

# Decision of the FIBAA Accreditation and Certification Committee



**18<sup>th</sup> Meeting on June 5, 2025**

## **INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION**

<b>Project Number:</b>	24/003
<b>Higher Education Institution:</b>	SDU University
<b>Location:</b>	Kaskelen, Kazakhstan
<b>Type of accreditation:</b>	Institutional Accreditation

The FIBAA Accreditation and Certification Committee has taken the following decision:

According to § 7 (3) in conjunction with § 10 (2) of the “Special Conditions for awarding the FIBAA Quality Seal for the Institutional Accreditation”, SDU University is accredited with one condition.

### **Condition:**

- **Condition 1** (see chapter III): The University ensures that all courses offered provide a course description.

Proof of meeting these conditions is to be supplied by March 4, 2026.

Period of Accreditation: June 5, 2025, until June 4, 2031.

The FIBAA Quality Seal is awarded.

## **Assessment Report**

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**Higher Education Institution:**  
SDU University, Kazakhstan

## A. Procedure

A contract for the institutional accreditation of SDU University was concluded between FIBAA and SDU University on January 31, 2024. On August 2, 2024, SDU University submitted a self-evaluation report including appendices to prove that the criteria for institutional accreditation are met.

At the same time, FIBAA appointed a review panel<sup>1</sup>. SDU University has agreed with the chosen experts. The panel consisted of:

**Prof. Dr. Agnieszka Dardzinska-Glebocka**

Bialystok University of Technology, Poland

Vice Rector for Education, Professor of Computer Science

**Prof. Dr. Vera de Hesselle**

University of Applied Sciences Bremen, Germany

Professor of Business Law and Tax Law

**Thomas Keuthen**

ZHAW, Switzerland

Business Administration M.A.

[Students representative]

**Prof. Dr. Christine Larbig** [Chair]

Lucerne University of Applied Sciences, Switzerland

Former Quality Officer Department of Computer Science

**Assoc. Prof. Dr. Assel Nurgazina**

Almaty Management University, Kazakhstan

Director of International Office, Associate professor – School of Management

[Country expert]

**Maik Oneschkow**

Expeditors International

Internal Quality Auditor, Manager Customs Brokerage

[Professional Practice]

FIBAA project manager:

Lisa Lubomierski

The assessment is based on the self-evaluation report, amended by further documents, as requested by the panel, and an on-site visit. The on-site visit took place on April 1-3, 2025, at

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<sup>1</sup> The panel is presented in alphabetical order.

SDU University's premises in Kaskelen, Kazakhstan. At the end of the on-site visit, the panel has given short feedback on its first impressions to representatives of the HEI.

The resulting assessment report was delivered to SDU University for comments on May 6, 2025. SDU University submitted its statement on the report on May 13, 2025. This feedback has been taken into account in the present document.

## B. Summary

SDU University has formulated a clear and coherent mission statement and developed a corresponding institutional profile. Its recent shift from a research-informed to a research-oriented university is evident in strategic efforts and stakeholder engagement. The University has identified relevant target groups and actively pursues internationalisation and financial independence. Its strategic planning aligns with its institutional claims and reflects a strong foundation. However, the mission statement does not yet fully reflect the university's corporate orientation, and the absence of formalised KPIs limits strategic monitoring. The panel encourages SDU University to implement comprehensive performance indicators and to develop an overarching long-term strategic roadmap with key areas of trendsetting focus.

SDU University has established clearly defined and functional governance structures that support institutional decision-making. Its quality management strategy aligns well with its institutional profile and is based on a culture of continuous improvement. Quality assurance processes cover teaching, research, and engagement, and involve internal and external stakeholders. The panel positively notes the University's strong commitment to quality and its diverse instruments for stakeholder feedback. However, quality control loops of the PDCA-cycle are often informal, and the transfer of feedback into documented action plans requires formalisation. The University is advised to implement structured follow-up mechanisms to enhance transparency and accountability.

The University offers a broad and well-structured portfolio of academic programmes that align with its institutional objectives and qualification frameworks. Programme concepts demonstrate academic coherence, and the mutual integration of research and teaching is well-supported. Students play an active role in shaping their learning experience, and facilities. For example, the Technopark offers valuable opportunities for applied research. Admission requirements are clearly communicated online; however, to ensure consistency, the University is required to formalise these criteria in an officially approved document (regulation). Additionally, SDU University must ensure that all courses include complete and transparent descriptions. Quality assurance mechanisms are in place, with further potential for standardisation and measurable outcome tracking, for example evaluation results of student surveys.

A clear and plausible research strategy with well-defined priority areas is in place. Research is supported by suitable facilities and incentive structures, and academic staff are actively engaged in national and international research activities. The University has institutionalised good scientific practices and demonstrated forward-thinking approaches, particularly in the use of AI. The panel commends the existing research culture and encourages further expansion of interdisciplinary collaborations and research-oriented positioning.

SDU University provides a wide range of support services aligned with its profile, many of which are digital and user-friendly. Services such as the Medical Centre illustrate a proactive and student-oriented approach. Satisfaction surveys are used to assess service quality. However, the panel notes that the transfer of this data into targeted development measures remains limited. To

improve quality assurance in this area, the University is required to establish a structured framework that links survey findings to specific improvement actions.

A high-quality infrastructure that supports both academic and community activities is in place. The campus, facilities, and technological resources meet modern standards and contribute to an excellent learning environment. The qualifications and number of academic staff are appropriate, and professional development opportunities are available. The panel encourages SDU University to attract more experienced staff by developing a comprehensive human resources strategy. Financial resources are well-managed and sufficient to support core activities, and transparency was positively noted during the onsite visit.

SDU University has implemented transparent regulations and communication channels across all aspects of the student lifecycle. The University's public relations strategy is systematic and effectively uses various platforms to engage internal and external stakeholders. Prospective students and partners benefit from well-structured advisory services. The panel appreciates the initial steps taken to disseminate quality assurance outcomes and encourages the University to expand the visibility and reporting practices of its Quality Assurance Department. Strengthening the department's resourcing would further support these aspirations.

## C. Panel Recommendation

According to § 7 (3) in conjunction with § 10 (2) of the “Special Conditions for awarding the FIBAA Quality Seal for the Institutional Accreditation”, SDU University is accredited with one condition.

### **Condition:**

- **Condition 1** (see chapter III): The University ensures that all courses offered provide a course description.

**Proof of meeting these conditions is to be submitted by March 5, 2026.**

**The panel members identified areas that could be further developed. The panel recommends:**

1. Being more transparent with research topics within research priority areas that are in an early stage of development.
2. Simplifying documentation to ensure that tasks and competencies are immediately clear, e.g. multiple organisational charts.
3. Developing a strategy for gender parity in management and implementing it in the short term.
4. To clearly indicate the PDCA-cycle and its quality outcomes in a more structural approach its of documentation.
5. Implementing formal instruments to systematically monitor and address persistent issues identified in quality instruments. Establishing clear procedures and reporting for translating feedback into documented action plans would strengthen the quality assurance system.
6. Ensuring that the admission requirements, particularly for the MBA FinTech programme, refer to the EQUAL MBA Guidelines.
7. Systematisation of the institution's overall research portfolio.
8. Exploring strategies to attract experienced academic staff for both full-time and part-time positions to enlarge the portion of academic staff with long-term professional and academic experience.
9. Implementation of continuous, targeted professional development programmes for young administrative staff to strengthen their professional skills and managerial competencies
10. Reviewing the department's resources to ensure that its responsibilities remain manageable, and its effectiveness is not compromised by overextension.

**There are several criteria that exceed the quality requirements:**

1. Quality Management System
2. Participation
3. Research transfer to the areas of studies and teaching
4. Cooperations
5. Rooms and facilities
6. Competencies and responsibilities
7. Documentation “student life cycle”
8. Public relations

## D. Quality Profile

	Exceptional	Exceeds quality requirements	Meets quality requirements	Does not meet quality requirements
<b>I. MISSION STATEMENT, PROFILE AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES</b>				
(1) Mission Statement			x	
(2) Profile			x	
(3) Target Groups			x	
(4) Academic Freedom			x	
(5) Strategic Objectives			x	
<b>II. MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE AND QUALITY MANAGEMENT</b>				
(1) Management Structure			x	
(2) Organisation of Localities	Not relevant			
(3) Quality Management Strategy			x	
(4) Quality Management System		x		
(5) Quality Management Instruments			x	
(6) Escalation Management			x	
(7) Participation		x		
<b>III. STUDIES AND TEACHING</b>				
(1) Study offer and qualification objectives			x	
(2) Study programmes' quality				Condition
(3) Research transfer to the areas of studies and teaching		x		
(4) Quality assurance			x	
(5) Cooperations		x		
<b>IV. RESEARCH</b>				
(1) Research strategy			x	
(2) Research activities			x	
(3) Promotion of research			x	
(4) Good scientific practice			x	
(5) Quality assurance in research			x	
(6) Research cooperations			x	
<b>V. SERVICES (ADMINISTRATION, CONSULTING AND ACADEMIC SUPPORT)</b>				
(1) Services			x	
(2) Assessment of services			x	
(3) Further development of services			x	
<b>VI. RESOURCES</b>				
(1) Rooms and facilities	x			
(2) Full-time teaching staff			x	
(3) Part-time teaching staff			x	
(4) Human resources			x	
(5) Financing			x	
<b>VII. PUBLICATION/ PUBLIC</b>				
(1) Competencies and responsibilities		x		
(2) Documentation "student life cycle"		x		
(3) Advice and information			x	
(4) Public relations		x		
(5) Results of quality management			x	



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## **F. List of Abbreviations**

<b>ABC</b>	Advisory Board Council
<b>AI</b>	Artificial Intelligence
<b>ECTS</b>	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
<b>HEI</b>	Higher education institution
<b>ISPT</b>	International SDU Proficiency Test
<b>KPI</b>	Key Performance Indicator
<b>NCE</b>	National Chamber of Entrepreneurs
<b>MoU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>PMS</b>	Personnel Information System
<b>QAD</b>	Quality Assurance Department
<b>QMS</b>	Quality Management System
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SER</b>	Self Evaluation Report
<b>SPT</b>	SDU Proficiency Test
<b>T&amp;R</b>	Teaching and Research position

## 0. BASIC DATA AND INFORMATION

Table 1: Basic data and information

Name of HEI	“SDU University” Establishment
Legal Status of HEI	The SDU University operates in accordance with the legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The University is a non-state, non-profit organization, financed as necessary by the Founder, and established to conduct educational, socio-cultural, and other non-commercial activities within the field of education.
Year of foundation	1996
Number of full-time academic staff of which professors	444 154
Number of non-academic staff	262
Number of part-time staff	32
Number of degree and non-degree programmes offered	Total: 134 Bachelor: 30 Master: 24 PhD: 8 Continuing education course: 72
Number of students enrolled	Total: 8334 Bachelor: 7808 Master: 363 PhD: 71 Continuing education course: 92

SDU University was established in 1996 with the participation of the first President of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the ninth President of Turkey. The University is a non-governmental, non-profit organization, financed by the Founders, established to carry out educational, managerial, socio-cultural and other functions of non-commercial nature in the field of education. The founder, also the owner of the University, is Bilim Orda International Public Fund.

The University carries out educational activities on the basis of the corresponding license within the framework of the national educational system in accordance with the legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan. SDU University started its educational activities from a small building in the centre of Almaty with a student contingent of 600 students. In 2012, the University moved to a new campus in Kaskelen. SDU University aims to take a leading position in the international higher education arena by teaching in English and by producing qualified professionals with

necessary skills and knowledge.<sup>2</sup> The University's vision is to become a trendsetting and contemporary University in Central Asia known for its technology enabled responsible education, research, and innovation with tangible global footprints.

In 2015, SDU University passed the initial international IAAR institutional accreditation. In 2020, SDU University was re-accredited for five years. In 2023, SDU University successfully passed the post-accreditation monitoring. In 2022, the University passed recertification of the quality management system in relation to educational activities for compliance with the requirements of ST RK ISO 9001-2016. All study programmes have state licenses obtained in accordance with the established procedure. Also, more than 68% of all study programmes have been successfully accredited by recognized international accreditation agencies. SDU University supports the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and promotes a culture of sustainability at the University.<sup>3</sup> The University also pays attention to the development and nurturing of a culture of sustainable development in the students.

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<sup>2</sup> SER, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> See [SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT - SDU University](#), last accessed March 17, 2025. In particular, SDU University focuses on reducing poverty (SDG 1), promoting good health and well-being (SDG 3), providing opportunities for quality education (SDG 4), promoting gender equality and reducing inequalities (SDG 5 and SDG 10), building and maintaining smart campus, responsible consumption, water management and a sustainable community (SDG 6, SDG 11 and SDG 12), as well as promoting the country's economic growth through support of staff/initiatives and innovation in the field of well-being (SDG 8 and SDG 9) and through partnership in relation to the SDGs (SDG 16 and SDG 17). All study programmes of the University include a mandatory university component "Community Engagement and Value-Based Society" as a commitment to several UN Sustainable Development Goals.

# I. MISSION STATEMENT, SDU UNIVERSITY'S PROFILE AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

## Mission Statement

SDU University has formulated the following mission statement:

Through outstanding knowledge creation and delivery, SDU is committed to developing graduates who are global citizens and whose values are formed through holistic education and sustainability thinking; who are skilled professionals and disseminators of knowledge and innovation; and who will contribute to improving the lives of fellow citizens and humanity in general.

SDU University functions in alignment with Kazakhstan's strategic development plans for 2030 and 2050<sup>4</sup> aiming to become a leading international university in Central Asia by contributing to regional development and achieving high evaluations from external accreditation agencies and international rankings. The University's mission supports the capacity-building of Kazakhstan's market. SDU University focuses on IT and pedagogy through the Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences and Faculty of Education and Humanities, contributing to the country's digitalization, innovation, and development of trilingual education. The University also focuses on preparing specialists and developing research in business, law, and social sciences through study programmes of the Faculty of Law and Social Sciences and the Business School.

SDU University has had up to 10 000 graduates since its establishment and its alumni are not only working for Kazakhstan but contributing to the development of Central Asian countries and beyond. Among its alumni are members of government, innovators, global tech professionals at Google, Amazon, and Tesla, as well as entrepreneurs. SDU University states that it is the only higher education institution in the Almaty region that includes nine districts and eleven cities with over 1.5 million people.<sup>5</sup> Every year the University generates about 1300 graduates in various fields of activity, the employment rate of which is more than 90%. SDU University aims to support regional development by promoting education and reducing unemployment, collaborating with local authorities to uplift socially vulnerable populations and influencing the economic growth of the region.<sup>6</sup> The Centre for Regional and Local Development was launched to facilitate and promote research and capacity building on socio-economic development of counties, cities, districts, regions and beyond. The research approach will promote evidence-based policymaking and generate new sustainable solutions through experimental methods.

The University states that one of its main values is social responsibility.<sup>7</sup> In 2023, the study programme Social Pedagogy based on Values<sup>8</sup> and the minor programme on Inclusive

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<sup>4</sup> [Strategies and programs — Official website of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan](#), last accessed April 14, 2025.

<sup>5</sup> SER, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> SER, p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> SER, p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Study programme website: [Social Pedagogy - SDU University](#), last accessed March 17, 2025.

Education<sup>9</sup> has been launched. There are a large number of student clubs involved in philanthropy, supporting social entrepreneurship, volunteering, conscious consumption, and environmental protection. Many events aim at developing sustainable thinking among student, and the academic and research community of SDU University are held annually.

## Profile

SDU University aims at developing a highly engaged and participative international style of education and promoting curriculum reform. The learning and teaching strategy in SDU University is based on five pillars:

1. **Intellectual Freedom** – Students are encouraged to become active, creative learners with ownership and responsibility for their own learning. While SDU University does not aim for a fully ‘flipped’ classroom, the teaching approach involves students in the co-creation of learning and independent research. For example, the lecture part of state-required courses such as philosophy, sociology, psychology, history, information systems and technologies, etc., are realised in the form of MOOC courses, which are studied by students individually in an asynchronous mode, and practical sessions are conducted by instructors in groups. This study format also has the effect of reducing the workload of the instructors.
2. **Continuous improvement** – Programme re-engineering is a process of continuous improvement with the objective of building in the key graduate attributes to both the programme and the learning style.
3. **Venue for learning** – Learning is no longer confined to the classroom but instead SDU University offers a milieu for co-learning and formative experience in a variety of learning situations. Students learn new professional skills and practice new knowledge in practicums, laboratories, virtual learning platforms, and through applied learning in companies via projects and internships. The student is educated to locate, evaluate and apply knowledge, especially in problem-solving contexts. The teacher must reflect on this new role.
4. **Teaching through English** – One of SDU University’s selling points is providing an English-medium education.
5. **Commitment to quality assurance** - SDU University has developed and is fully implementing an internationally benchmarked comprehensive quality assurance system.

All undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programmes are designed in alignment with the demands of society, economy, and labour market. They correspond to National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education<sup>10</sup> levels 6, 7, and 8 and are in accordance with the Dublin Descriptors.

The employment of graduates of the University is assisted through the activities of the Alumni and Career Development Department, namely, consultations for senior students to identify interests, assistance in drafting CVs, motivational and cover letters and letters of recommendation, job

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<sup>9</sup> Study programme website: [Inclusive Education - SDU University](#), last accessed March 17, 2025.

<sup>10</sup> [National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education - - Higher Education Development National Center](#), last accessed March 17, 2025.

search forms and the use of different platforms. During the academic year, there are events on student employment, such as Career Day, Job Fair, and master classes by employers. The University has developed a Beta Career platform<sup>11</sup> for senior-year bachelor students, which provides fourth year students opportunity to complete an internship in the industrial or academic field. This contributes to the goal of mastering professional and social skills, gaining the necessary basic knowledge of the industry and creating a network of contacts as well as supporting higher rates of employability of graduates. This is a unique approach in Kazakhstan. As a result, SDU University is constantly ranked higher than other universities in national rankings in terms of employability of graduates.

The ranking of National Chamber of Entrepreneurs of the Republic of Kazakhstan Atameken assesses the quality of educational services provided, the employment of graduates, and their relevance in the modern labour market.<sup>12</sup> In the period from 2021-2023, most programmes have been ranked in the top ten programmes among all universities in Kazakhstan. The table below shows the employability rate calculated by Atameken.

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<sup>11</sup> The University has a Beta Career platform for senior-year bachelor students, which covers elective courses in the penultimate semester for a certain number of students and contributes to the goal of mastering professional and social skills, gaining the necessary basic knowledge of the industry and creating a network of students' contacts among employers. In Information Systems, 80% of students chose the industrial track and 20% the academic track, specializing in Web Development, Project Management, and Mobile Development and Design. In Computer Science, 81% pursue industrial internships while 19% follow the academic path, focusing on Web Development, Mobile Development, and Data Analysis/Science. Among fourth year applicants, 81% pass the selection process, and 98% of those successfully complete the programme. Website available at [Beta career - SDU University](#), last accessed March 17, 2025.

<sup>12</sup> The Ranking of the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs of the Republic of Kazakhstan "Atameken" is an annual evaluation of higher education programmes conducted in cooperation with the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The ranking has been carried out since 2018 at the request of the Ministry and serves as a guide for prospective students and their parents when choosing a university, while also supporting universities in improving their academic programmes. The ranking is based on objective indicators collected from various state information systems. In particular, data on graduates' employment and average salaries are obtained from the Unified Social Payment System (ESF), while information on accreditation, student enrolment, faculty, and other relevant factors is sourced from the Ministry's database. The results of employer surveys and the availability of internship and practical training programmes are also taken into account. Website available at [«Атамекен» ҚР Ұлттық кәсіпкерлер палатасы](#), last accessed April 14, 2025.

Table 2: Employability Rate (%)

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Study programmes listed in the SER						
6B06102 BSc in Computer Science	80	77	85	96	91	91
7M04107 MBA in Financial Technology					100	100
8D04201 PhD in Applied Law				100	-	100
Selected undergraduate programmes						
Foreign Language: Two Foreign Languages	77	80	79	84	75	83
Kazakh Language and Literature	42	92	90	92	83	95
Mathematics (pedagogical)	82	83	88	100	100	95
Economics	78	88	50	88	92	100
Accounting and Audit	89	74	96	90	100	100
Finance	76	81	83	96	93	100
Digital Marketing	92	-	67	83	94	94
Management	77	73	82	60	91	82
International Relations	36	77	64	75	84	66
Journalism (TV and Multimedia)	66	76	91	88	91	85
Information Systems	81	77	94	96	98	96
Translation Studies	82	60	67	91	85	58
Mathematics (science)	81	-	77	72	95	80
Applied Law	78	79	80	85	80	76
International Law			84	100	93	94
Physics-Informatics				67	100	93
Chemistry-Biology				81	96	96

The University develops study programmes in accordance with national requirements.<sup>13</sup> The study format is regulated by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education as well.<sup>14</sup> According to these requirements and rules, no more than 50% of the total number of courses within a study programme for the entire study period can be delivered via distance learning. An exception is made for law study programmes with only up to 20% of courses being offered via distance learning. For pedagogical study programmes, distance learning is not permitted.

Distance-learning classes are conducted synchronously except for the MOOC courses. Synchronous learning means that students and instructors interact in real-time through live streaming, using information technologies and communication tools which allows students to

<sup>13</sup> “State Compulsory Standards for Higher and Postgraduate Education” approved by the Order No. 2 of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated July 20, 2022.

<sup>14</sup> “Requirements for educational organizations to provide distance education and the rules for organizing the educational process for distance education and online education for higher and (or) postgraduate study programmes”, approved by the Order No.137 of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated March 20, 2015.



receive information, work independently or in groups, and discuss it with other students and instructors from any location at scheduled times. The online format is mainly used for elective courses or courses taught by industry experts for third- and fourth-year students, as well as master's students, depending on the specialization of the programme.

Fully online education is provided according to a study programme listed in the Register of Study Programmes for the relevant field of study. There are no such programmes yet, but the University plans to start full implementation of some online programmes soon. These will be bachelor's degree programmes that are in the highest demand, such as study programmes of the Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences and the Business School.

## Target Groups

The University states that it applies a comprehensive approach in defining its student target group, focusing on both geographic and educational factors.<sup>15</sup> Central to this process is the annual Freshmen Analysis conducted at the beginning of each academic year. This analysis provides insights into the demographics and educational backgrounds of the incoming cohort, enabling the University to tailor its recruitment strategies accordingly. Based on the findings from the Freshmen Analysis, the primary target group for student recruitment is identified. The applicants are from the Almaty region, Almaty city, and the southern regions of Kazakhstan. Based on the results of this analysis the Admissions and Recruitment Department<sup>16</sup> further develops a plan for attracting applicants from other areas within Kazakhstan and abroad. Throughout the 2023-2024 academic year, the Admissions and Recruitment Department implemented an operational plan aligned with the strategic direction of Academic Excellence and Innovation in Education as a part of the University's Strategy 2023-2028. Key performance indicators include the deployment of career guidance activities in the largest 20 cities of Kazakhstan, holding SDU Proficiency Test Olympiad<sup>17</sup> at the national level, updating the enrolment system to ensure complete applicant information and automate the admissions process. Additionally, efforts to attract foreign students involved delivering career guidance activities and organizing ISPT (International SDU Proficiency Test) Olympiad in 15 countries both online and offline.

In addition to geographic location, the University places a strong emphasis on the educational backgrounds of potential students. The target group includes applicants who have graduated from prestigious schools such as Nazarbayev Intellectual School, Bilim-Innovation, and Daryn, where English is the main language of instruction. Furthermore, graduates from specialised Schools in Physics and Mathematics are targeted by the Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences. The University's analysis of the previous places of education of enrolled students helps identify patterns and trends, ensuring that recruitment strategies are aligned with the institution's academic strengths and the needs of prospective students.

Government funding represents a significant portion of SDU University's income, as it is consistently among the top choices for Kazakhstani applicants. Its programmes regularly rank in

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<sup>15</sup> SER, p. 10.

<sup>16</sup> [Admissions - SDU University](#), last accessed April 14, 2025.

<sup>17</sup> [ISPT - SDU University](#), last accessed April 14, 2025.

the top ten nationally according to the 'Atameken' rating system. Since state grants are allocated based on these rankings and performance metrics, higher rankings result in a greater number of grant placements awarded to the university. 74% of the total number of students are educated at the expense of the state grant. The rest are educated on a self-funded basis, or at the expense of internal grants of SDU University. The University's strategic target of financial sustainability aims to decrease the University's dependence on state grants and shift towards more self-sustaining sources of income. To achieve this, overpopulated study programmes of the Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences and the Faculty of Education and Humanities raise the required passing scores for the Unified National Testing for admission. This action targets the quality of incoming students as high passing scores required to attend SDU University attracts students with a stronger English proficiency and higher academic performance thus regulating application numbers.

To effectively engage corporations and industry target groups, the University has implemented several key strategies. Industrial partners are regularly invited to join the Advisory Board. In addition, SDU University selects and maintains relationship to prestigious companies such as Microsoft or the Big Four consulting firms (Deloitte, EY, KPMG, PwC). Each faculty has a designated Alumni and Career Coordinator to foster the relationships with the University Alumni. Alumni not only participate in academic events but also contribute socially, including providing scholarships. A specific example of leadership's interaction with industry is the collaboration with Freedom Holding Corp. A new construction project has been completed by sponsorship from this industry partner. Graduates are employed at Freedom Holding Corp, and efforts are made to secure internships and employment opportunities for students. The IT sector is a primary focus area, targeting large IT companies such as Krisha.kz, Kolesa.kz, Choco, Kaspi.kz, and the banking sector. These organisations are central to the University's IT-related study programmes of the **Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences**, advising curriculum development and providing significant opportunities for student internships, employment, and collaborative projects. The Department of Jurisprudence of the **Faculty of Law and Social Sciences** cooperates with The Advisory Board Council (ABC) that comprises a diverse range of experts in the Legal, Academic field and Policy Makers of Kazakhstan. Significant changes have been made in course teachings by following recommendations of the ABC. Further the Department of Jurisprudence established a Beta Career programme for new graduate students to support them in their pathways. The study programmes of the **SDU Business School** prioritise collaboration with the auditing companies of the Big Four. These companies are key partners that offer students internships with future employment opportunities. Many of the Business School bachelor's students are employed by the end of their studies. In terms of the study programmes offered by the **Faculty of Education and Humanities**, the University actively collaborates with public and private schools, particularly those with English as a language of instruction. The collaboration involves providing practical training, preparing teachers, and cooperating with educational management authorities.

SDU University has established 53 Memorandums of Understandings (MoU) with universities in Europe, Asia, the CIS, the USA, Australia, and Kazakhstan. The University collaborates with these universities on programmes of academic mobility of students, as well as implements joint

study programmes. In the academic year 2021/22, SDU University send 39 students abroad, in 2022/23 SDU University send 26, and in 2023/24 SDU University send 22 students to partner universities. Among others, SDU University students went to Zagreb University (Croatia), Schmalkalden University (Germany), Turība University (Latvia), Oklahoma State University (USA), Management and Science University (Malaysia), and UNIST (South Korea). Nine joint programmes are implemented with universities such as Hof University (Germany), Inha University (Korea), Wismar University (Germany), Kazakh national medical University (Kazakhstan), and others.

The University actively collaborates with the National Academy of Science Republic of Kazakhstan<sup>18</sup>. In the Mathematics study programme offered by the Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences, doctoral and master's students actively participate in the seminars offered by the Academy and are engaged in the research projects. Some faculty members work both at the Academy and the University. A similar collaboration exists between the Faculty of Education and Humanities and National Academy of Education named after Y. Altynsarin<sup>19</sup>.

SDU University actively cooperates with local universities, as well as leading international universities in the context of research projects, and projects funded by international organizations. The choice of partner university in research projects often depends on the research interests of the researchers and the universities. One example of a joint research project is project on "Integration into social and educational environments based on comprehensive support for children with autism spectrum disorders: challenges and benefits" conducted with the Kazakh National Pedagogical University. The project is funded by the Science Committee of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

## Academic Freedom

SDU University ensures freedom of research, study, and teaching through several key principles. According to the student-centered-learning approach the University allows students to define the learning trajectory, courses selection, teacher selection, and to design classes schedule. Faculty members are granted autonomy in their academic activities, namely freedom of teaching and research, curricula and syllabi design as outlined in and guaranteed by the SDU Academic Policy. The freedom of teaching is expressed in the instructor's independent development of the course syllabus, as well as the identification of their own teaching methodology. These processes are formalised in the Rules for the preparation and execution of the syllabus at SDU University.

Faculty members are encouraged to research, publish articles and monographs. These activities are included in the teaching workload. Full-time faculty members have the right to choose the composition of their workload: namely the ratio of academic work, research work, organizational and methodological work, as well as social work. The minimum teaching workload should be at least 75% with the remaining 25% available for selection from the abovementioned types of activities. Alternatively, a faculty member may choose to allocate 100% of their workload exclusively for teaching. The procedure for workload distribution is regulated by the Regulation

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<sup>18</sup> [Национальная академия наук Республики Казахстан](#), last accessed March 17, 2025.

<sup>19</sup> [Altynsarin Academy](#), last accessed March 17, 2025.

on the Planning and Calculation of Workload for Faculty Members at SDU University.

There are no restrictions for researchers regarding the selection of fields of research. Decisions regarding the research and teaching are prerogative of the faculty members who are hired based on their professional qualifications in the relevant fields.

## Strategic Objectives

The Strategic Development Plan of the University for 2018-2023 has been implemented and a new directional strategy has been approved for 2023-2028. The Strategic Development Plan includes Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for a defined period and underwent a revision process beginning in 2022. The revision was led by the Vice-Rector for Research and a Strategic Management Professor and was guided by three main principles: ensuring continuity with the previous strategy, involving a broad range of stakeholders, and maintaining flexibility to adapt in a changing environment. Unmet goals from the earlier strategy, such as those related to corporate development, were integrated into the new plan, and the mission was updated to emphasize sustainability thinking. The revision process involved foresight and scenario planning sessions with students, staff, alumni, employers, and ministry representatives. The strategy development followed a structured process, starting with a strengths and weaknesses analysis and scenario planning, followed by a collaborative workshop to draft objectives. These were refined through stakeholder sessions for each strategic portfolio. The draft was then shared broadly for feedback and revised accordingly before being finalized by the Executive Board and submitted for approval by the Board of Trustees.

The strategic objectives are implemented through annual progress reviews and planning. Typically, at the end of the academic year, based on current performance, each portfolio identifies priority areas and actions needed to achieve strategic objectives. Based on these priorities, the departments in each portfolio develop an action plan for the next academic year with KPIs and request a budget to achieve each KPI. Each KPI and budget request should match the corresponding strategic objectives. After review of KPIs and budgets at the portfolio level by the responsible Vice-Rector and Finance Director, the overall portfolio goals and budgets are brought to the Executive Board for approval. This process ensures the integration of the strategic objectives into action plans and links them to budgeting. While the strategy provides overall direction and guiding principles, the annual KPIs and courses of action are defined by the people who implement the strategy, making it adaptable to emerging patterns in a turbulent environment.

The University Strategy for 2023-2028 focuses on academic excellence, research and innovation, leadership and management practices, social development, digitalisation, and financial sustainability.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> The complete SDU University Strategy 2023-2028 can be found here: [About us - SDU University](#), last accessed April 14, 2025.

### **Academic excellence and innovation in education**

- **Student-centered learning:** SDU University will experiment with personalised learning methods. Additionally, SDU University will extend the portfolio of minors to cater to students' varying interests. Inclusivity and career advising will be prioritised, along with MOOCs and Virtual Learning Environments to enhance access to quality education and a more flexible learning environment.
- **Quality assurance:** SDU University is committed to maintaining and enhancing the quality of education by implementing a comprehensive quality management system. The system will cover three main directions related with the educational programmes, university effectiveness and academic reputation.
- **Dual education:** SDU University will continue to build on their practice-oriented education through initiatives like Beta Career, EDU Career, and Business Career. Fostering a start-up, entrepreneurship, and intrapreneurship culture will be a key focus.
- **Integrity and assessment amid technological changes:** SDU University will concentrate on implementing fair assessment methods and rubrics, while also embracing technology in the evaluation process.
- **Internationalisation:** Each faculty will develop its own internationalisation strategy in collaboration with the International Office.
- **Blended and online learning:** SDU University will invest in the necessary infrastructure, policies, studios, and support systems to facilitate the effective provision of online learning.
- **Strategic recruitment:** Attracting talented students is a priority for the University. Thus, SDU University will collaborate with partners to expand their reach and attract talented applicants.

### **Research and innovation<sup>21</sup>**

- Identifying and focusing on research priorities
- Developing research centres
- Strengthening PhD and master's programmes
- Strengthening university-industry collaboration to drive innovation
- Establishing a favourable research environment

### **Leadership and management practices**

- **Leadership:** At SDU University, best practices in leadership with a focus on transformative leadership, agility, and empathy will be implemented. The approach will include the establishment of horizontal structures, committee-based decision-making, and the encouragement of initiative-taking and decentralization.
- **Talent management:** The talent management strategy will focus on identifying and nurturing the best talent, providing induction programmes to ensure a smooth transition for new hires. SDU University will invest in professional development to help employees grow and excel in their roles.
- **Performance appraisal:** SDU University will set clear objectives for each employee, regularly evaluating their performance to ensure alignment with the University's goals.

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<sup>21</sup> The detailed research strategy can be found in chapter IV.

- **Communication with external and internal stakeholders:** SDU University will develop effective communication channels, such as CRM systems and help-desk platforms to ensure that communication with external and internal stakeholders is seamless and efficient.
- **Data-driven decision making:** SDU University will leverage data-driven decision-making tools, such as dashboards and risk management systems, to inform our strategies and policies. Data analytics will be employed to identify trends and opportunities, while HR processes will be automated to enhance efficiency.

### **Social development**

- **Diversity, equity, and inclusion:** Inclusiveness policies will be implemented, and relevant departments will support diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. SDU University will strive to establish gender balance in managerial positions.
- **Staff social development and wellbeing:** SDU University will provide support and development opportunities tailored to each employee's needs. The HR department will focus on the professional development of staff, development of motivation system, and ensure their wellbeing through access to an established benefits system.
- **Student social development and wellbeing:** SDU University is dedicated to creating a student-friendly atmosphere that fosters creativity, collaboration, trust, ethical conduct, sustainability thinking, and mutual respect.

### **Campus and digitalisation strategy**

- Prioritising user experience
- Balance between data protection and accessibility
- Automation of processes
- Facilities and services: To create a comfortable and productive environment, SDU University will enhance the facilities by offering co-working spaces, recreation areas, and common working spaces.

### **Financial sustainability**

- **Diversification of income sources:** In order to create a more resilient financial foundation, SDU University will diversify our sources of income and decrease our dependence on tuition fees. The establishment of an endowment fund will contribute to long-term financial sustainability.
- **Improving coordination:** To ensure efficient resource allocation and strategic decision-making, SDU University will improve coordination among fundraising, corporate development, and alumni affairs.
- **Branding and marketing:** The University will improve public relations, conduct extensive market research, and develop targeted program marketing strategies.

### *Appraisal “Mission Statement, HEI’s Profile and Strategic Objective”*

SDU University has not demonstrated, through consistent documentation, that the operationalisation of vision, mission and objectives is done for all areas of the University. Such measures only became apparent once the panel was able to discuss such operationalisation in the interview rounds.

During the onsite visitation, the panel concluded that SDU University has formulated a clear and comprehensible mission statement and developed a corresponding profile. SDU University recently shifted from a research-informed to a research-oriented University, incorporating this into their vision of becoming a trendsetting and contemporary university in Central Asia. The panel has the impression that SDU University is actively working towards this shift.

During interviews conducted with university representatives, it was noted that SDU University demonstrates a strong corporate orientation in its strategic and operational activities. However, this focus is not explicitly reflected in the current mission statement. This indicates a potential misalignment between institutional practice and formally stated objectives. Additionally, the absence of a clearly defined and publicly accessible KPIs impedes strategic assessment of performance. The implementation of KPIs would facilitate the tracking of institutional progress toward strategic goals and enhance transparency and accountability across units.

SDU University’s profile is plausible with regard to its specialisation, its study offers and formats, the employability of its graduates and its research activities. The panel encourages SDU University to further develop the areas of research priorities and consider combining certain aspects. The University’s research priorities are determined by the faculties in June for the upcoming academic year. These priorities are then presented to the Research Council and approved by the Academic Council. To contribute to the research community in the long run, permanent areas should be identified and determined. In addition, the Academic Council could actively set interdisciplinary research priorities to foster exchange among the faculties for research projects. The panel **recommends** being more transparent with research topics that are in an early stage of development, e.g. entrepreneurship. Development target could support the setup of the research area aligned with a great proportion of budget. While the panel acknowledges the extensive effort for deriving a well-founded, supported and ambitious research priorities, additional improvements could result in a multiyear procedure that covers, additionally to the short term, the long-term development direction of the HEI appropriately. During the on-site visit it became clear that SDU University critically deals with its capacity for research, more effort to document its proceeding should be made to engage its internal and possibly also its external partners. In its statement, SDU University explains that the recommendation has been addressed through the implementation of the Guidelines for Identifying Research Priorities at SDU University. These Guidelines provide a transparent and systematic approach to defining research themes, particularly in areas that are still in the early stages of development. The document aligns with the University Strategy and internal regulatory procedures governing internal research grants, the establishment of research centres, the allocation of teaching-and-research (T&R) positions, and the selection of PhD research topics. Up-to-date Research Priorities are communicated through

the University website.<sup>22</sup> By ensuring alignment between strategic objectives and emerging research areas, SDU University hopes that the Guidelines enhance transparency and coherence in the development of the University's research portfolio. The expert panel has reviewed the University's response and noted progress towards addressing the recommendation. They acknowledge that the recommendation has prompted further action, particularly through revisions to the University Strategy and internal regulations concerning research priorities. However, they express concern that the current documentation does not sufficiently address the core issues, particularly regarding the integration of long-term strategic research drivers (vision projects such as entrepreneurship). They emphasise that a 12- to 24-month planning horizon is likely inadequate to realise the intended depth and impact of SDU's research ambitions. The panel concludes that while the initial steps are commendable, full implementation and visibility of outcomes are necessary before the recommendation can be considered fulfilled.

SDU University has defined its target groups corresponding to its profile. SDU University mainly focuses on talented Kazakhstani students, trying to expand the proportion of fee-paying and international students to become more independent from government funding. As mentioned above, SDU University has a strong corporate orientation and actively works on establishing good relationships with its alumni. Further, the University has established cooperations with other higher education institutions and actively uses them for exchange and dual degree programmes.

The freedom of research, study and teaching is ensured. Professors are not subject to discretionary power with regard to the content of research and teaching.

SDU University possesses a strategic planning that corresponds to its institutional claim. The expert panel recognises this as a strong foundation and acknowledges potential for further advancement. The panel encourages the University to set more ambitious goals by developing a comprehensive roadmap and formulating a long-term strategic plan extending over a longer timespan (for example over a 10-15-year horizon). Furthermore, SDU University should ensure that this overarching strategy is coherently integrated with the strategic objectives of its individual departments, thereby fostering alignment and institutional cohesion.

	Exceptional	Exceeds quality requirements	Meets quality requirements	Does not meet quality requirements
<b>I. MISSION STATEMENT, PROFILE AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES</b>				
(1) Mission Statement			x	
(2) Profile			x	
(3) Target Groups			x	
(4) Academic Freedom			x	
(5) Strategic Objectives			x	

<sup>22</sup> [Research priorities - SDU University](#), last accessed May 22, 2025.



## II. MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE AND QUALITY MANAGEMENT

### Management Structure

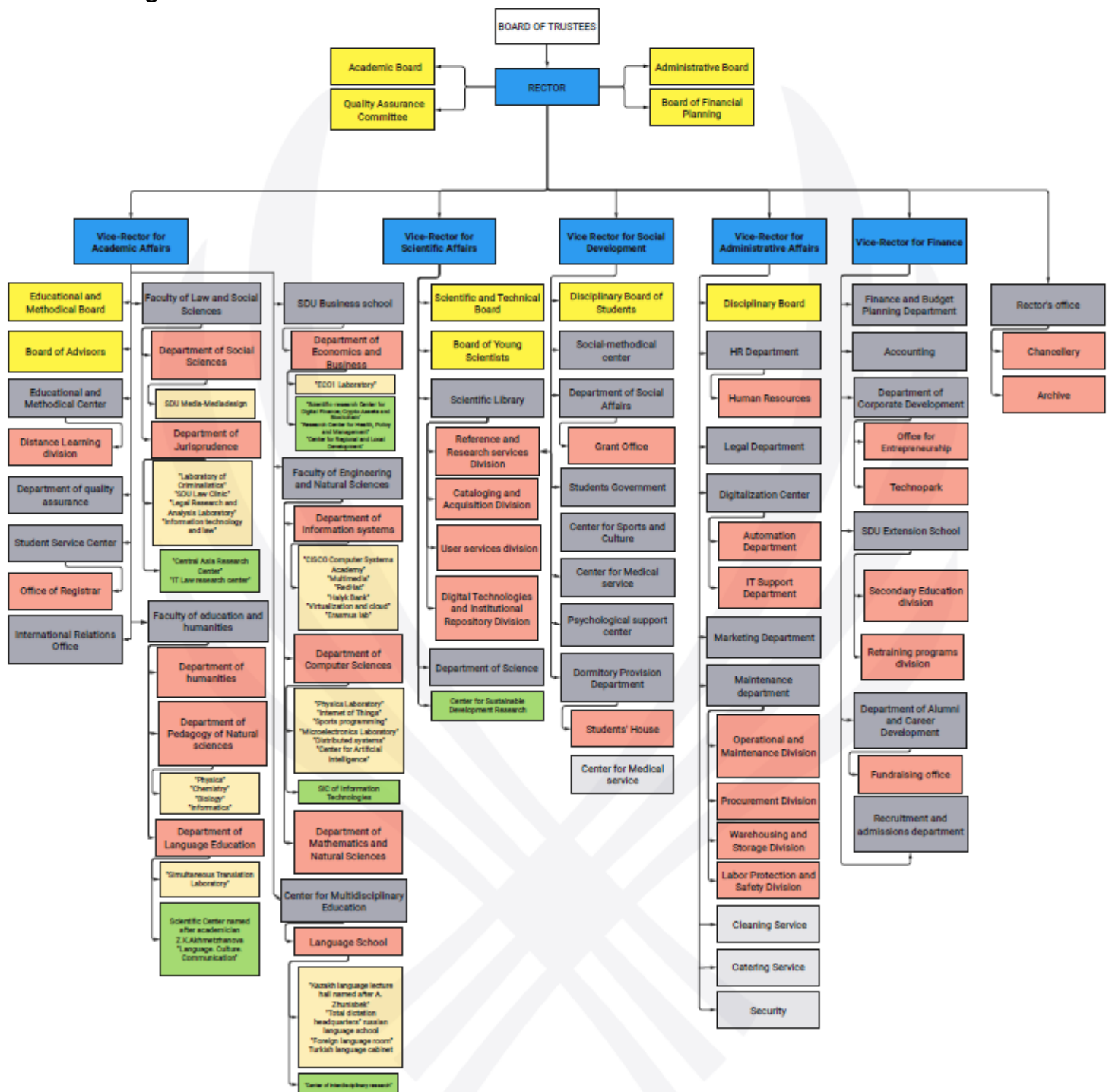


Figure 1: Management Structure

The University has established a management structure comprising various committees and collegiate bodies to ensure effective governance and quality assurance.

The **Academic Board**<sup>23</sup>, led by the Rector, serves as the university's main governance body responsible for strategic decisions aligned with its vision and mission. It oversees the development and implementation of academic strategies, approves the university's structure and academic units, and ensures a supportive environment for students and faculty. The Board also reviews annual reports from university leadership, approves faculty promotions, provides recommendations for the University affiliated publications, and makes decisions on research supervision and dissertation or diploma titles. It collaborates with other internal boards (including Scientific and Technical Board, Educational and Methodical Board, and Board of Young Scientists) and addresses key academic and organizational matters requiring collective decision-making.

The **Administrative Board**, chaired by the Rector, is responsible for addressing key operational matters of the University. It comprises the five vice rectors, deans of the three faculties and Business School, and directors of the Multidisciplinary Education Centre, Digitalization Centre, and the Rector's Office. The Board oversees internal regulations, structural unit issues, budget utilization, programme changes, and coordinates academic, research, and administrative activities across the institution.

The **Quality Assurance Committee** plays a key role in enhancing the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of the University's educational processes, while also strengthening institutional reputation and business operations. Comprising representatives from both academic and administrative units, the Committee is responsible for implementing the University's quality assurance policy, coordinating accreditation efforts, collaborating with structural units to monitor and improve study programmes, managing risks, ensuring regulatory compliance, and overseeing mechanisms for student feedback and service quality. At the faculty level, Quality Assurance Commissions support these efforts by conducting reflective teaching observations, analysing course evaluations and satisfaction surveys, reviewing study programme effectiveness and external examiner reports, and formulating corrective actions based on accreditation feedback.

The **Financial Council** oversees the financial management of the University, ensuring responsible budget planning, allocation, and implementation. Chaired by the Rector, it includes vice rectors, one of the deans, the financial director, and representatives from the board of trustees, with stakeholder input invited when necessary. The Council prepares and submits the draft budget plan, ensures appropriate distribution of funds, authorises contracts, and monitors the execution of financial decisions. It also determines tuition fees, staff levels, discounts, and internal budget allocations, while participating in strategic planning, salary decisions, and the approval of funding for university-endorsed initiatives.

The **Educational and Methodical Board** oversees the changes to the study programme, curriculum development, and teaching methodologies. It is chaired by the Vice Rector for

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<sup>23</sup> [University Senate - SDU University](#), last accessed March 21, 2025.

Academic Affairs and includes the heads of educational departments, heads of faculty educational methodical committees, the directors of the Multidisciplinary Education Centre, Educational Methodical Centre, and the Quality Assurance Department. Lastly, the Student Government President also participates.

The **Board of Advisors** assists in organizing and managing the work of advisors, ensuring that students receive the necessary guidance and support throughout their academic journey.

The **Scientific and Technical Board** is responsible, amongst others, for improving the efficiency of scientific activities, coordinating and updating research directions, and integrating scientific projects into the educational process and involving students of all educational levels in research activities.

There are **Faculty Councils** for each faculty consisting of the dean, the vice dean of Social Affairs, the heads of the educational departments as well as faculty members. The functions of the councils include discussing and approving course proposals, curricula, and study programmes, reviewing and aligning teaching methods and materials with current educational standards, addressing administrative matters related to the faculty's operations, and monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and research activities.

SDU University has a **Student Government** which has a president, vice president, and secretary as well as five ministries. The main responsibility of the student government is defending the rights and interests of students in educational, social, academic, scientific, and administrative activities.

## Quality Management Strategy

SDU University develops its internal quality management system in line with national requirements and international standards, while external quality is ensured through accreditation by recognized agencies and the implementation of their recommendations. Quality management is integrated into the University's strategy and focuses on three areas: Educational Programmes, University Effectiveness, and Academic Reputation.<sup>24</sup>

Currently, 70% of SDU University's study programmes are accredited by recognized accreditation agencies such as FIBAA, ACQUIN, ASIIN and IAAR. SDU aims to continue gaining international accreditation for its study programmes and prioritises professional certifications for future graduates, such as CIMA, ACCA, CIM, and CFA for business students, Microsoft certification for engineering students, and other industry-recognized qualifications. The University regularly updates its policies with a strong focus on quality assurance. SDU University states that ethics and integrity remain fundamental in handling and presenting data from these surveys and other sources.

Student learning experiences at SDU University are collected through various voluntary and anonymous surveys conducted throughout the academic year. The University promotes a

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<sup>24</sup> The complete SDU University Strategy 2023-2028 can be found here: [About us - SDU University](#), last accessed April 14, 2025.

feedback culture by sharing survey results with students and following up with actions from the administration. Both quantitative and qualitative data are analysed, covering not only student feedback but also input from other stakeholders. To support this process, SDU University uses modern tools like the Explorance Blue platform.

SDU University is decentralising quality assurance by establishing committees at the faculty level. Data analytics, dashboards, and predictive tools support informed decision-making. The quality management system emphasizes the engagement of all stakeholders, involving them not only in evaluating experiences but also in decision-making processes.

Performance is assessed through internal audits, with the University undergoing regular re-certification for compliance with the ISO 9001 standard. In 2025, SDU was successfully certified by an internationally recognized certification body for compliance with the ISO 27001 standard on information security, validating the effectiveness of its internal information systems and processes.

Membership in organisations such as the Academic Integrity League, international associations, and the Alliance of Asian Universities also foster collaboration and best practices sharing.

## Quality Management System

The University is committed to maintaining and enhancing the quality of education by implementing a comprehensive quality management system. As mentioned in the strategy, SDU Quality Management System (QMS) covers three main directions: study programmes, university effectiveness and academic reputation.

*Figure 2: QMS on study programme level*



**On the study programme level**, the focus lays on the monitoring of study programmes through course and teaching evaluation as well as students and faculty satisfaction evaluation. In addition, future focus is on the alumni and employers' engagement by enhancing external communication with SDU University stakeholders.

Figure 3: QMS on institutional level



**At the institutional level,** the QMS focuses on business processes, data management, and adherence to policies. As the University holds ISO certification and has established procedures for conducting internal audits across its structural units – carried out by certified internal auditors – the system undergoes continuous enhancement to ensure ongoing improvement. As part of the Quality Assurance Department, the Institutional Research division deals with the monitoring of study programmes and in addition, concentrates on data management and analytics collected from various university information systems and other sources.

Figure 4: QMS on the level of academic reputation



**At the level of academic reputation,** the QMS continues to focus on the promotion of the university in international rankings and national ranking Atameken<sup>25</sup> of study programmes, gain membership in the European Universities Association and other professional academic association, develop strategic partnerships with university partners through the implementation of joint study programmes, and increase joint research projects.

The Quality Assurance Department at SDU University is set to evaluate and promote the quality of the educational process. SDU University quality assurance procedures include improving

<sup>25</sup> See chapter I.

quality of teaching and learning, monitoring academic activity, analysing and evaluating stakeholders' feedback and assuring standards of educational process.

The Quality Assurance Department<sup>26</sup> is responsible for ensuring that the quality assurance system meets national and international standards, improvement of the University's business processes and management service, assessment of the students' and staff satisfaction. It has developed the internal quality management system which is certified for compliance with ISO 9001-2016.

The Department is also responsible for improving the quality of teaching, initial and continuous professional development of the staff, QMS, monitoring and supervising the use of academic credit framework, evaluating learning outcomes and quality of their assessment, supervising the process of standardization, and certification of educational processes. To strengthen the Quality Assurance System at the University the Quality Assurance Department introduced an Institutional Research Division<sup>27</sup> to ensure two-way communication with the external and internal stakeholders to respond to their demands through data management (data collection, analysis and results interpretation) and line up with the data-driven decision making, strategic planning support, reporting and stakeholder awareness and informing. The Institutional Research Division supports quality assessment at the University via conducting university level surveys, providing analytical support to the administrative departments in conducting surveys at the level of the University and faculty/school/centre. It assists in the accreditation and data collection and submission for the external monitoring, particularly, local and international higher education institutions rankings.

Ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and revision of study programmes are intended to ensure their effective implementation and create a supportive learning environment for students. This includes the evaluation of programme content in light of the latest advances in discipline-specific science to ensure the relevance of the discipline being taught, the changing needs of society, the workload, performance, and graduation of students, the effectiveness of student assessment procedures, the expectations, needs, and satisfaction of students with the programme's instruction, the educational environment and support services and their relevance to programme goals.

The evaluation and revision of the programmes involve students and other stakeholders. The collected information is analysed which results in the modifications to the study programme. Updates and modifications are made public.

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<sup>26</sup> [Quality Assurance Department - SDU University](#), last accessed March 21, 2025.

<sup>27</sup> [Institutional Research - SDU University](#), last accessed March 21, 2025.

## Quality Management Instruments

According to the Regulations on the development, approval and monitoring of the study programme, the University carries out two types of study programme monitoring: internal and external.

**Internal monitoring** is carried out by teaching staff, departments, faculties, the Quality Assurance Department (QAD), and students. The QAD conducts multiple surveys to gather feedback for continuous improvement via SurveyMonkey platform.<sup>28</sup> The calendar of surveys is available on the official University website.<sup>29</sup>

The following surveys are conducted:

Survey	Details	Frequency
Freshmen Survey	Conducted to gather feedback on admissions, student services, and marketing tools effectiveness. The results are studied by the Admissions and Recruitment Office and Marketing Department for developing operational plans and improving future freshmen' experience.	Once a year (August-September)
Course and Teaching Evaluation Survey	To gather detailed feedback from students on various aspects of course content and teaching methods. Students rate their experiences and provide qualitative feedback which are crucial for identifying strengths and areas for improvement.	Each semester
Annual Satisfaction Survey	Distributed to students, faculty members, and administrative staff to assess their overall experience and satisfaction with the University's services and environment.	Once a year (April)
Graduate Exit Survey	Conducted in order to gather feedback from graduating students on their overall educational experiences, including the relevance of study programmes.	Once a year (June)
Alumni Survey	Conducted to collect feedback from alumni to assess long-term outcomes. The survey aims to understand how the University can be beneficial to its alumni and explore ways alumni are willing to support and collaborate with the University.	Every two years (October)
Employers Survey and Interviews	Engage employers of the University alumni to evaluate the relevance and effectiveness of study programmes in meeting industry standards and requirements. Employers provide feedback through structured surveys and in-depth interviews, offering insights into the skills and competencies needed in the workforce.	Once a year (September-December)

<sup>28</sup> [SurveyMonkey - Free online survey software and questionnaire tool](#), last accessed March 24, 2025.

<sup>29</sup> [Survey - SDU University](#), last accessed March 24, 2025.



The feedback from these surveys informs programme revisions and improvements, assisting the educational offerings to remain relevant, effective, and aligned with stakeholder needs and labour market expectations. The QAD maintains a cloud-based repository of survey results and reports, accessible to departments upon request, ensuring transparency and continuous improvement in the University's study programmes.

Surveys results are analysed and used to make data-driven decisions, improve study programmes, and align with labour market needs. Feedback from alumni and employers helps to identify gaps in the curriculum and areas for enhancement. The insights gathered through the surveys and interviews are reviewed by the QAD and shared with the relevant departments and faculties for further actions.

In addition to the centralized surveys and assessments conducted by the QAD, University faculties, schools, and MDE centre independently carry out evaluation of teaching. One of the teaching evaluation tools is Reflective Teaching Observation. The Reflective Teaching Observation Policy was developed, which specified all the criteria and the process of conducting the observation.<sup>30</sup>

**External monitoring** is carried out by accreditation agencies, local and international rankings, local audit companies, and the Ministry of Higher Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The updates of professional standards of NCE Atameken, changes and additions to international training programmes for qualified managers are monitored.

## Escalation Management

The University follows a structured approach to conflict management, ensuring that all parties have the opportunity to be heard and that resolutions are pursued in a fair and appropriate manner. If the conflict arises involving a student, the matter is first addressed by the faculty/school's Disciplinary Council. The Disciplinary Council at the faculty/school level includes the Vice-Dean for Social Affairs.

If the conflict cannot be solved at the faculty/school level, it is escalated to the University level. There are separate disciplinary commissions for students and staff. These commissions deliberate on the matter and decide on the appropriate course of action which may include measures such as transferring a student involved in the conflict to another group, conducting

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<sup>30</sup> The purpose of Reflective Teaching Observations is different to peer observations or demo lessons: the reflective procedure has the dual aim of quality control and continuous professional development. These teaching observations must be conducted only by members of the faculty management (Deans & Heads of Department) and the coordinator team who also have relevant subject knowledge. In order to mitigate possibilities of subjectivity or bias, teachers may request for the observation process to be conducted by two people (with one jointly agreed report form).

The reflective observation process consists of three stages: the Pre-Observation Meeting, the Observation, and the Post-Observation Meeting. The procedure should be explained clearly to teachers at different times, as appropriate, e.g.: during their induction/start of the academic year; in an appropriately-timed faculty meeting; and/or via email and in the Pre-Observation Meeting. The observation report form should be made available to the teacher well in advance of the observation so that s/he is fully cognisant of the areas to be observed. (Reflective Teaching Observation Policy at Suleyman Demirel University, p. 4).



specific procedures, or providing necessary support to resolve the conflict. The Vice-Rector for Social Development chairs the Commission for student-related conflicts.

Conflict management at SDU University, both between staff members and between staff and the institution, follows clear, structured procedures to ensure transparency, fairness, and resolution. Initially, individuals are encouraged to resolve conflicts informally through direct dialogue or with the help of supervisors or department heads, who may mediate to clarify misunderstandings. If informal resolution fails, staff members may submit a formal written complaint to the relevant department or HR, including supporting documentation. HR or the designated department conducts an impartial investigation, meeting with each party separately, reviewing evidence, and gathering further information. Following the investigation, a detailed written decision is provided, outlining findings and resolution measures. If dissatisfaction remains or if the conflict involves serious policy breaches, the matter can be escalated to the Disciplinary Board for a binding decision. SDU University states that throughout this process, confidentiality, respect for dignity, and adherence to SDU University's internal regulations and Honor Code are strictly upheld.

In severe cases where the conflict escalates significantly the decision may lead to expulsion for students and contract termination for staff members.

## Participation

Stakeholders' involvement in the University quality management ensures that the educational processes meet the national and international standards and expectations of the internal and external stakeholders.

Internally, the University conducts biannual Course and Teaching Evaluation Survey to gather detailed feedback from students on various aspects of course content and teaching methods. Students rate their experiences and provide qualitative feedback which are crucial for identifying strengths and areas for improvement. Faculty members conduct self-evaluations and participate in departmental reviews to reflect on their teaching practices and academic contributions. The internal review process includes peer evaluations. Insights from these evaluations are used to improve teaching strategies, update course content, and ensure alignment with academic standards and student's needs. Annual Satisfaction Survey is also distributed to students, faculty members, and administrative staff to assess their overall experience and satisfaction with the University's services and environment. Results of the internal evaluation by the University stakeholders are analysed and presented to the various University councils and departments with the action plans developed based on the stakeholders' feedback to address any issues and enhance overall academic and operational environment. As outlined in chapter I, the structure of the University includes various boards and committees which, in parts, include members of staff as well as students. The Quality Assurance Committee includes representatives of faculty and administrative departments. The Scientific and Technical Board includes research coordinators from each faculty as well as representatives of T&R positions. To include student voices, SDU University has a student government. Representatives of this government participate in boards. For example, the Educational and Methodical Board and the Board of Advisors include the student government.

Externally, the University engages recent graduates and alumni through surveys to gather feedback on their educational experience, relevance of the knowledge gained at the University in the industry, and the University impact on their career development. Alumni are also asked how the University can support them and how they might contribute to the University. Feedback from these surveys helps to evaluate long-term educational outcomes and identify areas for curriculum improvement, as well as to develop support programmes and foster ongoing relationships with the alumni. Each faculty has a designated Alumni and Career Coordinator to foster relationships with alumni. The coordinators actively reach out to meet with and talk to SDU University alumni. This way, informal feedback is gathered. The employers of the University alumni are engaged through structured surveys and interviews to provide feedback on the preparedness and competencies of the alumni. This interaction helps to ensure that the University's study programmes remain relevant to industry.

### *Appraisal "Management Structure and Quality Management"*

SDU University's bodies, academic committees and offices as well as their tasks and competencies are clearly and transparently defined. However, the structure only became available during the onsite visit. Therefore, the panel **recommends** simplifying the documentation to ensure that tasks and competencies are immediately clear. For example, SDU could consider splitting the overview into multiple charts enhancing transparency. In the statement on the report, SDU specifies its plans to consolidate existing structural documents into a single, coherent format that outlines unit relationships and reporting lines. This will be further supported by the development of detailed documentation specifying roles, responsibilities, and functions for each unit. The revised structure will be submitted to the Board of Trustees for approval in August 2025, with further enhancements to follow, including the introduction of role descriptions and responsibility matrices to ensure operational clarity.

Overall, the panel concluded that SDU University's management and self-governing structures are functional and effective. However, the expert team noticed that gender equality structures do not appear to have been implemented in the SDU's own management. Leadership positions are not equally divided between men and women; women are significantly underrepresented or not represented at all. Although SDU has recognised the problem, it has not explained to the panel how it intends to achieve gender parity in management in the coming years. In the further process of SDU internationalisation, the expert team **strongly recommends** developing such a strategy and implementing it in the short term. SDU University acknowledges the importance of promoting gender parity in leadership and decision-making positions in its statement on the report. In line with this, the University is currently working on the development of a Gender Equality and Inclusion Plan. This plan will define short-term and long-term goals, and outline steps such as inclusive recruitment practices, gender-sensitive monitoring, and professional development initiatives aimed at supporting underrepresented groups. Although the formal strategy is still in preparation, initial steps have been taken to raise awareness and strengthen internal capacity for gender-inclusive practices. The Human Resources Department oversees the coordination of these efforts and reports progress to the Administrative Council. The expert panel notes the efforts of SDU and looks forward to concrete results after implementation.

SDU University pursues a comprehensible strategy in terms of its quality management. The strategy focuses on three main directions: educational programmes, university effectiveness, and academic reputation. This strategy is consistent with the SDU University's profile. As showcased during the on-site visit, the HEI maintains a high focus on self-developing state of the art software to accelerate its curriculum management and QMS tools. In addition to the outsourced programming, these activities have impressed the panel for its functionality and design. The panel comments that SDU University's quality processes would show more as the consequence of active planning and its execution if the documentation of them would show more structured. To clearly indicate the PDCA-cycle (Plan-Do-Check-Act) and its quality outcomes, a more structural approach its of documentation is **recommended**. SDU University states in its response to the report that it has integrated a formal PDCA cycle into its internal quality assurance documentation and processes. The PDCA model is supported by regular internal audits conducted in accordance with ISO 9001 standards. These audits provide an evidence-based mechanism for monitoring the effectiveness of implemented measures, identifying areas for improvement, and ensuring accountability. Outcomes and follow-up actions are documented, reviewed, and used to inform future planning cycles, reinforcing a culture of quality and transparency throughout the institution.

The implemented quality management system is suitable to regularly examine the quality of SDU University's different areas of performance and to ensure a consistent development. The competencies in the area of quality management are clearly regulated. One of the quality management system's cornerstones is a discernibly developing culture of quality (compliance) within SDU University.

The quality control loops and instruments of quality management are meaningfully connected and aligned to SDU University's different areas of performance. Quality management processes are evident across teaching, research, and social engagement, and ethical considerations are also integrated. The University demonstrates a commitment to quality using various instruments such as surveys, focus groups, and incentive structures for high-impact research. However, the panel observed that the quality loop remains largely informal and lacks visibility. In particular, survey results do not consistently lead to documented action plans with measurable objectives, and the feedback mechanisms, although present, are not sufficiently formalised or systematically linked to follow-up actions. For example, recurring concerns of students regarding English-language teaching have not yet resulted in structured, strategic responses. The panel **recommends** implementing formal instruments to monitor and address persistent issues systematically. Establishing clear procedures for translating feedback into documented action plans would strengthen the quality assurance system. SDU University states in its statement that it has implemented formal instruments to systematically monitor and address persistent issues identified through various quality assurance tools. A centralized action-tracking system is currently being established to enhance transparency, ensure accountability, and support continuous follow-up on identified areas for improvement. Stakeholder feedback is regularly collected and analysed. Structured response plans are developed based on the findings. Responsibilities are assigned to the appropriate departments, with clear deadlines and follow-up procedures to ensure effective implementation. To support these efforts, the University uses the Explorance Blue platform, which offers a range of functionalities for collecting feedback, generating reports, and tracking actions.

This platform enables timely reporting, streamlined workflows, and data-informed decision-making, all of which contribute to strengthening the overall quality assurance system. The panel acknowledges SDU University's efforts to enhance its quality assurance system through the introduction of formal monitoring instruments and the planned implementation of a centralized action-tracking system. However, the panel considers the recommendation not yet fulfilled. The panel clarifies that the system must be implemented and tested to systematically track issues identified to resolution. They emphasize the need for a roadmap outlining the implementation and pilot phase, as well as mechanisms to ensure that identified issues are demonstrably resolved. Therefore, the panel recommends maintaining the recommendation until the system is operational and its effectiveness in closing quality assurance loops can be verified.

SDU University has established an effective escalation management on all levels.

It is clear to the panel that SDU University's members (students, teaching staff, administrative staff) as well as external stakeholders are involved in the system and are given the opportunity to take an active role within the quality management. While alumni in particular are actively involved in the strengthening SDU University, degree programme development and furthering of research, evidence of these activities became evident only during the on-site discussions and reviews. The panel would encourage, that in the future, SDU University transparently describes and advertises its meaningful alignment with both sponsors and partners.

SDU University's members' and external stakeholders' participation is scheduled to take place on a regular basis to systematically ensure the continuous consideration of their interests. The panel encourages the University to formalise their usage of advisory boards to continue to fit its study programmes to the market and publicly determine how to better fit their graduates to the future market.

	Exceptional	Exceeds quality requirements	Meets quality requirements	Does not meet quality requirements
<b>II. MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE AND QUALITY MANAGEMENT</b>				
(1) Management Structure			x	
(2) Organisation of Localities	not relevant			
(3) Quality Management Strategy			x	
(4) Quality Management System		x		
(5) Quality Management Instruments			x	
(6) Escalation Management			x	
(7) Participation		x		

### III. STUDIES AND TEACHING

#### Study Offer and Qualification Objectives

**The structure of the University** includes:

1. Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences<sup>31</sup>,
2. Faculty of Education and Humanities<sup>32</sup>,
3. Faculty of Law and Social Sciences<sup>33</sup>,
4. SDU Business School<sup>34</sup>
5. SDU Extension School<sup>35</sup> and Centre for Multidisciplinary Education<sup>36</sup>,
6. nine research centres,
7. 27 laboratories,
8. the Administration
9. 24 structural divisions

The University offers 62 study programmes, namely 30 undergraduate study programmes, 24 master's study programmes, and eight PhD study programmes.

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<sup>31</sup> [Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences - SDU University](#), last accessed April 17, 2025.

<sup>32</sup> [Education and Humanities - SDU University](#), last accessed April 17, 2025.

<sup>33</sup> [Law and Social Sciences - SDU University](#), last accessed April 17, 2025.

<sup>34</sup> [Business School - SDU University](#), last accessed April 17, 2025.

<sup>35</sup> [SDU Extension School - SDU University](#), last accessed April 17, 2025.

<sup>36</sup> [Center for Multidisciplinary Education - SDU University](#), last accessed April 17, 2025.

Table 3: Study programme offer of SDU University

Bachelor's degree	Master's degree	Doctorate degree
<b>Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences</b>		
Information Systems Multimedia Sciences Computer Science Mathematical and Computer Modelling Mathematics Statistics and Data Science	Information Systems Software Engineering Computer Science Data Science Mathematics Financial Mathematics	Computer Science Mathematics Mathematics (Double diploma programme, Ghent University, Belgium)
<b>Faculty of Law and Social Sciences</b>		
Applied Law International Law Law of Public Administration Journalism (TV and Multimedia) International Relations Applied psychology	Private Law IT Law Data Journalism Media Studies and Journalism	Applied Law
<b>Faculty of Education and Humanities</b>		
Kazakh Language and Literature Foreign Language: Two Foreign Languages Translation Studies Chemistry-Biology Physics-Informatics Informatics Mathematics Pedagogy and psychology History Preschool training and education Social pedagogy and self-knowledge based on values Pedagogics and Methods of Primary Education Applied philology	Kazakh Language and Literature Foreign Language: Two Foreign Languages Chemistry Biology Physics Mathematics	Kazakh Language and Literature Foreign Language: Two Foreign Languages Mathematics

Business School		
Digital Marketing Management Accounting and Audit Finance Economics	Management Management (1 year) MBA Management in healthcare EMBA Management in healthcare Project Management Financial Technology MBA Economics and Business Analytics Economics	Management

The University has a trilingual education system (English Medium Instruction-based), according to which 70% of study programmes are taught in English and 30% are available in English, Kazakh or Russian. Education at the University complies with the Bologna Process. This ensures compatibility with ESG 2015.

The University develops study programmes following the state compulsory standards for higher and postgraduate education and other normative and legal acts, as well as the University Academic Policy. The University has defined requirements for the development, approval and revision of study programmes. The development of the university's study programmes is a collaborative process involving academic departments, students, strategic partners (Advisory Board), and the Teaching and Methodological Council. The Council oversees compliance with academic policies, ensures alignment with state educational standards, provides methodological guidance, and monitors programme quality and labour market relevance while safeguarding student interests. Academic departments design the study programmes in line with legal standards and institutional guidelines, integrating innovative, practice-oriented teaching methods, and ensuring stakeholder input. The Advisory Board at the SDU University is established to provide expert support and facilitate effective interaction between the University and external stakeholders, including public authorities, organizations, and industry representatives. Its primary purpose is to ensure that the study programmes offered by the University align with current market requirements and professional standards. The Advisory Board provides support for developing and maintaining study programme effectiveness and facilitates communication with employers. The membership is continuously updated, including new members to ensure fresh perspectives and enhanced collaboration. Each year, deans, coordinators, and department heads meet with industry representatives. These interactions are integral to refining the curriculum, ensuring it remains relevant and beneficial for students. Lastly, students participate in shaping study programmes, selecting courses, and providing feedback for continuous improvement.

## Study Programmes' Quality

Three study programmes were selected as a sample of the study programme offer of SDU University: Bachelor's in computer science, MBA in Financial Technology, and a doctoral degree in Applied Law.

### BA Computer Science

The aim of the bachelor programme Computer Science<sup>37</sup> (240 ECTS credits) is to furnish students with a robust education and skills to prepare them for success in the field. The programme is taught in English, and it provides a foundation in computer science principles, methodologies, and technologies, fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and innovation. Graduates are equipped to apply their knowledge across various domains and pursue specialized tracks in Data Science and AI, Hardware, Software, Cybersecurity, and Blockchain. These tracks offer in-depth knowledge and specialized skills, enabling graduates to excel in their chosen careers and adapt to the evolving industry landscape.

The programme has the following learning outcomes:

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<sup>37</sup> [Computer Science - SDU University](#), last accessed March 25, 2025.



Table 4: Learning Outcomes of B.Sc in Computer Science

<b>BSc in Computer Science</b>	
<b>1</b>	To achieve proficiency in foreign language skills, including reading, writing, listening, and speaking, while also gaining a cultural understanding to communicate effectively in various speaking contexts.
<b>2</b>	To understand and apply fundamental principles of mathematics, physics, and biology, using logical reasoning, mathematical modelling, and statistical analysis to solve complex problems across these disciplines.
<b>3</b>	To develop and optimize computer programmes, effectively utilize data structures and advanced algorithms, and gain proficiency in specific programming languages including Go. To demonstrate understanding and application of coding practices, algorithms, and data structures typically used in FAANG (Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Netflix, Google) companies for problem-solving and product development.
<b>4</b>	To design and manage database systems, perform advanced data analysis, and apply machine learning, deep learning, and natural language processing techniques. To utilize cloud computing for large scale data processing, create data visualizations, and deploy specialized tools in fields such as computer vision and medical image processing. To culminate these skills in a comprehensive data science and AI project
<b>5</b>	To design, develop, and test efficient and user-friendly web and mobile applications, utilizing front-end and back-end web programming, iOS and Android platforms, and software architecture patterns. To apply UX/UI design principles, use advanced software development tools, and validate software functionality. To implement these skills in a comprehensive software engineering project.
<b>6</b>	To understand and design computer architecture, manage operating systems with a focus on Linux, and programme FPGA. To comprehend and implement network protocols, digital circuit design, and low-level architecture. To familiarize with IoT devices, data management, and analytics for IoT. To implement these concepts in a comprehensive hardware engineering and operating systems project.
<b>7</b>	To understand the fundamentals of cybersecurity, apply secure coding practices, and implement network and web application security measures. To develop proficiency in cryptography, conduct ethical hacking and penetration testing to identify vulnerabilities, and apply these skills to ensure the security of digital assets. To implement these principles and techniques in a comprehensive cybersecurity and penetration testing project.
<b>8</b>	To apply research tools and methodologies in the field of computer science, manage IT projects, and comprehend the dynamics of entrepreneurship. To understand and apply the principles of financial technologies (FinTech), IT management, and digital marketing, Law, Economy and Ecology. To develop self-improvement and leadership skills in IT, with an understanding of IT law. To explore the application of information technology in education (EdTech) and implement these concepts in a comprehensive project.

Bachelor's degree programmes include disciplines of three cycles – general education disciplines, basic disciplines and profile disciplines. The scope of the cycle of general education disciplines is 56 ECTS credits. Of these, 51 ECTS credits are allocated to the disciplines of compulsory component, such as History of Kazakhstan, Philosophy, Kazakh (Russian) Language, Foreign Language, Information and Communication Technologies, Physical Culture, and a Module of socio-political knowledge (political science, sociology, cultural studies, psychology).

The cycle of basic disciplines and profile disciplines includes the study of academic disciplines, professional practices and is not less than 176 ECTS credits. Students independently determine the learning paths aimed at achieving the learning outcomes of the study programme, except

disciplines of the cycle of general education disciplines. Courses offered in the Bachelor programme are, for example, Web programming: back end, Introduction to iOS Programming, Introduction to Android Programming, and Software Testing and Validation. Final attestation is not less than eight academic credits in the total volume of the bachelor's degree programme. The University independently determines the form and procedure of the final attestation.

The admission process requires graduates to score at least 120 points in the National Unified Testing in the exam group Mathematics and Informatics. Applicants studying in programmes with English as the language of instruction must take an English language test. If the level of language proficiency is lower than the level approved by the faculty, the applicant attends an additional course in their first year.

### **MBA in Financial Technology**

The aim of the MBA in Financial Technology<sup>38</sup> (120 ECTS credits) is to train specialists with modern managerial, technological knowledge and skills that allow them to successfully advance their careers in the financial technology industry and have a competitive advantage. It is a blended full-time programme, with 50% of courses conducted online. The languages of instruction are Russian, Kazakh, and English.

The following 15 learning outcomes are defined for the programme:

*Table 5: Learning Outcomes of MBA in Financial Technology*

<b>MBA in Financial Technology</b>	
<b>1</b>	Demonstrate leadership skills to manage change and innovation in banking and financial sector organizations
<b>2</b>	Be able to assess and manage risks in fintech projects.
<b>3</b>	Assess the ethical side of the actions of a manager and an organization when making business decisions related to financial technologies
<b>4</b>	Conduct financial analysis of the company, investment projects, master the basic methods of financial forecasting, planning, assess the cost of capital
<b>5</b>	To use digital technologies to more accurately predict financial and economic indicators, develop financial products and improve their quality, save time through automation, and solve other business problems.
<b>6</b>	Demonstrate skills to analyse socio-economic information and make forecasts of the situation in the field of fintech
<b>7</b>	Know the techniques and methods of effective communication in business and know how to use them in practice
<b>8</b>	Be able to apply corporate law in practice, manage the intangible assets of the enterprise and build a strategy for the commercialization of intellectual property
<b>9</b>	Develop and implement strategic planning, taking into account external and internal changes in the environment. Be able to identify company opportunities and formulate alternative strategies.

<sup>38</sup> [MBA Financial Technology - SDU University](#), last accessed March 25, 2025.

10	Be able to conduct business research and make decisions based on forecasting changes in the external environment
11	Apply statistical and mathematical methods to solve business problems, use a systematic approach to the process of quantitative information analysis when making management decisions.
12	Use security methods and models to reduce the risk of fraud and crime in fintech organizations. Know crime trends in financial markets, as well as the main tools of government agencies in ensuring security and regulation.
13	Have a technical understanding of blockchain technologies, apply blockchain applications to solve business problems through the secure and efficient exchange of information.
14	Apply artificial intelligence solutions in customer classification, transaction monitoring and security, regulatory requirements, to reduce user support costs.
15	To use in practice the methods and tools of digital marketing in order to promote fintech products, services and brands.

The content of the master's degree programme consists of:

1. theoretical learning, including the study of cycles of basic and profiling disciplines;
2. practical training of Master students: various types of practical training, research or professional internships;
3. research work, including the performance of master's thesis - for scientific and pedagogical master's degree, or experimental-research work, including the performance of master's project - for specialized master's degree.
4. final attestation.

The cycles of basic and profiling disciplines include disciplines of the university component and optional component. The list of disciplines of the university component and elective component is determined by the University independently. It considers the needs of the labour market, expectations of employers, needs and interests of undergraduates. The university component of the cycle of basic disciplines of all master's degrees of scientific and pedagogical direction includes the disciplines History and Philosophy of Science, Foreign Language (Professional), Pedagogy of Higher Education, and Psychology of Management (20 ECTS credits). For the profile direction the disciplines Management, Psychology of Management, Foreign Language (Professional) are offered (15 ECTS credits). The scope of the profile discipline cycle is 53 credits including courses on AI for Fintech, Data Analysis, Project Management, Machine learning etc. Furthermore, students are required to complete a work internship as well as conduct experimental research for their Master's project. Teaching in the MBA (EMBA) programmes is provided by faculty involved in business research and consulting, academia, and management experience.

To be admitted to the programme applicants have to fulfil certain pre-requisites: Statistics 1-5 ECTS credits, Fundamentals of Financial Management – 5 ECTS credits (Total: 10 ECTS credits). There is no need to study prerequisite subjects if the bachelor's degree (major) is in a relative specialty.

## PhD Applied Law

The aim of the doctoral programme Applied Law<sup>39</sup> (180 ECTS credits) is to prepare future researchers-specialists motivated in the future to make a teaching and scientific career. The language of instruction is Russian and Kazakh. There are five learning outcomes of this programme:

Table 6: Learning Outcomes of PhD in Applied Law

PhD in Applied Law	
1	Conduct independent legal research using modern methods of knowledge.
2	Present the results of scientific research by participating in conferences and publishing in leading domestic and foreign publications.
3	Possess the skills of studying the problems of material and procedural law, to prepare an expert-legal opinion, using a scientific approach, knowledge and skills obtained at theoretical courses.
4	Carry out the process of scientific research on the relevant topic by setting and developing issues related to the subject of research.
5	Analyse the state of current legislation, assess the proper regulation of public relations on the basis of knowledge about the main theoretical and practical aspects of legal science.

The Doctoral Programme is made up of basic and profile disciplines. Doctoral students take the courses Methods of Scientific Research, Academic Writing as well as a Research Seminar. They do independent research work, including internships and working doctoral thesis. The internship's place corresponds to the research direction of the study programme, the doctoral dissertation and the international advisor's workplace. The internship is carried out in leading international scientific organizations and Universities.

To be admitted to the programme applicants have to fulfil certain pre-requisites: Introduction to Law – 5 ECTS credits, Law of Obligations 1-5 ECTS credits, and Law of Obligations 2-5 ECTS credits (Total: 15 ECTS credits). There is no need to study prerequisite subjects if the master's degree (major) is in a relative specialty.

## Didactical concept across programmes

The academic workload is measured by the time required for a student to study an academic discipline, module, or the entire higher education programme to achieve the established learning outcomes. The workload of students per semester may vary from 20 to 40 ECTS.<sup>40</sup> The total number of ECTS for each education level (Bachelor, Master, PhD) are 240, 120, and 180 respectively. Based on the curriculum and Catalogue of elective disciplines, students create an individual curriculum through the SDU University online portal<sup>41</sup> with methodological and consultative assistance from the department, coordinators and advisors. Advisors offer

<sup>39</sup> [Applied law - SDU University](#), last accessed March 25, 2025.

<sup>40</sup> According to the Regulation on the organization of the academic process according to credit technology of education at SDU.

<sup>41</sup> Accessible to students at [my.sdu.edu.kz](http://my.sdu.edu.kz). The expert panel received a throughout introduction to this portal during the on-site visitation.

consultation and methodological support to students regarding educational trajectory, discipline selection, and teacher selection. To fulfil the requirements of the study programme, a student must complete their individual curriculum by obtaining the necessary credits. The planning of the educational trajectory, including the registration for disciplines, is carried out in accordance with the Academic Calendar.<sup>42</sup>

Innovative techniques and technologies are utilized to educate students, such as project-based learning, active learning, interactive learning, critical thinking development technology, task-based learning technology, and technology for evaluating educational achievements being employed in the implementation of the competency-based approach to study programmes. The teaching staff of the programmes employ information and communication technologies, interactive and video lectures, seminars, conferences, project-based and research-based teaching methods in the educational process. SDU University utilises digital platforms such as Moodle and Webex for lecture and practice lessons. Moodle is used for managing all academic learning activities throughout the academic year (including electronic textbooks, quizzes, collection of homework), while Webex is used for conducting online lectures, webinars, and conferences (especially for MSc and PhD programmes).

SDU University is a member of the Academic Integrity League, and according to one of the League's principles, student knowledge assessment must be provided in written form. According to the pre-examination rules, each teacher is required to clearly outline the types of exams in the syllabus, provide a clear exam description, and allocate scores for each exam. Furthermore, the teacher must include the assessment method in the syllabus according to the Assessment Policy. The syllabus of each course indicates the topics for student research and study time with deadlines. To enhance students' research skills and academic writing abilities, the University has recommended that teachers of various subjects incorporate written tasks, such as writing reports, articles, and abstracts, into their course syllabi. To support students and consult them on various options of the final control, Final Attestation Guidelines are provided.

### **Students' involvement in the designing of learning processes**

In the study programmes, student involvement is a cornerstone of the University approach to designing effective and relevant learning processes. By actively engaging students in the development of the curriculum and learning activities, coordinators ensure that the programme meets their needs and aspirations, while also staying aligned with industry demands. Mechanisms for student involvement are:

#### **1. Feedback Surveys and Focus Groups**

Regular feedback surveys and focus group sessions are conducted to gather student opinions on various aspects of the programme, including course content, teaching methods, and overall learning experience.

#### **2. Collaborative Workshops and Brainstorming Sessions**

Collaborative workshops and brainstorming sessions are organized to involve students in the ideation and development of new learning modules and activities. These sessions are

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<sup>42</sup> [Academic calendar - SDU University](#), last accessed April 15, 2025.

facilitated by faculty members and often include industry experts, providing students with the opportunity to co-create learning experiences that are both practical and innovative.

### **3. Advisory Board**

Student representatives are permanent members of the Advisory Board within each study programme, as are other stakeholders, such as industry experts, partner universities, faculty members.

## **Research Transfer to the Areas of Studies and Teaching**

The University integrates research into the study programmes through several strategic initiatives and structured processes. Faculty members holding Teaching and Research (T&R) positions engage in both academic instruction and research ensuring that the research activities directly inform their teaching. The dual role allows for the effective incorporation of the latest research findings and methodology into the curriculum. Graduate students including master's and doctoral students benefit from a semester-based colloquium progress report system. Special committees composed of T&R staff and faculty members provide detailed feedback to these students helping them enhance the quality of their research. This system ensures that the research progress of the students is continuously monitored and improved. Research tools and methods courses are a mandatory component of every study programme, including undergraduate study programmes, aligning with the University's strategic goals. This inclusion ensures that all students regardless of the education level are equipped with the essential research skills. Some faculty members employ a research-oriented approach where students are assigned academic articles to foster critical thinking and research skills. Participatory research activities where students actively engage in research projects are also encouraged. The University's research centres and grant programmes play a pivotal role in integrating research into teaching. Both graduate and undergraduate students are involved in the implementation of research projects.

## **Quality Assurance**

The Quality Assurance Department is responsible for the ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and revision of study programmes, as well as the evaluation of learning outcomes and quality of the assessment. The process for quality assessment includes Course and Teaching Evaluation Survey, Exit Survey, monitoring and evaluation of study programmes, and analysis of the qualitative indicators from University's internal information systems such as Grades Report, dropout rate analysis, etc.

The **Course and Teaching Evaluation Survey** aims at gathering student feedback on course content and teaching methods to support decisions on adjusting study programmes and improving teaching methodologies. Before final examination in each semester, students rate courses and teaching methodology on a Likert scale and provide feedback through open-ended questions. The participation is voluntary. The results are analysed by the Quality Assurance Department and are stored in a cloud format. Faculty has access to the results in their personal account. The results are further reviewed in departmental sessions, by the Faculty Board, Educational and Methodical Board, and Administrative Board. The President of the Student Government is a member of Educational and Methodical Board which ensures students' participation in decision-making processes. The President of the Student Government shares the results with the faculty ministers who further disseminate information to the student body. The results primarily determine

the need for the development of certain changes in the curriculum, subject content, methods of assessment and teaching, and can also be aimed at identifying systemic violations. Corrective action plans are adopted according to the negative feedback provided by students. One of the terms of the prolonging the contract with faculty is student feedback gathered in the course of CTE. In case of poor feedback, the contract might be terminated.

The **Exit Survey** is conducted to gather feedback from graduating students on their overall educational experiences, including the relevance of study programmes. The survey covers general information, programme quality, and overall feedback. Before graduation, students receive the link to the survey at the end of the academic year. The participation is on a voluntary basis. The results are analysed by the Quality Assurance Department and compiled into reports. The results are reviewed by the Administrative Board, Faculty Board, Advisory Board and in departmental sessions. Similar as with the Course and Teaching Evaluation Survey, the President of the Student Government is present at the Advisory Board session and responsible for the further dissemination of the information to the student body. The survey informs decisions about study programme curricula adjustments, teaching methods, work of the University administrative departments, and overall student services. Corrective action plans are developed based on the feedback to improve experience for future students. The results are taken into account while renewing and/or adjusting the study programme development plan.

The University has defined requirements for the format of **monitoring and evaluation**, including the effectiveness of the study programme which are implemented on the basis of the Regulations on the development, approval and monitoring of the study programme. The grounds for monitoring of the study programmes are updating the state educational standard of higher education, introduction of the new professional standards, analysis of the labour market, change in regulatory requirements for the development of the study programme, studying the experience of leading local and foreign universities, and analysis of the students' survey results. The monitoring and evaluation of study programmes is an ongoing process with regular reviews at the end of each academic year. The process involves employers/strategic partners, students/graduates, and faculty members.

At the end of each semester, a thorough analysis of student grades is conducted, resulting in a comprehensive Grades Report. The Grades report is used to assess overall academic performance, determine the distribution of each grade, and evaluate how closely the grading aligns with the bell curve. External examiners' reports are also analysed to evaluate and advise on programme design and assessment procedures.

Primary monitoring and adjustments to the content of the study programme are discussed at the Faculty's Advisory Board. Depending on the nature of the adjustments, changes may be made to the curriculum, passports of the study programme, the content and volume of disciplines. Information of any updates made to the study programme is publicly available on the website. Results of monitoring are regularly reviewed at meetings of collegiate bodies: meetings of the department, faculty council, Educational and Methodical Council, and Academic Council. Monitoring also determines the compliance of the study programme with regulatory legal acts in the field of education, the relevance of the study programme with its scientific validity, prospects and ways of its development, and the meeting ESG standards. Based on the results of monitoring,

a discussion is held at the collegiate bodies of the university and written conclusions are issued to the relevant departments.

## Cooperation

The University leverages cooperation agreements with external partners to enhance the quality and relevance of the study programmes and teaching methods.

The most significant partners the academic sector include Ghent University (Belgium), Hof University (Germany), and Inha University (Korea) for the Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences, Kazakh National Medical University (Kazakhstan) and University of Chemistry and Technology (Czech Republic) for the Business School, Wismar University (Germany) for the Faculty of Law and Social Sciences, and Malaya University (Malaysia) for the Faculty of Education and Humanities.

Experts from various industries are engaged on a contractual basis to deliver specialized applied courses and practical training sessions. Each faculty has a comprehensive career programme to facilitate student employment in relevant industries. These partnerships extend to collaborative research, economic, cultural, and technical teaching formats. They influence the content and profiles of progressive academic groups and their curricula. Examples are tailored courses offered by the international company DataArt<sup>43</sup> on programming algorithms. They are developed in collaboration with industry experts ensuring the alignment of the course content with the industry standards. Further, the University engages legal practitioners for the legal clinics to provide training for the students. The Applied Law study programme has adopted the case method as a part of the Cases from the Practice of International Firms course with contributions from Grata international law firm.<sup>44</sup> Another example is the partnership maintained between the Faculty of Education and Humanities and the public and private schools such as Spectrum International School<sup>45</sup> to provide students with internship opportunities. The Business School actively cooperates, for example, with the Astana International Financial Centre<sup>46</sup>. The cooperation is aimed at a broad exchange of best practices, knowledge and the implementation of joint educational, research programmes and projects. Together with the AIFC Bureau of Continuous Professional Development, access to the Eikon database was opened in one of the laboratory rooms at the SDU Business School.

## *Appraisal “Studies and Teaching”*

SDU University has three faculties and a business school. They offer 62 programmes on bachelor, master and doctoral level. The panel concludes that the study offer and the superordinate qualifications objectives correspond to SDU University's profile.

The documentation of the selected programmes – bachelor's in computer science, MBA in Financial Technology, and a doctoral degree in Applied Law – demonstrates in an exemplary manner that SDU University is capable of developing suitable concepts for study programmes

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<sup>43</sup> [Strategic Technology Partner for Global Businesses | DataArt](#), last accessed March 27, 2025.

<sup>44</sup> [Kazakhstan](#), last accessed March 27, 2025.

<sup>45</sup> [SPECTRUM INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL](#), last accessed March 27, 2025.

<sup>46</sup> [Astana International Financial Centre | AIFC](#), last accessed March 27, 2025.



that in their qualification objectives are oriented towards the (inter)national qualification frameworks to describe and differentiate the educational levels. The University provides clearly outlined admission conditions for each study programme on its website and in the Admissions Policy of SDU University. However, the panel **recommends** that given the University's strategy and its international orientation, the admission requirements, particularly for the MBA FinTech programme, should also take into account the EQUAL MBA Guidelines.<sup>47</sup> In the statement, SDU University explains that the MBA FinTech programme's admission criteria have been revised to explicitly align with the EQUAL MBA Guidelines. The updated admission policy includes clear references to the EQUAL framework, including a section on "General Requirements and information for applicants pursuing a degree in MBA/EMBA" on page 18. Here it is stated that "a minimum of two years of relevant professional experience is highly recommended" for admission to an MBA and "a minimum of two years of professional experience, including managerial roles, is highly recommended" for admission to EMBA's. However, the EQUAL MBA Guidelines state that "as a post-experience qualification, the MBA should be designed solely for participants with at minimum 2-3 years of relevant postgraduate work experience."<sup>48</sup>, therefore the recommendation cannot be considered as fulfilled.

In general, SDU University ensures dependability and predictability in teaching and examination operations by providing detailed information in the student portal "MY SDU". SDU University provided detailed insights into this student portal during the onsite visitation and the expert panel appreciates the detailed information provided to students. However, while examining the course descriptions, the panel noticed that not all modules in the PhD programme are sufficiently described. At present, M1.10, M1.11, M2.1, M2.2 and internship(s) are still missing. The curriculum includes six internships, but the PhD students only reported one. It is not clear which skills are taught in the classroom teaching sessions (contact hours). Furthermore, self-study time is not clear. It is only mentioned in M 1.3., not in the other modules. To increase transparency, the panel recommends the following **condition**:

**The University ensures that all offered courses provide a course description.**

SDU University reacted to the condition in its statement on the report. They explain that the Curriculum Overview of the PhD programme in Applied Law previously submitted as part of the self-evaluation report did not include complete descriptions for all modules. In response to this, the University has updated the current version of the Curriculum Overview, which now includes all relevant course descriptions. Specifically, M1.10 refers to the Teaching Internship and M1.11 to the Research Internship, while M2.1 and M2.2 are elective courses. Additionally, full course syllabi and detailed module descriptions are available to all enrolled students via the University's internal information system. This ensures transparency and accessibility regarding course content and academic expectations. In response to the panel's observation regarding the number of internships in the PhD programme Curriculum, SDU University would like to clarify that the programme includes the component "Doctoral research work, including completing an internship and writing a doctoral dissertation" in accordance with the State Compulsory Standards of

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<sup>47</sup> [Microsoft Word - EQUAL-Guidelines.docx](#), last accessed May 22, 2025.

<sup>48</sup> [Microsoft Word - EQUAL-Guidelines.docx](#), p. 2.

Postgraduate Education. Although the curriculum spans six semesters, a doctoral student is required to complete only one internship during the research phase, as outlined in their individual study plan. This internship is undertaken upon achieving preliminary research results or publications, and its timing and location are determined individually in consultation with the academic supervisor. The inclusion of six semesters of research work in the curriculum structure reflects the extended duration of doctoral research rather than multiple internship requirements. This structure fully complies with State standards, particularly Annex 7, which specifies the framework for scientific and pedagogical doctoral programmes. Relevant regulatory references include Order No. 2 of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated July 20, 2022. The individual plan of each doctoral student contains detailed information regarding the topic, rationale, publication schedule, and the internship, thereby aligning academic expectations with national standards. To further address the panel's comments, SDU University provides the following clarifications: The skills taught during classroom-based (contact hour) sessions are explicitly outlined in the updated curriculum and course syllabi. For example, the course Methods of Scientific Research and Academic Writing develops competencies such as academic writing, structuring research articles and proposals, and conducting independent research. Similarly, the course Problems of Improving Existing Law: Modern Concepts equips students with skills in analysing global legal systems, comparing legislative frameworks, and formulating evidence-based recommendations for legal reform. Regarding the allocation of self-study time, SDU University acknowledge that this information was previously incomplete. The revised curriculum now includes detailed breakdowns of contact hours and self-study hours for all modules, thereby ensuring transparency and alignment with academic workload expectations.

The panel has carefully reviewed the provided materials handed in together with the statement. The panel recognises the efforts by SDU University to further improve its structural ideals for their module description. The panel encourages the University to vigorously assure complete transparency in all offered courses in the same manner as the strategic approach. They observe that SDU University has demonstrated with the “Rules for organising and conducting professional practice of doctoral students” that clear instructions on organizing and conducting PhD practices exist. The document explains how this is done, why the practice is required and who is responsible. The respective course description of Teaching Internship (M1.10) and Research Internship (M1.11) were not accessible and therefore the panel could not get a deeper understanding of the courses. The review of document M2.1 and M2.2 revealed a differend structure within course descriptions. Further the section on “course content” is unclear for M2.1 as it seems rather like an instruction on “expected behaviour”. The panel concludes that inconsistencies in structure and lack of access to key documents (M1.10, M1.11) warrant retaining the condition.

During the interviews, the panel formed the view that students take an active role in the designing of learning processes.

The mutual relations of research and teaching are designed as to ensure a knowledge transfer from research activities to the area of teaching. This transfer is fostered by teaching and research position for faculty members ensuring that research activities directly inform their teaching.

Recognising the value of such roles, the expert panel suggests that the University consider expanding the number of these positions to further strengthen the integration of research and teaching.<sup>49</sup> Further, students receive the opportunity to actively participate in SDU University's research activities. One opportunity for research and entrepreneurial development provided to students is the Technopark<sup>50</sup> which impressed the expert panel.

The quality management system includes instruments and methods for the regular assessment of the programmes' quality. Feedback is gathered through various channels, including course evaluations, exit surveys, and focus groups. Additionally, informal discussions with alumni contribute to the University's understanding of programme effectiveness. The information resulting thereof is evaluated and the findings obtained are transferred into specific measures for the programmes' improvement and further development. SDU Universities updated Quality Management System, as outlined in the Quality Assurance Policy, ensures that quality assessment findings are formulated as measurable outcomes, assigned to responsible units, and followed by transparent actions. These processes are integrated into the PDCA cycle and monitored through internal audits. Programme-related documents such as curricula, course syllabi, and learning outcomes are regularly reviewed and monitored through established internal procedures. This process is coordinated by the Quality Assurance Department in collaboration with the Faculty, School, or Centre level, a Quality Assurance Commission and includes periodic evaluations, peer reviews, and stakeholder feedback. Updates are made based on changes in academic standards, labour market needs, and quality assessment findings to ensure relevance, consistency, and continuous improvement. This monitoring process is integrated into the University's PDCA cycle to ensure that planning, evaluation, and improvements are systematically implemented and tracked. Measures to increase survey response rates are formulated and documented as part of SDU University's Quality Management System and supported by the capabilities of the Explorance Blue platform. These include automated reminders, personalized communications, and real-time response tracking. The University hopes that these measures help foster a feedback-providing culture where stakeholder input is actively encouraged and used to inform institutional improvements.

SDU University holds cooperation agreements with partners from science, economy, culture and its social environment in the frameworks of studies and teaching that correspond to their study offer and formats. Cooperations in the areas of studies and teaching are intensively fostered and significantly shape and influence the content of the programmes' curriculums as well as the graduates' profile. One example of this are internships done in partner schools offered for students of educational programmes. For the revision of curricula, SDU University uses stakeholder input from industry partners which further illustrates the close relationship to cooperation partners.

Exceptional	Exceeds quality requirements	Meets quality requirements	Does not meet quality requirements
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<sup>49</sup> See also appraisal in chapter IV. Research.

<sup>50</sup> See chapter IV. Research for further details.

III. STUDIES AND TEACHING				
(1) Study offer and qualification objectives			x	
(2) Study programmes' quality				Condition
(3) Research transfer to the areas of studies and teaching		x		
(4) Quality assurance			x	
(5) Cooperations		x		

## IV. RESEARCH

### Research Strategy

SDU University adopted new research objectives for the next five years as part of University Strategy 2023-2028 as well as developed corresponding research supporting policies to strengthen the research activities. Research and innovation are main components of SDU University's strategy. The role of research in SDU University's strategic planning focuses on enhancing academic reputation, innovation and knowledge creation as well as economic and social impact. It envisions that during the next five years, SDU University will become an applied research university, contributing to knowledge development and innovation in its selected fields.

The strategic goals of SDU University in research are:

- **Identifying and focusing on research priorities:** SDU University will identify and periodically revise research priorities based on existing potential, societal and industry needs, and global research trends.
- **Developing research centres:** SDU University will focus on establishing several strong research centres and/or institutes that contribute to knowledge generation and innovation in priority areas.
- **Strengthening PhD and master's programmes:** SDU University will further strengthen its PhD and master's programmes through the Jas Maman (young specialist) and T&R programmes.
- **Strengthening university-industry collaboration to drive innovation:** To strengthen university-industry collaboration, SDU University will involve industry representatives in research projects to increase the impact of research outcomes. The University will further develop internal regulations on intellectual property and profit-sharing to balance the interests of companies, the university, and innovators and to motivate scholars.
- **Establishing a favourable research environment:** This involves organising seminars by researchers to get feedback on their ongoing research and/or sharing the results after publishing; conducting trainings and seminars on research methodology; organizing pre-conference sessions for emerging scholars; organizing workshops for research capacity building and roundtables; hosting conferences on faculty and university levels; and developing SDU University journals as venues for knowledge sharing.

The university's research priorities are determined by the faculties in June for the upcoming academic year. These priorities are then presented to the Research Council and approved by the

Academic Council. Thus, in June 2024, the following research priorities were identified for the 2024-2025 academic year:

*Table 7: Research Priorities AY 2024/2025*

<b>Faculty</b>	<b>Research Priority Area</b>
Engineering and Natural Sciences	Artificial Intelligence
	Information Security
	Pure and Applied Mathematics
	Gamification
Business School	Human Resource Management
	Development Economics
	Technology in Management
	Entrepreneurship
Education and Humanities Faculty	Translation Studies
	Physics Education
	English Language Education
	Internationalization of Higher Education
Law and Social Sciences Faculty	Eurasian Studies
	News Consumption
	Private Law

## Research Activities

SDU University has a dedicated Science Department and Scientific Technical Board which monitors the development and implementation of research strategies and policies. They also secure funding and ensure compliance with regulations. Particularly, the Science Department administers all internal and external research grants, tracks scientists' academic publications, and assigns bonuses for their publications. Further, it manages all scientific journals of the University, administers their websites and publications, and assists faculties with improvements. The Science Department also runs the Scientific Technical Council's monthly meetings and works closely with faculty members, in particular research coordinators, journal editors, and research centre directors to communicate the University's agenda to the faculties. Lastly, the department organizes university-level academic conferences, forums, and PhD boot camps, and provides technical assistance to dissertation councils for PhD thesis defenses.

SDU University has a Technopark<sup>51</sup> and nine research centres:

1. Sustainable Development Centre
2. Art of Words
3. Language Culture Communication
4. Interdisciplinary Research Centre
5. Digital Finance, Crypto Assets and Blockchain Research Centre
6. Central Asian Research Centre
7. IT Law
8. Centre for Health, Policy and Management
9. The Centre for Regional and Local Development

These research centres and SDU Technopark serve as a communication platform for interdisciplinary research and close work with industry.

The Vice-Rector for Research is appointed for the research supervision and ensuring alignment of the strategic goals. On the faculty level, the four deans of each faculty are responsible for research promotion and supervision on school level research. Further, each faculty has a research coordinator which is responsible for research agenda implementation. These coordinators supervise the faculty's research development, coordinate and manage T&R work, and collaborate closely with the Science Department. They play a crucial role in organizing and developing research activities such as seminars and workshops and often assist with, or even serve as editors of, the faculty's scientific journals.

Each faculty has its own research agenda, guided by Research Coordinators and aligned with faculty members' areas of specialization. Faculty often collaborate within research groups on specific projects. Additionally, the University conducts research training sessions for faculty members every semester to enhance their research capabilities. SDU University's graduate programmes promote student research under faculty supervision. Dedicated courses are available to equip students with necessary research skills, supported by relevant academic resources to strengthen their research competencies. The University publishes four peer-reviewed scientific journals, covering its key research priorities. The Science Department, T&Rs<sup>52</sup>,

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<sup>51</sup> The SDU Technopark is a centre for the commercialization of intellectual property, technological solutions and products developed within the University. The main task of the SDU Technopark is the cultivation of technological entrepreneurs (start-ups) within the walls of the University. The Technopark develops an innovative "eco system" that supports the joint work of teaching staff, students and private initiatives. Accordingly, the Technopark will build capacity of the University, as well as the teaching staff and students, in particular, in the field of technological entrepreneurship ([Technopark - SDU University](#), last accessed March 27, 2025).

<sup>52</sup> Teacher Researcher (T&R) position implies 50% of the workload dedicated to research activities, the remaining 40% to teaching and 10% to other activities.

**The research work of the teaching staff includes:**

- organization and implementation of fundamental research, applied research and development, experimental and design work,
- participation in scientific projects, research,
- publication of educational and methodical and scientific works, educational and methodical manuals,

and Research Coordinators actively contribute to the publication process. For example, in 2024, scholars from the Business School launched the Journal of Entrepreneurship & Development Economics. The School's Research Coordinator serves as the Managing Editor, while an assistant professor in a T&R role holds the position of Editor-in-Chief.

## Promotion of Research

SDU University implements various measures and incentive systems to promote research in the University among their students and faculty members. Below are some examples of practical implementation:

**Reduction of Teaching Workload:** Each academic semester faculty members who are actively engaged in significant research projects may receive a reduction in their teaching responsibilities to allow more time for research. In addition, in 2019, Teacher-Researcher (T&R) positions have been introduced which allows to decrease teaching workload by 50% and dedicate this time for research. T&R positions are reviewed at the beginning of each academic year, with progress reports evaluated at the end of the year to ensure the continued alignment with the University's goals.<sup>53</sup> For the rest of faculty members (non-T&R positions), research activities involve organizing and participating in conferences, participation in seminars and workshops, student thesis supervision (graduate level), publications to the journals recognized by the Ministry of Higher Education and Science and ranked in Scopus.

**Research Leave:** SDU University encourages its faculty members to apply for the state-funded *Bolashak* scholarship programme, which offers research internship opportunities at international universities for master's, doctoral, and postdoctoral studies. SDU University grants academic leave while ensuring faculty members retain their positions.

**Performance-Based Incentives:** SDU University has implemented a Regulation on Stimulation of Teaching Staff to encourage all of its researchers to produce various research and methodological publications. This policy is regularly updated and improved to better support researchers and motivate them for professional and personal development. Depending on the quality of the publication,<sup>54</sup> researchers can receive different monetary rewards per publication. For the 2023-2024 academic year, more than 100 different publications received incentives.

**Research Grants and Funding Support:** SDU University provides opportunities for internal and

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- publication of monographs, scientific articles,
  - participation in scientific-theoretical and practical, republican and international conferences,
  - preparation of reports and presentations of scientifically actual topics of conferences, research, projects,
  - organization of scientific conferences of students,
  - supervising the research work of students, masters and doctoral students,
  - participation in the work of the scientific bureau of the faculty.

<sup>53</sup> SDU offered 17 TR position in 2019, 21 in 2020, 18 in 2021, 20 in 2022, and 20 TR positions in 2023.

<sup>54</sup> Incentives have been considered for publications in indexed journals in the Scopus and Web of Science databases, journals recommended by Science and Higher Education Quality Assurance Committee of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, as well as for textbooks, teaching aids and monographs.

external grant funding. Internal research funding is available under Jas Maman programme<sup>55</sup> to support master students. Further, faculty members receive funding for attending scientific conferences. Thus, eight educators had the opportunity to participate in significant conferences related to their specialties during the academic year 2023–2024. External funding is available from state and international organizations both for faculty members and students. SDU University encourages and supports research teams in their applications for external research grants and in managing these projects. Currently, there are seven ministry-funded and one national bank-funded research projects underway across various fields. About 50 staff and students are involved in these projects. Calls for these grants are made annually, with progress evaluated at the end of each year. For the 2024-25 academic year, the University approved seven out of 13 applications for research grants.

**Professional Development and Support:** SDU University provides mentoring research workshops on an ongoing basis related to research skills. This is meant to connect junior researchers with experienced mentors to guide them in their research careers. For example, professors, young scientists and doctorate students joined the Science Department's Academic Publishing Bootcamp. The Science Department also organizes a series of monthly research seminars for students and faculty members.

**Infrastructure and Resources:** SDU University has nine active research centres and 27 laboratories to enhance and support faculty members in their research activities. Emerging research ideas and the development of research centres at their initial stages are supported by small research grants at SDU University. For the 2024-2025 academic year, four research centres received funding for further development. In addition, equipment to support high-quality research is financed as part of grants.

## Good Scientific Practice

SDU University has various regulations dedicated to good scientific practice. To uphold ethical values, SDU University adopted a **Research Ethics Policy**. The aim of this policy is to set out the general principles that underpin the ethical conduct of research. Researchers are expected to familiarize themselves with the policy and follow the rules and regulations to maintain good scientific practice in all aspects of their work. Human subjects research at the University is guided by the ethical principles set forth in the Belmont Report. In publishing results of their research, authors and other stakeholders in the process are expected to follow COPE (Committee on Publication Ethics) guidelines.<sup>56</sup> **SDU Academic Integrity Policy** covers various forms of academic misconduct including plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, and facilitation of dishonesty. In addition, with the rapid development of AI, the **Regulation on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) instruments** was adopted in the academic year 2023–2024. It was drafted to control the

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<sup>55</sup> The “Jas Maman” (Young Specialist) Programme aims to develop a pool of talented graduates by offering comprehensive education, mentorship, and professional development opportunities at SDU University. By investing in the growth of employees from the start of their careers, the programme seeks to cultivate qualified staff who align with the University's values, mission, and long-term goals. The programme is available at both the Master's and Doctoral levels, with candidates admitted based on the requirements specified in official regulations.

<sup>56</sup> "[COPE: Committee on Publication Ethics](#)", last accessed March 28, 2025.



unethical application of AI.

At the organizational level, the University has an active **Research Ethics Committee**<sup>57</sup> that aims at preventing potential scientific violations. The Committee operates to provide feedback and clearance on possible ethical issues that may arise during the research process. Researchers fill out an online self-assessment form which informs the researcher whether they need to be reviewed by the ethics committee. If review is required, researchers fill out an ethics review form which will be reviewed by the committee. The committee meets once a month.

## Quality Assurance in Research

The quality assurance in research focuses on ensuring the integrity, reliability, and quality of research outputs. University measures are designed to maintain high standards, foster continuous improvement, and promote accountability. The quality assurance measures are based on the following building blocks: compliance of research ethics and policy guidelines, evaluation, monitoring and reporting, and training. As described above, conducting research is based on the Research Ethics guidelines and scholars are urged to present their work to the SDU Scientific Board for comments and suggestions before applying for grants from the Ministry of Science and Higher Education or starting the research. The Regulation Requirements for the publication of educational and scientific publications governs the publication of scientific and educational publications. It includes specifications for the publication's format and content as well as the steps involved in obtaining an ISBN and getting the work approved by the Academic Board. Every publication is delivered to councils along with reviews and a Turnitin<sup>58</sup> certificate. The Educational and Methodological Council reviews textbooks, instructional aids, and methodological recommendations while the Scientific Board reviews monographs. The work is recommended for publication after receiving a favourable decision from the University's Academic Board. This procedure is applied for both faculty members and students. However, student research is also monitored at the University level according to internal academic rules and regulations. Graduate students' dissertation topics are approved in Academic Board Meetings and student performance is evaluated by the dissertation committees at the faculty level. In addition, the research centres also report to the Scientific Technical Board about their activities and research outputs.

## Research Cooperation

SDU University research cooperations with other HEIs and research institutions are implemented both on the local and international level.

**Collaborative Research Projects:** Annually SDU University applies for research collaborative grants financed by the Ministry of Higher Education and Science with local Kazakhstan universities. Currently, the Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences is actively working on preparing a proposal for the targeted project with Astana Medical University. At the moment, there are nine joint projects. Further, the University participates in different consortiums under Erasmus+ programme and UN funding in collaboration with international universities.

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<sup>57</sup> [Research Ethics - SDU University](#), last accessed March 28, 2025.

<sup>58</sup> A licensing programme to identify plagiarism.

**Conferences:** Annually, each faculty organizes international conferences with visiting scholars from both, local and international universities, and organizations. Examples are the international young scholars conference<sup>59</sup> in 2022, the 11<sup>th</sup> International Conference Building Cultural Bridges<sup>60</sup> in 2024, and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network Conference<sup>61</sup> in 2024.

### *Appraisal “Research”*

SDU University pursues a comprehensible research strategy with five key strategic goals. They have identified research areas of priority. The panel concludes that the importance of research corresponds to SDU University’s institutional claim.

SDU University’s full-time teaching staff are involved in the research environments of their respective subjects through scientific publications, participation in conferences, memberships and functions in professional associations, as well as research cooperations. The expert panel recognises existing lighthouses in research within the University’s staff and encourages SDU University to further expand this potential.

SDU University enables their academic staff to participate in research activities, which are promoted by means of a suitable incentive system. Currently, 5% of academic staff hold teaching and research (T&R) positions, which the expert panel considers a good foundation for fostering a research-oriented culture. SDU University states in its response to the report that it has taken concrete steps to increase the proportion of academic staff engaged in both teaching and research by approving formal Guidelines for Teacher-Researcher (T&R) Positions. These guidelines define a departmental quota system, allowing up to 20% of academic staff to hold T&R positions, depending on each department’s staffing structure and specific academic priorities. Departments maintain autonomy in determining their staff composition while aligning with institutional goals to strengthen research capacity.

The available research facilities are good and with a more systematic development of research structures, the panel assumes that SDU University might soon exceed this quality criterion. The panel suggests for example transforming existing teaching labs into research labs and ensuring consistent internal funding for research centres. It can be expected that a higher visibility of research labs attracts innovative corporations for collaborations. Subsequently, such a focus would assure a more consistent exchange and influence from research onto teaching and vice versa. While there are some examples of interdisciplinary collaboration, these remain limited. To move towards exceeding the benchmark, the University is encouraged to expand such initiatives and institutionalise support mechanisms cross-disciplinary research activities. SDU University explains in their statement that efforts are underway to enhance the research infrastructure by transforming selected teaching laboratories into research-oriented facilities. For example, the Artificial Intelligence and Computer Vision labs now operate as part of the AI Centre, supporting interdisciplinary research and faculty involvement in active research projects.

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<sup>59</sup> [IYSC 2022 - SDU University](#), last accessed March 28, 2025.

<sup>60</sup> [ICBCB 2024 - SDU University](#), last accessed March 28, 2025.

<sup>61</sup> [SDSN Conference 2024](#), last accessed March 28, 2025.

SDU University has implemented instruments that ensure a good scientific practice. The panel was impressed by the way in which the University handles the rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI). They have formalised a regulation on the use of artificial AI instruments and actively train their faculty staff in the use of AI.

The quality management system includes instruments and methods for the regular assessment of the quality of research. While individual research activities are monitored and evaluated, the panel **recommends** further systematisation of the institution's overall research portfolio. This includes developing a structured overview of ongoing and completed research projects, clearly identifying responsible individuals, research centres, and thematic focus areas. A more systematic approach would not only enhance transparency and coordination but also support strategic planning and continuous improvement in the University's research performance. SDU University states that it is actively working toward the systematisation of its overall research portfolio. Currently, information related to research activities is publicly available through the Research section of the University's official website, where updates on internal and external grants, research centres, scientific journals, and other research outputs are regularly published. Oversight and approval of research initiatives are managed by the University's Research Board, which ensures coordination and strategic alignment of research efforts across faculties and centres. To further enhance transparency and consistency, a comprehensive Research Reporting and Monitoring Guideline will be developed. This document will serve as a formal framework for documenting research progress, consolidating outcomes, and supporting evidence-based planning. The guideline will be shared with both internal and external stakeholders to promote accountability and informed engagement. The expert panel acknowledges SDU University's efforts. However, the recommendation remains in place as the process is still ongoing.

SDU University promotes a culture of cooperation in research that corresponds to the individual subjects' cultures.

	Exceptional	Exceeds quality requirements	Meets quality requirements	Does not meet quality requirements
<b>IV. Research</b>				
(1) Research strategy			x	
(2) Research activities			x	
(3) Promotion of research			x	
(4) Good scientific practice			x	
(5) Quality assurance in research			x	
(6) Research cooperations			x	

## V. SERVICES (ADMINISTRATION, CONSULTING AND ACADEMIC SUPPORT)

### Services

The University has an Institute of Advisership to provide individual assistance to students and to conduct advisory and methodological work with students regarding the choice of educational trajectory, disciplines, and teachers one month before the start of enrolment. The Advisor conducts organizational, methodological and advisory work during the registration period and introduces students to the Student Handbook<sup>62</sup>.

Registration for disciplines and the formation of an individual educational plan of the student includes:

- Familiarisation of the student with the rules of organization of the educational process on credit technology of education,
- Familiarisation of the student with educational trajectories,
- Familiarisation of the student with the list and content of elective disciplines and the sequence of their study,
- Enrolment in disciplines in the amount of not less than the established number of credits in the academic year to master the chosen curriculum,
- Compliance with the established terms of registration and re-registration for academic disciplines.

SDU University provides **academic advisors** to students. These are teachers who perform the functions of an academic mentor, studying in the relevant study programme, assisting in the choice of learning path (formation of an individual educational plan) and mastering the study programme during the period of study. Identification of the needs of different groups of students is identified with the help of the academic advisor, who is appointed after the enrolment of the applicant to the University. The academic adviser is appointed from the staff of the teaching staff, who has work experience at the University and the necessary pedagogical qualifications. It is obligatory for the advisor and the student to meet before the beginning of each semester to discuss the proposed course of study as well as procedural and personal issues related to the educational process. Advisors help students not only in the course of choosing a path of study and its adjustment but also monitors the progress of students and compliance of the educational process with the requirements of legislation, instructions and regulations, representing the academic interests of students at all levels.

SDU University offers the following further services:

- SDU University has a **Student Service Centre**<sup>63</sup> which offers numerous services related to admissions, academic records and tuition fees of students. The University has

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<sup>62</sup> The Student Handbook comprises information about the University and its faculties, other academic units, student service centre, grades and GPA, distance learning environment, scientific library, financial matters, social life, student housing and more.

<sup>63</sup> [Student Service Center - SDU University](#), last accessed March 28, 2025.

developed an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy. Students who feel like they have been treated unfairly may report this to the Student Service Centre for guidance on how to proceed.

- The **Psychological Support Centre**<sup>64</sup> provides mental health consultations to students and employees with the aim to promote mental health and well-being within the University community.
- The **Science Department** provides academic support to faculty members and students. This includes administrative support when applying for internal and external research projects, conducting research within the University, etc.
- The **Extension School**<sup>65</sup> offers professional development opportunities to faculty members to help them enhance their teaching skills and stay up to date with recent advances in the education field.
- The **Subject Librarian** provides specialized assistance in curation a list of publications and books on a specific research topic upon request from faculty members and researchers.
- SDU University concluded a contract with a Med Centre to provide medical care for its students. The **Medical Centre**<sup>66</sup> provides outpatient medical care to students and staff of SDU University.
- The goal of the **Grand Office**<sup>67</sup> is to identify and support applicants and students from low-income families who are socially active and have sufficient academic performance and motivation for further education.
- The **Department of Career and Professional Development**<sup>68</sup> helps students explore and prepare for their future careers.
- The **Inclusion Support Services**<sup>69</sup> are designed to support students with special needs and/or disabilities, ensuring equal access to educational opportunities and resources.

## Assessment of Services

Assessment of study programme support services is conducted to identify the timeliness of orders for updating the material and technical base, repair of classroom equipment and furniture, purchase of educational and methodological literature, and access to Internet resources. For this purpose, satisfaction surveys are conducted among students, teachers and administrative staff. All members of the University community participate in the survey providing a comprehensive view of satisfaction levels across different groups. Results are analysed and shared with relevant departments and faculties. The feedback is used to make improvements to the University environment, infrastructure, support services, and overall experience. The results are discussed at the Administrative Council and are used to inform strategic planning and decision-making.

**The Student Satisfaction Survey** is administered annually to determine all students' level of

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<sup>64</sup> [Psychological Support Centre - SDU University](#), last accessed March 28, 2025.

<sup>65</sup> [SDU Extension School - SDU University](#), last accessed March 28, 2025.

<sup>66</sup> [Medical Center - SDU University](#), last accessed April 11, 2025.

<sup>67</sup> [Grant office - SDU University](#), last accessed April 11, 2025.

<sup>68</sup> [Careers & Professional Development - SDU University](#), last accessed April 11, 2025.

<sup>69</sup> [Inclusion Support Services - SDU University](#), last accessed April 11, 2025.

satisfaction with various student support areas and services at SDU University. The Quality Assurance Department collects the data to identify aspects of the University's operations and services that are either performing effectively or need improvement. The survey includes questions on:

- General Student Demographics
- Inclusivity & Diversity
- Learning Environment and Conditions
- Support Services
- Student Government
- Communication with the University
- *Separate section for International Students*
- Research (*only for PhD students*)
- Overall Feedback

Data from numerical questions is processed with Microsoft Excel tools and PowerBI. Written comments are analysed separately. The surveys are conducted on the SurveyMonkey platform on an anonymous and voluntary basis.

**The Academic Staff Satisfaction Survey** aims to measure the level of faculty satisfaction with working conditions, professional development and leadership at SDU University in order to support decisions for making the University a better workplace. This survey helps to better support and sustain faculty well-being and belonging, and to increase equity and justice at SDU University. Survey questions cover the topics:

- General Information
- Inclusivity & Diversity
- Human Resources Management
- Teaching
- Research
- Teaching and Research
- Environment Conditions
- Support Services
- *Separate section for International Academic Staff*
- Overall Feedback

**The Administrative Staff Satisfaction Survey** has a similar aim as the faculty satisfaction survey. The survey includes questions on:

- General Information
- Inclusivity & Diversity
- Human Resources Management
- Support Services
- Interaction & Effectiveness
- Overall Feedback

In addition to the University, the Academic Integrity League<sup>70</sup> also conducts a student satisfaction survey as well as a faculty satisfaction survey at the end of each academic year. These surveys are conducted directly and independently by the League team responsible. The University receives the results of the survey to further improve processes and increase satisfaction.

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<sup>70</sup> [Лига Академической честности - Main](#), last accessed March 28, 2025.

## Further Development of Services

The results of these surveys are sent to faculties and teaching staff for information, as well as discussed at the meetings of the Faculty Council, Educational and Methodical Council, and Administrative Council. The University conducts the annual Town Hall meetings of the management with all employees and students. At the meetings the management reports about which measures have been implemented in the past year. Management shares the plans for the next year, comments on the results of the satisfaction survey, and reports the corrective actions performance. Further, management answers questions of all participants. After the meeting, a questionnaire is sent to all participants to get feedback on the meeting, the results of which are taken to improve organizational issues at the next meeting.

Internal audits conducted by a specially trained group of university employees systematically evaluate the effectiveness of business processes and provide insights and data that inform the improvement and development of the services offered by SDU University.

### *Appraisal “Services”*

SDU University provides the necessary services for the support in all areas of performance. The services correspond to SDU University’s profile. These services are predominantly digital, easily accessible, and designed with user-friendliness in mind. The expert panel was particularly impressed by the proactive nature of the support provided. Notable examples include the Medical Centre, which ensures around-the-clock medical assistance for students and staff through on-site doctors and nurses. However, despite the high quality and effectiveness of these services, the panel notes that the full range of support offerings is not sufficiently documented. Due to this lack of systematic documentation, the quality criterion cannot be considered as exceeded.

The quality management system includes instruments and methods for the regular assessment of the quality of services, primarily through satisfaction surveys distributed to students and staff. As part of the SDU University Strategy 2023–2028: Prioritizing User Experience, the University has developed a well-documented and organized Quality Assurance Guide for University Services to ensure that information on services is effectively translated into concrete improvement measures. The Guide provides a structured approach to ensure that all relevant departments engage with collected feedback, analyse data and identified issues, develop clear action plans, and systematically follow up on their implementation. Integrated within the University's Quality Management System, the implementation of planned actions is centrally monitored, with oversight provided by the Administrative Council based on key service quality indicators. The effectiveness of these actions is regularly assessed to support ongoing improvement. The Guide outlines the main stages of the quality assurance process, from issue identification through to implementation and evaluation. Importantly, it incorporates a “closing the loop” mechanism, allowing the University to assess stakeholder satisfaction with the changes made and to integrate this feedback into the next cycle of continuous improvement.



	Exceptional	Exceeds quality requirements	Meets quality requirements	Does not meet quality requirements
<b>V. SERVICES (ADMINISTRATION, CONSULTING AND ACADEMIC SUPPORT)</b>				
(1) Services			x	
(2) Assessment of services			x	
(3) Further development of services			x	

## VI. RESOURCES

### Rooms and Facilities

SDU University started its educational activities from a small building in the centre of Almaty with a student contingent of 600 students. In 2012, the university moved to a new campus in Kaskelen, just outside of Almaty. The campus is located on the territory of 14 hectares. The campus includes the SDU University main building, student housing as well as the SDU life centre. Across campus Wi-Fi is available providing round-the-clock access to all databases.

The main building offers room for all faculties of the University as well as the library and various other student services. The SDU Scientific Library<sup>71</sup> aims to improve the quality of education and science in the University by providing reliable and effective information resources, as well as high-quality services to researchers, instructors, staff and students. The SDU Library is located in the basement, ground floor, and first floor of the SDU University building. There are 624 seats available. The first floor of the Library is fully dedicated to self-study of students. There is also an isolated Meeting room on the first floor, which can be booked for groups of at least twelve people. The library offers 25 computers with Internet connection. An online portal for the Scientific Library of SDU University has been developed. This online portal integrates an online catalogue with integrated EBSCO Discovery Service (system of unified search), which helps to search materials through all available SDU University databases in Kazakh, Russian, and foreign languages. The library's collection is formed in accordance with the study programmes offered. To access online information resources, the Scientific Library of SDU University provides access to the EBSCOhost, SAGE electronic databases and EBSCO e-book collection (more than 212 000 books). Under the national subscription, access is available to Scopus, and Web of Science resources (references only). In addition to the existing electronic materials, the library regularly collects requests from teachers to purchase test and permanent subscriptions to databases in the main directions of the University's faculties. Further, a memorandum of cooperation has been signed with the Library of Nazarbayev University and Kazakh National Women's Teacher Training University, enabling students to use their resources as well. SDU Library has an Institutional repository<sup>72</sup> to collect, archive, and provide open access to all works of faculty, as well as theses and dissertations of master's and doctoral students. To date, over 1200 works by faculty and

<sup>71</sup> [Library SDU](#), last accessed April 10, 2025.

<sup>72</sup> <https://repository.sdu.edu.kz/home/>, last accessed April 10, 2025.



students of SDU University have been uploaded. The library collection consists of 418,709 copies, of which 29% are in Kazakh language, 8% are in Russian, and 63% are in foreign languages.

All classrooms are equipped with projectors, podiums, and the necessary computer and software resources. The Red Hall is a spacious hall for large-scale events, conferences, and other gatherings. It is fully equipped with the latest technology and facilities for simultaneous translation.

The University has 34 laboratories across various faculties and school, all furnished with modern equipment tailored to meet the needs of the respective study programme:

- Laboratory of Virtualization and Cloud Computing
- Red Hat Laboratory
- Physics Lab
- MSM Lab
- Internet of Things (IoT Laboratory)
- Huawei Laboratory
- Halyk Academy
- Distributed Systems and Computing Lab
- CISCO Networking Academy
- Microelectronics (Chip Lab)
- Artificial Intelligence Laboratory
- STEM laboratory
- Physics laboratory
- Educational Physics laboratory
- Inorganic and Analytical Chemistry Laboratory
- Organic and Instrumental Chemistry Laboratory
- Experimental Biology Laboratory
- Biosphere Laboratory
- SDU Law Clinic
- Criminology Polygon
- Criminology Laboratory
- IT & Law Research Centre
- German Law Research Centre
- Courtroom Laboratory
- MediaLab
- MediaDesign Lab
- Photo Lab
- Central Asia Research Centre
- United Nations Classroom (UNC)
- UNESCO Club Laboratory
- AIFC BCPD - SDU FinLab
- Business School Laboratory

There is a centralized database of electronic addresses, and every teacher and student have their own email on the sdu.edu.kz domain. The majority of teachers utilize innovative and informational technologies in the process of teaching, utilizing computers equipped with necessary software<sup>73</sup>. Each workstation for academic and administrative staff is equipped with a computer and office equipment.

The SDU Life Centre serves as a hub for student clubs and social events. It also includes a large sports hall with new equipment for a variety of athletic activities. In the centre all conditions have been created for students to lead a healthy lifestyle and engage in creativity. The building has a gym and rooms for various activities, an assembly hall, separate fitness rooms for male and female students, as well as changing rooms. There is also a dining hall, elevator, and parking lot in the building.

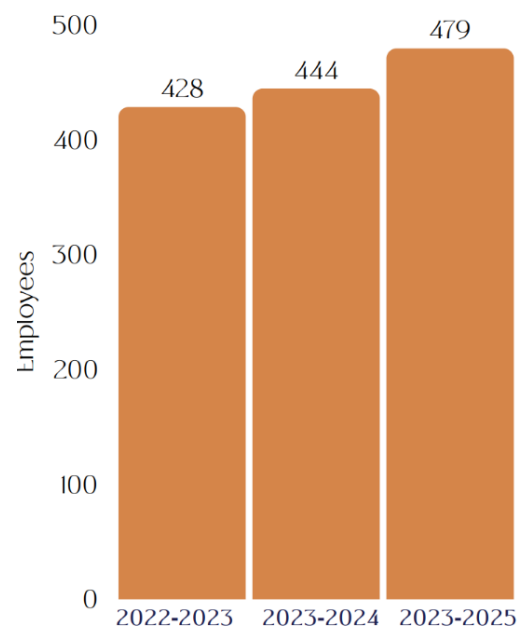
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<sup>73</sup> Windows, Office Professional version, Gimp, Sublime, Blender, Dev C++ Bloodshed, Cisco Packet Tracer, Codebloc, Foxit, Java + Java Development, Silverlight, Visual Studio, Netbeans, Python, Ruby, Stamina, Firebird, Matlab, Photoshop, Camtasia Studio, Assembler, TechSmith, etc.

## Full-time Teaching Staff

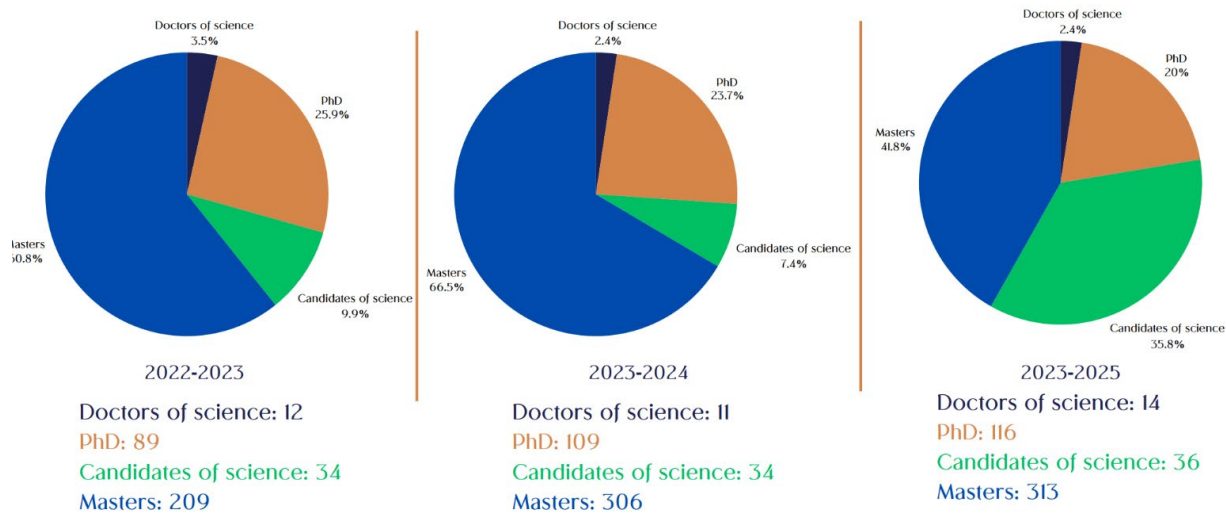
Each of the four faculties, Business School, and MDE centre at SDU University identifies specific quality requirements for academic staff based on their needs, focusing on educational level and research background. Academic staff are generally expected to hold advanced degrees, preferably at the doctoral level, and have a proven track record of research and publication. The selection process is competitive, ensuring that candidates not only meet the academic standards of the University but also bring a set of skills and experiences to enhance the learning environment. Candidates must provide an English proficiency certificate such as IELTS or TOEFL, or a diploma of education from an English-speaking country. The hiring process includes an interview with the HR department, interview with the faculty administration, preparing a demo-lesson, and submissions of the professional references from previous workplaces.

The teaching staff at SDU University currently consists of 479 members. Over the academic years from 2022 to 2025, SDU University has experienced steady growth in academic staff numbers. Since 2022, there was a 7,9% increase in academic employees. The graphs below illustrate the development and outline the composition of degree levels of teaching staff.



*Figure 5: Development of Academic Staff Numbers*

## Degree Level Composition



*Figure 6: Degree Level Composition of Academic Staff*

Out of 444 full-time academic staff, 23.4% have received education abroad, for example in the USA, UK, Malaysia, and Turkey. Additionally, 58 staff members, or about 13% of the total, are Bolashak scholarship<sup>74</sup> holders. Overall, Kazakhstani employees remain the majority, with international staff increasing to 3% in the academic year 2024/25. The University employs 13 international staff members, primarily from Australia, Japan, Nigeria, Iraq, India, and Pakistan.

### Part-time Teaching Staff

The quality requirements for external teaching staff at SDU University are similar to those for full-time professors, with a focus on practical industry experience. External teaching staff are integrated into the organization and quality assurance of teaching through a structured process. At the beginning of each academic semester, teachers and the dean of the faculty discuss individual KPIs which include teaching hours, quality of teaching, student feedback, research activities, publications, and participation in the conferences. At the end of the academic semester, the achievement of the KPIs is discussed. Students assess each teacher's methodological quality and provide feedback.

### Human Resources

The University places a strong emphasis on the professional growth and development of its staff. The personnel policy of the University is founded on a systematic approach and is governed by a set of rules and regulations.<sup>75</sup> All guidelines are accessible to all SDU University staff members

<sup>74</sup> Information available at [Bolashaq International Scholarship](#), last accessed May 5, 2025.

<sup>75</sup> Such as regulations of hiring the employees, regulations on the remuneration of the employees, instruction on evaluation and development of competencies of employees, regulations on training and professional development of the employees, regulations on the probation and adaptation of employees, rules of internal labour order, methodology for grading positions in the SDU University, and regulations on the rules of personnel procedures.

through the electronic portal PMS (Personnel Information System). The main principles of the personnel policy are based on the University Strategy and prioritize ongoing staff development and the maintenance of high professional standards.

The Personnel Policy of the SDU University encompasses the following key objectives:

- Implementation of a comprehensive system for qualitative and quantitative planning of human resources
- Enhancement of the personnel selection and recruitment processes
- Improvement of the personnel training system
- Enhancement of the personnel assessment system
- Creation and development of a personnel reserve
- Improvement of the remuneration and material incentive system for employees
- Enhancement of the social support system for employees.

The University offers various programmes to support the continuous development of the staff. The Jas Maman (“young specialist”) programme provides young scholars with opportunities to pursue master’s or doctoral degree at SDU University with internal grants and fellowships eventually employing them as senior lecturers. The Learning and Development Manager of the HR Department oversees training activities which are categorized into internal and external training. Internal training involves courses delivered by the University staff (e.g. workshops and seminars on acquiring specific hard skills). External training engages third-party organizations for specialized educational events.

Regular research and methodological seminars with invited speakers, as well as summer and winter schools are organized by SDU Extension School for teaching staff. Staff members are also encouraged to pursue specific certifications and qualifications with partial or full funding provided by the University. Employees who hold certain certifications are eligible for additional bonuses to their remuneration. Both teaching and administrative staff are provided with training courses to enhance their qualifications or learn new skills.

## Financing

As mentioned above, the Financial Council manages the financial affairs of the University, ensuring the proper budget distribution and oversight.<sup>76</sup> SDU University finances their activities through a variety of sources. These include the following:

1. **Government funding.** Currently, studies of 74% of students are financed as part of government scholarships at all levels (Bachelor, master and doctorate). SDU University has identified a high dependence from state funding, therefore in its new strategy 2023-2028, SDU University focuses to decrease dependence from the state under the Financial Sustainability mandate.<sup>77</sup>
2. **Tuition and fees:** 30 % of income of the University comes from tuition and fees paid by

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<sup>76</sup> See chapter II for further details of the composition and responsibilities.

<sup>77</sup> SER, p. 56.

the students both local and international. Future plans of the University include increasing this stream of income.

3. **Donations and Fundraising**<sup>78</sup>: SDU University has the Fundraising Office which coordinates the process of donations, and financial support from its alumni and partners. This money is used to support students and faculty through granting scholarships & fellowships, research grants, as well as the purchase of laboratory equipment and funding for various projects carried out by the University
4. **Partnerships and Collaborations**: SDU University has close ties with the private sector and non-governmental organizations who also bring additional funds in organizing international conferences, seminars as well as to sponsor campus facilities. Currently, one of the partners Freedom Holding Corp. They sponsored the construction of the AI block which was recently opened.
5. **Research grants and contracts**: The research income of SDU University is not significant. At the moment, the research income mostly comes from the state research funding on specific projects. There are some small international grants. They are mostly sponsored by international organizations such as EU organizations and UN organizations.
6. **Auxiliary Enterprises**: In addition, SDU University has other revenue-generating activities such as campus space rent, health care facilities, dining, accommodation for students and SDU University store.
7. **Endowments**: This is a new target for SDU University and the concept is under development and is planned to be realized as part of University Strategy 2023-2028.

SDU University aligns its budgeting with the strategic goals. Each year the University adopts an action plan for the new academic year based on the strategic goals and priorities, to ensure effective financial management. The University uses the following framework of budgeting: continuous budget (used for fixed expenses that remain relatively stable from year to year), activity budget-based action plan expenses, centralized budgeting for certain expenses (professional development, IT and book resources, advertising, etc).

### *Appraisal “Resources”*

The panel was deeply impressed with the facilities shown during the round tour of the campus. Students can make use of various labs (for example the AI lab<sup>79</sup>) as well as a well-equipped library. The research labs are equipped with the necessary infrastructure, for example the media lab and all of its users can obtain support from staff. The area for AI research has grown within the past four years and clearly reflects the research priority of the University. In addition, students can use the Technopark for developing and exchanging ideas on entrepreneurial endeavours. The leisure area and facilities, supermarket and rooms for clubs enable students to lead an active life on campus with social interactions. It was the unanimous opinion that these facilities, its usage and the resulting university cohesion is exemplary and one of its kind. Not only do the rooms and facilities enable the smooth running of SDU University, but they are also used for building community among members of the HEI. SDU Life Centre serves as a hub for student clubs,

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<sup>78</sup> For more information on the Fundraising Office see [About us - SDU University](#), last accessed April 11, 2025.

<sup>79</sup> [About faculty ENG - SDU University](#), last accessed April 22, 2025.

physical activity, and social events. SDU University's teaching and practice rooms are equipped with the most modern technology.

The qualifications of the full-time academic staff correspond to the requirements of study, teaching and research. The number of full-time professors matches the scope of tasks in teaching and research. The qualifications of the part-time teaching staff correspond to the requirements as well. They are involved in the organisation of SDU University's teaching operations in a suitable manner. The expert panel **strongly recommends** exploring strategies to attract experienced academic staff for both full-time and part-time positions. Experienced faculty members contribute to the overall quality of education by enriching the teaching process with real-world knowledge, practical insights, and advanced research capabilities. They are also more likely to possess established academic and professional networks, which can foster collaborations, enhance research output, and increase the institution's visibility and reputation. In their statement, SDU University recognizes the strategic importance of increasing the proportion of experienced academic staff to enhance both teaching quality and research performance. In response, the University has initiated a range of measures to attract highly qualified professionals for both full-time and part-time academic positions. The recruitment strategy includes targeted outreach efforts such as participation in international academic job fairs and the establishment of partnerships with global research networks to identify and engage high-profile scholars. In addition, as part of its strategy to establish international partnerships, the University plans to attract high-quality faculty and facilitate knowledge exchange. Currently, an agreement has been reached with the University of Hong Kong, and negotiations are underway with the University of Birmingham regarding a long-term strategic partnership. At the same time, the University is reviewing its human resources policies to introduce more flexible employment conditions, including part-time and hybrid roles, to appeal to candidates with substantial academic and/or industry experience. The efforts are acknowledged by the expert panel, but the outcomes should be reviewed at a later stage for further evaluation.

The human resources in the different areas of performance allow for the adequate fulfilment of tasks. Staff development and qualification take place for all staff groups. For example, the University offers summer and winter schools for further training and provides the option for English classes. Nonetheless, the experts **recommend** the implementation of continuous, targeted professional development programmes for young administrative staff to strengthen their professional skills and managerial competencies. In their statement on the report, SDU University recognises the importance of strengthening the competencies of young administrative staff as part of its broader institutional strategy. In alignment with the goals in leadership development, talent management, and data-driven HR processes, SDU University is initiating targeted professional development programmes aimed at building essential managerial and operational skills. These programmes are integrated into the evolving HR strategy and will support long-term capacity building, agility, and internal career progression. By investing in the development of emerging talent, SDU University aims to build a pipeline of capable and confident administrators who are well-equipped to contribute to the University's strategic goals and adapt to an evolving higher education landscape. By the beginning of the new academic year, SDU University plans

to launch an onboarding programme for new employees, including mentorship and training in key professional skills. Modular training sessions will be implemented, focusing on project management, digital tools, and effective communication. SDU University has developed and started a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Programme specifically targeting young administrative staff. Additionally, a talent pool of young professionals with leadership potential is being formed, offering them individual development paths and opportunities to participate in managerial initiatives. While the expert panel recognise this initiative, a follow-up assessment will be necessary to evaluate its effectiveness.

Furthermore, the expert panel suggests that SDU University address certain structural challenges, including the limited number of positions leading to a frequent overlap of roles of staff members. The experts address certain challenges related to the overlapping roles of teachers and researchers and their need for further training. A structured development plan for employees can help to reduce health risks due to overload. In addition, the University could develop a comprehensive human resources strategy that includes clear plans for staff retention and initiatives to attract experienced professionals as full-time faculty members. In particular, the HEI should determine the desired threshold of lecturers and researchers that have been brought up through SDU University programmes and identify additional opportunities to recruit external talents. Additional actions could also include further academic exchanges on these levels.

The financing of the different fields of performance to the necessary extent is ensured. The panel appreciated the transparency of SDU University during the onsite visitation. The panel members were impressed by how the University integrates and cooperates with third parties and the scale of their investment support for the development of university facilities, including alumni, investors, industry employers, etc. The planning process of long-term investments, short-term financing needs and decision-making levels were convincingly presented.

	Exceptional	Exceeds quality requirements	Meets quality requirements	Does not meet quality requirements
<b>VI. RESOURCES</b>				
(1) Rooms and facilities	x			
(2) Full-time teaching staff			x	
(3) Part-time teaching staff			x	
(4) Human resources			x	
(5) Financing			x	

## VII. PUBLICATION/ PUBLIC

### Competencies and Responsibilities

Informing the public about the University is done according to the Regulation of the Information Policy, as well as in accordance with the Brandbook of SDU University. The principles of informing include legality, coordination of interaction, reliability, openness and accessibility, efficiency, security, comprehensibility, and effectiveness. The main communication channels of the University are:

- Official website of the University<sup>80</sup> - including a chatbot
- Information system of educational process management
  - SDU University internal portal for employees<sup>81</sup>
  - SDU University internal portal for students<sup>82</sup>
- SDU University social networks
  - SDU University Instagram pages
  - SDU University Facebook
  - SDU University YouTube channel
  - SDU University Telegram channels
- E-mail distribution to internal and external contacts.

The University pays special attention to the transparency and relevance of information for the audience and stakeholders. The official website of the University is monitored on a quarterly basis with the participation of the Management, heads of departments and Deans of faculties. Every year, the University website undergoes a web design audit for compliance with the rule of visual web representation.

Services provided by the University including competencies and responsibilities in the field of learning and teaching, research are available on the official website of the University. Information on teaching and learning is located in the sections *Faculties & Academics* and *Students*. The *Faculties & Academics* section contains data on each faculty, contact information about department heads and coordinators, as well as a detailed description of each study programme of bachelor's, master's and doctoral studies. Questions regarding active students are displayed in the students section.

Information on qualifications, programme content, including programme description, prerequisites, comprehensive testing subjects, compulsory and optional modules, employment opportunities, international accreditation and advisory board, as well as contact information for each study programme is available on the University website in the programme profile.

Finally, informing stakeholders about updates and modifications of the study programmes is also carried out through the University social networks as well as through the portal “MY SDU”.

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<sup>80</sup> [SDU University](#), last accessed April 11, 2025.

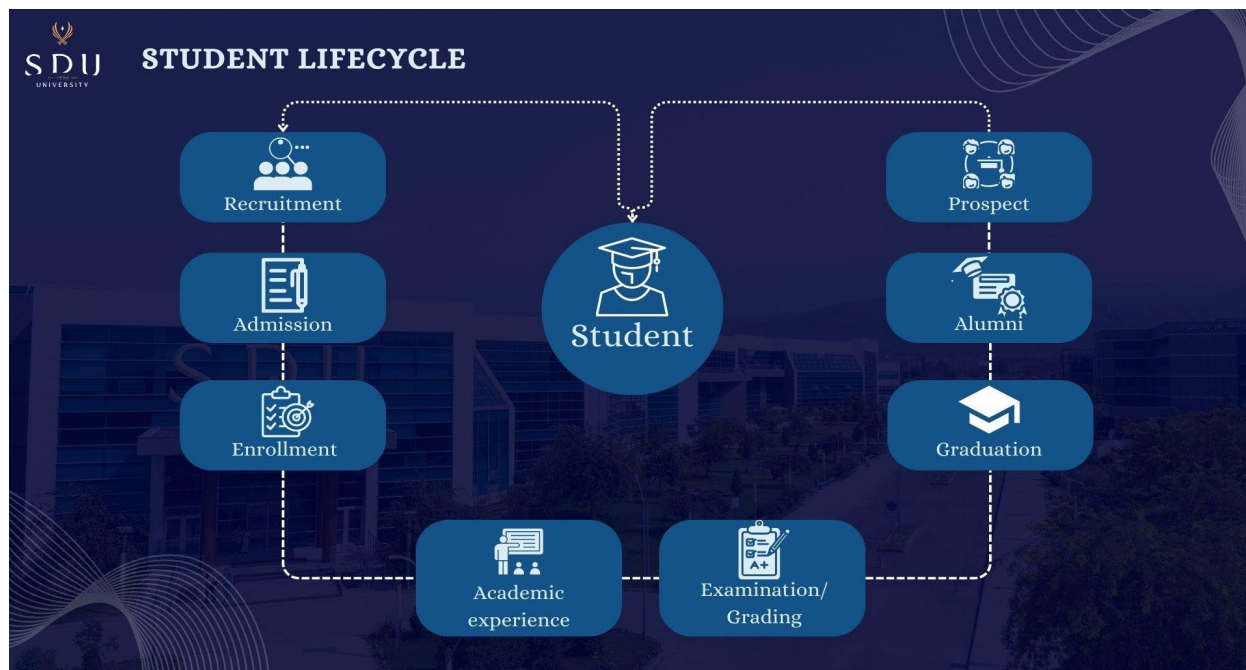
<sup>81</sup> <https://pms.sdu.edu.kz>, last accessed April 11, 2025.

<sup>82</sup> <https://my.sdu.edu.kz>, last accessed April 11, 2025.



Current information about research can be found in the *Science* section. The section provides information on research centres, projects, achievements, conferences, and scientific journals. It should be noted that the site focuses on providing up-to-date information on a wide range of services. It provides transparent access to all services, from academic programmes and research to student support and career support. The pages of the site offer all available information about each of the services provided, as well as the opportunity to contact the team for further help or advice.

## Documentation of “Student Life Cycle”



*Figure 7: Student Lifecycle*

The Admission Committee provides information about the existing study programmes at the University through all available channels of communication with the public, official booklets, as well as the University handbook.

The University has implemented information management processes, including a variety of methods of collecting and analysing information. To inform applicants, students, staff and the public, the University's official website, internal information and education portal, and official accounts of the University in social networks are used.

The information and educational portal “**MY SDU**” provides information about the learning process of each student for the entire period of study, records of academic progress in all disciplines, GPA, attendance, as well as places orders and announcements in three languages. The portal provides individual access and the student registers for disciplines and creates a schedule, gets access to the academic calendar, grades, and transcript (for the whole period of study). Further, the learner can get information about the internal rules and regulations of the

University.

Before graduation, the Career Centre requests contact information from graduating students to keep them informed about the University Alumni Association and other University events.

## Advice and Information

Prospective students and potential partners typically receive advice and information about SDU University through several channels:

- **University Website:** The official website serves as a primary source of information. It includes details about academic programmes, faculty profiles, research activities, admission requirements, and contact information.
- **SDU Recruiting Office:** The Recruiting Office members organize and provide SPT (SDU Proficiency Test) and ISPT (International SDU Proficiency Test) Olympiads for high school graduates.
- **SDU Admissions Office:** The Admissions Office handles inquiries from prospective students regarding application procedures, deadlines, entry requirements, and any other related queries. They provide personalized advice to help applicants navigate the admissions process.
- **Publications and Brochures:** SDU Marketing Department produces printed or digital publications, such as brochures, that provide an overview of the institution's offerings, facilities, and achievements. These are distributed to prospective students and partners.
- **Open Days and Campus Tours:** SDU University frequently organizes open days, campus tours, or virtual tours to give prospective students and partners a firsthand experience of the campus environment, facilities, and academic life. These events allow direct interaction with faculty, staff, and current students.
- **Information Sessions and Webinars:** The University hosts information sessions or webinars aimed at prospective students and partners. These sessions cover topics such as academic programmes, research opportunities, student life, and collaboration possibilities.
- **Social Media and Online Presence:** SDU University has active social media accounts and online platforms (like YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram) where they share updates, student achievements, research breakthroughs, and engage with prospective students and partners.
- **Corporate Development Department:** This department serves as a link between the University and industry.

## Public Relations

SDU University has identified a strong corporate culture and internal communications as essential elements for the development of the institution.<sup>83</sup> Therefore, SDU University pays great attention to creating a favourable working atmosphere and conditions for timely exchange of information vertically and horizontally. SDU University has introduced the practice of an annual meeting of the management with all employees as well as students (Town hall meetings<sup>84</sup>). At these

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<sup>83</sup> SER, p. 61.

<sup>84</sup> [Successful Townhall Meeting Held with SDU Employees - SDU University](#), last accessed April 11, 2025.

meetings, the management talks about the work done in the past year and shares project plans for the next year, comments on the results of the questionnaires on Satisfaction survey for staff and satisfaction survey for students, as well as personally answers questions from all interested parties. After the meeting, a questionnaire is sent to all participants to get feedback on the meeting, based on the results of which steps are taken to improve organizational issues at the next meeting.

Additionally, to keep SDU University staff informed, the SDU News Digest from the Marketing Department, the Rules and Regulations Digest from the Quality Assurance Department, and the Library News Digest from the SDU Scientific Library are e-mailed to all staff monthly.

At the same time, there is also an Instagram page, where current vacancies, news and facts from the corporate life of SDU University are published. In the social network Telegram, there are special channels that are intended only for SDU University employees and for internal and external stakeholders where current news, announcements, meeting new employees and other useful information are published.

## **Results of Quality Management**

All main business processes are regulated and described in the internal regulations of the University. As part of quality management, these regulations are updated and supplemented on an ongoing basis. All current regulations are posted on the PMS portal and are divided into two sections: Academic and Administrative. Also, as mentioned above, a digest of updates of existing regulations and approval of new ones is e-mailed to all staff on a monthly basis. Implementation of the University Strategy within one academic year is reflected in the Operational Plans of faculties, schools, centres and structural units. The implementation of the operational plans is reviewed by the top management at the end of each semester. In turn, the Rector and all Vice-Rectors make a full report on the results of the year to all stakeholders during a town hall meeting.

Official decisions of the University's collegial bodies are mailed to all interested stakeholders. The university has a collegial body, the Quality Assurance Committee, and the report of the meeting of this body will be published on the official website of the university to keep the members of the university informed about the measures and results of quality management. Further, the Quality Assurance Department creates reports following its surveys which vary in length and detail depending on the target group. These customised reports are sent to students, faculty members and management.

The “MY SDU” portal is an effective channel of communication with students. This portal has all the necessary information for students. All the current University Regulations, announcements, monitoring results, dashboards, etc. are posted on this portal. Furthermore, for effective communication with students, the University actively develops social networks, where information about social events and news are usually published, and feedback from students, applicants, and the community is effectively collected and analysed.

### *Appraisal “Publication/Public”*

Competencies and responsibilities in the control system are clearly and transparently regulated and published. Stand-in arrangements for competencies and responsibilities are defined in order to ensure smooth and consistent performance in all areas.

Regulations regarding the “student life cycle” are defined and published. The documentation of the “student life cycle” is constantly updated, it is accessible to all interested parties also in digital form, and it creates high transparency.

SDU University has established suitable service offers to ensure that prospective students and potential cooperation partners are provided with advice and information.

SDU University’s members as well as external stakeholders and the public are informed on SDU University’s activities on a regular basis. SDU University conducts active public relations and network communication, which reflects on external media and external stakeholders. SDU University has multiple Telegram channels catering to different groups of stakeholders. Further, SDU University actively participates in discussions on higher education policy. The panel assesses the information policy of SDU University as very systematic and comprehensive.

SDU University informs its members in a suitable manner on the quality management’s measures and results. Regular townhall meetings are held to update both students and staff while facilitating direct dialogue. In addition, the Quality Assurance Department (QAD) has recently begun compiling and disseminating survey result reports to various university stakeholders, including the management, faculty, and students. The expert panel commends these initial steps and encourages the University to build upon them. SDU University explains in the statement that it established a consistent and structured practice for publishing regular reports on survey findings. Survey data is systematically analysed and compiled into standardized reports that are made available through multiple channels to ensure transparency and stakeholder engagement. While selected annual reports are published on the University’s official website, the broader dissemination of survey results takes place via internal information systems, including the Performance Management System (PMS), Learning Management System (LMS), and MySDU portal. In addition, relevant reports are sent directly to students, academic and administrative units via email to support timely review and follow-up actions. The use of the Explorance Blue platform has further strengthened this process. Individual staff profiles within the platform provide personalised access to feedback results, fostering a culture of data-informed improvement and accountability.

Overall, the panel is particularly impressed by the commitment and dedication demonstrated by the QAD and wishes that SDU University increases the visibility of their work within the institution. To support these efforts sustainably, the panel **recommends** reviewing the department’s resources to ensure that its responsibilities remain manageable, and its effectiveness is not compromised by overextension. Taking into account the recommendations of the expert panel and in line with SDU University’s strategic focus on leadership, process optimisation, and sustainable growth, an updated staffing structure has been developed to support the planned

launch of three online study programmes in the upcoming academic year. This structure includes changes in the faculty and administrative staff as well as adjustments to the organisational structure, and will be presented to the Board of Trustees for approval. The proposed changes are part of broader institutional efforts aimed at ensuring that departmental responsibilities remain manageable and that operational efficiency is not compromised by overextension of resources. The University is actively reviewing the allocation of human and structural resources to maintain a balanced workload and ensure high performance across both academic and administrative functions. Final decisions on implementation will be made by the Board of Trustees at its scheduled meeting in August 2025. The expert panel appreciates that an initiative has been launched and acknowledge the effort. As it remains important to revisit and evaluate the outcomes to ensure their effectiveness, the recommendation remains in place.

	Exceptional	Exceeds quality requirements	Meets quality requirements	Does not meet quality requirements
<b>VII. PUBLICATION/ PUBLIC</b>				
(1) Competencies and responsibilities		x		
(2) Documentation “student life cycle“		x		
(3) Advice and information			x	
(4) Public relations		x		
(5) Results of quality management			x	