goods and vehicles transported across the state borders, identify, prevent and avert administrative offenses and crimes, qualify the facts and circumstances of offenses and crimes, draw up procedural documents and perform the necessary actions when revealing administrative offenses and crimes, ensure the protection of the rights and legitimate interests of participants in foreign economic activity and persons carrying out activities in the field of customs.

Professional activity of graduates of the programme in Law and Customs Affairs includes the State Revenue Committee of the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Kazakhstan and its territorial divisions, law enforcement agencies, the Ministry of Finance and its territorial divisions, the Agency of the Republic of Kazakhstan for Civil Service Affairs, judicial, executive and representative bodies of state power and administration, state and non-state enterprises, and educational organisations. These areas of future employment are adequate and correspond to the learning outcomes.

Since November 2021, the development of modular educational programmes has been carried out by Academic Committees, which consist of leading teachers of the department, representatives of students, representatives of employers and, if necessary, representatives of foreign partner universities. During a meeting with students, they talked about their experience of participating in the development of study programmes. The expected student workload is sufficiently defined and transparent.



Professional internship is an obligatory component of a student's education, which is carried out to consolidate the theoretical knowledge gained in the learning process, acquire practical skills, and form professional competencies and experience in the field of the relevant programme being taught. Undergraduate professional internships are divided into three categories: observational (2 credits), on-the-job (16 credits), and research (6 credits); the total duration of all internships is 24 weeks. The personal growth and development of students are confirmed by the feedback from employers, which is given to students during the internship. At the request of students, the department provides students with places for a professional internship. At the same time, students can independently choose places for internships, in addition to those offered by the university.

All study programmes of KAFU, including Law and Customs Affairs, are aimed at achieving the main goals of higher education defined by the Council of Europe. First, it prepares students for sustainable employment. The study programme is aimed at the formation of practical competencies related to future professional activities, which are formed both in the study of professional disciplines and in the completion of professional internships. Secondly, the educational programmes in Law promote personal development and prepare students for active citizenship. Students take an active part in the scientific and social life of the university. Thirdly, the creation of a wide advanced knowledge base is carried out by subscribing the library to international scientific publications, e. g., Thomson Reuters Web of Knowledge, Springerlink, SciVerse Science Direct by Elsevier, and Scopus. Fourth, stimulation of research and innovation is carried out by the KAFU administration through organisational, non-financial, and financial stimuli.

Development of modular study programmes is carried out based on regulatory documents of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the requirements of international standards within the Bologna process. The structure and content of working curricula correspond to the standard curriculums and the catalogue of elective disciplines. The objectives of the study programmes are defined in accordance with the programmes of the institutional strategy are consistent with the mission of the university, the needs of society and correspond to the levels of the National Qualifications Framework.

The disciplines included in the curriculum of the study programme have been developed in accordance with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). The content of the modules is well balanced, consistent, and focused on obtaining the expected learning outcomes. Students, faculty members, and employers are involved in the process of development of study programme.

The availability of normative documentation and methodological guidance ensures transparency and effectiveness of the development, approval, and implementation of study programme. It corresponds to the objectives and the expected learning outcomes. The qualification obtained as a result of the programme development is clearly defined and explained.

### Law and Legal Enforcement (Bachelor)

From the point of view of the expert committee, the introduction of the programme is a sensible enrichment of the range of courses. The programme is very well designed. The content follows the state guidelines, while consciously setting its own priorities, particularly through international partnerships and the goal of educating students to become involved and committed citizens. In addition to the theoretical foundations, there is a clear and welcome focus on practical skills.

Although the course was only introduced last year, its conception and implementation already meet the requirements for higher education of European standard in every respect.

On the basis of the description of the content of the programme, including the defined competencies to be acquired, and above all also from the interviews with the students and the qualified lecturers of the study programme, the expert group has without exception gained the impression that the content of the study programme is well matched to the practical professional requirements and follows the previously defined competency objectives. The learning objectives and competencies to be achieved are structured in a didactically sensible manner, are comprehensible and appropriately designed in terms of content, and are also clearly communicated to the students.

All learning objectives are accessible to students. In addition to viewable module descriptions, lecturers also take care to ensure that the respective requirements are explicitly communicated, so that students are given a clear picture of the respective course unit as well as the programme as a whole.

The already very good content design of the very young study programme is still in its early stages, also from the point of view of those responsible for the study programme and the teaching staff. The teaching staff and students are actively involved in the further design process.

The Academic Council for Quality is a body that monitors the defined standards and regulations and can quickly implement optimisation processes. A positive aspect is that students in particular have the opportunity to provide direct feedback on teaching content and the learning environment through regular evaluations and can thus initiate optimisation processes. In the opinion of the expert committee, the cooperation with the Centre for Institutional Research ensures that the results of surveys and especially evaluations are handled professionally and transparently.

Students have access to an effective online learning platform called Moodle, which we have experienced to be very popular. In addition, there is a well-stocked library with numerous books available online, as well as an excellent learning environment and a good social and cultural environment at KAFU university. Targeting students through online media (Instagram channel, YouTube page, etc.) promotes community cohesion through collaborative information management.

The experts have the impression that the highly qualified teaching staff are very committed and approachable to the students. Students also regularly receive individual learning materials to prepare for and follow up on classes and can get involved in the university environment in a subject-specific way

through various offerings (including a law clinic). In accordance with the international orientation of KAFU university, students of the programme also have the opportunity to participate in exchange programmes and receive very good foreign language support. In some cases, there is also the possibility of taking classes in the chosen foreign language. The university management also provides targeted incentives for good teaching and publications – including study-specific ones – and rewards these with salary bonuses, among other things.

Finally, it should be positively emphasised that the university takes special account of the high practical orientation of the course through seminars, practical study periods, and guest lecturers from the police and judiciary.

International Relations (Bachelor) and International Relations (Master: 1-year Professional Orientated Training and 2-year Scientific and Pedagogical Oriented Training)

The Development Strategy of the Kazakh-American Free University emphatically states that the core mission of KAFU in 2018–22 will be to train ‘leaders of the 21<sup>st</sup> century’, ‘competitive specialists who speak foreign languages, are able to think independently, have strategic thinking and manage global trends in the national and world economy.’ Nonetheless, according to the same document, the intertwined strategic goals of internationalisation and leadership training are intended to ‘benefit sovereign Kazakhstan.’ Therefore, an internationally oriented and student-centered development strategy stands in patent contradiction with the declared national scope of the university, ultimately functional to the needs and interests of the Kazakh state.

The stated mission of the three study programmes in International Relations align fully with the overall goals set by the university management, while nonetheless solving their inherent contradiction. According to the International Relations self-assessment report, 6B03101, 7M03101, and 7M03102 all aim at training critical-minded, independent decision-makers through International Relations expertise and practice, thus turning students into ‘responsible citizens of their country.’ Hence, the International Relations mission statement successfully harmonises the goals of the autonomous development of individual students, international expertise, and national service into the concept of responsible citizenship. Concretely, this harmonisation translates into a number of professional skills of International Relations graduates in the field of the relations of Kazakhstan with the external world. For example, such skills include compiling diplomatic documents (6B03101), translating from and into Russian (7M03101 and 7M03102), conducting business correspondence on the organization of international events (7M03101), and accompanying diplomatic delegations (7M03101). Mainly, International Relations graduates are expected to find jobs in the Kazakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs or in other departments of the national and regional public administrations of the country. In sum, the Department

of Law and International Relations has set the mission of the three programmes under review consistently with the general strategic goals of KAFU and has identified the career prospects of International Relations students accordingly.

In principle, the objectives of the of International Relations programmes reflect the requirements of the professional field, as far as the Kazakh job market is concerned. Yet, the actual correspondence of the expertise acquired by of graduates to the demands of International Relations professions is hard to assess. The Self-Study Report indicates that the employment rate of former International Relations students has remained relatively high since 2017, with biennial oscillation ranges between 75% and 100%. Yet, we do not know the exact employment of each graduate. From the online meetings with former of International Relations students, it emerged that several of them work in Kazakh customs, but more comprehensive data are needed beyond anecdotal and random evidence. We recommend KAFU to appoint a specific person/office in charge of monitoring the careers of students after graduation and collecting data about their employment on a more structured and systematic basis.

Certainly, the Law and International Relations Department deserves praise for involving employers in the design of the programmes alongside faculty, students, and the administrative staff. Academic Committees consisting of representatives of all these groups propose the curriculum of each programme, subject to review, amendment, and final approval by the Educational and Methodological Council of the department and of the general Educational and Methodological Council of KAFU. Thus, degree programmes are designed through a highly formalized, transparent, and multi-layered procedure involving different internal and external stakeholders.

Overall, the curricula of the three programmes under review include a handful of core subjects for the major, such as History of International Relations, International Relations Theory, International Law, and International Economy, which are mandatory for all students. Nonetheless, the Bachelor and Master programmes design follow the model of the so-called modular educational programmes. That is, students are allowed to personalise the curriculum by choosing from a wide variety of elective courses, including a second and third foreign language of specialisation besides English. The range of available elective courses is impressive in terms of both subjects and geographical areas, covering such diverse topics as international crisis management, international business law, disputes resolution, etc.

While this variety and flexibility are praiseworthy indicators of student-centered learning, they can nonetheless mislead students. The contents, organisation, requirements, and learning objectives of each elective course are clearly and accurately illustrated. Yet, electives are enlisted randomly and collectively, with no discernable criterion for grouping them into modules. To make the modular educational programme more consistent and better focused, we recommend the Department of Law and International Relations to identify and clearly propose to students a few specialisation options within

each International Relations curriculum. These may be defined in terms of topics (globalisation, regional integration, conflict resolution, etc.), subjects (International Relations theory, law, history, etc.), or area studies. As far as area studies are concerned, Southeastern Europe, the Caucasus, Eastern Asia, and Eurasian studies appear the most natural option given the location of KAFU, the foreign languages currently offered to students, and the likely employment of International Relations graduates in the foreign policy apparatus of the Kazakh state.

Each International Relations curriculum includes a set of mandatory professional internships, for a total duration of 24 weeks in the undergraduate programme, and 30 weeks in the Master programmes. Moreover, KAFU has stipulated exchange agreements with over 50 partner educational institutions in the United States, Russia, Turkey, Japan, and elsewhere. Evidently, KAFU provides adequate logistical and institutional support to its students interested in undertaking educational and professional experiences abroad. On the contrary, it is not clear whether and how frequently foreign students, scholars, and employers come to KAFU. To comply with the strategic goal of internationalisation, international exchanges should be pursued in both directions. During the expert meeting with International Relations students, these latter expressed their desire to host more international visitors at KAFU. We recommend the Law and International Relations Department to act upon this wish.

### **2.3 Conclusion**

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

### 3 ESG Standard 1.3: Student-centred learning, teaching, and assessment

**Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.**

#### 3.1 Implementation

The organisation of student-centred education in study programmes is carried out in accordance with the university's academic policy. A tailored approach toward diverse groups of students and their demands is maintained at the Department of Law and International Relations.

The university monitors the adaption process of students who are socially vulnerable and provides material assistance. It provides tuition discounts in accordance with the Regulations on the Provision of Educational Benefits at KAFU for students with limited physical and material capabilities, as well as socially unprotected segments of the population (in the event of the loss of the breadwinner, for large families, orphans, etc.), as well as academic contest winners, holders of the Altyn Belgi sign (pupils with straight A's).

Group advisers are picked from among the most experienced and well-trained instructors to give assistance in ensuring students' continuous progress in their academic careers. Advisors are allocated to groups by the dean of the faculty based on the presentation of the department head. Advisors, such as student mentors, provide consultations and explanations to students both during the preparation of individual academic plans and at the request of students during the academic year.

Furthermore, using their own account, students select subjects for the following academic year based on their selected specialisation and compose their customised curriculum. Undergraduate and doctoral students can also select a specialisation. A student's workload is determined by individual talents, interests, and chances for future professional progress, which are expressed in the individual academic plan. It allows students to pursue their personal and professional interests while still meeting their educational goals. There are plans for all academic fields, professional internships, research, and final certification. It is signed by the registrar, adviser, and student, and it has been authorised by the faculty dean. A Master student is trained based on an individual work framework prepared under the guidance of a supervisor.

The departments staff use conventional and interactive teaching techniques while leading training sessions for students. The foundations of students' theoretical knowledge are laid via traditional forms

and techniques (lecture, explanation, writing essays, reports, and working on assignments and tasks), which also help students develop their subject-specific, interdisciplinary, and general educational abilities. Interactive techniques have a clear benefit in contemporary higher education, presenting undergraduate-centred learning/graduate-centred learning, as a current kind of active methods. All participants in the educational process can interact with one another, develop communication skills, work together to complete tasks, assess their own behaviour, and become immersed in a genuine environment of business cooperation to solve problems thanks to the use of interactive teaching methods.

At the Department of Law and International Relations, interactive lectures, business games, project methods, brainstorming, dialogues, case method, round table, colloquium, and creative assignments are most successfully used as teaching tools. Business simulation games allow for the construction of action plans under the circumstances of given models and the systematisation of theoretical knowledge to address a particular practical issue.

E-learning technologies are utilised in a number of educational settings. For asynchronous educational contact between an instructor and a student, video lectures are incorporated. The university has been working on developing video lecture courses for various taught subjects since the 2017–2018 academic year. The department's professors are creating extensive online courses and have prepared video lectures on many topics. Videos can be found on the KAFU distant learning portal or on its official YouTube channel.

Regular feedback on the methodologies is gathered to assess and improve educational approaches, and it is one of the fundamental tenets of organising education at the university, and this is reflected in the data that the Research Centre receives as a result of anonymous surveys. In addition, input on the techniques and methods is used to assess and adjust pedagogical methods, it relates to participation in the Best Teacher competition, and mutual attendance of classes by teachers of the department, which is reflected in the form of designated questionnaires.

A number of papers have been implemented to encourage mutual respect and academic honesty among students and staff in order to develop a solid corporate culture and maintain an optimal psychological environment at the university: Academic Policy of KAFU, Academic Integrity Code, Internal Routine Rules, etc.

The Code establishes academic honesty principles in educational and research processes, as well as the rights and obligations of participants in these processes. It also specifies the types of academic honesty violations, the procedure for writing a report by both the teacher and the student, and the

procedure for taking action if those are committed. As a result, the student has the option of submitting an individual or group petition for a variety of reasons, including dissatisfaction with the teaching techniques.

The determination of students' academic achievements is separated into two parts: formative (ongoing) control and summative (midterm and final) assessment, with the midterm evaluations 1 and 2 calculated and a final evaluation (examination). Examination sessions are set by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan and are held on the seventh and fifteenth weeks of the semester. The types of assessments are defined by the instructor within the context of the discipline being taught and are also specified in curricula. The faculty is responsible for direct assessment of students' educational achievements, whereas the registrar's office is responsible for accounting for educational achievements. The registrar's office service keeps track of students' academic achievements and computes their academic rating (GPA). The dean's office compiles reports on absolute progress and knowledge quality based on the results of midterm-rating controls (2 times each semester) and test sessions (1 time per semester). These reports are discussed in dean's office, department, and Council of Advisors meetings.

The university-wide policy for measuring educational achievements and student preparation enables for the ideals of transparency, impartiality, continuity, and a focus on students' interests to be upheld. The syllabus contains information on the evaluation criteria as well as various ways of assessments. A list of examination questions for a specific discipline is included into the curriculum students get access to. Teaching staff creates test activities and examination questions, which are then reviewed by the department's educational and methodological departments. Students are provided with syllabi in electronic form. The instructor for a specific subject discusses the policy and criteria for various forms of current, midterm, and final assessment to the students during the first session each term.

Support is provided to students who have knowledge gaps resulted from missed classes due to illness or other justifiable reasons. Students who are not able to keep up with the academic criteria are also paid special attention. To provide academic assistance to this group of students, the department's staff conducts extra consultations on a regular basis, in accordance with the schedule of additional courses for students which is approved by the department.

If students disagree with the results of the tests, they are granted the opportunity to seek remedies in order to settle disputed points of the knowledge evaluation, as well as to protect students' rights and expedite decision-making on appellate matters. The appeal procedure is outlined in the Academic Policy of the university.



### 3.2 Assessment

KAFU fulfils this criterion. Different types and methods of teaching are applied such as lectures, seminars, simulations, games as well as encounters with the business world and e-learning modules. From the discussions it became apparent that teaching staff is giving their best to vary these and especially expand their online availability.

There is continuous evaluation of teaching methods conducted through the university' own centre for institutional research. The questionnaire provided reveals to be adequate for evaluation although, as already recommended it would serve to get a better picture to adjust the answer possibilities and consider adapting a five-stage scale from very positive to very negative, in order to attain more balanced feedback on teaching and didactic methods.

From the discussions and the self-assessment report provided, it became apparent that students have little complaints but if so, there are appropriate and sufficient possibilities to place complaints which are defined in the relevant governing documents. Suggestions for improvement are always welcome by the teaching staff although there are state-imposed regulatory limitations for this as pointed out in the discussions.

Methods and criteria of assessment are provided to the students in the syllabus of the respective course and introduced to them in the first session as stated by the teaching staff and the students. They appear to be transparent and also clearly defined. The assessment procedure and regulations are as mentioned communicated in the syllabus and other documents to the students.

The assessment process consisting of three weeks and six to eight examinations per student and semester seems to be feasible, although this can be challenging for some students; in the discussion rounds there appeared to be no unhappiness with the current procedure.

Examinations are carried out in a written and oral form, in general these formats align with the intended learning outcomes; however, the group of experts remains somewhat sceptical in this regard. A better connection of the learning outcomes and objectives to the respective assessment formats would be welcomed and could also help to rethink assessment formats i.e., doing open book exams, more creative examinations which prepare for the challenges of the future where information is accessible but needs to be accessed and used in a smart way. Also, taking simulations and more creative forms into account to assess students would be interesting for the students and equip them with important skills. At the same time, a link to the learning outcomes should be drawn here as well.

According to the self-assessment report, students have the opportunity to place an appeal concerning assessments, however, from the discussions with both students and teaching staff this option appeared to be barely used and is not needed very often.

It is to be welcomed that the university employees and teaching staff are stressing the learning of English as a second language. However, to this end, it would be good to have more international lecturers, e.g., guest lecturers. This can broaden students' horizons and stimulate discussions that are especially relevant in today's world. Furthermore, new methods of teaching should be encouraged and allowed by the university management. The improvement of educational and information resources as mentioned in the self-assessment report poses a foundation for all this and should be carried out consistently.

Students seem to be taking an active role in the learning process; however, this can always be strengthened and improved, so the positive trajectory selected by the university should be continued.

### **3.3 Conclusion**

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

#### 4 ESG Standard 1.4: Student admission, progression, recognition, and certification

**Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student “life cycle”, e.g., student admission, progression, recognition, and certification.**

##### 4.1 Implementation

At all educational levels — Bachelor, Master, and Ph.D. studies — applicants are admitted and enrolled as prescribed by state laws and regulations. The university does not have the authority to accept and enrol students based solely on intra-university rules. There are various different forms of documentation that cover all aspects of a student's life cycle and relate to the administrative structure and other aspects of the educational process. The Academic Policy of the university may be found under the section development - regulatory papers - internal regulatory documents. Sectional reference guidebook on academic programmes for each academic year is presented on the university official website, which contains information about credit technology in education, the point-rating method of evaluation, internal regulations, information on the admission criteria and conditions, the list of required documents, the applicant's calendar, information about the educational programmes, the tuition payment procedure, regulatory documents, and so on. The essential information is available and regularly updated.

There is also information for applicants on the possibility of getting scholarships and discounts in the advertising and information material, as well as on the website. Effective career advice, the availability of a financial assistance system at the university, a high professional level of faculty, and a high employment rate among university graduates are the elements that assure the stability of student enrolment numbers in the department study programmes.

Following the completion of the admission campaign, the freshman induction programme is run. Over the course of its implementation, students become acquainted with the university, support services, internal regulations, credit technology principles of education, opportunities for extracurricular and sports life, and participation in international programmes.

Students are provided with a guidebook, which is available on the university website and in the library and contains all kinds of information: about the university, departments and study programmes, schedule, the organisation of the educational process, the basic rules for organising the educational process, credit technology, students' rights and obligations, the procedure for registering for and de-registering from academic disciplines.

Monitoring admission quality entails assessing applicants' academic readiness for the study programmes. Keeping track of the current performance entails analysing students' progress in courses learned through practical exercises, self-study, tests, and so on. During the academic year, a rating system is used to assess students' current progress. The indicators of knowledge and skills evaluation in the framework of the final certification further demonstrate the students' and graduates' readiness to fulfil the requirements of the State Educational Standards and to engage in professional activities.

To stay in touch with graduates, record their career progression, and determine their labour market demand, the department sends out questionnaires to businesses each year that include questions on graduates' qualifications, theoretical knowledge, and practical abilities.

The procedure for admitting students from other universities, as well as the recognition of periods of external studying and previous education, is an essential component of ensuring student success in the learning process, promotes mobility, and is carried out in accordance with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, which guarantees that the qualifications of a signatory from one country are recognised in another. The method for reciprocal recognition and transfer of disciplines has been devised and is outlined in the Regulations on the Recognition of Learning Outcomes in Non-Formal and Formal Education.

#### **4.2 Assessment**

The admission requirements and process can be found on the website of KAFU and are clearly defined and laid out. The United National Testing conducted in Kazakhstan provides a firm basis for admissions and adds to the transparency of the process. The expert group heard from students that it was easy to apply and be admitted. The relevant platforms are accessible albeit it is unclear whether they are equally well maintained in all three languages.

Student progression is evaluated through the examinations at the end of each semester. Furthermore, each student has an individual academic plan which can also be accessed online. There they can find information on their own progression. According to the university, all academic disciplines, professional internships, research, and final certification are planned in the individual academic plan. In cases of difficulties, the university has adequate mechanisms in place to support the student retention such as advisors and opportunities of exam resits.

KAFU has appropriate recognition procedures for transfer students, these are in line with the Lisbon Convention. When a student wishes to transfer to the university programme in International Relations or Law, they send their transcript to the dean's office where it is checked and evaluated to identify whether there are knowledge gaps the student needs to remedy while studying at KAFU, and then they can attend, and their prior qualifications are recognised. There do not appear to be very precise

documents on this matter which is understandable since recognition is always on a case-by-case basis taking into account current regulations of the study programme itself. The dean's office seemed competent to handle recognition cases in a serious and professional manner.

The graduation documents list the qualifications gained, achieved learning outcomes, and further information on the university degree. From a first impression they are lengthy, but this is necessary in order to transmit all the essential information. Students pointed out that the admissions process was easy, the continuous monitoring of student achievements is to be welcomed and helps students' progression.

### **4.3 Conclusion**

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

## 5 ESG Standard 1.5: Teaching staff

**Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.**

### 5.1 Implementation

The Kazakh-American Free University personnel policy guides its staff hiring and development. The main goal of the personnel policy is to create a system for shaping, advancement, and management of the university personnel that has a high level of professionalism required to achieve the goals and meet the mission of the university and is carried out in the following areas: improvement of corporate governance mechanisms, further training of faculty members, development of administrative and managerial personnel, and attraction of foreign lecturers.

In line with the Labour Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the university governs the procedures for faculty selection, employment, promotion, and dismissal. Faculty positions at the university are filled through a competitive process. In case of vacant positions of faculty and scientific staff, the university places an ad in the printed media and Internet resources at least thirty calendar days prior to the deadline for accepting documents, forms the competitive commission, accepts and considers the documents of the competition participants for compliance with the qualification characteristics of the positions of faculty and equivalent persons of KAFU.

The personnel pool also ensures career development based on the results of teacher evaluations and competition for available vacancies. All processes are outlined in the applicable regulatory papers. Teachers who are familiar with the legal framework in the higher education sector and who have experience dealing with regulatory paperwork are appointed at the department as heads of subject areas for the appropriate study programme. These teaching staff duties include arranging the educational process for specific programmes and generating educational and methodological documentation.

The legal regulation of employee schedules and labour discipline is carried out in accordance with the Labour Code, Charter, Collective Agreement, and KAFU Labour Regulations. The university has drafted and approved the Corporate Culture Code, which is a system of moral and ethical standards of behaviour based on universally acknowledged moral concepts, and which defines the norms of conduct for professors, staff, and students, as well as the rules of their interactions. Furthermore, the Code defines the rules of business etiquette (team relationships, manager-subordinate relationships, teacher-employee ethics, student-employee ethics, holding meetings and conferences, phone communication,

introducing colleagues and partners, business clothes, gifts, and services), corporate symbols, corporate awards and distinctions, corporate events, and corporate communications. Compliance with the Code standards by each employee strengthens the university image and business reputation.

If a breach of the main rules regulating labour discipline and the educational process is discovered during the monitoring of teaching activities, a series of remedial actions (talk, advanced training, etc.) is implemented. In the absence of positive improvements in the teacher's professional actions, the employment contract with them is terminated in accordance with all employee rights guaranteed by the labour legislation of Kazakhstan.

In the event of an employee egregious breach of ethical standards, a system of disciplinary consequences in the form of a remark, reprimand, severe reprimand, and dismissal is applied to them in accordance with the hierarchy of penalties. The system's flexibility contributes to the sufficiency of the infraction and the penalty, which, in most cases, has a limited term. In the event of a dispute, the matter is heard by the KAFU Conciliation Commission (permanent body), which is comprised of an equal number of members from the employer and employee sides.

The Career and Personality Development Centre arranges advanced training for instructors in specialised subjects both within and outside of the institution, providing a depth and breadth of theoretical and practical knowledge that improves students' learning outcomes. Working with educational and methodological literature, designing assessments, knowledge assessment, grading using a point-rating system, and other topics are covered in courses for practical instructors.

Mutual attendance of courses by teachers is offered to allow instructors to become acquainted with the teaching techniques and gain experience in accordance with the timetable set at the department meeting. The department heads evaluate and monitor courses based on the findings of the evaluative visit, as well as the Centre for Institutional Research by means of surveys.

The university makes plans regarding the faculty annually in order to carry out educational, intellectual, methodological, and scientific tasks that are necessary for the efficient execution of study programmes. The quantitative and qualitative composition of the faculty is determined by the number of load rates, taking into account teachers' professional specialisation, the share of full-time teachers in the total number of faculty, and the proportion of teachers with academic degrees and titles in the number of full-time faculty as established by the Law on Education and the order of the Minister of Education and Science.

Part-time instructors, in addition to full-time teachers, are involved in the department work on an annual basis through collaboration with other institutions, exchange of experience, supervision of these

and dissertations, which creates circumstances for an independent assessment of the level of students' knowledge.

One of the most significant areas of development for KAFU is international collaboration and internationalisation of operations. The goal of recruiting foreign scientists and graduates to KAFU is to extend collaboration networks with the world's best scientific and educational institutions, as well as to integrate into the worldwide educational environment, which is a prerequisite for strengthening its competitiveness. International professors are participating in the educational process on the basis of cooperation agreements with foreign universities and educational organisations, both for reading a complete course and covering particular areas of the discipline.

In the 2021-2022 academic year, the annual workload of the teaching staff varied depending on their qualifications and experience, it averaged at 680 hours per annum for professors, 820 hours for associate professors, 910 hours for senior lecturers, and 950 hours for lecturers. Starting from the following academic year, a significant reduction is planned, to 420, 480, 540, and 680 hours accordingly.

An individual plan for the current academic year that governs pedagogical, methodological, organisational, research activity, and advanced training is the fundamental document that sets the scope and types of work of each teacher. Preparation for lectures, practical classes, seminars, and laboratory courses; drafting and editing lecture notes; production of visual aids; discussion of open training sessions, mutual visits; setting up guidelines for students; preparing textbooks, teaching aids, and suggestions for publishing. In addition, information about membership in professional organisations, participation in professional symposiums, congresses, conferences, seminars, and trainings, participation in attestation commissions of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan and other universities as a member or chairman, and consulting activities can be included.

The faculty research and publication activities are constantly evolving. All published educational, methodological, and instructional aides are actively integrated into the educational process, and term papers are written using them. The list of publications utilised in the course instructional support pack includes educational and methodological material produced by the department staff.

The condition of research and its prospects are constantly discussed at departmental meetings, as well as pedagogical and methodological sections. Furthermore, at meetings of scientific and methodological seminars, issues concerning the condition of the department's faculty research activity are raised, and reports and plans for teachers' research work are evaluated and authorised.

The department's advanced training is carried out in line with the Perspective Plan for Advanced Training of the Faculty of KAFU for 2021-2025, individual plans for scientific activity, and advanced training



of instructors agreed at the department meeting. Particular emphasis is placed on enhancing the qualifications of the department instructors in relevant disciplines. Advanced training is provided at both the regional, republican, and international levels. Various innovative training methods are being deployed; during the epidemic, remote seminars have become essential.

The administration of the university uses a variety of financial and non-financial incentives, including certificates of appreciation, letters of gratitude, monetary rewards, as well as other incentives, to encourage effective and productive educational work, the introduction of new technologies, forms, and methods of education into the educational processes, assuring the unification of education and upbringing, success in the practical training of students, in the growth of their creative activity, and in their independence.

## **5.2 Assessment**

Declaredly, KAFU carries out open, transparent, and competitive procedures for the selection of the teaching staff in compliance with the pertinent national laws of Kazakhstan. Based on the documentation provided by KAFU and on the results of the interviews with the university management, faculty, and administration, the experts could find no evidence of improper interference by public authorities or private interests impairing the freedom, publicity, and impartiality of the teacher selection process.

Most of the teaching staff consists of non-permanent full-time faculty. Adjuncts are typically hired on the basis of renewable yearly contracts. Their average teaching assignment amounts to 7–8 courses per year. In principle, each teacher is entitled to a free day per week to work on her/his own research. Hence, in general, the teaching load of non-permanent faculty appears extremely heavy and potentially overwhelming. However, teaching duties may be replaced by research activities and scholarly work. For example, an adjunct may obtain to teach one course less than scheduled in order to concentrate on writing an academic article. Indeed, KAFU promotes and rewards research and scientific publications by its own faculty through various symbolic and material incentives, such as pay increases, contributions towards publication costs and travel expenses for participation in academic conferences, public praise in front of colleagues and students. This policy, per se valuable, can subject teachers to enormous stress and reciprocally detrimental competition, if it is not coupled with a reasonable reduction of the teaching assignment.

Expert interviews with faculty representatives provide the most significant evidence for assessing the practical effectiveness of the research incentives system in place at KAFU. Likewise, the self-stated level of faculty satisfaction is the main parameter through which experts can determine whether teachers are fairly paid. During the interviews, faculty representatives were asked to evaluate their working conditions and economic treatment in comparison with those of their colleagues from other Kazakh

universities. All interviewees, including experienced academics who had previously served in other educational institutions in Kazakhstan, expressed utmost satisfaction with the treatment they receive at KAFU. Therefore, we recommend the university management to preserve the existing faculty contract policy, and to grant equal access to research and publication opportunities to all faculty members, in line with KAFU declared policy.

Roughly 20% of KAFU teachers is made up of professional experts, in line with the threshold set by Kazakh laws. Most, but not all, academic teachers have a doctoral degree. However, the university encourages its teachers without a PhD to pursue doctoral studies at KAFU through scholarships and supervision by senior faculty. In addition, KAFU keeps a 'personnel reserve' among its former graduates in case faculty vacancies cannot be filled through an external search. Hence, a significant percentage of current KAFU teachers has studied at the same university. Overall, the majority of faculty consists of Kazakh nationals who have earned their degrees at Kazakh universities. On average, the research and publication records of KAFU faculty appears adequate and satisfactory, especially in the light of the significant number of teaching duties of the instructors.

In sum, while teachers are overall adequately competent and qualified, they essentially share the same national and academic background. This homogeneity contradicts the strategic goal of internationalisation outlined in the KAFU development plan for 2018–22 and constitutes an objective weakness of the International Relations programmes. The experts are fully aware of the practical difficulties of attracting international professionals and academics in Kazakhstan under the hardships of the current geopolitical and sanitary situation. Nonetheless, the national and academic profile of teachers should be enriched and diversified through remote teaching arrangements and temporary faculty exchange agreements with KAFU partner universities abroad.

### 5.3 Conclusion

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

## 6 ESG Standard 1.6: Learning resources and student support

**Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.**

### 6.1 Implementation

The university has a system in place to help students achieve their educational goals, which includes not only ensuring the educational process but also resolving every day and social issues, finding employment, cultural, and creative opportunities, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, and participating in leisure activities. KAFU makes considerable effort to organise the learning process in a way that is as convenient as possible.

Buildings and facilities owned by the university that accommodate classrooms, rooms with special equipment, and labs that conform with the current hygienic requirements and laws are available for study programmes implementation. The KAFU-owned facilities are located in Ust-Kamenogorsk and consist of four buildings totalling 11,630.54 square meters. The institution comprises three instructional and laboratory buildings totalling 11,309.94 square meters, with 7,280.89 square meters of classroom space. The area around the building has been landscaped.

Every building has a canteen, and the university administration and the city sanitary services constantly monitor its menu and quality of the food. Students who are not city residents have the option of living in a cosy dormitory. It is a 728 square meter space for 78 students. A 36 square meter medical office that is formed under a mutually beneficial cooperation agreement with an outpatient centre institution provides medical care for students and staff. The institution features a sports and leisure complex that is 320.6 square meters in size and includes a swimming pool, as well as a gym that is 288 square meters in size. The university also includes a 2,500 square meter open sports field.

There are specific rooms outfitted with all required equipment and measurement tools for organising and conducting laboratory and practical lessons for the execution of Law programmes: courtroom, a specialised chamber of legal actions, and a laboratory of criminalistics. There is an office of international relations and a space for learning foreign languages for the execution of International Relations programmes. Internet access and computer classes are available for all students and staff.

The university steady financial standing allows it to devote significant funding each year to upgrade and modernise facilities and equipment. Financial resources are distributed in line with the approved

Plan for the Implementation of the KAFU Development Strategy for the current fiscal year. The university guarantees that the budget is distributed transparently. The president of the university discusses a report on the outcomes of the university activities for the reporting year and plans for the next year during an extended meeting of the Academic Council every year. The implementation of the university budget, which offers detailed information on the allocation of financial resources, is one of the important elements of the report.

The inflow of funds from the delivery of educational services to students who are paying tuition or students covered by the state national grants accounts for 90–93% of the KAFU budget. Positive trends may be seen in the budgetary growth of the university; multi-channel funding is assured. The university is solvent and financially stable since it has no debts for either its long-term or short-term obligations. The university financial standing enables it to successfully complete the responsibilities assigned for carrying out the study programmes. Over the course of the previous five years, the university resources and facilities have seen dramatic growth. Currently, the equipment and facilities meet the requirements of scientific and educational activities as well as the implementation of innovative approaches.

The university library and information complex houses three reading rooms with a combined seating capacity of 176. The library has 391.6 square meters of overall space, and readers can use the computers and office equipment (such as a printer and a scanner) that are installed there. The hardware in each room enables the organisation of access to electronic educational and scientific content, as well as the provision of educational and scientific seminars and online events (webinars) using contemporary interactive technologies (sound systems, video conferencing systems). Through reading rooms, where various sorts of materials are displayed, KAFU also employs an openness of information strategy. These rooms operate in the open-access mode. The university has programme-specific academic literature in three languages and access to national and international databases, including Thomson Reuters Web of Knowledge, SpringerLink, Elsevier's Sci Verse Science Direct, and Scopus.

Any student can apply to the department in order to learn the disciplines in English, where they will be provided with advice on the matter and given a timetable that will allow them to attend lessons in each subject field. The American programme schedule includes foundational and major-specific disciplines taught in English that are presented concurrently offline and online so that all interested students can attend.

To help students with the implementation of internal and external academic mobility procedures, KAFU maintains a Department of International Cooperation. The Bologna process is a set of ideas that KAFU works to put into practice, and one of its main tenets is the academic mobility of instructors and students. International scholarship programmes and cooperation initiatives with partner universities are used to implement academic mobility.

Students and professors are informed about international exchange programmes through the department of international cooperation through the university faculties and pertinent information resources (its website and social networks). Specific contracts and agreements between partner universities cover the process and requirements for applicants to take part in international exchange programmes.

The university establishes competitive commissions to choose candidates and decide the selection criteria for participation in overseas study programmes, taking into account the requirements of the host institutions and partner organisations. Academic mobility is funded by the republican budget, grants from national corporations, social partners, and international funds, monies from the receiving party, including grants from international organisations and private foundations, and student personal contributions.

The maintenance of the university facilities and equipment, as well as the production and maintenance of its information resources, is carried out by skilled educational support and administrative personnel assigned to the department, library, special rooms, computer courses, and structural units. Employees handling computer equipment and computer programmes include laboratory assistants, programmers, system engineers, librarians, and department experts. The Technical Support Department of the university is responsible for upgrading and maintaining a computer bank, office equipment, producing software help, and providing technical support to faculties and departments.

## **6.2 Assessment**

From the discussion with the representatives of higher education institution (students, teachers, management, and administrative staff), it is obvious that the university provides all necessary space and equipment for its students. Starting from the COVID-19 outbreak, all classrooms have been equipped with cameras and Internet to help students and teachers to interact during lectures, seminars, and examinations. To maintain contact and academic progression, the student support centre was created for dealing with all required documentation.

Students who enrol to the university from rural areas are provided with a place in the dormitory. Students facing troubles with equipment are supported by the university with library materials and laptops on a temporary basis. In case of conflicts, corruption, or any other issues, there is a hotline option listed on the website, and every semester surveys are undertaken to identify cases of corruption and to contribute to the development of the learning process quality. Throughout the whole period of time, faculty and departments help develop and show leadership skills of students relevant to their future career and life.

The KAFU student development centre is a permanent representative and coordinating body of students, acting on the basis of the regulation on the corporate social responsibility, approved by the

rector of the university. Among its main goals is creation of conditions for the formation of students' humanistic values, patriotism, civic culture, creative thinking, active life position, leadership qualities; providing support and assistance to the development of student movements, associations, interest clubs; support and assistance in the implementation of youth projects and initiatives; participation in the organisation and improvement of the educational process in academic groups and at the university as a whole in areas of activity; interaction with republican and local executive bodies and youth organisations on issues related to practical and relevant solutions to youth problems.

As a conclusion, it can be outlined that KAFU fulfilled the criterion. At the same time, the university also should support students in forming opinions by enhancing available library sources and making them more accessible, expanding the range of authors and subscriptions to make educational process of students more efficient and global in nature. Similarly, the circle of potential employers should be expanded to improve the chances for employment of KAFU graduates.

### **6.3 Conclusion**

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

## 7 ESG Standard 1.7: Information management

**Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.**

### 7.1 Implementation

KAFU keeps a permanent statistical record of students' progress in Bachelor, Master, and Ph.D. programmes. The observed drop in quality performance metrics was caused by a rapid shift to distance learning following the onset of the pandemic, as well as the presence of a high number of students who had to study during the summer semester in addition to the autumn and spring semesters to stay on track.

The Platonus portal contains information on student attendance and progress, grant distribution, hostel allocation, and scholarships from the president of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the president of KAFU. It also ensures transparency and accessibility to knowledge assessment information for students, who are provided with a virtual personal account where they may familiarise themselves with the outcomes of the ongoing assessments and midterms, transcripts, and GPA computation. The automation of operations in the Platonus system dramatically expedited the processing of information and student access to it. Instructors and examiners insert all grades into electronic journals, which are automatically reflected in students' statements and transcripts.

The syllabus contains all information on the evaluation criteria as well as modes of module assessments. Students receive their syllabi electronically. The respective instructor discusses the policy and criteria for evaluations and various forms of current, midterm, and final evaluation to the students in the first session for a specific discipline.

Furthermore, the graduate employment rate is a crucial indicator of the quality of a study programme and the foundation for its revision in order to assure graduates' competitiveness. The proportion of graduates in employment has been trending somewhat down during the reporting period, which is attributed to some graduates moving abroad for permanent residency in the Russian Federation and other countries as well as the establishment of a prohibition on hiring by various governmental agencies during the epidemic.

### 7.2 Assessment

The Kazakh-American Free University presented information on the Information management system in the context of the study programmes undergoing accreditation. Among other things, information

was provided on the profile of the student body, student progression, success and drop-out rates, students' satisfaction with their programmes, learning resources, available student support, and career paths of graduates.

The information on the number of students stated data for the period of 2021-2022 academic year. The largest number of students, 244 students, are enrolled in the study programme Law (Jurisprudence). The self-assessment report provided information on the number of expelled students between 2017-2021. The Kazakh-American Free University is guided by the Model Rules for the Activities of Educational Organisations of the Relevant Types (approved by Order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated October 30, 2018 No. 595.). Article 41 of these rules provides for the following grounds for expulsion: academic failure, violation of the principles of academic honesty, violation of the Internal Regulations and the Charter of the university, violation of the terms of the contract for the provision of educational services, including non-payment of tuition fees, as well as at a student's own request.

The Platonus web portal of the university contains information about the attendance and progress of students. It also provides transparency and accessibility to information on knowledge assessment for students, for whom a virtual personal account is provided, where they can get acquainted with the results of current assessment and intermediate certification, transcripts, and their GPA calculation. Automation of processes in the data system significantly accelerated the processing of information and access to it for students. All grades for the evaluation of students' knowledge are put directly in electronic journals by teachers and examiners. Indicators of the final certification and defence of diploma and Master theses of students in educational programmes of the department are presented on the KAFU website.

The information on graduates and their employment is systematically collected. According to the information provided by the university, in the 2019-2020 academic year, the highest employment rate among students amounted to 91.5%, whereas in the 2021-2022 academic year, the employment rate stood at 67.1%. In the 2017-2018 academic year, the highest employment rate among graduates amounted to 83%, in the 2021-2022 academic year the employment rate was 66.2%.

The university maintains a permanent statistical record of the progress of students in the offered study programmes. Indicators of the absolute progress and quality of knowledge of full-time students from 2017-2018 to 2021-2022 academic years allow to see a stable percentage of absolute progress and a decrease in the quality of knowledge from 79.4% in the 2017-2018 academic year to 53% in the 2020-2021 academic year. Indicators of absolute progress and quality of knowledge of graduate students indicate a conscious continuation of education at the second and third stages. The new mechanism of



entrance examinations also contributes to improving the quality of knowledge. Centralised comprehensive testing, which includes an assessment of the skills of critical and analytical thinking and allows for the qualitative selection of students for the Master level programmes.

Information about study programmes is carried out based on collection, analysis, and use of relevant information. The collected data are used to summarise the results and the effectiveness of the study programmes. During the conversation with students, it was noted that students actively use the Platonus platform in their educational activities on a regular basis. The positive highlight is that the university uses a system that allows to collect data, monitor, and manage information about the achievements of students, among other applications.

### **7.3 Conclusion**

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

## 8 ESG Standard 1.8: Public information

**Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.**

### 8.1 Implementation

KAFU places a high priority on informing the public, preserving a favourable image, and gaining a competitive edge in the educational services market. KAFU information resources are made up of socially pertinent data for all internal stakeholders, business partners, and the community at large. Furthermore, materials are published in the media to provide information regarding the university study programmes.

The following information and educational sources and systems are in operation to accommodate various groups of users with information: the official website *kafu.edu.kz*, educational Internet resource *platon.kafu.kz*, and distant learning information system *moodle.kafu.edu.kz*.

The official website of KAFU contains essential information about the university development milestones and priorities, its structure and management, contact information, details about structural divisions, study programmes, international collaboration, scientific activities, admission regulations, news, announcements, and so on. It is there to inform applicants, students, staff, and other stakeholders. The site is available in three different languages: Kazakh, Russian, and English.

The Department of Academic Policy is required to verify and approve all content before it is posted on the university official website. The Monitoring and Admission Department, along with other departments, monitors the quality of information and promotional materials in conformity with the established criteria.

The educational Internet resource *platon.kafu.kz* enables the provision of information support for the educational process, including rating scores, examination and final grades, results for state final certification, the creation of statements, transcripts, individual academic plans, administrative and statistical reporting, and so on. By means of this Internet resource, students and their parents may easily obtain personal information regarding their academic achievements. Furthermore, information kiosks have been installed in the university buildings to provide easy access to academic performance information and the university official Internet resources.

The Department of Law and International Relations arranges a variety of practical events to facilitate free flow of communication between future young professionals and employers, including job fairs,

career days at KAFU, where meetings with representatives of government agencies are held, as well as master classes, guest lectures, and trainings are offered.

A new version of the website is to be launched to provide users with complete, reliable, and timely information about the services and areas of operation. The site layout should allow for easy and convenient browsing across online information resources. The website is to act as a source of information for candidates, employers, partners, and the general public, and also serve as one of the contact channels among students and faculty.

## **8.2 Assessment**

The official website of KAFU serves as the main source of the basic information about the history of creation and study process relevant details of the university. The university website has a designated section for applicants with the details outlining the functions of the admissions committee with working hours and contact details which is available on the landing page of the website. The rules for admission to KAFU are reflected on the Applicant tab, where a list of educational programmes is listed. The dissemination of information about the university is also carried out through its social media pages and accounts on the following platforms: Facebook, Instagram, VKontakte, and YouTube.

In the discussion round with students, it was confirmed that all the necessary information is available on the university website without additional registration, and they also used the services of the admission centre. Information about admission criteria, learning outcomes, qualification awarded, teaching, learning, assessment procedures, pass rates, learning opportunities, and graduate employment information are provided on the official website of the university.

That being said, the pages of the Department of Law and International Relations contain the information on the implementation of study programmes and statistical information about employment. For optimisation purposes, it is necessary to supplement it with additional up-to-date information on specific programmes-related essential details in all three levels of training (Bachelor, Master, PhD) for all study programmes, including updated curricula, annual reports on the activities of the department, activities of clubs, programmes of the final state examinations, activities of the department (news, announcement of upcoming events, etc.). In this context, it is essential to create conditions and review mechanisms for keeping all the key data regularly updated, with indispensable points made available in all three languages in order to provide all internal and external stakeholders with current information on the key aspects of the applicant, student, and alumni life cycles.

Over the course of the discussions with different status groups of the university, it has been revealed that a completely reinvented version of the website is to be launched in the foreseeable future, with

specific date stated having to be extended multiple times. That is the reason that certain parts of the current version are somewhat unattended.

### **8.3 Conclusion**

The criterion is **not fulfilled** as the existing pages are partially outdated in terms of key details due to the fact that they are not being maintained to a satisfactory extent in all available languages pending the launch of the university website version 2.0.

## 9 ESG Standard 1.9: On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes

**Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.**

### 9.1 Implementation

The university quality assurance policy aligns with the development plan, the mission, as well as aims and objectives. The current key strategic goal is to provide high-quality competitive staff training and educational upgrading. The other strategic goal entails the organisation of effective management and the development of human resources through the improvement of corporate governance mechanisms; faculty development; administrative and managerial personnel development; the use of modern information technologies in the organisation and management of the university; and involvement of foreign lecturers, confirming the close relationship between the quality assurance policy and the strategic management of the university.

The KAFU has created, documented, implemented, and is currently maintaining an internal quality assurance system. This system is constantly evolving. A continuous comparison of planned and actual activities/parameters, their analysis, and implementation of relevant actions, based on standards and guidelines for quality assurance in higher education in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), ensures its improvement. The university administration, staff, and students all play an active role in the design, development, and execution of all major procedures at KAFU.

All heads of structural units, faculty representatives, and students are members of the Academic Council and the university administration, where all collegiate decisions on the institution key issues of operation and growth are made. Meetings of the Academic Council and administration are held in a more formal setting, with the full faculty and staff invited. Everyone has the right and chance to share their thoughts, views, or ideas on matters concerning educational quality.

The Academic Council and the professors of the graduating department are in charge of developing study programmes and guaranteeing their quality. Their responsibilities include examining state compulsory education requirements, standard programmes for the cycle of general education disciplines, establishing curricula for all forms and programmes of study, and generating a catalogue of elective disciplines for each academic year.

The content of the study programmes is reinforced by internal educational and methodological materials such as curricula, lesson plans, individual educational content, and syllabuses. To assure the content quality of each discipline, the syllabi are subjected to required evaluation and review in the Academic and Methodological Section of the Department, and if approved, they are forwarded to the university Academic and Methodological Council meeting for approval.

The Center for Institutional Research at KAFU conducts internal monitoring of satisfaction with the quality of education using questionnaires and surveys for all main stakeholders; the findings of the formalised inquiries allow the university to evaluate the level of satisfaction with the quality of services offered. The results of the research are brought to the attention of students by the group advisor and addressed at meetings of the deans and the Council of Advisors; based on the results of the discussions, corrective measures are developed, and the effectiveness of the corrective measures is subsequently analysed.

The satisfaction survey of graduates and students is a useful instrument for gauging the quality of the study programmes as well as for its revision, which involves updating the list of disciplines to reflect advancements in science, the regulatory framework, and socioeconomic indicators as well as strengthening the formats and procedures of educational activity.

## **9.2 Assessment**

KAFU conducts anonymous surveys among students and faculty alike to test their level of satisfaction with the existing learning offer, in terms of both individual courses and degree programmes. Alongside letters from external employers, these surveys form the basis for monitoring the curriculum of each study programme, and, when necessary, re-adjust it. As outlined in detail in the Assessment part of ESG Standard 1.2 of this report, there is a formalised procedure for the design, approval, and regular revision of degree programmes.

In sum, KAFU has established adequate and transparent procedures for the periodical self-review of its study programmes, in which internal and external stakeholders are equally involved. Expert interviews with faculty representatives provide precious evidence for assessing the practical outcomes of these review procedures. For example, faculty members of the International Relations programmes have illustrated a few recent and prospective changes to the International Relations curriculum resulting from periodical review. Firstly, research methodology courses in International Relations have been strengthened by updating reading assignments in line with the most recent and relevant anglophone and global debates in the field of International Relations theory. In addition, a new course on Geopolitical and Economic Interests in International Relations has been introduced to adjust the curriculum to the most recent developments and trends in international relations and politics. Furthermore, new

courses on international cooperation are planned for the next couple of years, in compliance with the strategic goal of the International Relations programmes to promote responsible citizenship among its students. Finally, the directors of the International Relations programmes plan to re-cast the geographical focus of the curriculum from global processes to regional ones, with a closer attention to the standing of Kazakhstan in the Caucasian and Eurasian contexts. This latter development appears entirely consistent with the most likely employment prospects of International Relations graduates in the Kazakh Foreign Ministry or in other national and regional administrative bodies.

The sample syllabi provided to the experts suggest that the reading assignments of KAFU courses are adequate and up to date. In conclusion, there appears to be considerable evidence of transparent, inclusive, and effective periodical review of KAFU degree programmes.

### **9.3 Conclusion**

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

## 10 ESG Standard 1.10: Cyclical external quality assurance

**Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis.**

### 10.1 Implementation

External quality assurance procedures in various forms allow for the evaluation of the reliability of internal university quality assurance processes for study programmes, and they serve as the foundation for the development and implementation of upgraded options for the educational service provision. External quality assurance of study programmes is carried out in a variety of ways. To ensure conformity with state and international educational standards, all study programmes undergo programme, institutional, and international accreditation procedures.

The Bachelor and Master study programmes in Law as well as the undergraduate programme in International Relations were accredited by the Independent Kazakh Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (IQAA) in 2017. The Kazakh-American Free University received IQAA international institutional accreditation for all levels of training in 2019. Since 2014, the Kazakh-American Free University has ranked among the top in the national list of the most advanced institutions in the Republic of Kazakhstan, compiled by IQAA. The final evaluation of higher education institutions' academic activities is based on six indicators: student body, study programmes and learning outcomes, academic staff and faculty quality, research and innovation work, international cooperation, and the information content of the university website.

The Customs Affairs programme was placed third in the Independent Agency for Accreditation and Rating (IAAR) rating of 2015. The ranking includes 55 universities, which were assessed by measures such as a high number of outstanding students, instructors, and researchers; academic mobility; graduate competitiveness; and competitiveness of scientific publications by specialisation faculty members.

Since 2018, the Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs has conducted an impartial evaluation of Kazakhstani institutions in terms of academic programmes. To create the ranking, 19 factors are reviewed, among other elements, the following areas are taken into consideration: the level of employment of graduates, the median wage of graduates, accreditation of the educational programmes, faculty qualifications, and educational programme pertinence.



After the procedure is completed, the results of certification and accreditation of study programmes are published on the websites of the accrediting authorities. The institution then posts the accreditation outcomes on its official website and other online information sources, providing the public access to reports and other details about which study programmes have been accredited and for how long.

Post-accreditation reports are submitted by the departments based on the findings of the external evaluations. Every year, during the post-accreditation monitoring period, the department creates a report on the comments and the application of the external evaluation recommendations. This report includes a corrective action plan outlining the timing of their implementation and the individuals in charge of that. Corrective measures might include updating the objectives, supplementing curricula, modules, and working curricula, engaging professionals to join the department staff, boosting student participation in scientific endeavours, bolstering the educational and laboratory facilities, boosting faculty participation in competitions for scientific projects funded by the Ministry of Education and Science of Kazakhstan or from other sources, among other things.

Employers evaluate the quality of study programmes by participating in the work of the accreditation committees, evaluating discipline syllabi, or providing internship possibilities. Information on the performance of the interns and their degree of competence in handling professional challenges from employers is solicited. Feedback is discussed and considered when upgrading the content of the disciplines.

## **10.2 Assessment**

KAFU has successfully undergone several reputable national and international accreditations. In order to be a competitive private university, the Kazakh-American Free University was the first higher education institution in Kazakhstan to complete the full procedure of international accreditation by the Council for Accreditation of Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP, USA) in 2010.

As the accreditation is awarded for a certain period of time, KAFU set a goal and succeeded in receiving the international reaccreditation by the ACBSP in 2021. Learning from the previous experience and making targeted effort, the second evaluation procedure resulted in no adverse comments. KAFU has also passed institutional and specialised accreditations by the Independent Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (IQAA, Kazakhstan).

Hence, it can be said that external accreditation procedures are held regularly. At the same time, preparation and improvements at the university are a continuous commitment as many of them can be done prior to or in-between the accreditation initiations, as there are specific recommendations and opportunities for constant improvements available; both in the medium and long term, the associated

endeavours at the department levels can be planned and implemented in a way that goes beyond the specified baselines.

### **10.3 Conclusion**

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

#### IV Recommendation to the Accreditation Commission of ACQUIN

##### 1 **Assessment of compliance with the Standards and Guidelines in the Higher European Area (ESG) in the current official version**

Law (Bachelor), Law (Master: 2-year Scientific and Pedagogical Oriented Training), Law (PhD), Law and Customs Affairs (Bachelor), Law and Legal Enforcement (Bachelor), International Relations (Bachelor), and International Relations (Master: 1-year Professional Orientated Training and 2-year Scientific and Pedagogical Oriented Training) were assessed on the basis of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and the national or other relevant regulations.

The expert group concludes that the **ESG standards 1.1** (Policy for quality assurance), **1.2** (Design and approval of programmes), **1.3** (Student-centred learning, teaching, and assessment), **1.4** (Student admission, progression, recognition, and certification), **1.5** (Teaching staff), **1.6** (Learning resources and student support), **1.7** (Information management), **1.9** (On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes) and **1.10** (Cyclical external quality assurance) are fulfilled.

The expert group concludes that the **ESG standard 1.8 (Public information)** is not fulfilled.

The assessment criteria are as follows:

**Standard 1.1 Policy for quality assurance:** Universities have a publicly accessible quality assurance strategy, which is part of their strategic management. This strategy is developed and implemented by internal stakeholder representatives through appropriate structures and processes, involving external stakeholders.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

**Standard 1.2 Design and approval of programmes:** Universities have procedures for the design and approval of their courses. The courses are designed in such a way that their objectives, including the desired learning outcomes, can be achieved. The qualification obtained during a degree program is clearly defined and communicated; it refers to the corresponding level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, the qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

**Standard 1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching, and assessment:** Universities ensure that the courses offered are carried out in such a way as to encourage students to play an active role in the design of the learning process and that this approach is also taken into account when assessing students/examinations.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

**Standard 1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition, and certification:** Universities ensure that the courses offered are carried out in such a way as to encourage students to play an active role in the design of the learning process and that this approach is also taken into account when assessing students/examinations.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

**Standard 1.5 Teaching staff:** Universities ensure the competence of their teachers. They use fair and transparent procedures for the recruitment and further training of their employees.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

**Standard 1.6 Learning resources and student support:** The university has adequate funding to finance study and teaching and ensure that there is always a sufficient and readily available range of learning and support available for their studies.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

**Standard 1.7 Information management:** Universities ensure that they collect, analyse and use the relevant data relevant to the successful conduct of studies and other activities.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

**Standard 1.8 Public information:** Universities publish easily understandable, correct, objective, up-to-date, and well-accessible information about their activities and courses of study.

The criterion is **not fulfilled**.

**Standard 1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes:** Universities are constantly monitoring their courses and regularly reviewing them to ensure that they achieve the goals set and meet the needs of students and society. The tests lead to a continuous improvement of the courses. All affected parties will be informed about any measures planned or resulting from this.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

**Standard 1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance:** Universities regularly undergo external quality assurance procedures in accordance with the ESG.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

**National criteria** are integrated into the ESG standards.

## 2 Accreditation Recommendation

The peer-review experts recommend *conditional accreditation* of Law (Bachelor), Law (Master: 2-year Scientific and Pedagogical Oriented Training), Law (PhD), Law and Customs Affairs (Bachelor), Law and Legal Enforcement (Bachelor), International Relations (Bachelor), and International Relations (Master: 1-year Professional Orientated Training and 2-year Scientific and Pedagogical Oriented Training).

The peer group proposes **accreditation with a condition**.

The peer-review experts propose the following **general condition**:

- The website pages must be continuously maintained in all languages in order to provide all internal and external stakeholders with updated information on the essential aspects of the applicant, student, and alumni life cycles.

The peer-review experts propose the following **general recommendations** for all of the above-stated study programmes:

- The university should strive to provide more support and opportunities for incoming academic mobility of students and guest lecturers by utilising existing and establishing new partnerships, also trying to diversify where possible, including Europe and Latin America.
- The university should expand its efforts to identify new funding sources to support its initiatives for further development and internationalisation.
- On top of professional development opportunities in subject-specific areas, the university should provide regular further training in didactics and methodology for its teaching staff, on a mandatory basis.
- Scales used in the questionnaires should be more balanced, e.g., a 5 or 7-point scale with an even distribution of positive and negative assessment options.

### **Law (Bachelor, Master, PhD) recommendation:**

- Current content from the areas of digitalisation, new technologies, and Islamic law should be anchored in the curriculum, in line with current professional standards, while going beyond the regional job market.

### **Law and Custom Affairs (Bachelor) recommendations:**

- The university should define the objectives more precisely so that the profile of the programme is more distinguishable from the other Law variations.

- The university is encouraged to look into the possibilities of adding disciplines that take into account information security, the digital economy, and big data processing abilities to the study programme in order to further enhance it.

**International Relations (Bachelor, Master) recommendations:**

- The potential areas of employment for the graduates of International Relations programmes should be stated more clearly so that the applicants are aware of their future employment possibilities. This should include both the website of the university and printed materials provided to potential students.
- Without abandoning the interdisciplinary character of the International Relations programmes, the university should identify and clearly propose to students a few specialisation options within the programme curriculum for individual profiling. These may be defined in terms of topics (globalisation, regional integration, conflict resolution, etc.), subjects (international relations theory, law, history, etc.), or area studies (Southeastern Europe, the Caucasus, Eastern Asia, and Eurasian studies appear the most natural options given the location of the university and the foreign languages currently offered to students).
- The university should assign a specific person/office in charge of monitoring students' careers after graduation and collecting data on their areas of employment on a more structured and systematic basis.

## **V Decisions of the Accreditation Commission of ACQUIN**

Based on the evaluation report of the expert group and the statement of the Higher Education Institution, the Accreditation Commission of ACQUIN made on the 21 October 2022 the following decision unanimously:

**The study programmes are accredited with the following general and specific conditions and recommendations:**

### **General condition**

- **The website pages must be continuously maintained in all languages in order to provide all internal and external stakeholders with updated information on the essential aspects of the applicant, student, and alumni life cycles.**

### **General recommendations for all study programmes:**

- The university should strive to provide more support and opportunities for incoming academic mobility of students and guest lecturers by utilising existing and establishing new partnerships, also trying to diversify where possible, including Europe and Latin America.  
More learning spaces for students should be created.
- The university should expand its efforts to identify new funding sources to support its initiatives for further development and internationalisation.
- On top of professional development opportunities in subject-specific areas, the university should provide regular further training in didactics and methodology for its teaching staff, on a mandatory basis.
- Scales used in the questionnaires should be more balanced, e.g., a 5 or 7-point scale with an even distribution of positive and negative assessment options.

### **Law (Bachelor)**

**The study programme in Law (Bachelor) is accredited without any specific conditions.**

**The accreditation is valid until 30 June 2024.**

**The Higher Education Institution must submit documents that prove the fulfilment of the condition by 21 October 2023. If the Accreditation Commission comes to the conclusion that the condition is fulfilled, the accreditation will be extended until 30 September 2030. If the Higher Education Institution fails to prove the fulfilment of the condition in due time, the accreditation will not be extended.**

**The accreditation procedure may be suspended for up to 18 months after response from the Higher Education Institution, with the expectation that the Higher Education Institution will remedy the deficiencies within the given time frame. This statement must be submitted until 21 November 2022.**

The following recommendation is given for the further development of the study programme:

- Current content from the areas of digitalisation, new technologies, and Islamic law should be anchored in the curriculum, in line with current professional standards, while



going beyond the regional job market.

### **Law (Master: 1-year Professional Orientated Training and 2-year Scientific and Pedagogical Oriented Training)**

The study programme in Law (Master: 1-year Professional Orientated Training and 2-year Scientific and Pedagogical Oriented Training) is accredited without any specific conditions.

The accreditation is valid until 30 June 2024.

The Higher Education Institution must submit documents that prove the fulfilment of the condition by 21 October 2023. If the Accreditation Commission comes to the conclusion that the condition is fulfilled, the accreditation will be extended until 30 September 2030. If the Higher Education Institution fails to prove the fulfilment of the condition in due time, the accreditation will not be extended.

The accreditation procedure may be suspended for up to 18 months after response from the Higher Education Institution, with the expectation that the Higher Education Institution will remedy the deficiencies within the given time frame. This statement must be submitted until 21 November 2022.

The following recommendation is given for the further development of the study programme:

- Current content from the areas of digitalisation, new technologies, and Islamic law should be anchored in the curriculum, in line with current professional standards, while going beyond the regional job market.

### **Law (PhD)**

The study programme in Law (PhD) is accredited without any specific conditions.

The accreditation is valid until 30 June 2024.

The Higher Education Institution must submit documents that prove the fulfilment of the condition by 21 October 2023. If the Accreditation Commission comes to the conclusion that the condition is fulfilled, the accreditation will be extended until 30 September 2028. If the Higher Education Institution fails to prove the fulfilment of the condition in due time, the accreditation will not be extended.

The accreditation procedure may be suspended for up to 18 months after response from the Higher Education Institution, with the expectation that the Higher Education Institution will remedy the deficiencies within the given time frame. This statement must be submitted until 21 November 2022.

The following recommendation is given for the further development of the study programme:

- Current content from the areas of digitalisation, new technologies, and Islamic law should be anchored in the curriculum, in line with current professional standards, while going beyond the regional job market.

### **Law and Customs Affairs (Bachelor)**

**The study programme in Law and Customs Affairs (Bachelor) is accredited without any specific conditions.**

**The accreditation is valid until 30 June 2024.**

**The Higher Education Institution must submit documents that prove the fulfilment of the condition by 21 October 2023. If the Accreditation Commission comes to the conclusion that the condition is fulfilled, the accreditation will be extended until 30 September 2028. If the Higher Education Institution fails to prove the fulfilment of the condition in due time, the accreditation will not be extended.**

**The accreditation procedure may be suspended for up to 18 months after response from the Higher Education Institution, with the expectation that the Higher Education Institution will remedy the deficiencies within the given time frame. This statement must be submitted until 21 November 2022.**

The following recommendations are given for the further development of the study programme:

- The university should define the objectives more precisely so that the profile of the programme is more distinguishable from the other Law variations
- The university is encouraged to look into the possibilities of adding disciplines that take into account information security, the digital economy, and big data processing abilities to the study programme in order to further enhance it.

### **Law and Legal Enforcement (Bachelor)**

**The study programme in Law and Legal Enforcement (Bachelor) is accredited without any specific conditions.**

**The accreditation is valid until 30 June 2024.**

**The Higher Education Institution must submit documents that prove the fulfilment of the condition by 21 October 2023. If the Accreditation Commission comes to the conclusion that the condition is fulfilled, the accreditation will be extended until 30 September 2028. If the Higher Education Institution fails to prove the fulfilment of the condition in due time, the accreditation will not be extended.**

**The accreditation procedure may be suspended for up to 18 months after response from the Higher Education Institution, with the expectation that the Higher Education Institution will remedy the deficiencies within the given time frame. This statement must be submitted until 21 November 2022.**

### **International Relations (Bachelor)**

**The study programme in International Relations (Bachelor) is accredited without any specific conditions.**

**The accreditation is valid until 30 June 2024.**

**The Higher Education Institution must submit documents that prove the fulfilment of the condition by 21 October 2023. If the Accreditation Commission comes to the con-**

**clusion that the condition is fulfilled, the accreditation will be extended until 30 September 2030. If the Higher Education Institution fails to prove the fulfilment of the condition in due time, the accreditation will not be extended.**

**The accreditation procedure may be suspended for up to 18 months after response from the Higher Education Institution, with the expectation that the Higher Education Institution will remedy the deficiencies within the given time frame. This statement must be submitted until 21 November 2022.**

The following recommendations are given for the further development of the study programme:

- The potential areas of employment for the graduates of International Relations programmes should be stated more clearly so that the applicants are aware of their future employment possibilities. This should include both the website of the university and printed materials provided to potential students.
- Without abandoning the interdisciplinary character of the International Relations programmes, the university should identify and clearly propose to students a few specialisation options within the programme curriculum for individual profiling. These may be defined in terms of topics (globalisation, regional integration, conflict resolution, etc.), subjects (international relations theory, law, history, etc.), or area studies (Southeastern Europe, the Caucasus, Eastern Asia, and Eurasian studies appear the most natural options given the location of the university and the foreign languages currently offered to students).
- The university should assign a specific person/office in charge of monitoring students' careers after graduation and collecting data on their areas of employment on a more structured and systematic basis.

### **International Relations (Master: 1-year Professional Orientated Training and 2-year Scientific and Pedagogical Oriented Training)**

**The study programme in International Relations (Master: 1-year Professional Orientated Training and 2-year Scientific and Pedagogical Oriented Training) is accredited without any specific conditions.**

**The accreditation is valid until 30 June 2024.**

**The Higher Education Institution must submit documents that prove the fulfilment of the condition by 21 October 2023. If the Accreditation Commission comes to the conclusion that the condition is fulfilled, the accreditation will be extended until 30 September 2028. If the Higher Education Institution fails to prove the fulfilment of the condition in due time, the accreditation will not be extended.**

**The accreditation procedure may be suspended for up to 18 months after response from the Higher Education Institution, with the expectation that the Higher Education Institution will remedy the deficiencies within the given time frame. This statement must be submitted until 21 November 2022.**

The following recommendations are given for the further development of the study programme:

- The potential areas of employment for the graduates of International Relations programmes should be stated more clearly so that the applicants are aware of their future

employment possibilities. This should include both the website of the university and printed materials provided to potential students.

- Without abandoning the interdisciplinary character of the International Relations programmes, the university should identify and clearly propose to students a few specialisation options within the programme curriculum for individual profiling. These may be defined in terms of topics (globalisation, regional integration, conflict resolution, etc.), subjects (international relations theory, law, history, etc.), or area studies (Southeastern Europe, the Caucasus, Eastern Asia, and Eurasian studies appear the most natural options given the location of the university and the foreign languages currently offered to students).
- The university should assign a specific person/office in charge of monitoring students' careers after graduation and collecting data on their areas of employment on a more structured and systematic basis.