

**Evaluation Report for the Accreditation of Study Programmes**  
 offered by  
**the School of International Journalism of**  
**MGIMO University, Moscow**

Name of Programme	Degree Awarded	ECTS credit points	Programme duration	Type of programme	Annual admission capacity	Taught in
International Journalism	Bachelor of Journalism	240	4 years	Full-time	50	Russian
Advertising and Public Relations	Bachelor of Advertising and Public Relations	240	4 years	Full-time	50	Russian
Sociology of Mass Communication	Bachelor of Sociology of Mass Communication	240	4 years	Full-time	20	Russian
International Journalism	Master of Journalism	120	2 years	Full-time	20	Russian
Translator and Interpreter Training for International Organizations	Master of Linguistics/Master of Education	120	2 years	Full-time	15	Russian
Russian Culture and the Arts: Traditions and Modernity	Master of Arts	120	2 years	Full-time	20	English
Germanic Languages	PhD (Linguistics)	179	3-5 years	Full-time/part-time	5	Russian
Roman Languages	PhD (Linguistics)	179	3-5 years	Full-time/part-time	15	Russian

Date of on-site talks at MGIMO University: 27-28 November 2012

Contact person (MGIMO University): Alexandra Khudaykulova, Ph.D., Vice-Rector for Educational Program Development, MGIMO University, 76, Prospect Vernadskogo, Moscow, 119454, Tel. (495) 434 92 93, email khudaykulova@mgimo.ru

Project coordinator (ZEvA): Ms Anja Grube

Expert Panel:

- **Prof. Dr. Hildegard Spraul**, retired Professor of Slavonic Linguistics, Universität des Saarlandes, Saarbrücken, Germany
- **Prof. Dr. Michael Meyen**, Professor of Communication, University of Munich, Germany
- **Prof. Dr. Frank Ettrich**, Professor of Sociology, University of Erfurt, Germany
- **Prof. Dr. Peter Ludes**, Professor of Mass Communication, Jacobs University, Bremen, Germany
  
- **Mr. Oleg Dmitriev**, Chief-Editor, Russia Today
- **Prof. Dr. Mira B. Bergelson**, Chief-editor of the English website of the President of the Russian Federation
- **Mr. Maksims Belozjorov** (student representative)

Hannover, Germany, March 6, 2013

## Table of contents

1.	Evaluation Report .....	2
1.1	Introduction: Purpose, Design and Context of the Accreditation Procedure .....	2
1.2	Outline of the Institutional Profile, Organizational Structures and Management of MGIMO University .....	3
1.3	Evaluation of the Study Programmes, the General Infrastructure and Related Managerial Aspects .....	4
1.3.1	Qualification Objectives of the Study Programmes .....	4
1.3.2	Compliance of the Study Programmes with the ECTS Users' Guide.....	6
1.3.3	Study Programmes: Curricular Structure, Teaching Contents and Achievement of Learning Outcomes .....	9
	General Remarks on the Desired Learning Outcomes of the Programmes and their Compliance with the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area.....	9
	Bachelor's programmes .....	9
	Master's programmes .....	10
	PhD programmes.....	11
	Summary and recommendations for improvement.....	11
1.3.4	Students and Study Conditions.....	12
1.3.5	Examination System .....	14
1.3.6	Cooperative Relationships .....	15
1.3.7	Resources and Infrastructure.....	16
1.3.8	Transparency and Public Information .....	17
1.3.9	Quality Assurance and Development.....	18
1.4	Summary .....	19
2.	Final vote of the expert panel .....	20
	General Recommendations: .....	20
	Recommendation to the Accreditation Commission .....	21

## 1. Evaluation Report

### 1.1 Introduction: Purpose, Design and Context of the Accreditation Procedure

By contract dated June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012 the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO University) has entrusted the Central Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (ZEvA) with the accreditation of its entire portfolio of study programmes. For this purpose, the programmes were grouped according to academic disciplines. All in all, five different clusters were formed, each of which was evaluated separately by a review panel consisting of experts from the respective scientific and/or professional background.

This is one of five evaluation reports following a series of on-site talks at MGIMO University between October and December 2012. As indicated in the survey table above, this report focuses on the Bachelor's, Master's and PhD programmes in the fields of International Journalism, Sociology/Mass Communication, Public Relations and Linguistics.

The evaluation of the study programmes is based on the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG, 2009), the Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area and the ECTS Users' Guide. Among other things, the ESG require "established processes, criteria and procedures that are used by [quality assurance] agencies which should be also pre-defined and publicly available" (ESG 2005, p. 25). Hence, ZEvA has largely applied its established procedures and evaluation criteria for the accreditation of study programmes, which are all fundamentally rooted in the European-wide standards and guidelines mentioned above. Among others, one central procedural rule is the representation of all institutional stakeholders in the expert panel. Thus, ZEvA decided to include representatives of the Russian labour market and a Russian student representative in each of the five review panels.

Russia signed the Bologna declaration in 2003 and since then has continuously implemented its basic objectives both at national and at institutional level. In the year 2004, MGIMO introduced the ECTS system with its central focus on the learners, the learning process and learning outcomes.

However, slight modifications of the accreditation framework were necessary, especially when it came to aspects that do not lie within the power of the institution alone: for example, the reviewers took a less narrow approach to issues of curricular structure and modularization, as the design and content of the curricula depend to a relatively large extent on nationwide standards defined at ministerial level, not at institutional level. In case of a positive accreditation decision, the study programmes will receive the ZEvA quality seal (instead of the seal of the German Accreditation Council). As a recognized actor in quality assurance at European level, ZEvA is also awards the quality seals of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

This evaluation report is based on the self-report and documentation submitted by the responsible departments, additional documents provided on request during the on-site visit or shortly thereafter and the on-site talks with the heads of the school and the departments involved, members of faculty, students and members of the rectorate on November 27<sup>th</sup> and

November 28<sup>th</sup>, 2012. Both in the self-report and during the talks the English language was used as a medium of communication, partly with the help of simultaneous translators.

The procedural rules and the criteria for the accreditation of the study programmes were made transparent to MGIMO at the time of contracting. Also, a template including all central evaluation criteria was created to assist the university in generating the self-report.

The experts would like to thank the leadership board, faculty, staff and students of MGIMO University for the friendly and open atmosphere during the on-site talks and the careful organization and planning of the site visit.

## **1.2 Outline of the Institutional Profile, Organizational Structures and Management of MGIMO University**

The Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO University) was founded in 1944 and quickly became Russia's leading diplomatic training institution. Still today, MGIMO is closely linked to the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, although it is operating as an independent higher education institution. Until the present day, MGIMO has retained its humanistic, decidedly non-technical profile with a focus on International Relations and Diplomacy, Economics, Law and Social Sciences.

In the course of the large-scale social, political and economic changes that Russia saw in the 1990s, MGIMO also underwent a process of restructuring and modernization. In 1994, it officially gained the status of a university. In recent years, the institution's educational scope has been continuously widened through the foundation of several new schools and institutes. During the past decade, MGIMO has also gradually got in line with the European-wide educational standards developed in the course of the Bologna Process, for example by introducing two-tier study programmes (Bachelor's/Master's programmes) and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) at all educational levels. What has remained, however, is the strong emphasis on internationality which is reflected, for instance, in the special importance attached to foreign language acquisition and a significant percentage of graduates entering diplomatic service for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A relatively large number of international students and numerous joint programs offered in cooperation with other European universities are also evidence of MGIMO's overall strategy of internationalization.

At present, MGIMO University comprises eight different schools and five associated institutes which cooperate with the schools in matters of teaching and learning, but are independent of them in terms of organization. All schools and institutes consist of several departments (.). Also, there are independent departments responsible for the general administration and coordination of Master and PhD programmes and academic supervisors in charge of the individual Master's programmes.

The study programmes discussed in this report are run by the School of International Journalism, which was established in the late 1960s and counts some of Russia's most popular journalists among its graduates. About 650 students are currently enrolled in the school's programmes, 500 of whom are female. At present, the faculty comprises almost 100 lectur-

ers.

The Bachelor's programme in International Journalism constitutes the heart of this organizational unit, followed by the Bachelor's programme in Advertising and Public Relations. All other Bachelor's and Master's programmes have only been established quite recently (that is, within the last 10 years). The two Master's programmes in the field of translating and interpreting were launched in 2010. Hence, there are not yet any graduates. The same applies to the Master's programme on Russian culture, which was especially designed for foreign students and started with its first five students this year. Further programmes (especially joint programmes in cooperation with international partners) are in the phase of development.

### **1.3 Evaluation of the Study Programmes, the General Infrastructure and Related Managerial Aspects**

#### **1.3.1 Qualification Objectives of the Study Programmes**

The central qualification goals of all programmes offered by MGIMO are based on nationwide standards which are defined by the Ministry of Education for each academic discipline. As the Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area, these standards describe the level of knowledge and the analytical, generic and communicative skills and competences that graduates should have acquired at completing a programme.

This chapter provides a brief introductory outline of the general aims and purposes of the study programmes referred to in this report. More detailed information on educational goals and learning outcomes is provided in the chapters 1.3.2 and 1.3.3.

#### **Bachelor Level**

The qualification goals of the three Bachelor's programmes in International Journalism, Advertising & PR and Sociology/Mass Communication are described in detail in the self-report and in the Diploma Supplements. As the programmes provide higher professional training in different fields, the qualification goals vary, depending on the students' desired career paths: graduates are qualified to be employed as reporters, presenters, editors or PR specialists in mass media (newspapers and magazines, TV, publishing houses, news agencies, advertising etc.), but also in governmental organizations or ministries, political parties, NGOs or in research and teaching. Graduates of the Bachelor's programme in Sociology may work as researchers, analysts, teachers or consultants for governmental organizations, the industry or various other sectors (health care, educational or cultural institutions etc.).

Apart from a practice-oriented professional training, the students of all three Bachelor's programmes are to receive a profound general education in the humanities, social sciences, economics and mathematics (cf. outline of the different educational "cycles" in Chapter 1.3.2). In particular, they are expected to acquire profound knowledge in fields that are of significance for professionals working in international contexts, as e.g. world politics, international political and economic relations or the culture and history of certain foreign countries and regions. Also, in line with MGIMO's international orientation, foreign language acquisition

plays a central role in all programmes, i.e. the knowledge of foreign languages is an essential part of the graduates' special educational profile. Whereas courses in English are compulsory for everyone, students must also choose at least one out of 20 other European and non-European languages on offer. Hence, foreign language classes take up a large part of the curriculum, making for about one third of the total workload. Part of the language classes closely relate to the field of journalism and media studies, that is, students acquire exactly the competencies they need for their professional careers (as e.g. "English for International Journalists").

Furthermore, the Bachelor students are to develop general personal and social competences as e.g. the ability to cooperate with others within a team, the capability of self-development and self-improvement as well as analytical skills and the capability of independent thinking. Intercultural competence is also imparted in the context of the language classes.

Also, students are expected to learn how to interact constructively with other members of society, to assume responsibility for them and to solve conflicts. Tolerance of social, ethnic and cultural differences is part of this. In summary, graduates should have an understanding of the social significance of their work, be able to contribute actively to the advancement of civil society and to initiate positive change.

### Master level

Most of MGIMO's Master's programmes are strongly practice-driven rather than research-oriented: the ability to conduct independent scientific research is part of the programmes' qualification goals, but plays a lesser role than the aspect of employability. In this respect, the School of International Journalism is no exception. It must be kept in mind, however, that this is well in line with the overall profile of the institution: the main focus of the university still lies on educating future leading figures in business, law, diplomatic services and politics, i.e. on providing higher professional education instead of producing top-class scholars. It should also be stressed in this context that a large part of Russia's research output is still attributable to scientific academies and institutes, rather than higher education institutions.

Students of the Master's programme in International Journalism further develop their own professional profile and personal skills, including language skills and methods of journalistic creativity. They are expected to advance their knowledge and understanding of journalism, mass media and related areas (media psychology, media economics etc.). Furthermore, they are to learn how to act responsibly and to adhere to ethical standards in professional contexts. As the graduates of the Bachelor's programme in International Journalism, the Master's graduates are employable in a very broad range of different media and organizations – that is, the programme aims at producing "universal soldiers" rather than highly specialized experts in particular fields, as e.g. political journalism.

The two programmes on Translatology and Interpretation are aimed at graduates in Modern Languages, Linguistics, Education or International Relations who are interested in becoming either professional translators or interpreters in international organizations or university teachers in the field. Apart from undergoing professional training, students learn how to apply the methods and principles of scientific research. Also, they are expected to further develop

their general personal competences and social skills. Didactic training is of special importance for the MA in Education.

The Master's programme on Russian Culture and the Arts is not quite as strongly focused on the aspect of employability, as it is especially designed for foreign students who wish to learn more about Russian art, history, society and media. Thus, the focus of the programme is on imparting knowledge and methods of scientific research rather than professional skills, even though graduates have employment prospects outside science and research, as, for example, in cultural institutions or the tourism industry.

### PhD Level

All Master's graduates may also proceed to PhD level. In the field of Linguistics, postgraduate students may specialize either on Germanic or Roman Languages.

As distinguished from the Bachelor's and Master's programmes, developing the research abilities of the students is the central educational goal at PhD level. Graduates are expected to be capable of designing and planning a research project and of conducting critical and independent analyses.

### 1.3.2 Compliance of the Study Programmes with the ECTS Users' Guide

In 2004 MGIMO was the first Russian university to introduce the European Credit Transfer System based on the awarding of credit points for achieved learning outcomes. Courses are worth between 1 and 10 ECTS credit points.

Bachelor's programmes at MGIMO comprise 240 ECTS credits to be acquired within a span of four years (60 credits per academic year). As a general rule, the courses are not grouped into larger educational components (modules) but are instead allocated to one of the three following "cycles" (Russian: cikl) :

- Humanities, social and economic cycle ('general' academic cycle)
- Mathematic cycle
- Professional cycle

The "cycles" may be most appropriately described as courses of lectures in different disciplinary fields. On principle, all Russian undergraduate students must fulfil general education requirements instead of focusing exclusively on a particular academic discipline. (In this sense, the Russian education system is comparable to that of the United States. In both countries, students leave school at a considerably younger age than in most EU countries. Hence, they receive a large part of their general education at third level.) The general educational parts of the programme are represented by the first two courses of lectures mentioned above. Even though the term "cycle" may not be a fully adequate translation of the Russian "cikl" it shall be further used in the context of this report for the sake of convenience.

The three educational strands of the programme are not studied successively, but simultaneously: each semester students take courses from more than one cycle (i.e. from each

course of lectures). Each cycle includes both compulsory elements (as prescribed by ministerial directive) and a range of varying electives that lie in the responsibility of the institution itself.

Additional ECTS points are awarded for foreign language training, internship placements, the final state examinations (cf. Chapter 1.3.5) and the final paper. The content and didactic purpose of the individual cycles will be described in more detail in Chapter 1.3.3.

At Master level, a total of 120 ECTS points is awarded (60 credits per year). All Master's programmes consist of the following cycles/pillars:

- Humanities, social and economic cycle
- Professional cycle
- Internship and thesis

ECTS points are also awarded to PhD students, even though there is very little teaching input in the PhD programmes: out of a total of 179 ECTS points, independent research work accounts for 165 ECTS points.

By ministerial directive, one ECTS credit point equals a total workload of ca. 36 hours at all levels of qualification (both contact hours and self-study time are included in this value, which applies to all higher education institutions in the country). In total, this amounts to a workload of about 2160 hours per academic year, which clearly exceeds the average workload recommended in the ECTS Users' Guide (25-30 hours per ECTS point, 1500-1800 hours per year). Although the average annual student workload is high by international comparison (in most Bologna countries it does not go beyond the limit of 1.800 hours), the experts still regard it as manageable, especially for MGIMO students, who are usually of exceptional scholastic aptitude (cf. Chapter 1.3.4). In spite of that, the experts strongly recommend a closer monitoring of workload estimates at course level (cf. Chapter 1.3.4).

In accordance with the ECTS Users' Guide, ECTS points are awarded based on the assessment of these desired learning outcomes by means of different forms of examination.

The self-report included examples of ECTS key documents (Diploma Supplements, Transcripts of Records) which are, by and large, designed as recommended in the Users' Guide. The procedures in connection with the issuance of the documents are described in detail in the draft ECTS handbook submitted at the occasion of the on-site talks. Templates of Learning and Training Agreements were missing in the documentation, but, according to the draft handbook, are already being applied or will be applied shortly.

#### General remarks regarding the practical components of the curricula

As already indicated in Chapter 1.3.2, all of MGIMO's study programmes at Bachelor's and Master's level consist of both general education (including compulsory physical training for undergraduates) and subject-specific parts. The members of the panel were particularly impressed by the intense practical training MGIMO students receive from an early stage and by the close transfer between theory and practice which forms a core part of MGIMO's educational philosophy. As a general rule, students gather practical experience in the context of

internship placements in a professional field closely related to their studies. In many cases, successfully absolved internships result in the permanent employment of interns after graduation. For example many Russian media outlets have employed MGIMO graduates on a permanent basis. MGIMO assists students in finding suitable partners for the internships (MGIMO has forged cooperations on internships with numerous companies and organizations) and has set up written regulations (in Russian) for the organization of internships.

For undergraduates, there are two different practical phases (curricular practical training and off-campus employment) whose exact nature and goals, however, do not become clear in the institutional self-report. Neither do these parts of the curriculum appear in the course descriptions or the Diploma Supplements. The same goes for the longer practical phase to be absolved by the Master's students. According to the ECTS User's Guide "the teaching staff should define the learning outcomes to be achieved through work placements when designing the curriculum" (ECTS Users' Guide, 2009, p. 20). As students must submit a report on their internship in order to receive credits for it and all internships are supervised both by an MGIMO lecturer and a representative of the company, the experts assume that general agreement exists within MGIMO regarding the educational goals/desired learning outcomes of internships. Yet they consider it advisable to outline these goals explicitly in the course handbook and/or to describe them in more detail in special Training Agreements to be signed by the student, the training company and MGIMO.

At Master's level the internship phase is tightly linked to the final thesis, as students usually generate their thesis while absolving the internship at the same time, that is, in the course of the final semester. In most cases, the internship comprises three successive months of full-time work, but may also be absolved part-time.

#### General remarks on credit transfer and mobility

Student exchange and mobility are part of MGIMO's overall strategy of internationalization and participation in the Bologna process. Each year, MGIMO takes in a large number of international students and in return sends its own students to universities abroad. The School of International Journalism is the most active one of all MGIMO schools in terms of exchange programmes.

The members of the panel strongly appreciate this high level of commitment, even though the rules and procedures applied by MGIMO for the recognition of credits earned abroad remained somewhat unclear in the documentation. As mentioned above, there were no examples of Learning and Training Agreements included in the documentation.

However, the draft ECTS handbook submitted during the on-site talks clearly and transparently describes a process of recognition based on comparable learning outcomes as recommended in the ECTS Users' Guide. As there were hints during the on-site talks that the described procedure is not yet fully implemented (prior recognition of credits still seems to be to a large extent dependent on individual lecturer's judgments instead of transparent criteria), the panel members strongly recommend developing a binding and policy on the recognition of credits as soon as possible. The criteria and procedures for the recognition of credits should also be published online.

### 1.3.3 Study Programmes: Curricular Structure, Teaching Contents and Achievement of Learning Outcomes

#### General Remarks on the Desired Learning Outcomes of the Programmes and their Compliance with the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area

As already outlined in Chapter 1.3.2, all of MGIMO's Bachelor's and Master's programmes consist of several "cycles", each of which has its own didactic purpose and desired learning outcomes defined by nation-wide standards. By and large, these standards are closely aligned with the desired learning outcomes of first and second cycle programmes described in the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area: students are to acquire knowledge and learn to apply it in order to find solutions to concrete problems. Also, graduates should be able to communicate facts and arguments to different audiences, to work as part of a team and to critically analyse and synthesise information. In their decisions they should take social and ethical considerations into account.

The level descriptors for Russian higher education differentiate clearly between first, second and third cycle qualifications: graduates from a Master's programme should be able to demonstrate a more advanced knowledge and understanding of their field of study, to work and think with a higher degree of independence and to solve more complex problems than Bachelor's graduates. Finally, holders of a PhD degree should be able to conduct independent research and to extend the existing pool of knowledge by contributing innovative ideas and new insights.

#### Bachelor's Programmes

In the course of a four-year Bachelor's programme, students receive a broad general education in the Arts and Humanities (Philosophy, History, Politics and Sociology) and the fields of Mathematics and Information Science. At the same time they acquire specific knowledge in their area of specialization (Journalism/PR and Advertising/Sociology) and related fields and receive in-depth training in at least two foreign languages.

The applied forms of teaching and learning are adequate to help students reach their desired goals. Already at Bachelor's level, students learn to apply their knowledge in professional contexts and to face practical challenges within their field of study. This is mainly achieved by simulations, games and creative activities: for example, students conduct interviews and create their own newspaper articles, documentaries and other TV programmes. Mandatory Master classes and workshops taught by professional journalists are of particular importance in this context. There are also joint practical projects with students of other MGIMO schools.

Students are enabled to gather and interpret relevant data within their field of study to inform judgments that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues (as, for example, ecological problems or professional ethics in journalism). Furthermore, they acquire the necessary theoretical and methodological basis for undertaking further study autonomously. In particular, the students of all three Bachelor's programmes are introduced to central qualitative and quantitative theories and methods of Sociology and Communication Science.

Also, students learn to communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences. Due to the small size of most classes there is plenty of opportunity for group discussions and interactive teaching. Through practice-oriented teaching, students are familiarized with the stylistic techniques and conventions of professional journalism and PR and learn to apply the necessary technology. The development of intercultural competences (along with foreign language acquisition) is another particularly significant aspect, as about 5% of the school's graduates end up working in foreign media.

The Bachelor's degree is a fully recognized third level degree, i.e. it enables graduates to enter qualified positions on the employment market. According to the members of faculty of the School of International Journalism, Bachelor's graduates have no problem finding work in their field of specialization, for example as middle managers or editors.

However, the great majority of the faculty's students proceed to Master's level after completing the Bachelor's programme, as this greatly increases their chances of finding attractive, adequately paid working positions.

### Master's Programmes

Master's programmes at MGIMO usually comprise 2 years and 120 ECTS credit points. The taught courses are allocated either to the "general scientific" (humanities, social and economic) cycle or to the professional cycle, each consisting of both compulsory and elective courses.

The Master's programmes build on the broad knowledge base laid at Bachelor's level. Compared to the Bachelor's programme, the general cycle lays a stronger focus on the core disciplines of the programmes – i.e. in all parts of the Master's programmes the emphasis is on specialized rather than general knowledge.

With regard to the Master's programmes in Translating and Interpreting, the experts recommend widening the range of electives by introducing a certain number of non-linguistic subjects (taught in Russian), as, for example, contents from the field of cultural Sciences or economics. In this way, graduates' prospects on the employment market could be increased, as not only international organizations like the UN are in need of translating and interpreting services, but also the industry, publishing houses etc. Hence, students should get a chance to acquire systematic knowledge in at least one non-linguistic subject area in order to specialize on the translation of texts in this particular field.

Also, research gains a stronger significance at Master's level. Even though professional training is still the main objective of the programmes, one central goal of all Master's programmes defined by the Ministry of Education is to enable students to conduct scientific research independently and autonomously. The experts have no doubt that the students of the School of International Journalism reach this goal, especially in the course of generating the Master's thesis. From an early stage, special classes on the methodology of scientific research provide students with the knowledge and skills they need when working on their final research projects.

Furthermore, the experts are certain that students acquire the necessary soft skills they need

to take up leading positions in their field of specialization. Through further intense language training, students' communicative skills quickly reach a very advanced level, which was also impressively demonstrated by the students participating in the on-site talks.

### PhD Programmes

The qualification objectives defined by the ministry for third cycle programmes are in line with the Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area. Graduates should be capable of independent analysis, synthesis and assessment. Also, they should be able to plan, structure and manage large-scale scientific projects and to contribute to the extension of existing knowledge.

Apart from working on their dissertations, first year PhD students in Roman or Germanic languages must also attend foreign language classes and taught courses in Linguistics, Philosophy, Politics and International Relations. At the end of the first year, students must take intermediate exams in order to continue their studies.

The peers are convinced that students succeed in reaching the desired goals, as the compulsory courses provide them with the methodological basis they need to conduct their own research. Also, the experts have no doubt that students receive intensive supervision and assistance at all times.

### Summary and Recommendations for Improvement

Based on the written course descriptions and the information provided during the on-site talks in Moscow, the experts have come to the conclusion that the Bachelor's and Master's programmes offered by the School of International Journalism succeed in imparting the level of knowledge, skills and competences described by the Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area. However, there are some general recommendations for improvement to be made:

- As technological developments in modern mass media are becoming faster than ever, the School of International Journalism should take increased efforts to adapt more effectively to this rapidly changing environment. In spite of the school's very high level of practice-orientation, current standards in multimedia technologies are not always reflected in the curricula. Hence, the experts recommend introducing obligatory training classes to assist the members of faculty in keeping up with evolving technological standards. The curricula should aim at imparting long-term analytical knowledge while at the same time enabling students to work with new, fast technologies.
- It should be assured that students acquire the necessary flexibility to render their messages to audiences from various cultural contexts using different types of media.
- With a view to the school's international profile it would be worthwhile to compare core components of the study programmes with similar programmes in other parts of the world in order to assure their compliance with international standards.

#### 1.3.4 Students and Study Conditions

##### Admission Procedure

To be admitted to MGIMO, applicants must complete their secondary school education (Unified State Exam) with excellent grades, especially in the area of Russian language and literature and in foreign languages.

Furthermore, MGIMO is one of only a few higher education institutions in Russia conducting their own additional entrance examinations: applicants for the Bachelor's programme in International Journalism must participate in a 'creative contest' (consisting of a written essay on a topic of the student's choice), whereas applicants for the programme in Advertising and PR must sit an additional foreign language exam. The peers regard this selection procedure as adequate, as it takes central skills into account that students need to master the programmes. Russian Federal Law also grants special rights of admission to certain groups of persons, as e.g. disabled or orphaned applicants.

As mentioned above, the great majority of MGIMO's Bachelor graduates go on studying at Master's level. Also, Bachelor graduates from other Russian universities are enrolled in Master's programmes at MGIMO. So far, there seem to be very few non-nationals absolving a complete Bachelor's or Master's programme at MGIMO (apart from those Master's programmes especially designed for foreign students). Formally, foreigners may apply, provided their school leaving certificates are recognized at state level (so-called 'nostrification' of foreign degrees).

All in all, the reviewers gained the impression that MGIMO's body of students is still relatively homogeneous in social and cultural terms. The same goes for the members of faculty (cf. Chapter 1.3.7). However, from the peers' point of view, internationally oriented study programmes, especially programmes in International Journalism, require a higher degree of diversity among faculty and students in order to be truly competitive. As Russia itself is a multicultural nation state, MGIMO should actively enhance the recruitment of cultural and social minority students, for example by providing special scholarships. MGIMO would also benefit from a more diverse faculty from Russia and beyond. This is of utmost importance for ensuring quality and aiming at cultural diversity as well as even higher international reputation.

Apart from a Bachelor's degree in Journalism or a similar field of study, admission requirements for the Master's programme in International Journalism include proficiency in foreign languages and a solid base of knowledge in Journalism and related academic disciplines, both of which must be demonstrated in entrance examinations. For the two Master's programmes in Linguistics, the admission criteria and the selection procedure are by and large the same. Applicants for the Master's programme "Russian Culture and the Arts: Traditions and Modernity" must hold a Bachelor's degree in a related field and good knowledge of the English language. Also, a motivation letter and two letters of recommendation must be submitted as part of the application.

Applicants for the PhD programmes must hold a Master's degree (or equivalent) in Linguistics or a related field. Also, there are two entrance examinations: one in foreign languages and one focusing on professional aspects.

### General Study Requirements and Workload

MGIMO students spend the largest part of the day in class (teaching hours are usually from 9 am until 4 pm on six days a week); the rest of the time is dedicated to independent self-studying and extracurricular activities. From the third academic year onwards, one day per week is dedicated to research and thus kept free of taught classes.

As described in Chapter 1.3.3, practical placements also consume a relatively high amount of time which must be brought in line with the theoretical part of education, both in organizational terms and in terms of content. Also, the frequent tests and examinations cause a considerable amount of work on the students' side (cf. Chapter 1.3.5).

All in all, the students present during the on-site talks described their schedules as tightly packed, but manageable. As the majority of MGIMO students stand out through strong ambition and exceptional scholastic aptitude, the expert panel agrees with this. The fact that only very few of the students need to sustain themselves through side jobs also plays a role here. Nevertheless, the panel recommends a closer monitoring of student workload at course level: the university should check on a regular basis whether there is a discrepancy between the anticipated workload and the time actually taken by the majority of students to achieve the expected learning outcomes. This could be achieved, for example, in the context of course evaluation. If necessary, adequate measures should be taken to revise the estimated workload, the teaching and learning methods applied or the desired learning outcomes, as recommended by the ECTS Users' Guide. Although the students confirmed that this was already being done on an informal basis, a formalized procedure would be desirable here.

### Counselling and Advisory Services

The members of the expert panel were very impressed by the close relationship between teachers and learners they encountered at MGIMO and by the teaching faculty's high level of commitment. Most lecturers have an open door policy, and students may approach them personally, by phone or by email whenever they wish. In case of individually occurring conflicts between lecturers and students, a colleague may act as a mediator. In organizational matters, students may contact a member of the administrative staff. Faculty and students may also consult a team of psychologists who offer counselling and advisory services on campus or online.

For undergraduate students there are also frequent tutorials taught in small groups to further assist them in their academic progress.

### General Organizational and Social Aspects

As far as the members of the expert panel can see, the design of the curricula and the

course schedules has no negative impact on student performance. Students profit from relatively small group sizes (in seminars, the number of students does not exceed 25; in language training there is a maximum number of 8 students per class).

For most students, MGIMO is not only a place for studying, but the place where they spend much of their spare time, too: the university offers a large number of social activities that students can get involved in, as e.g. several student associations. The School of International Economic Relations has its own student initiative whose members help first year students find their way through the programme, invite experts to hold talks etc. On the MGIMO campus, students also have a variety of sporting grounds and facilities, a well-equipped canteen and several cafeterias at their disposal.

Generally, the students participating in the on-site talks were recognizably proud of being part of MGIMO and displayed a very high level of identification with the institution. To a certain extent, students also have a say in the institutional politics and management of MGIMO: for example, student representatives may participate in the election of the rector and the deans. They may also lodge students' complaints and demands to the rectorate or the faculty. In most cases, recognizable measures for improvement are quickly taken.

Although encouraged to do so during the on-site talks, none of the students in International Journalism voiced explicit questions or statements on Russia's role in Europe and Asia, or on the country's contribution to global economic, cultural, political, or military developments. It has also remained unclear to the peers how the students define their future social function and professional ethics as critical journalists. Hence, the peers recommend further increasing the students' capacity for independent thought, for example by initiating critical debating circles and by providing students with more critical perspectives on their future profession in the context of classes.

### 1.3.5 Examination System

Examination regulations and the evaluation criteria for student assessment at MGIMO are based on several internal acts, guidelines and directives, most of which are publicly available on the university's website. As English translations of these documents are not at hand, they were listed in the institutional self-report, but not included in the documentation.

Final course examinations are held twice a year, i.e. at the end of each semester. The number and scope of examinations within that span of time does not exceed a manageable measure (a maximum of five exams per semester). However, in each course there are usually three additional tests or assignments that serve to monitor students' progress throughout the term. Even though students excelling in these tests may be exempt from the end-of-semester exam, the peers consider the overall workload caused by tests and examinations to be relatively high. In addition, both Bachelor's and Master's students must submit written course papers (one paper per academic year) and may also have to undergo further tests (so-called 'zachet') in order to receive credits for internships, workshops etc. It is also for this

reason that the peers recommend a closer monitoring of student workload at course level (cf. Section 1.3.4).

Furthermore, both Bachelor's and Master's students must undergo final 'state examinations' in order to be awarded their degrees. At MGIMO, these usually consist of a final thesis (including oral defence) and two examinations: one foreign language exam and one exam in the core discipline of the programme.

All in all, tests and examinations are well distributed over the academic year and thus remain feasible for students at all times.

Depending on the subject, there are either written examinations (with a maximum duration of 2 hours) or oral examinations that last about 15 minutes. Oral exams may also be taken in groups of up to five students. As a general rule, there are at least two examiners for each exam, and each paper is corrected by two lecturers to ensure objectivity. The evaluation criteria are made transparent to the students both orally and as part of the course syllabi. A lot of attention is paid to making the process of grading transparent: if necessary, lecturers take time to explain the reasons for the grades to the students.

The applied forms of examination are fit to measure the desired learning outcomes of the courses: for example, whereas in Maths and Statistics exams are primarily knowledge-oriented and hence conducted in written form, the ability to participate in multilateral negotiations can best be demonstrated in an oral exam. In the course papers and the final theses, students can show that they have learned to apply methods of scientific research and to apply their knowledge to a concrete topic or problem.

Based on the on-site talks and the self-report the experts have come to the conclusion that the procedures for the assessment of students applied at MGIMO comply with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. However, as the relevant institutional regulations and legal acts could not be provided in English, some details have remained unclear – as, for example, the regulations covering student absence, illness and other mitigating circumstances. Hence, the experts recommend making at least the most central information regarding student assessment and examination available in English. The experts are fully aware that translated versions and/or summaries of such official documents cannot be legally binding, but would still like to make this recommendation for the sake of transparency and student-friendliness, especially with a view to the needs of foreign students (cf. Chapter 1.3.8).

### 1.3.6 Cooperative Relationships

MGIMO has forged numerous cooperative relationships regarding its study programmes with business companies, political institutions, administration and higher education institutions inside and outside of Russia.

The School of International Journalism cooperates with a large number of partners, mainly in

the form of internship placements and practical training for students. It goes without saying that numerous partners are to be found in the media sector (TV stations, advertising and communication agencies etc.). Also, students frequently absolve their internships in political institutions, international organizations or administration (embassies, Ministry of Foreign Affairs etc.). On principle, internships are integrated in the curriculum and supervised by an MGIMO lecturer (cf. Chapter 1.3.3).

In line with its international profile, MGIMO cooperates with higher education institutions around the globe, as e.g. through exchange of students and lecturers and joint research projects. To further enhance and intensify relationships with partners abroad, increased efforts should be made to attract more lecturers from foreign universities (cf. Chapter 1.3.7).

### 1.3.7 Resources and Infrastructure

#### Teaching Staff

In total, MGIMO has a faculty of about 1.200, including 160 full professors, 430 associate professors as well as assistant professors and other supporting lecturers of various qualifications. The number of part-time assistant lecturers is relatively high (especially in the realm of language training), yet the main responsibility for a course always lies with a full professor. At the School of International Journalism, there are currently 95 lecturers.

After extensive discussions with numerous lecturers of the School of Journalism and a close reading of the relevant documents, the panel members are convinced that the requirements of the ESG concerning the quality assurance of teaching staff are satisfied. The faculty members possess the knowledge, professional experience, skills and qualifications that are necessary for effective and successful teaching. Many lecturers are also working as professional journalists. The members of faculty are given opportunities to develop and extend their teaching capacity on a regular basis by participating in professional training programmes. Also, students can provide feedback on the quality of teaching in the context of regular surveys (cf. Chapter 1.3.9).

The percentage of international lecturers at MGIMO is still relatively low: only 25 out of 1.200 lecturers are non-nationals. To further sharpen its international profile, MGIMO should aim at recruiting more teaching faculty from abroad, both for short-term stays and on a permanent basis. On the other hand, MGIMO lecturers should be given more opportunity for longer leaves of absence, as e.g. in the context of (international) research projects or for sabbaticals.

During the on-site talks the peers also gained the impression that communication and cooperation between the members of faculty at the School of International Journalism could still be improved. In order to provide more room for interdisciplinary approaches and to make the best use of the school's extensive pool of knowledge and expertise, the experts recommend letting some classes be jointly run by lecturers of different departments and, ideally, of different age groups.

## Infrastructure and Equipment

MGIMO provides its students with excellent infrastructure and learning resources, both by Russian and international standards. There are five different buildings on the premises which primarily serve academic purposes and comprise more than 200 lecture rooms, computing facilities, multimedia labs and language laboratories as well as a high-standard research library which also provides access to online literature databases like EBSCO host. There are two TV studios on campus, one of which is used by the School of International Journalism only. The school also has its own reference library and its own website where students get a chance to publish their journalistic works. There is also a classroom especially equipped for the practical training of simultaneous interpreters.

Beyond the academic realm, the university also caters for numerous other needs of students and staff: apart from the sports facilities already mentioned above, there are several dormitories on the premises, another one with an intake capacity of up to 1.800 students is currently in the process of construction. Furthermore, MGIMO has its own medical center, pharmacy and shops.

### 1.3.8 Transparency and Public Information

According to the ESG, higher education institutions “have a responsibility to provide information about the programmes they are offering, the intended learning outcomes of these, the qualifications they award, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used, and the learning opportunities available to their students” (ESG, 2009, p. 19). As has already been outlined above, the most important regulations regarding student assessment, internships, final theses etc. are published on the Russian website of MGIMO, but are not yet available in English. The English version of the website provides extensive information on the institution as a whole, but only the most basic facts regarding the study programmes.

Course descriptions/syllabi in Russian are available in print and on the MGIMO intranet. Even though these documents contain extensive information regarding the content and desired learning outcomes of the courses, they strongly deviate from the Bologna standards in structure and design. On the other hand, the brief course descriptions in English that were submitted as part of the documentation do not yet include all information that the ECTS Users' Guide recommends. Based on these observations, the members of the expert panel would like to recommend the following measures for improvement:

First of all, the English version of the MGIMO website should be extended to include more detailed information regarding the study programmes, the central regulations and evaluation criteria for student assessment and the institutional quality assurance policy. A mission statement in English as well as information regarding tuition fees and other charges (as, for example, fees in connection with Russian language classes for international students) should also be available.

Secondly, a course catalogue in English should be generated for each study programme

within the cluster. The design and content of the course catalogues should follow the recommendations of the ECTS Users' Guide as closely as possible: each document should comprise a general introductory part providing general information on the institution and the programme, as well as course descriptions including at least a brief outline of the contents and the desired learning outcomes of each course. The panel members recommend having the English translations revised by a native speaker or a professional translator and to check the course descriptions for outdated information on a regular basis. The course catalogues should be made available for download on the MGIMO website.

### 1.3.9 Quality Assurance and Development

For the last few years, MGIMO has been developing an internal quality management system which is applied throughout the institution. The implementation and further development of this system are the responsibility of the Department for Quality Assurance and Academic Development which was established in the year 2007. An official quality assurance policy does exist, but is not yet available in English. The experts recommend generating and publishing a translated version of this document.

Apart from assuring compliance with the educational standards issued by the Ministry of Education and Science, quality assurance at MGIMO aims at further improving study programmes and educational processes on the basis of collected data. To this end, a new information system based on performance indicators has recently been introduced. The university gathers the necessary management information by continuously monitoring the students' academic progress and achievements and through regular surveys among students and alumni. At the end of each term, students get a chance to provide feedback on the quality of courses and teaching. Based on the survey results, analytical reports are generated which are passed on to the rectorate and the heads of the schools and institutes as a decision base for further action. It should also be pointed out in this context that MGIMO's quality assurance system is not only about identifying weaknesses, but also about rewarding high performance in teaching and learning: incentives have been created for excellent students and lecturers in the form of bonuses, scholarships, fee reductions etc.

It can thus be concluded that the internal quality assurance mechanisms of MGIMO are in accordance with the recommendations of the ESG. Nevertheless, the members of the expert panel would like to make a few suggestions for further improvement:

Lecturers should be encouraged to discuss the results of course evaluations with their students. In case this is not possible for organizational reasons, it should at least be made sure that students receive feedback on the results of the surveys. Generally, students should get a chance to participate actively in all phases of the quality assurance cycle: for example, student representatives should be entitled to suggest measures for improvement, contribute to working groups etc.

## **1.4 Summary**

The members of the expert panel were very impressed by the modern infrastructure and equipment, the strong commitment of faculty, students and staff and the efficient organizational structures they found at MGIMO. Today as much as in the past MGIMO has managed to establish itself as a trademark for high quality education. The experts have no doubt that the students get well prepared for the challenges of working in international media and have excellent prospects on the employment market, both at home and abroad. Also, the panel members strongly appreciate MGIMO's international orientation in teaching and learning as well as the alignment of the university's study programmes and management practices with European-wide standards. The experts recommend further pursuing this path towards internationalization and diversification – as, for example, by intensifying international exchange and by extending the scope of selection and recruitment of both faculty and students. The strong practice-orientation of the programmes should be kept up and, if possible, enhanced.

## 2. Final vote of the expert panel

### General Recommendations:

#### Quality Assurance

- The experts strongly recommend a closer monitoring of workload estimates at course level.
- Students should receive feedback on the results of course evaluations and should get a chance to participate actively in all phases of the quality assurance cycle.

#### Internships and Practical Placements

- The educational goals and contents of practical placements should be defined in the course handbook and/or Training Agreements to be signed by the student, the training company and MGIMO.

#### Credit Transfer and Mobility

- The experts strongly recommend developing a binding and transparent institutional policy on the recognition of credits as soon as possible. The criteria and procedures for the recognition of credits should also be published online.

#### Transparency and Public Information

- The experts recommend making at least the most central information regarding student assessment and examination available in English.
- The English version of the MGIMO website should be extended to include more detailed information regarding the study programmes, the central regulations and evaluation criteria for student assessment and the institutional quality assurance policy. A mission statement in English as well as information regarding tuition fees and other charges should also be available.
- A course catalogue in English should be generated for each study programme within the cluster. The design and content of the course catalogues should follow the recommendations of the ECTS Users' Guide as closely as possible. Each course catalogue should also include descriptions of compulsory practical placements/internships and their desired learning outcomes. The panel members recommend having the English translations revised by a native speaker or a professional translator and to check the course descriptions for outdated information. All course catalogues should be published on the MGIMO website.

#### Teaching and Curricula

- The experts recommend introducing obligatory training classes to assist the members of faculty in keeping up with evolving technological standards.
- The curricula should aim at imparting long-term analytical knowledge while at the same time enabling students to work with new, fast technologies. It should be assured that students acquire the necessary flexibility to render their messages to audi-

ences from various cultural contexts using different types of media.

- With a view to the school's international profile it would be worthwhile to compare core components of the study programmes with similar programmes in other parts of the world in order to assure their compliance with international standards.
- The experts recommend widening the range of electives in the Master's programmes in Translating and Interpreting by introducing a certain number of non-linguistic subjects (taught in Russian), as, for example, contents from the field of cultural sciences or economics.
- The experts recommend providing students with a more critical perspective on their role and function as future journalists and on current social and political developments in Russia and Europe.
- The experts recommend letting some classes be jointly run by lecturers of different departments and, ideally, of different age groups.

#### Diversity and Internationalization

- The experts recommend further increasing the degree of social and cultural diversity among faculty and students by modifying patterns of recruitment and selection.
- MGIMO lecturers should be given more opportunity for longer leaves of absence, as e.g. in the context of (international) research projects or for sabbaticals.

#### **Recommendation to the Accreditation Commission**

The expert group recommends towards the Accreditation Commission the accreditation of the study programmes offered by the School of International Journalism of MGIMO for the accreditation period of five years.