

Evaluation Report for the Accreditation of Study Programmes offered by

the International School of Law, the International Institute
of Administration, the European Studies Institute (ESI), the Institute of
European Law (IEL) the Master's Programmes Office and the Depart-
ment of Post-Graduate Studies of
MGIMO University, Moscow

Name of Programme	Degree Awarded	ECTS credit points	Programme duration	Type of programme	Annual admission capacity	Taught in
Law	Bachelor of Laws	240	4 years	Full-time	200	Russian
Law	Bachelor of Laws	240	4 years	Full-time	50	Russian
International Finance Law	Master of Laws	120	2 years	Full-time	35	Russian
International Economic Law	Master of Laws	120	2 years	Full-time	25	Russian
International Private and Civil Law	Master of Laws	120	2 years	Full-time	45	Russian
Corporate Law and Legal Support for International Transactions	Master of Laws	120	2 years	Full-time	30	Russian
Law of the European Union	Master of Laws	120	2 years	Full-time	130	Russian
International Law and EU Law	Master of Laws	120	2 years	Full-time	25	Russian

Name of Programme	Degree Awarded	ECTS credit points	Programme duration	Type of programme	Annual admission capacity	Taught in
International Law	PhD in Laws	179	3 years	Full time	13/16	Russian

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1. Evaluation Report

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

By contract dated June 1st, 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 study programmes in the field of Law.

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. Neither does the report address issues of equal opportunities, diversity management or support structures for disabled and disadvantaged students, for in Russia these social aspects are generally not regarded as central responsibilities of higher education institutions. Although the reviewers certainly consider this desirable, they are aware that implementing the necessary measures and organizational structures would consume an amount of time and resources exceeding the scope of what can be required in the context of a programme accreditation procedure. 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 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 schools and institutes of MGIMO University, additional documents provided on request during the on-site visit or shortly thereafter and the on-site talks with deans, teaching faculty, students and members of the rectorate on October 9th and October 10th, 2012. Both in the self-report and during the talks the English language was used as a medium of communication.

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 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/Master 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 (most of which equal what would be called a 'chair' in English-speaking countries or a 'Lehrstuhl' in German). Also, there are independent departments responsible for the general coordination of, Master and PhD programmes and academic supervisors in charge of the individual Master programmes.

The Bachelor's programmes in Law discussed in this report are offered by the International School of Law and the International Institute of Administration, the former being one of the three founding schools of MGIMO. Most of the different consecutive Master's programmes are coordinated by the Master's Programmes Office and academically supervised by a professor from one of the Law departments. In addition, the European Studies Institute (ESI) and the Institute of European Law (IEL) each coordinate and supervise a specialized Master's programme: "International Law and Law of the European Union" and "Law of the European Union", respectively. The International Institute of Administration also is responsible for the programme "Legal Regulation of the Market Economy". Most of the Master's programmes provide a specialized education in certain sub-disciplines of International Law. A PhD programme in International Law is also on offer and coordinated by the Department of Post-Graduate Studies.

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 Bachelor's, Master's and PhD programmes offered by MGIMO are based on nation-wide governmental 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 goals and learning outcomes is provided in the chapters 1.3.2 and 1.3.3.

Bachelor Level

The qualification objectives of the Bachelor programmes in Law have been made transparent in the self-report and the course descriptions submitted by MGIMO. Some of them are also mentioned in the Diploma Supplements.

Apart from acquiring a broad basis of knowledge in History, Philosophy and Politics as well as in law-related IT, students are to receive a profound education in law with a focus on international and Russian law as well as including different specialities like business law, taxation law or criminal law. Graduates should have gained sound knowledge e.g. of the nature and essence of state and law, of tools and means of legal regulations and of general principles, categories or the legal status of the various actors, as well as knowledge of basic provisions of the legal sciences. In addition, students should gain skills and competencies in e.g. the language of law, in analysing, interpreting and applying legal norms, and in providing qualified legal advice. This set of knowledge, skills and competences should prepare them for professional positions in the judicial sector. Also, Bachelor graduates shall be qualified to work as expert consultants and carry out educational activities.

In line with MGIMO's international orientation, foreign language acquisition plays a central

role especially at undergraduate level, 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 (around 90 out of 240 ECTS-points).

Furthermore, the Bachelor students are meant 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. Intercultural competence is also imparted in the context of the language classes.

Democratic citizenship is an explicitly formulated educational goal of the Bachelor programmes in Law, including the aim of compliance with the rules of profession conduct of a lawyer (*bona fide*) or fighting corruption. In addition, extracurricular activities as e.g. involvement in the student union or other clubs and societies support this goal.

Master level

The educational goals of the Master's programmes vary depending on the professional field that the graduates are supposed to enter. The different programmes cover special fields of law, EU law, international tax law, contract law etc., mostly with a special focus on international law and comparisons between Russian law and the law of different countries or regional associations. As most of MGIMO's Master's programmes are, by definition, very much practice-oriented rather than research-oriented, the needs and requirements of future employers seem to be of higher significance than advanced scientific training. This goes especially for the programmes offered by the European Studies Institute which are aimed towards further post-graduate training of civil servants, employees of enterprises or NGOs. Most of the programmes in this cluster use practice-oriented forms and contents with direct reference to further employment. Therefore, the curricula integrate forms of external, practice-related workshops or seminars with representatives from e.g. international law firms. It should also be stressed in this context that in Russian higher education, scientific research is traditionally not considered a prime task of higher education institutions, but is still very much associated with separate academies and research institutes.

At Master level, students further develop their own professional profile and personal skills, including language skills. According to the university's self-report, the Master's students are also to learn how to act responsibly in professional contexts and to adhere to ethical standards.

PhD Level

As distinguished from the Bachelor's and Master's programmes, the research abilities of the students lie in the centre of attention at PhD level. Holders of a PhD in International Law are expected to demonstrate the ability to conduct independent, original research and critical analyses, to communicate their research results to peers and the general public and to contribute actively to scientific advancement in the international context.

The experts assess the programmes on Bachelor, Master and PhD level as being oriented

towards scientific and employment-related qualification objectives. Also considered are the goals of developing personal skills and competencies and – to a considerable degree – of enhancing the involvement in civil society.

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 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” or pillars:

- Humanities, social and economic cycle (circa 25 ECTS points)
- Mathematic cycle (circa 8 ECTS points)
- Professional cycle (circa 185 ECTS points)

The three cycles are not studied successively, but simultaneously, i.e. each semester students take courses from more than one cycle. Each cycle includes both compulsory courses (as prescribed by ministerial directive) and a range of varying elective courses that lie in the responsibility of the institution itself.

Additional ECTS points are awarded for foreign language training, internships (on-campus and off-campus), 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.

Graduates of the Bachelor's programmes are awarded the degree “Bachelor of Law”.

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

- General scientific cycle (philosophy of law, language etc.)
- Professional cycle
- Internship, Scientific Research and thesis
- Examination

ECTS points are also awarded to PhD students. For the PhD programme in Law, students have to take 11 compulsory courses with a total credit of 32 ECTS points. The rest of the workload is devoted to independent research (that is, the generation of the doctoral thesis) and preparation for examinations.

While the experts regard the curricular structure as reasonable in general, the programme-related awarding of credits to specific cycles, courses and other achievements (internship, thesis etc.) remains somewhat ambiguous in the presented reports. The panel members therefore highly recommend including transparent crediting provisions in the programme

handbooks (see below).

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 estimation). This amounts to a workload of about 2,160 hours per academic year, which clearly exceeds the average workload recommended in the ECTS Users' Guide (25-30 hours per ECTS point, 1,500-1,800 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 as only students capable of an exceptionally high academic performance are admitted to MGIMO (cf. Chapter 1.3.4). In spite of that, the experts recommend a closer monitoring of workload estimates at course and programme level (cf. Chapter 1.3.4).

Graduates of the Master's programmes in Law are awarded the degree "Master of Law".

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.

A Diploma Supplement including an ECTS grading scheme has been submitted for the Bachelor's programme and most of the Master's programmes. Examples of other ECTS key documents like Learning Agreements were not included in the documentation. However, after the on-site talks, MGIMO submitted a draft version of an ECTS handbook (in English), in which Learning Agreements and Transcripts of Records are mentioned as standard documents. The procedures in connection with the issuance of the documents are described in detail in the draft handbook.

The experts welcome the draft of the general part of an ECTS handbook by MGIMO. However, to allow for compliance of all reviewed study programmes in Law with the provisions of the ECTS User's Guide the experts strongly recommend to compile specific ECTS-handbooks for each of the study programmes. Besides a general part they must include the workload and awarded credits for each course as well as for each cycle/part of the programme, including internships, exams or thesis preparation. Furthermore, a description of the course or module is necessary that focusses on the learning outcomes to be attained.

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 and subject-specific parts. The members of the panel welcome the 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. Both Bachelor's programmes in Law include two types of compulsory practical components: practical training integrated in the curricular structure (2.5 credits) and an off-campus internship (4 credits), both taking place in the last year. In addition, a one-month 'introductory internship' takes place during summer vacations in the third year. The Master's programmes have an internship of twelve weeks in the last semester, which is often related to the preparation of the Master's thesis.

This information should be included in the programme-specific ECTS handbook as well as further information on the educational goals/desired learning outcomes of internships and the existing forms of quality assurance (e.g. special Learning Agreements to be signed by the

student, the training company and MGIMO).

General remarks on credit transfer, mobility and admission

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 relatively high number of international students and in return sends its own students to universities abroad. The members of the panel appreciate this lively exchange, 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 transparently describes a process of recognition based on comparable learning outcomes as recommended in the ECTS Users' Guide. Again, the experts strongly recommend the inclusion of these procedures and provisions in the respective ECTS handbooks, including a binding policy on the recognition of credits. The criteria and procedures for the recognition of credits should also be published online.

1.3.3 Structure, Teaching Contents and General Concept of the Study Programmes

Bachelor's programmes in Law

Like all Bachelor's programmes offered by MGIMO, both Bachelor's programmes in Law consists of several "cycles", each of which has its own didactic purpose and desired learning outcomes defined in nation-wide standards. By and large, these standards are closely aligned with the desired learning outcomes described in the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area. Students are to learn to apply basic methods of analysing legal phenomena (judicial norms, facts, institutions, relations etc.), identify legal problems and offer solutions for them based on their acquired knowledge, including legal science approaches, and the interpretation of legal norms and procedures. Also, graduates should be able to communicate the results of their work in written and oral forms directed at different types of audiences.

During both four-year programmes, students receive a broad general education in the Arts and Humanities (Philosophy, History, Politics and Sociology) and take courses in the field of Information Science ("IT for Legal Activities", "IT in Law"). At the same time they acquire specialized knowledge in the area of Law and receive in-depth training in at least two languages. Apart from the language training, the Professional Cycle includes compulsory courses in the core disciplines of Law, like Constitutional Law, Civil Law, Social Law or Labour Law, mostly with an Russian and international focus, e.g. "Criminal Law of Russia and Foreign Countries". According to the representatives of the International School of Law, the comparative focus is mostly on specific states like the United Kingdom or Germany. In addition, students choose elective courses in subfields like Municipal Law, History of Political and Juridical Thought, International Business Procedure or Diplomatic and Consular Law.

Based on the self-reports and the on-site talks, the members of the expert panel evaluate the programmes' concepts as being built up coherently and as encompassing all relevant sub-

fields of Law that should be part of a Bachelor's degree in Law. They welcome the substantial international perspective of the programme. Thus, the experts have no doubt that the programme succeeds in imparting the level of knowledge and skills as described by the Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area. The programme carefully builds on the students' level of knowledge from secondary education. Hence, students usually should have no significant problems in managing the coursework requirements.

The applied forms of teaching and learning are basically adequate to help students reach their desired goals. At Bachelor's level, students learn to apply their knowledge in professional contexts and to solve practical problems within their field of study (as e.g. by means of discussion, case-work, seminars). They are enabled to understand, interpret and apply legal texts on a suitable level. Furthermore, they acquire the necessary theoretical and methodological basis for undertaking further study autonomously. Yet, the experts recommend gradually developing and implementing more interactive forms of teaching already at the Bachelor's level.

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 the opportunity for group discussions and interactive teaching. Sometimes there are also special classes offered which aim at enhancing communicative skills in the legal professions, as, for instance, an English language class especially designed for students of Law ("Legal Terminology: Translation and Interpreting Skills"). Bachelor graduates should accomplish a level adequate to C1 or even C2 in English according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, depending on their entry level.

For all these reasons the experts have come to the conclusion that the Bachelor's programmes are in line with the Bologna framework in terms of educational goals and learning outcomes.

Yet, the self-documentation and the discussions with the teaching staff show that the programmes are not structured in the sense of the ECTS User's Guide, as the presented 'modules' and their learning outcomes do not represent the educational components actually used. The curriculum should therefore be based on the existing courses and their stated learning outcomes. Although that would create relatively small educational components they would nevertheless form coherent entities which could be thematically grouped to somewhat larger units later. Furthermore, there should be an encompassing catalogue based on the proposed new structure (making up a central part of the programme handbook) with an adequate description of content, learning outcomes, forms of teaching, exams, literature used etc. for each course.

The Bachelor's degrees in Law are a fully recognized third level degree, i.e. they enables graduates to enter qualified positions on the employment market. However, the great majority of the graduates proceed to Master's level after completing the Bachelor's programmes, as this greatly increases their chances of finding attractive, adequately paid working positions, e.g. in the Foreign Ministry or international law firms.

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” (philosophy, languages) cycle or to the professional cycle, the latter consisting of both compulsory and elective courses.

The desired learning outcomes of Master’s programmes defined by the Russian Ministry of Education are generally closely in line with the Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area: for example, graduates are to be “able to define, independently and critically analyse complex scientific and professional problems”, “integrate knowledge of various fields, contribute to the creation of new knowledge, research or the development of new professional working methods, demonstrate understanding and ethical responsibility for the possible impact of the scientific results or professional activity on environment and society”.

Based on the written descriptions of the curricula and the information provided during the on-site talks in Moscow, the experts have come to the conclusion that the graduates of the Master’s programmes reach the desired learning outcomes for the second cycle as described by the Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area.

The Master’s programmes build on the broad knowledge base laid at Bachelor’s level. Compared to the Bachelor’s programmes, 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. Some of them offer a certain focus on special fields of Law (“International Private Law”, “International Economic Law”, “International Private and Civil Law”), while some are more adjusted towards the judicial framework of the European Union. The latter programmes – “Law of the European Union” (offered by ESI) and “International Law and Law of the European Union” (offered by IEL) – are not only developed and administered by two different, relatively autonomous entities of MGIMO, but are adjusted towards different clienteles and learning objectives. The Institute of European Law (IEL), established in 1996, offers a more traditional Master of Laws-programme with a stronger emphasis on scientific knowledge and research skill and takes up around 20 students each year in line with the general MGIMO-procedure of admission to Master’s programmes (see below). The European Studies Institute (ESI), created in 2006, is focused on the training and re-training of Russian civil servants. The programme offered (“Law of the EU”) has considerable curricular overlap with programmes on EU economics and EU politics (evaluated in the other clusters) and thus a more interdisciplinary perspective. The education is more oriented towards practice-related knowledge and skills and admission is based on professional qualifications, vocational profile and motivation and carried out by a separate commission from the Institute.

The Master’s programme “Corporate Law and Legal Support for International Transactions”,¹ supervised by the International Institute of Administration, is noticeably focused on the Russian legal aspects of trade, markets, finance etc. (e.g. courses on “Practical Application of Labour Law in Russia” or “International Property Administration in a Company”), but also includes courses on international judicial aspects (e.g. international economic law, international tax law).

Despite professional training being clearly the main objective of the programmes, rather than

¹ This programme’s name has been changed from “Legal Regulations of the Market Economy” in the course of the accreditation procedure.

scientific education in the narrow sense of the word, 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 come to the conclusion that the students of the Masters' programmes in Law reach this goal, in particular by writing a Master's thesis. Furthermore, the experts are certain that students acquire the necessary soft skills they need to take up leading positions in their field of professional specialization. Through further intense language training, students' communicative skills reach an advanced level. Yet, the recommendations above for the Bachelor's programmes, regarding the structure of the educational components (courses) and their transparent description in a separate handbook for each programme, apply here, too.

PhD Programme

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 and thus equivalent to foreign PhD or Doctorate degrees. Holders of a PhD 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.

PhD candidates in International Law in their first year must take three compulsory courses in philosophy, foreign language and law, plus one elective class. They can choose their law-specialization from a range of seven specializations, ranging from "General Theory of State and Law" to "Criminal Procedure and Criminalistics". If PhD-students pass a 'qualifying exam' after this year, they can continue the programme exclusively with their research work. Total amount of the programmes is 192 credits.

The peers are convinced that the PhD candidates succeed in reaching the desired goals, as the compulsory courses provide them with a solid basis of knowledge and methodological skills. Also, the experts have no doubt that students receive intensive supervision and advice throughout the programme.

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. High performance in Russian, Mathematics and foreign languages is held especially important in the selection of students. Furthermore, MGIMO is one of only a few higher education institutions in Russia conducting their own additional entrance examinations – in case of the Bachelor's programmes in Law, applicants must take a written foreign language exam. Considering the central importance of foreign language training for MGIMO's educational concept, this selection procedure is regarded as adequate by the panel of experts.

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 postgraduate programmes at MGIMO. So far, there seem to be very few non-nationals ab-

solving a complete Bachelor's or Master's programme at MGIMO (apart from those Master's programmes especially designed for foreign students).

Formally, foreigners have the opportunity to apply, but it has remained somewhat unclear how well the recognition of foreign degrees and grades as equivalent works in practice. To further MGIMO's own aim of internationalization, the experts recommend that MGIMO should set up regulations and procedures for the admission of foreign students, especially to their (Russian-taught) general Master's programmes. It must be made clear, if and how foreign graduates with a 3 year-Bachelor's degree (180 ECTS credits) can enter MGIMO's Master's programmes. Furthermore, the 'nostrification' of foreign degrees, i.e. the legalization prior to continuing higher education, as practised by the Russian government, might hinder the vertical mobility of incoming students. Since Russia has signed and ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention in 1999/2000, each party shall recognise higher education qualifications conferred in another party unless a substantial difference can be shown.² While the current practice of recognition by the Russian government might be in line with the Convention, the criteria and procedures for the nostrification and, if applicable, for further admission procedures by MGIMO should be made transparent (e.g. online). In general, the experts recommend describing the admission rules – including the difference between fee-paying and fee-exempt students – as transparent as possible in English on the website and in the programme handbooks.

Apart from excellent academic performance in a similar or related Bachelor's or "Specialist" programme, admission requirements for the Master's programmes in the field of Law include proficiency in the English language and a solid base of knowledge in relevant judicial disciplines, which must be demonstrated in two entrance examinations: foreign language and law. An exemption is the Master's programme offered by the European Studies Institute with a committee-based selection procedure (cf. Chapter 1.3.3).

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. As stipulated in the Russian Law on Education, the weekly study time cannot exceed a total 54 academic hours, which includes both contact time and self-study time. The maximum number of contact hours per week does not exceed 27, excluding physical training. 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 certain 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).

² Cf. Lisbon Recognition Convention, Section VI;
<http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/165.htm> (access February 4, 2013).

All in all, the students present during the on-site talks described their schedules as “sometimes stressful”. The workload appears highest in the first three years of the Bachelor’s programmes, due to exclusively compulsory courses plus a considerable workload for the language classes. All in all, the experts see the workload as high, but manageable. This is supported by the self-perception of the students as being ambitious and outstanding and thus fitting into the competitive environment of MGIMO. Nevertheless, the panel recommends a closer monitoring of student workload: 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 reach 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.

Counselling and advisory services

The members of the expert panel were in principle satisfied with the presented counselling and advisory services at MGIMO, including an Ombudsman. Yet, the different levels and forms of counselling should be described in more detail (and in English) in a general part of programme handbooks.

General organizational and social aspects

As far as the members of the expert panel can see, students profit from relatively small group sizes and an impressive teacher-student ratio. In addition, MGIMO offers a number of social and extra-curricular activities that students can get involved in, as e.g. several student associations (e.g. “Club of Comparative Law”) or an Arbitration Moot. 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 displayed a high level of identification with the institution. Yet, the integration of students into institutional decision-making as well as in internal quality assurance seems rather low and informal. The experts thus recommend to strengthen the role of students and other stakeholders in these procedures as recommended in the “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA” (ESG).

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 Russian 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 usual-

ly 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. Thus, the peers recommend a closer monitoring of student workload (cf. Section 1.3.4).

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 seem to be made transparent to the students both orally and as part of the course syllabi.

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 interdisciplinary exam in the core academic discipline of the programme. The Bachelor's thesis comprises around 45 pages, a Master's thesis around 90 pages.

All in all, the experts regard tests and examinations as being well distributed over the academic year and thus remain feasible for students at all times. The applied forms of examination are fit to measure the desired learning outcomes of the courses, including different types of written and oral exams. In 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 thus 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. Hence, the experts recommend making the 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 cooperative relationships regarding its study programmes in Law with law firms (e.g. Salans, PTI Lawyers, Baker Botts), political institutions (especially the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), and higher education institutions inside and outside of Russia. The cooperations are on the one hand used for internship placements and practical training for students. On the other hand, external partners offer practice-related courses and workshop for MGIMO students, e.g. in the programme "International Economic Law" with practical train-

ings on tax law, capital markets, oil and gas etc.

In line with its international profile, MGIMO increasingly 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. Chapters 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. Students are usually taught by lecturers from several MGIMO schools and departments.

After an extensive and open discussion with the teaching faculty, the panel members come to the conclusion that the faculty members exhibit a high level of knowledge, professional experience, skills and qualifications that are necessary for effective and successful teaching. The experts especially welcome the efforts of younger faculty members to introduce new forms of teaching and learning in their courses.

Teaching staff is also given the opportunities to develop and extend their teaching capacity 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.

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, LEXIS-NEXIS and Wolters Kluwer.

Beyond the academic realm, the university also caters for 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 pro-

cess 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”. As has already been outlined above, the most important regulations regarding student assessment, internships, final theses etc. seem to be published on the Russian website of MGIMO, but are not yet available in English. The English version of the website provides information on the institution as a whole, but only few facts regarding the (Russian-taught) study programmes.

Some course descriptions/syllabi in Russian (available in print and on the MGIMO intranet) were shown at special request. Even though these documents contain extensive information regarding the content and desired learning outcomes of the courses, they deviate from the Bologna standards in structure and design. On the other hand, the programme and course descriptions in English that were submitted as part of the documentation do not yet include all information that the ECTS Users’ Guide recommends for the description of study programmes and course units (MGIMO should, according to its own curricular structure, label them “courses” instead of “modules”). 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, the rules of admission and the institutional quality assurance policy.

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 especially on the programme (including provisions for international mobility, recognition, internships etc.), as well as course descriptions including at least a brief outline of the contents and the desired learning outcomes of each course. The handbooks including course catalogues should be made available on the MGIMO website. Furthermore, a study plan of each programme should be included that shows the students how and when the objectives of the examination rules with regard to compulsory and elective units and final exams can be met.

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.

The members of the panel thus conclude that the internal quality assurance mechanisms of MGIMO are in accordance with the recommendations of the ESG. Nevertheless, they would like to make a few suggestions for further improvement:

Course evaluations should become more differentiated, e.g. by introducing scales ranging from 0 to 5 or 0 to 10. Also, 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 impressed by the modern infrastructure and equipment, the strong commitment of faculty, students and staff and the efficient organizational structures they found at MGIMO. Students of MGIMO no doubt are being well prepared for the legal professions and for professional practice as a lawyer in enterprises, government and international organisations. The profound knowledge acquired on legal issues in the various fields will enable them to address successfully and efficiently legal problems arising in their future positions. Also, the panel members 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. They strongly recommend that MGIMO adjust its structure of educational units to ECTS standards and enhance its information in the English language to make available to students and prospective students all relevant rules and regulations governing the degree programmes.

2. Final vote of the expert panel

2.1 General Recommendations

Infrastructure and Study Conditions

- The experts strongly recommend a closer monitoring of workload estimates at course and programme level.
- The experts highly welcome the efforts of MGIMO for internationalization. They recommend further maintaining their policy of attracting international students as well as international faculty to the Law programmes.

Teaching, Practical Phases and Internships

- Interactive forms of teaching should be increasingly developed and implemented already at the Bachelor's level.
- Information on obligatory or facultative internships as well as integrated practical phases in the programmes should be included in the programme handbooks.
- The contents, regulations and quality assurance procedures of practical placements/internships should be defined in the course handbook. Internship Agreements should be signed by the student, the training company/institution and MGIMO.

Mobility, Credit Transfer and Recognition

- The experts strongly recommend developing a binding and transparent institutional policy on the recognition of credits, periods of study and degrees. The criteria and procedures for the recognition (including nostrification of degrees) should be published online and in English.
- It should also be made transparent, if and how foreign graduates with a 3 year-Bachelor's degree (180 ECTS credits) can enter MGIMO's Master's programmes.

Transparency and Public Information

- 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, the institutional quality assurance policy and information on student exchange and mobility. The admission rules and procedures should be made transparent (including different categories of fee-payment).
- A description and catalogue of educational units (courses) in English should be generated for each study programme within this cluster. The design and content of the catalogues should follow the recommendations of the ECTS Users' Guide as closely as possible. Each course catalogue should also include detailed information on crediting of different curricular aspects/components, a descriptions of compulsory practical placements/internships and the examination system. All course catalogues should be published on the MGIMO website. Furthermore, a study plan of each programme should be included.

Quality Assurance

- Course evaluations should become more differentiated and students should receive feedback on the results of course evaluations. In addition, students (and other stakeholders) should be given the chance to increasingly participate actively in all phases of the quality assurance cycle and related institutional procedures.

2.2 Recommendation to the Accreditation Commission

The expert group recommends towards the Accreditation Commission the accreditation of the study programmes in Law, as offered by the International School of Law, the International Institute of Administration, the European Studies Institute (ESI), the Institute of European Law (IEL) the Master's Programmes Office and the Department of Post-Graduate Studies of MGIMO for the accreditation period of five years.