



UNIVERSITY
OF CENTRAL ASIA

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

TAJIKISTAN | KYRGYZSTAN | KAZAKHSTAN



About UCA

The University of Central Asia (UCA) was founded in 2000 as a private, not for profit, secular university through an International Treaty signed by the Presidents of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, and His Highness the Aga Khan; ratified by their respective parliaments and registered with the United Nations. The Presidents are the Patrons of the University, and His Highness is the Chancellor. UCA's mission is to promote the social and economic development of Central Asia, particularly its mountain communities, by offering an internationally recognised standard of higher education, and enabling the peoples of the region to preserve their rich cultural heritage as assets for the future. UCA brings with it the broader commitment and partnership of the Aga Khan Development Network.

For more information: www.ucentralasia.org

UCA Campus in Khorog, Tajikistan

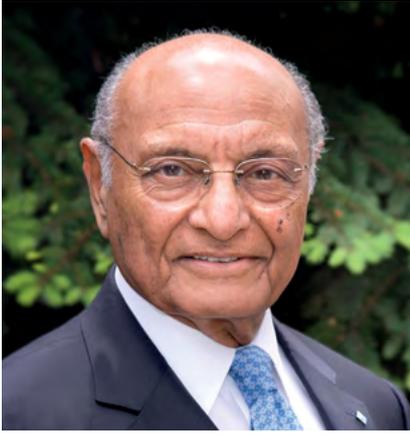


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Cover photo: UCA campus in Khorog, Tajikistan. Covid-19 was a defining force during 2020, and physical distancing and mandatory masks were a way of life.



Message from the Chairman

The COVID-19 global pandemic is one, if not the main event, which made 2020 a year like no other. Despite myriad challenges resulting from this crisis, the University of Central Asia (UCA), under the leadership of the Rector, continued its day-to-day operations seamlessly, despite an almost overnight shift to a “virtual” modus operandi, including online delivery of our education programmes.

The most significant impact of COVID-19 was on the admissions process for the 2020/2021 academic year, which resulted in a cancellation of the admissions test, removing the common base that allowed a comparison of candidates from different backgrounds and regions. A modified short-listing process was implemented successfully and UCA welcomed 84 new students, out of a total of 2,149 applicants; 59% of whom are from rural areas or secondary towns.

Governance of the institution also shifted to a “new normal” with all meetings of the Board of Trustees and its Board Committees held electronically. The two meetings of the full Board with the Chancellor, His Highness the Aga Khan, and regularly scheduled meetings of the three Board Committees provided a platform for discussing key strategic matters and timely policy decisions to enable the University to remain on course during these turbulent times. The Board was further strengthened in 2020 with the appointment of Dr Nurlan Omurov, Deputy Minister of Education, Kyrgyz Republic, nominated by the President of the Kyrgyz Republic in place of retiring UCA Trustee Ms Elvira Sarieva, and Professor Andrew Petter, President Emeritus of Simon Fraser University, British Columbia, Canada, nominated by current Trustees as per the International Charter of UCA. The Chancellor and the Trustees appreciate Ms Sarieva’s valuable contributions to the governance of the University.

A seminal event last year was the signing by UCA and the University of Cambridge, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in February to promote academic partnership, and collaborate in areas including joint research, faculty and student exchanges, as well as sharing of academic and educational material. The MOU builds on the University of

Cambridge’s centuries-old commitment to academic excellence and on the ongoing relationship of the Cambridge Trust with UCA, which extended its funding support for the development of our faculty by pledging an additional \$1.3 million over the next four years. This and other academic partnerships of UCA were supported by the newly created International Office.

The Board and management are particularly motivated by the Chancellor’s long term vision of UCA as a high quality research university with primary focus on addressing the challenges faced by mountain societies. In support of this, the University has allocated specific research funds which are accessible to individual faculty members at the Graduate School of Development and the School of Arts and Sciences. In addition, research grants of \$1.7 million were secured from multilateral and bilateral partners.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, and students, I take this opportunity to convey our gratitude to UCA’s Founding States, our sister agencies in the Aga Khan Development Network, as well as academic partners, international supporters, and well-wishers. The Board’s special appreciation goes to the faculty and staff for their dedication, commitment and resolve to ensure the smooth operation of the University through a particularly challenging year.

Dr. Shamsh Kassim-Lakha
Chairman, Board of Trustees

Message from the Rector

Covid-19 was an inescapable reality of the year 2020, a global pandemic impacting every aspect of life and work. With the continued support of the Chancellor of the University of Central Asia, His Highness the Aga Khan, and the Board of Trustees, the UCA community rose to the challenge of “Living with Covid-19.”



Management and staff of UCA played an outstanding role in ensuring that not a single day of work was lost during the pandemic. Despite a constantly evolving environment, often requiring a daily change of plans, work continued uninterrupted. This is a true testament to the dedication and professionalism of the women and men of this institution. It also speaks to the professionalism and dedication of UCA’s Operations and Finance teams that led the implementation of a digital platform allowing work to continue despite lockdowns of a geographically dispersed workforce and student body.

Lessons learned in 2020 should be an asset as we continue to live with Covid.

Steady progress was also made on enhancing quality assurance at UCA; the granting of national accreditation in Kyrgyzstan for the Computer Sciences and Communications & Media Degree programmes of the School of Arts and Sciences (SAS) of UCA, was a key milestone for this fledgling institution. While UCA achieved many other accomplishments, I draw attention to some noteworthy ones, which highlight the regional impact of the University over the past year, all the more important due to a shift to virtual operations.

During the peak of the pandemic, the School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE), accelerated its efforts to transfer its programmes online across its locations in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan. Distance education mode offerings were also made available in Afghanistan, where a new AI driven tool (CAT) for English Language instruction was piloted. SPCE also launched new English and IT courses for the management team of Badakhshan University in Faizabad.

The 6th Annual Life in Kyrgyzstan (LiK) Conference was held online, and brought together over 550 participants and speakers from 16 countries, representing government, development agencies, non-governmental organisations, academia, research institutions, and media. Participants exchanged knowledge and experiences on recent socio-economic developments in Kyrgyzstan and beyond, and addressed a range of topics, from agriculture and nutrition to the impact of Covid-19 on Central Asia.

In spite of the global pandemic, in 2020 \$1.28 million in new donations were pledged to UCA, including 27 scholarships to students at the School of Arts and Sciences. Cumulative fundraising from individual donors over the past 5 years amounted to \$2.34 million.

UCA remains focused on its aim to establish itself as the region’s leading teaching, learning, and research institution, committed to providing world-class education to the next generation of Central Asian scholars, entrepreneurs, and leaders.

I hope you enjoy looking back at the many achievements made by our students, faculty, and staff in 2020, a year in which the University of Central Asia continued to mature and grow stronger, against all odds.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Sohail H. Naqvi". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Prof. Dr. S. Sohail H. Naqvi
Rector



School of Arts and Sciences

UCA's School of Arts and Sciences (SAS) provides high quality undergraduate education in liberal arts and sciences in a fully residential setting. Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Arts degrees in Computer Science, and Communications and Media are offered at the Naryn campus and in Global Economics, and Earth and Environmental Sciences at the Khorog campus. The Tekeli campus is presently in the planning stage, and will offer degrees in Engineering Sciences and Business Management.

Accreditation

The accreditation of the undergraduate programme at the Naryn campus in 2020 was a milestone accomplishment. The process began in February 2020, and a UCA Task Force was set up to start compiling and organizing the volumes of material required to demonstrate the University's compli-

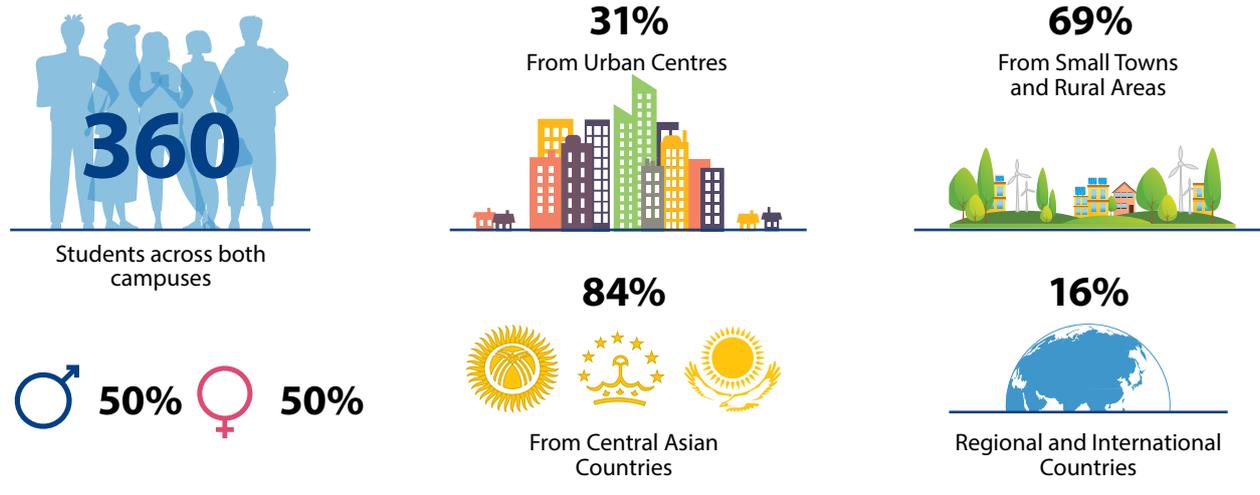
Prof Mohssen Moazzen demonstrating the application of a portable XRF (X-Ray Fluorescence) to analyze chemical compounds in rock mineral and soil samples.

ance with national requirements. After eight months of intensive work the paperwork was completed and presentations prepared for the Agency for Accreditation of Educational Programmes and Organizations (AAEPO), an independent service provider appointed by the Government of Kyrgyzstan to assess the undergraduate programme of UCA in Naryn. Accreditation of the Khorog campus is expected in 2021.

Students' Profile

SAS admitted its fifth cohort in September 2020, with 83 new students enrolled in the undergraduate programme to form the Class of 2025. The total number of students across both campuses is 360, of which 50% are male and 50% are female. Thirty-one per cent of UCA students come from major cities, while 69% are from rural locations and secondary towns. Eighty-four per cent of UCA students are residents of the Founding States, i.e. Tajikistan (56%), Kyrgyzstan (23%) and Kazakhstan (4%). As of the 2020-2021 Academic Year, students beyond the Founding States come from countries such as Pakistan (11%), Afghanistan (4%), Russian Fed-

Student Profile



eration (2%) and a combined 1% from Iran, Syria and Kenya.

Faculty Profile

In Fall 2020, 10 new faculty, of which 6 are full-time faculty and 4 are visiting faculty, were recruited with a total of 50 faculty members representing 14 countries at its two campuses in Naryn and Khorog. Twenty-four faculty members are from Central Asia, six from South Asia, five from Europe, four from North America, three from Australia and eight from other countries, including Azerbaijan, Ukraine, New Zealand, Iran, and the Philippines. Forty-eight per cent of faculty are from the Founding States and 52% are international faculty members.

Moreover, UCA hosted 13 visiting faculty members to teach Kyrgyz, Tajik and Russian languages as well as liberal arts courses. Many faculty members are engaged in research in their own disciplines as well as collaborative projects with UCA's research institutes. They also provided support to in-service and pre-service teacher training as part of their community service initiatives working with local schools, Khorog State University, Naryn State University, UCA's Education Improvement Programme, and the Aga Khan Education Services, both online and offline.

Online Teaching

In 2020, most of the Teaching and Learning pivoted to an online format due to the global pandemic. Digital and Distance Learning Office (DDLO), launched in the 2019-2020 academic year, played

a crucial role in ensuring a smooth transition by supporting faculty at the SAS through training in the use of digital platforms, maintenance, and sharing of resources to raise awareness related to remote teaching. During the first semester of the 2020-2021 academic year, faculty members were involved in 23 training sessions in order to maintain the quality of teaching while delivering online sessions.

Cooperative Education

In 2020, due to Covid-19, all international and most of the regional and in-country placements were canceled. Instead, 209 students were placed as remote interns in 37 partner organisations based in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Russia, and some with representatives of international organisations such as US-AID, ACCELS, IREX, AKDN and others. Students improved their skills in article writing, software developing, project task delivering, and on-line teaching through their internship experiences at various online platforms. UCA also provided 110 paid on-campus internship opportunities for students (Teaching and Research Assistantship) and summer internships in various units.

In 2020, UCA partnered with the World Association for Collaborative Education (WACE). Four UCA students participated and successfully completed a WACE and Practera (an Australian education technology company) two-week program on finding collaborative industrial solutions called Global Student Collaborative Projects. Student representatives from 9 universities across 8 coun-



A joint session of the Accreditation Expert Committee and UCA at the University's Central Administration Office in Bishkek.

tries were formed into 8 teams and connected with 8 organisations to complete their projects. Participants worked collaboratively as part of an international, interdisciplinary, and inter-cultural student team and delivered a project for organisations in Australia, Europe, and USA. One of UCA's junior students majoring in Computer Science, Nina Petrushkova, had the following impression about the initiative: "It is a great opportunity to practice the skills that you already have and to develop new skills. I really liked that this program is like a sneak peek into real-life professional work! It was interesting to work with people from different countries and cultures and meet actual clients. I would recommend this program to my peers."

Community Outreach

Expanding on the idea of the Khorog English Teachers' Association, Senior Lecturer of EAP, Tojiniso Olimnazarova, and Dastanbui Mamadsaidov, Project Manager of University Town Development established an Association of Teachers of GBAO in Tajikistan, a non-governmental organisation open to GBAO teachers of English, math, science, as well as librarians. Since December 2020, Tojiniso Olimnazarova has been organizing monthly work-

shops for Khorog English Teachers. The association has established a close collaboration with many educational institutions in Khorog and plan to further expand to the entire GBAO region.

Research

School of Arts and Sciences faculty produced 39 Publications in 2020, either as author or co-author with external scholars, which were published in international journals such as Sustainability, Geosciences, Journal of Geodynamics, IEEE Access, International Geology Review and others.

The International Development Association of the World Bank Group (WBG) funded a grant in Tajikistan to implement the country's Rural Economy Development Project (REDP). The project's development objective is to improve the sources of livelihood for local populations in GBAO and Khatlon regions through tourism and agribusiness. As part of this grant, a UCA team consisting of faculty members led by Dr. Sultonbek Aksakolov, Department Chair of Social Sciences and Humanities, alongside researchers from partner universities, was selected to conduct a research project on the

“Creation of Information Repository of the Natural, Historical and Cultural Sites”.

Student Life

Due to Covid-19 most of the Student Life Activities switched to an online platform in 2020. The Student Life Team has been in contact with and continues to offer support to all students in the Naryn and Khorog communities; the University Counsellor has been conducting online counseling sessions for students. All sessions are conducted online via Microsoft (MS) Teams, WhatsApp, Telegram, and other means of virtual communications.

Student Life Team (SLT) conducted more than 60 online activities, most of which were campus-specific, and included games, hangout lounges, and art. Online orientation sessions such as Cyber Thriving focused on wellness and health-based issues; On-line Learning Survival Guide introduced tools and skills needed to succeed in classes; and Introduction to Cyber Life, provided students with an overview of programmes offered online and were conducted via MS Teams.

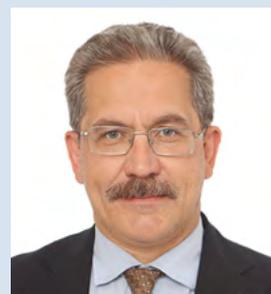
Other online activities for students included fitness Club, yoga classes, student government meetings, photography contests, a variation on trivia night, continued efforts of LEADS (the community engagement group), Enactus, Philosophy Club, and weekly Conversation Cafes. Conversation Cafes connected students with experts from around the globe who share relevant experiences. An example was the conversation UCA students had with Alif Khalfan, Vice President of the Disney Corporation, who addressed the topic, Navigating Uncertainty and Change and Developing Resiliency in Difficult Times.

University Counselors also conducted on-going series of yoga and mindfulness sessions and delivered talks specifically aimed at managing difficulties which could arise at any time in life.

The UCA Student Association (UCASA), was actively engaged in organizing events for their peer students which included celebrations of Kenya and Kazakh Independence Days, Spelling Bee tournament, Open Mic and many others.

New Dean

Dr. Maxim Borisovich Khomyakov, former Vice-Director of Higher School of Economics (HSE), St. Petersburg, Russia, was appointed the new Dean of the School of Arts and



Sciences in 2020 succeeding Dr. Diana Pauna, who served for five years. Prior to joining UCA, Dr. Khomyakov was leading HSE’s strategy, research, and international affairs. Moreover, he has extensive experience as a visiting research fellow, advisor and lecturer at different universities across the globe including European University Institute, in Florence, Italy; the University of Johannesburg, South Africa; and Fudan University, Shanghai, China. Dr. Khomyakov holds multiple memberships in professional associations and editorial boards and is often invited to present at lectures and conferences. Dr. Khomyakov has multiple books, articles and translations published, including “BRICS as a New Form of Multilateral Relations: A Report for the Global Academic Summit” published in 2015.

“The University of Central Asia is a fantastic and very unique project. In striking contrast to the overwhelming majority of higher education institutions in the world nowadays, it is based upon a powerful vision of education as a major development force. Its regional status makes it an important educational hub for Central Asia, and it is truly making a difference.

The excitement and temptation to be a part of this fascinating institution, to take part in establishing what is most certainly going to become the driving force in higher education in this very diverse region of Central Asia, to witness its growth and to actively participate in it was too tempting, and certainly a life-changing opportunity, which I simply could not turn down.

But with all this excitement also comes responsibilities, and I look forward to the challenges and opportunities ahead.”



School of Professional and Continuing Education

The School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE) remains a leading provider of post-secondary, short-cycle continuing education in Central Asia and Afghanistan. Certificate programmes are offered in 14 learning centres across Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan. SPCE staff provide young learners, teenagers, and adults, professional and vocational qualifications in a flexible format that boosts skills development, improves qualifications for employment, job creation and educational mobility.

The year 2020 was a turning point for SPCE as it embarked on a new vision. SPCE plans to concentrate on five main pillars aligned with the approved 2025 Five-year Strategy to maximize the impact of new opportunities by becoming Digitally Native; Focusing on Entrepreneurship; Reaching Marginalized Learners; Maintaining Financial Sustainability; and ensuring Quality Assurance across all programmes.

The concept of distance learning was adopted by SPCE at the end of March 2020. The shift triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic shed light on existing gaps and opportunities for SPCE to take on and develop further. SPCE staff took advantage of Covid-19 to arrange a rapid shift to online learning via new Learning Management System (LMS) such as Moodle, Microsoft Teams, and Zoom platforms to conduct e-lessons. The Project Management Office (PMO) at SPCE developed a strategy for handling the situation across all locations following two directions: capacity building for teachers and adjusting the curricula and tests to an online mode of delivery.

A vocational training class in plumbing in Khorog, Tajikistan.

SPCE PMO together with the Cambridge Assessment English Center arranged numerous webinars for both internal and external teachers (300 teachers in total) on implementation of new pedagogies and usage of new techniques in online teaching and learning. The shift allowed SPCE to focus on the capacity building of its own staff and teachers across different countries. Not only did SPCE help many internal instructors to boost digital literacy skills, but also extended knowledge and best practices of online learning across four countries. Additionally, major programmes in demand are aligned to the e-learning component, and a number of working groups are developing the updated content with the support of LMS. The concept of online learning is here to stay with further SPCE enhancements, allowing many to receive quality education from anywhere in the world. In 2021, SPCE plans to invest heavily in the professional development of its staff to popularize e-courses and expand not only physically, but also virtually.

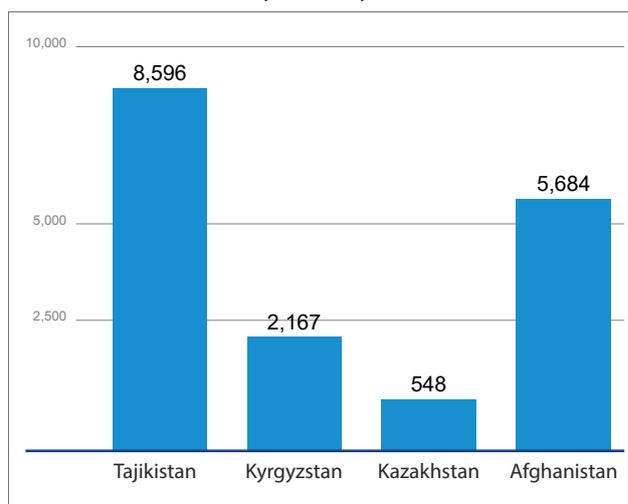
Programmes and Key Statistics

Over the course of 15 years, nearly 167,000 students have graduated from 14 SPCE Learning Centres across Central Asia (9) and Afghanistan (5), of which 53% are women. Among the most popular certificate programmes are Entrepreneurship and Business Planning, English language programmes, specifically the Academic Achievement Programme (AAP) backed by Cambridge Assessment English standards, followed by the international certification from the Cambridge Assessment (English component), ICDL (IT component) and SAT (Math component), Mental Math for children, and Accounting with further international certification (CAP/CIPA). As quarantine measures were imposed because of Covid-19, SPCE boosted the online component of its teaching and learning processes. During this period, 55 new concept notes and policies were produced, of which 23 related to newly developed online programmes like CATs (Learning English Online), Digital Professional Developed and Cyber-security (based on Moodle platform) and Science Journalism (SciDev platform).

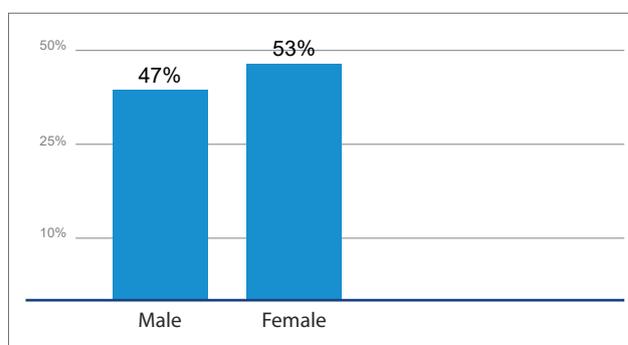
SPCE town-campuses and learning centres employ 190 full-time and more than 300 part-time staff. Nearly 100% of employees are nationals of the three Founding States, who continuously receive professional development in their areas of expertise.

Profile of SPCE Students in 2020

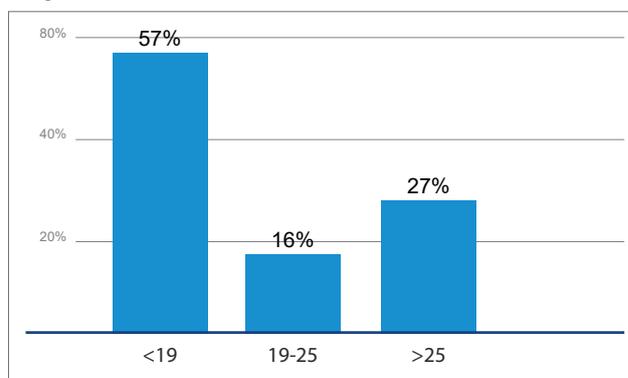
Student Enrolment by Country:



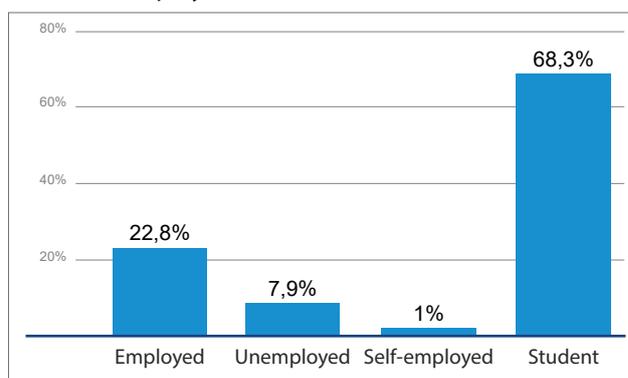
Gender



Age Distribution



Student Employment Status



SPCE Graduates from 2006-2020

167,000

People graduated from SPCE

2020	16,995
2019	19,967
2018	18,423
2017	14,450
2016	12,996
2015	12,498
2014	11,992
2013	11,713
2012	11,074
2011	10,856
2010	10,764
2009	6,888
2008	3,756
2007	3,448
2006	1,092

In 2020, SPCE student enrolment reached 16,995, with 595 students graduating from Bokhtar (TJ); 5,069 students from the three centres of Dushanbe (TJ); 2932 from Khorog (TJ); 548 from Tekeli (KZ); 1,009 from Bishkek (KG); 1,158 from Naryn (KG); and 5,684 from Afghanistan.

All academic staff shifted exams to the online format to allow those in remote areas to take online tests related to Young Learners English, Academic Achievement Programme, and Conversational English programmes. Afghanistan and Tajikistan rolled out CATs programme allowing students to learn English at their own pace online. Almost all centres purchased new books for the young learners programme (ages 7-12), the AAP programme (ages 12-18), and the Math and English components.

Notable Achievements

SPCE delivered numerous short-term courses and professional development programmes both online and offline including Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT) trainings, and Trainings of Trainers on Social Entrepreneurship, Business Planning, and Essay and Academic Writing. SPCE is the only official centre for many international qualifications through the International Computer Driving License (ICDL), Certified International Professional Accountant Examination Network, Cambridge Assessment English Centre and Teaching Qualification Centre. Throughout the year, SPCE provided professional training for internal and external instructors from Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Afghanistan.

SPCE also offered around 1000 international examinations (Cambridge Assessment English and International Computer Driving License) and actively promoted its certifications on a ministerial level. SPCE students continue to take part in national and international competitions related to Mental Math and Information Technology.

Kyrgyzstan

SPCE Kyrgyzstan enrolled 2167 students, of which 1158 were in the Naryn town-campus, and 1009 in Bishkek. The most popular programmes were short-term English language, Outreach, Entrepreneurship, Media Literacy, and Essay Writing courses. As an authorized ICDL and Cambridge Assessment English center, SPCE offered exams to nearly 800 people across the country.

Kyrgyzstan successfully cooperated with international organisations such as UNODC (language courses for Customs Officers in Osh), USAID Youth Initiative project (boosting Entrepreneurship and ICDL trainings), as well as local state and private institutions such as the Mountain University Partnership (MUP) programmes with Naryn State University under AKDN/UCA support. Additionally, funds were secured from the US Embassy in Bishkek and Regional English Language Office (RELO) on the Media Literacy Project, Media Project (European Commission and Erasmus+) to boost media skills among youth workers, DAI/DFID and PEAK Kyrgyzstan to boost entrepreneurship skills across Russian and Kyrgyz language speakers. A Local Impact Future of Work project



ICDL class at SPCE Learning Centre in Ishkashim, Afghanistan.

began, with an aim to establish a Centre for Entrepreneurship in Naryn.

Both centres launched new programmes for Young Learners (Pre-A1 to A2), Digital Professional Development (DPD) for teachers across the country, Python programming course, Online Financial Literacy, English for the Corporate Sector, followed by official Business English exams and webinar series.

Tajikistan

- SPCE Dushanbe continued to manage four US Embassy grants amounting to \$147,700 on English Teaching Mentor Programmes, English for Journalists, and English for Tajik Governmental Officials. The projects were implemented in all SPCE centres in Tajikistan. “Grow Your Business” supported by DAI PEAK UK AID along with Education Acceleration Programme, promoted quality training on business set-up, marketing and communications, HR and budgeting.
- SPCE Tajikistan successfully launched the CATs programme in partnership with Cambridge Malaysian Education and Development Trust, a programme allowing students to study online at their own pace. Three instructors and one administrator went through the programme during the Covid-19 lockdown and offered it to students from November 2020. A partnership with Worldwide Education Fund of the Dallas Foundation (WEF), and its international delivery partner Foundation to Empower Students Worldwide (FESW) trained three instructors on Cybersecurity Professional Certificate programme, and six modules of the programme were developed.
- Despite the lockdown, the TVET vocational training programme continued to be offered to potential plumbers and auto mechanics, followed by apprenticeship in local companies such as Youth Centres and Town Theatres.
- SPCE Khorog and Bokhtar were able to conduct Global Money Week 2020 before the lockdown, reaching over 2,500 individuals directly, and over 15,000 individuals indirectly. Multiple sessions were organized on “Learn.Save.Earn” for school students grades 7-10th.
- The Dushanbe office added another learning centre, bringing the total to three to meet increasing



MoU signing ceremony between UCA, AKF-A, and the AKES-A to establish an SPCE Centre in Kabul. Clockwise: Prof Dr. S. Sohail H. Naqvi, Rector of UCA; Dr. Bohdan Krawchenko, Dean of UCA's Graduate School of Development; Akylbek Joldoshev, Quality Assurance Officer at SPCE; Dilovar Butabekov, Director of SPCE.

demand. Among the most popular courses and programmes are AAP English and Math, Mental Math, IELTS Preparation, TOEFL preparation, Basic Russian, Young Learners, ATC and Cashier programmes, Conversational English and Chinese Language.

- The entrepreneurship programme, including business planning and social entrepreneurship courses under the Thrive Project are offered to participants throughout Shamsidini Shohin, Hamadoni, Panj and Farkhor districts of Khatlon region in both online and offline modes. Following the signing of an MoU with the First Micro Finance Bank in Tajikistan, SPCE implemented a plan to target women and men entrepreneurs to growth-oriented financial and technical assistance services.
- The PGPP programme continues to run and train students for studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies and University College of London. In 2020, PGPP modules underwent a thorough analysis and updates by IIS specialists on topics of Methodology of Syllabus Design, Tutor Academic Skills Competency, and Advanced Preparation for IELTS.

Kazakhstan

- SPCE Tekeli continued to focus on the market demand for English language programmes by introducing English for Young Learners, upgraded Academic Achievement programmes and IELTS preparation courses. This year, all programmes were adapted to online modes of teaching. The Accounting Technology certificate programme, including Basic Accounting and IC Software continued to be offered to those who wanted to upgrade their skills and get new jobs.
- SPCE Tekeli, as part of the MoU among the Akimat, the National Chamber of Entrepreneurship and UCA, conducted a short course “Operator Grinding, Crushing and Sorting Machines” to prospective grinders.

Afghanistan

- The local staff focused on delivering Conversational English programme, Entrepreneurship and Accounting programmes, Mental Arithmetic, Entrepreneurship for TVET Trainees and GRLE Seminars, as well as ICDL with the latest updated version. The SPCE Afghanistan team updated books and translated them into Dari, trained four

ICDL testers in Kabul and nine members of the staff. Before the lockdown, ESL instructors took part in the English Teacher Mentorship Workshop in Kabul, which united secondary and university instructors and allowed them to collaborate and exchange experiences.

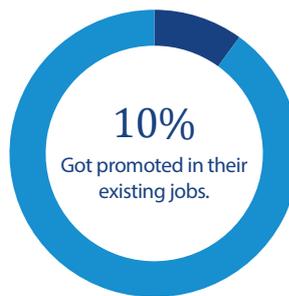
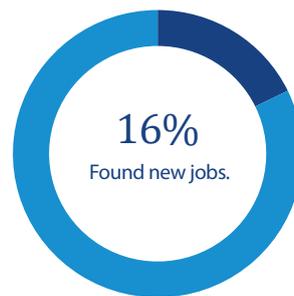
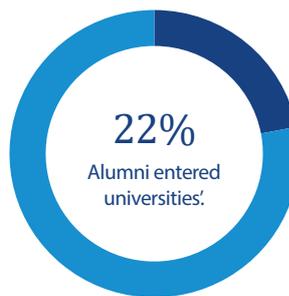
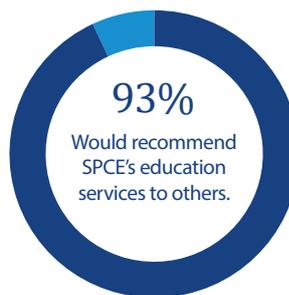
- SPCE Afghanistan successfully launched the CATs programme in September 2020, in partnership with Cambridge Malaysian Education and Development Trust, a programme allowing students to study online at their own pace.
- The Pathways to Innovation project, funded by the International Development Research Centre and the Aga Khan Foundation Canada, completed two components: Gender Responsive Learning Environment Training for 1116 individuals, and Mental Math training for 172.
- Over 1700 AKF TVET trainees in Badakhshan, Takhar, Kunduz, and Bamyán provinces started training in the entrepreneurship programme, focusing on business idea generation, and starting and expanding a business.

Alumni Survey

An annual alumni survey across all SPCE centres interviewed 2,540 alumni who graduated during 2018-2020 (56% female and 44% male). The gender distribution of the alumni varied from country to country. For example, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan had a higher percentage of female respondents, while Tajikistan and Afghanistan had more male respondents.

The survey was conducted online using Google and MS forms translated in English, Russian, Dari and Kazakh. Most alumni represented the following programmes: English language programmes, ICDL, and accounting courses. Respondents represented students (56%), or those employed in state and private organisations (21%).

SPCE Alumni Survey





Institute of Public Policy and Administration

In 2020, IPPA launched several new projects, strengthened existing partnerships, and contributed to the advancement of evidence-based policymaking in Central Asia and Afghanistan through research, training, and professional development initiatives. With support from national and international partners and donors, IPPA's activities focused on economic policy, trade, tourism, small and medium enterprises, employability and civic engagement of youth, food security and nutrition, agriculture, mining, and public health.

Dr. Troy Sternberg, Senior Research Associate at the University of Oxford's School of Geography and the Environment in the United Kingdom, delivering a UCA public lecture on "Citizen Science". Citizen science is public participation in scientific research. Watch this and other lectures on UCA's YouTube channel: https://youtu.be/2sXa_I2c1nE

Research

Despite global lockdowns and remote working, the IPPA team reported excellent productivity. It published 27 works, including 7 articles in refereed journals, one book, two book chapters, eight externally published research reports, and two papers in conference proceedings. IPPA also published seven new works for its Working Papers and Occasional Papers series in both English and Russian, having now produced 69 such publications, all available for free download at https://ucentralasia.org/research/ippa_publications/en.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture of the Kyrgyz Republic and the Agricultural Institute of Slovenia, IPPA expanded quantitative agricultural policy monitoring in the Kyrgyz Republic by determining the list of key agricultural commodities and collecting data on key agricultural commodity markets and relevant national policies. These activities were funded by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) as part of the "Quantitative Agricultural Policy Monitoring in Eight Post-Soviet Countries" project.



Minister of Economy Abdul Hadi Arghandiwal (left) at the Executive Masters in Economic Policy Programme Graduation Ceremony in Kabul, Afghanistan, Sheherazade Hirji (right), Diplomatic Representative of AKDN to Afghanistan.

IPPA also successfully implemented the project on gathering evidence and supporting multi-stakeholder engagement on the role of diets and food systems in the prevention of obesity and non-communicable diseases in Kyrgyzstan. The main goal of this endeavour was to identify potential pathways of cause and effect between trends in various dimensions of food systems (food supply, consumption, environment) and overweight, obesity and non-communicable diseases in Kyrgyzstan. This project was also supported by FAO.

In addition, IPPA helped to carry out the study of micro, small and medium enterprises in the mountainous regions of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan as part of the joint Mountain Universities Partnership project of UCA, Naryn State University and Khorog State University. IPPA provided support in both data collection and capacity-building of higher educational institutions.

IPPA was also engaged in the “Demilgeluu Jashtar” project on enhancing employability and civic engagement of youth in the Kyrgyz Republic. This project was funded by USAID and implemented by a consortium of organisations, including Mountain

Societies Development Support Program, International Debate Education Association Central Asia, Social Entrepreneurship Association, and Accelerate Prosperity. IPPA conducted the baseline study and helped develop a monitoring and evaluation plan for the project activities.

Furthermore, although the Covid-19 pandemic delayed summer fieldwork and a rearrangement of activities of the project “Mediation Model for Sustainable Infrastructure Development: Scaling up Praxis from Mongolia to Central Asia”, these developments provided researchers with opportunities to do more home-based research and writing. As a result, the project team secured a book publication contract with the international publisher Routledge; it is also actively working with the Birmingham-based software agency Bluetel to develop a mobile application to promote inclusive economic development and social welfare in Central Asia. The project is a collaboration between the University of Oxford, Independent Research Institute of Mongolia, and UCA, and is funded by UK’s Economic and Social Research Council and Global Challenges Research Fund.

Public Policy

Strengthening the capacity of government agencies, civil society organisations, tertiary institutions and individual experts to conduct quality research and generate knowledge in its practical application is a necessary precondition for efforts to adapt to the challenging international economic “new normal”. Accordingly, IPPA continues its efforts to offer lasting contributions to the professional capacities of regionally based individuals, governments, and organisations in Central Asia and Afghanistan through its flagship programmes – the Executive Masters in Economic Policy (EMEP), and the Certificate Programme in Economic Policy (CPEP). These initiatives are supported by the International Development Research Center (IDRC) and the Aga Khan Foundation Canada (AKFC) through the “Pathways to Innovation (P2i)” project.

In 2020, 34 students graduated from EMEP. All were Afghan civil servants who enrolled in EMEP as part of a long-lasting partnership between UCA and the Ministry of Finance of Afghanistan. There were also 14 graduates of CPEP in Kyrgyzstan and 28 in

Tajikistan. Although the programmes started in a customary mode, due to the pandemic, the teaching had to continue online. Students adjusted well to the new format, and all of them successfully defended their capstone projects. Besides academic programmes, as part of the “Pathways to Innovation (P2i)” project, IPPA published research papers on labour market and public finance in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan, and a special publication on Covid-19 and its consequences in Afghanistan jointly with the Biruni Institute of Afghanistan.

Life in Kyrgyzstan

This year the Sixth Annual Life in Kyrgyzstan (LiK) Conference was held online. The LiK 2020 brought together over 550 participants and speakers from 16 countries, representing government, public sector, development agencies, non-governmental organisations, academia, research institutions, and media. Participants exchanged knowledge and experiences on recent socio-economic developments in Kyrgyzstan and beyond, and addressed a range of topics, from agriculture and nutrition to the impacts of Covid-19 on Central Asia. The LiK 2020 was or-

IPPA Working Papers and Policy Briefs in 2020



Public Finance and Technological Development in Central Asia

This paper discusses the current situation with government revenue, expenditure, and deficits in the economies of Central Asia and considers the options available to use fiscal policy to support the technological development of these economies. It analyses contemporary issues in the public finances of these countries including the size of their governments, efficiency losses due to uneven taxation of different sectors and entities, ineffective foreign aid, and government expenditure inefficiency. The paper provides recommendations for the modification of fiscal policies to promote economic diversification and productivity growth in Central Asia.



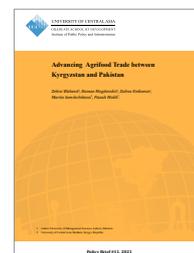
The Garment Sector and Youth Employment in Kyrgyzstan: A Value Chain Analysis

A value chain analysis of the garment sector identifies gaps in the knowledge and skills of youth workers in sewing workshops, examines constraints which affect negatively the decision of youth workers to constantly change their workplaces as well as pinpoints potential opportunities of garment production in rural areas of Kyrgyzstan. The study refreshes the thinking about the current state of garment production in Kyrgyzstan, its structure, and main stakeholders. The study also gives an overview of the garment value chain stages and discusses issues of migration, unemployment, gender, and core literacy skills relevant to the current state of the garment sector.



Labour Market and Technological Development in Central Asia

This paper discusses the current situation in the labour markets of the economies of Central Asia and considers the options available to use labour market policies to support the technological development of these economies. It analyses contemporary issues in the labour markets of these countries including the labour migration, informality, inequality, and financing of pensions through the taxation of labour. The paper provides recommendations for the modification of labour market policies to promote the economic diversification and productivity growth in Central Asia.



Advancing Agrifood Trade between Kyrgyzstan and Pakistan

The policy brief discusses the current situation and options for expanding the agrifood trade between Kyrgyzstan and Pakistan. It addresses the governments' trade policies, existing and emerging transportation routes, business practice challenges and provides recommendations for boosting the cooperation between two countries.

ganised by IPPA, the Leibniz Institute of Vegetable and Ornamental Crops, International Security and Development Center, and the World Bank, and was supported by the Aga Khan Foundation Kyrgyzstan, UK's Department for International Development, and USAID.

Impact Evaluations

Impact evaluations are one of the activities for which IPPA is in high demand by governments, donor countries and international organisations. In 2020, IPPA was responsible for the impact evaluation assessment of "Accelerating Progress towards Rural Women Economic Empowerment". The project was launched in seven countries, including Kyrgyzstan, and is run by the International Fund for Agricultural Development, Food and Agriculture Organization, UN Women, and World Food Programme. The objective of this initiative is to empower women, reduce rural poverty, promote sustainable agricultural production, and improve food and nutrition security.

In addition, as part of this project "Capacity Development Component in Support of a Digital Monitoring and Evaluation System", IPPA conducted training for Kyrgyz civil servants on monitoring and evaluation of the National Development Strategy 2018-2040. The objective of the training was to develop and deliver a course that is tailored to the needs of public officials for enhancing their knowledge and skills to use digital monitoring and evaluation systems more effectively.

Partnerships

IPPA programming is carried out with generous support from a number of partners and donors. It works closely with key government ministries in Central Asia and Afghanistan and draws expertise from a range of local and international institutions. This year IPPA joined the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Nexus Network that aims to strengthen cooperation between partners from Colombia, Ecuador, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Germany. The network is funded by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).

Occasional Papers Published in 2020



Suicide in Asia: A Literature Review

Suicide is a serious and complex global problem. About 1.5 million people die by suicide each year, and approximately one billion people are affected by it. Although most suicides occur in the low and middle-income countries of the world, research on suicides largely comes from upper-middle-income and high-income countries (Bantjes et al., 2016). Suicide varies around the globe due to factors relating to culture, context, and environment. There are striking differences in the appearance of suicide between the world's richer and poorer countries. The meaning and significance of suicide, the causes of suicide, and the risk and protective factors for suicide are uniquely embedded in the cultural and religious contexts of different geographical regions.



Factors of development and obstacles to growth of small and medium-sized businesses in Naryn oblast of Kyrgyzstan

Naryn oblast of the Kyrgyz Republic is rich with a variety of natural resources, such as mountain pastures, water and forest resources creating the potential for opening and development of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSME). Nature, ecosystem, highland pastures, climate and fertile soils are highly suitable for bee-farming, mountain tourism, herbs collection and livestock breeding. A total of 96 MSME were surveyed using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. Authors identified key development issues of MSME in these sectors and presented conclusions and recommendations that could be useful for the MSME sector development in Naryn oblast.



Factors of development and obstacles to growth of small and medium-sized businesses in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region of the Republic of Tajikistan

The study was carried out in Shughnan, Rushan and Darvaz districts and Khorog city. The studies sectors are bee-farming, livestock breeding, agricultural processing, trade and tourism. The paper presents the results of a survey of 96 micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region with a description of the research methodology, as well as an analysis describing the factors that promote growth and the barriers to the development of MSMEs in that region.

IPPA research initiatives focus on economic policy, including regional economic relations and trade, economics of development, food security and agriculture and regulatory and microeconomic policy.

To date, IPPA has published more than 60 peer-reviewed working and occasional papers in these areas in English and national languages as part of the IPPA Working Paper Series. Available for free by download from the UCA website: www.ucecentralasia.org/ippa





Mountain Societies Research Institute

The Mountain Societies Research Institute (MSRI) is an inter and transdisciplinary research institute within UCA's Graduate School of Development (GSD), dedicated to addressing the challenges and opportunities within Central Asian mountain communities and environments. MSRI's goal is to support and enhance the resilience and quality of life of mountain societies through the generation and application of sound scientific research.

MSRI Research Fellows launch a drone to study the forest in the Sary-Chelek Biosphere Reserve in Kyrgyzstan.

Addressing Climate Change

Remote mountain communities need access to better climate, weather, and streamflow data, which affect agricultural production, natural hazards and related disasters, domestic water supplies, and livelihoods. Many of the villagers are subsistence farmers whose lives are increasingly impacted by the pressures of climate change and variability, which drive droughts, landslides, debris flows, snow avalanches, and flood hazards, as well as affect crop selection, grazing capacity, and land degradation. In 2020, MSRI continued its work with the Addressing Climate Change in Afghanistan (E3C) project with an overall objective of improving resilience to climate change of communities and ecosystems in the Panj-Amu River Basin and the sustainability of their beneficial use for rural areas. This includes initiating field activities to interact with target communities and fostering collaborations with partner institutions. In cooperation with AKF-Afghanistan, MSRI collected some primary data on the current conditions and trends of wildlife, rangelands, forestry, and marketable medicinal plants in five districts. Eventually, as a technical partner in climate

modelling, MSRI aims to make its research findings meaningful by communicating with partners and translating results of climate modelling into products for use.

Land degradation and water resources management

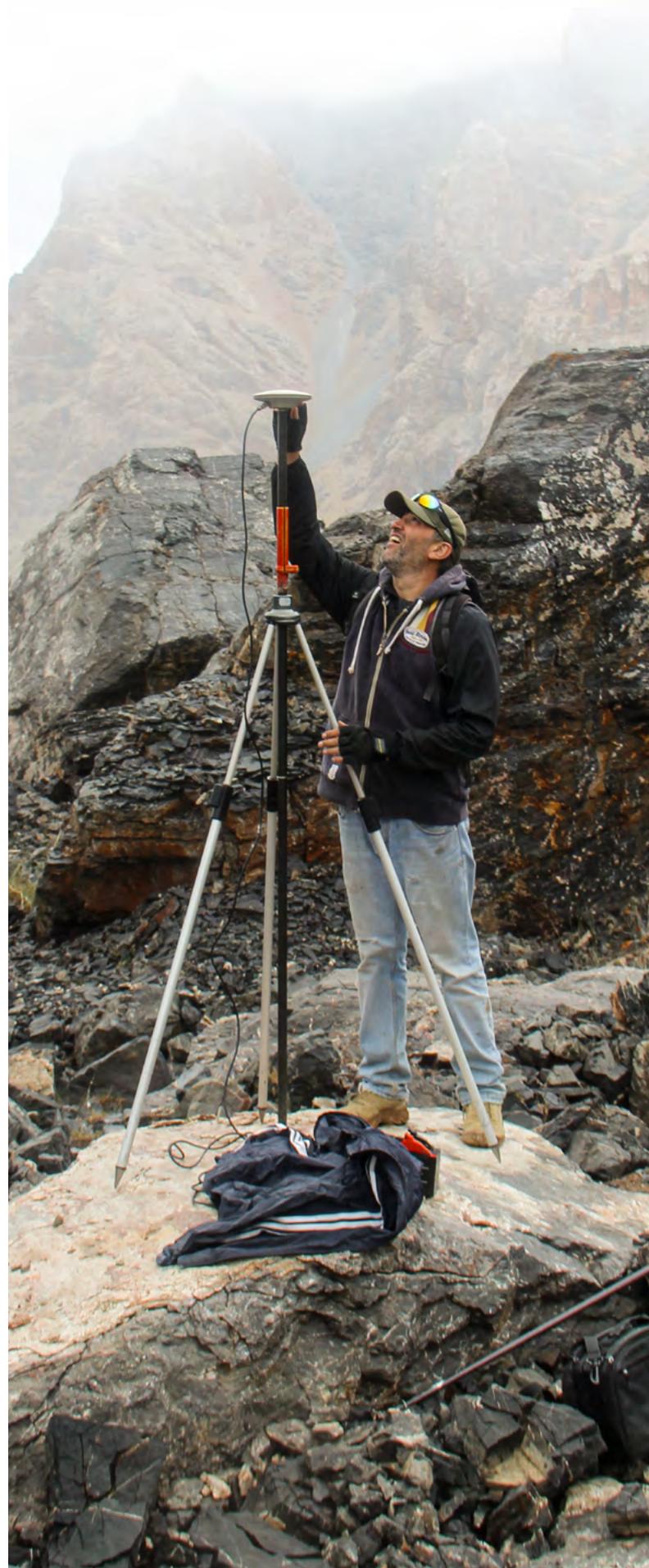
In 2020, MSRI successfully secured new proposals funded by the World Bank on: “Catchment Characterization in the Vakhsh Basin Upstream of Nurek Reservoir, Tajikistan” and “Mapping and Valuing Ecosystems Services, and Prioritizing Investments in Select Watersheds in Tajikistan to support Sustainable Hydropower”. The main objective of these projects is to understand erosion processes in Vakhsh River Basin above Nurek Dam and estimate the sediment loads to the dam reservoir. MSRI conducted and completed mapping analyses and field assessments; compiled hydrologic, topographic, and geologic maps; analyzed historical snow cover; and assessed erosion processes, sediment sources and delivery mechanisms, results of which will be included in an interim report and published in English and Russian languages in early 2021.

Another project, also funded by the World Bank, on “Crop Yield Forecasting using Remote Sensing in Tajikistan” aims to develop and test a methodology for predicting the yield of main agricultural crops, at the district level and at the level of several large reference dekhkan farms. MSRI developed a methodological approach to land use and land cover classification which discriminates crop fields based on time series of Sentinel-2 satellite images. To produce agriculture land maps based on time series satellite images, field surveys were arranged to collect crop data at the field level in three targeted districts representative of agro-climatic regions.

Rural migration during pandemic

The second year of the AGRUMIG: ‘Leaving something behind’ - Migration governance and agricultural and rural change in ‘home’ communities: comparative experience from Europe, Asia and Africa project, supported by the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, consisted of intensive field work in 15 villages of Jalalabad, Batken and Naryn regions of Kyrgyzstan. A quantitative survey conducted in November covered 300 migrant households and focused on the relationships among rural change, migration, and the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, MSRI published

Muslim Bandishoev, Remote Sensing and GIS Expert at the Mountain Societies Research Institute, collecting geospatial data for biomass estimation using satellite imagery.





A small headwater stream of Vakhsh River brings heavy loads of sediment into the river system after receiving a spring rainfall. This sedimentation is reducing the capacity of Tajikistan's Nurek reservoir, and threatening the long term viability of a nationally important hydropower operation.

a policy paper on the same topic and produced an animated video on impacts of migration on rural development in Kyrgyzstan. The collected data will help MSRI understand a range of economic, institutional, cultural and agroecological factors that mediate the outflow of labor from rural areas, explain how demographic changes feed back into reshaping rural transformation in these areas, and challenge thinking on the best policy and practice approaches to govern migration in these contexts.

Sustainable Use of Natural Resources

About one third of the forested area in Tajikistan is covered with Juniper forests, but since the beginning of the 20th century, the proportion of wooded areas has decreased dramatically. Uncontrolled use in the past and present has led to such a degradation of forests in many places. With an aim of supporting local actors in the development of strategic management plans for sustainable Juniper forest use involving location population, MSRI continued implementation of the Balancing and Optimization of Multifunctional Use of Juniper Forests in Central Asia (JuniperCA) project in Tajikistan. As part of biomass modelling and estimation, MSRI collected field data on Juniper plots to develop volume estimates, collected samples based on the “destructive” method to model Juniper growth, and established precise ground control points using DGPS for accurate georeferencing of Pleiades satellite imagery to generate a Juniper tree canopy model required for biomass estimation at the regional level. As a result, a biomass map will be created that is used for the spatial representation of juniper stands and can be used for land use and forest planning.

Building Regional Research Capacity

In the “Pathways to Innovation” project, funded by the International Development Research Centre, Canada, and the Aga Khan Foundation Canada, MSRI continued its collaboration with Khorog State University (KSU), Tajikistan and Badakhshan and Bamyan Universities in Afghanistan, where selected fellows successfully implemented nine research projects around food security, livelihood improvement and natural resource conservation topics. Preliminary research findings from these projects have been integrated in the teaching of supported researchers. In addition, six participants of the Certificate Programme in Natural Resources Management (CPNRM) from KSU conducted 4-5-day training workshops on Natural Resource Management for faculty members and students of KSU. Following this, in May 2020, MSRI conducted a survey to assess post-program impact at partner institutions and held an online conference with partner universities where researchers presented their findings on a live Zoom broadcast. As a result, the project helped develop new partnerships between MSRI and partner universities in Tajikistan and Afghanistan and provided MSRI with a unique standpoint to identify local accomplished academics and leaders who could be supported in the future.



MSRI Scientists collecting sediment samples from the Vakhsh River as part of the World Bank funded project to study sediment loads to Nurek Dam, the largest hydropower station in Tajikistan.

In close integration with the Earth and Environmental Sciences Programme of SAS, Roy Sidle, MSRI Director and Ben Jarihani, Associate Director have been teaching courses on Hydrology and Hydrogeology; Natural Hazards and Risk Management in Mountain Regions; Introduction to Remote Sensing and GIS; Advanced Remote Sensing and GIS; and Science, Impact, and Complexity of Climate Change to undergraduate students at UCA. In the Summer of 2020, MSRI hosted nine students of UCA's Earth and Environmental Sciences program as interns in Khorog through UCA's Co-operative Education Program.

Partnerships and Outreach

In 2020, MSRI strengthened research activities and focused on building research collaborations in Central Asia with various regional and international organisations. These discussions resulted in collaborations, including drafting a Memorandum of Understanding with the Soil Institute of Tajik Academy of Agricultural Science, and submitting a major SATREPS proposal to the Japanese Government.

MSRI also continued its collaboration with the Global Environment Facility Small Grants

Programme (GEF SGP) on the development of a Country Strategy for the Programme in Kyrgyzstan. To identify priority development areas related to the environment in Kyrgyzstan, MSRI organized a workshop on March 10th 2020 in Bishkek, attended by more than 40 representatives from State Environment Protection bodies, NGOs, and academia. As a result, Osh and Batken provinces of Kyrgyzstan were selected as target landscapes and analysis of these landscapes as well as GIS assessment of existing meteorological and remotely sensed data for describing the target landscapes were conducted. A draft Country Strategy document was developed based on collected information. MSRI findings will help guiding GEF in allocating funds for purposes that reflect the needs and requirements of local communities in the areas of natural resource management, local infrastructure, water management, hazardous waste management and sustainable sources of income.

After moving its headquarters to Khorog, MSRI increased its staff members and hired two post-doctoral fellows, one local supported by the SDGnexus Network, and one international supported by UCA.



Cultural Heritage and Humanities Unit

The Cultural Heritage and Humanities Unit (CHHU) advances the University's mission to help different peoples of the region preserve and draw upon their rich cultural traditions and heritages as assets for the future through research, documentation, teaching, and public outreach activities. It generates new dialogues on Central Asian heritage and identity and addresses contemporary cultural production and cultural institutional issues. CHHU works with a network of regional scholars and cultural practitioners to achieve its goals. Its staff also teach classes in the Liberal Arts programme of the School of Arts and Sciences.

Premier of the musical performance *The Origin* played by the "Kyrgyz Kairyk" ensemble, Bishkek.

Publications

CHHU's Cultural Heritage Book Series republished the two volume book *The Tajiks of the Huf Valley* (in RUS, 800 pages) by Mikhail Andreev (1873-1948), a renowned Russian ethnographer, orientalist and scholar of Central Asian culture and history. On February 29th, the Unit organized a book launch at the Ismaili Centre in Dushanbe, presenting three new book publications: *The Tajiks of the Huf Valley*, the only available ethnographic research of Tajiks from the upper streams of the Amu-Darya River; *Andrei Evlampievich Madji: Half a Century of Research in Central Asia* by historian Victor Dubovitskii about life and academic work of orientalist Andrei Madji; and *Architectural Odyssey. 'Safarnama' of Nasir Khusraw*, about medieval Islamic architecture, written by Munavar Mamadnazarov. This event gathered over 200 attendees from the academic community, international organisations as well as state officials.

The Unit also released three electronic monographs: *Common Ethno-Cultural Patterns of Kyrgyz and Uzbeks* (in Kyrgyz and English) of Dr Abdymitalip

Murzakmetov, Professor of Osh State University; Epistemology of Abu Ali ibn Sina (Avicenna): The Dynamics of Thought from Illusion towards Truth (in Russian) by Sunotullo Jonboboev, Senior Research Fellow of CHHU; and The History of Geographic Study of Kyrgyzstan from the Ancient Times till the Mid-19th Century (in Russian) by S. Umurzakov, a leading scholar and geographer of Kyrgyzstan.

Research Paper Series

CHHU published eight new studies in its Research Report Series on cultural and historical heritages of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan: “National Festivals of the Tajiks through the Ages” by Dr. Larisa Dodkhu-doeva, et. al.; “The Pamirian Languages: Between Past and Future” by Dr Tohir Kalandarov; “Jadidism in Kyrgyzstan: Historical Value of its Heritage in the Past and Present Day” by Dr Aida Kubatova; “The Conception of the House in the Shughni Linguistic Worldview” by Dr Shahlo Nekushoeva; “Forced Migration of Kyrgyz to China in the 20th Century: Field Research in 2015 in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region of China,” by Dr Gulzada Abdaliev; “M. S. Andreev in Historical Perspective: Review of Tadzhiiki doliny Huf,” by Saynak Saynakov; “Jusup Abdrakhmanov: Dekulakization, the Basmachy Movement and the Great Famine” by Dr Jumagul Baydildeev; and “Women’s Songs in the Cultural Traditions of Badakhshan” by Dr Bahrainiso Kabilova.

Outreach

CHHU’s public lectures series went online with five lectures from on April 23: Dr. Tohir Kalandarov presented on “Pamiri People and their Languages: Shimmering Identity,” on May 12, Altyn Kapalova, Research Fellow of CHHU presented on “Civic Activism through Arts: What it is and How it is Practiced in Central Asia,” on May 21, Dr. Aida Kubatova presented on “Jadidism in Kyrgyzstan: Political, Cultural and Educational Activities in the late 19th- and early 20th-Centuries,” and on May 28, Dr. Kubat Tabaldiev lectured on “Archeology in Kyrgyzstan: Research findings in 2000-2019 and Future Perspectives” and Chorshanbe Goibnazarov, Research Fellow of CHHU presented on “Music is All We Have: Musicians respond to Covid-19 in Tajikistan.”

Partnerships

CHHU-SAS joined a global art event in Bishkek and Osh cities of Kyrgyzstan. Participants experienced an adventurous exploration of art and self,

combining elements of play, mindfulness, and embodied practice. In cooperation with the University of New South Wales, Sydney and Kyrgyz National Museum of Fine Arts, CHHU organized an interactive on-line event “The Playful Eye goes to Kyrgyzstan” to discover traditional and modern Kyrgyz art. Playful Eye events have been held at some of the world’s leading public and private art museums, including the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Asian Art in Washington DC, the Olbricht Foundation’s Collectors’ Room in Berlin, the National Gallery of Australia, and the Queensland Art Gallery and Gallery of Modern Art. The first event took place in Bishkek on August 26, followed by Osh city on September 17.

In partnership with Kyrgyzstan’s National Television and Radio Broadcasting Corporation (KTRK) and leading archeologists including Dr Kubat Tabaldiev and Dr Aida Abdykanova, CHHU supported the filming of a series of documentary TV programs of cultural and historical sites of the Naryn region. Eight documentary films (with English subtitles) are being prepared to be broadcasted on KTRK’s Culture, History and Language channel in 2021.

Supporting State Museums in Kyrgyzstan

CHHU continued its support activities by capacity building of museum staff in Kyrgyzstan. On October 28, the Unit held a seminar for museum specialists of Naryn and Issykul regions. The seminar “New Narratives and Forms of working with museum audiences” was attended by 25 specialists from 7 museums. The seminar was hosted by the Center for Nomadic Civilizations in Chong-Sary-Oi village of Issik-Kul province. Dr. Michael Garbutt from Sydney University gave an online lecture based on his experience of creating new forms of communications in the museum space. Museum expert, Oksana Kapishnikova, and Altyn Kapalova, CHHU research fellow, spoke about the creation of new decolonial narratives in the work of museums. Altynai Kudaibergenova, research fellow of the Kyrgyz National Museum of Fine Arts shared how they were successful in transitioning the museum online during the COVID 19 pandemic.

On December 15-16, based on its success at the regional level, CHHU held a national seminar for museum professionals of Kyrgyzstan on “New Forms and Narratives in Working with Museum Audiences”. More than 50 representatives of re-



Dr. Bahriniso Kobilova (left), from the Institute of History, Archeology and Ethnography of the Academy of Science of the Republic of Tajikistan, and Kurbon Alamshoev (right), receive the new edition of the Tajiks of Huf Valley publication.

gional and city museums of the country took part in this online seminar. This was the sixth seminar organized by UCA with a focus on rural museums with the aim of improving the skills of museum professionals and building human resources to introduce innovative solutions in organizing a modern museum and improving the effectiveness of working with museum audiences.

Cultural Production

A short documentary film titled “The Flying Horse” has been produced and is available on the Aga Khan University’s (AKU) website. (<https://www.aku.edu/vrw/kz/Pages/home.aspx>). This film covers the importance of preserving the indigenous Kyrgyz horse and talks about its resilience in adapting to climate change, the preservation of mountain pastures, and Kyrgyz cultural traditions. The film is directed by Aibek Baiymbetov, Junior Research Fellow of CHHU and his team, in consultation with Andrew Tkach, a well-known documentary filmmaker, carried out within the framework of the Voices from the Roof of the World (VRW) project of AKU.

On November 3, the Theater for Young Spectators hosted a premiere of the musical performance

“Sky Woman - Jer Ene” based on the Potawatomi legend from the book “Braiding Sweetgrass”, written by R. W. Kimmerer. The play is about the birth of Earth, the appearance of the first woman, and the fate of man and his destructive attitude toward Earth. The premiere of this unique, experimental performance was made possible through partnership with CHHU.

“Jaralysh” (The Origin), a unique concert-performance produced in partnership with CHHU, thrilled audiences who flocked to Bishkek’s Asanbay Centre on December 23. The Kyrgyz Kairyk ensemble, the youth experimental theatre and young designers of Kyrgyzstan, teamed up for this production which explores the birth of a nation through a hero who faces enormous challenges in life. “Jaralysh” is an initiative of the “Kyrgyz Kairyk” musical project, which in partnership with CHHU is contributing to the preservation and revitalization of Kyrgyz traditional music.

The *Pamiri Rubob* is a popular musical instrument with people of the Gorno-Badakhshan region of Tajikistan.





Civil Society Initiative

The University of Central Asia's Civil Society Initiative (CSI), established in 2017, enriches development thinking by bringing to the foreground the importance of associational life in the well-being of communities, society, and civil society organisations as drivers of efforts to give people a voice on policy and governance. CSI aims to foster a more enabling policy and administrative environment for civil society's development, including measures that unlock the potential of philanthropy and private giving to support activities for public benefit. It is also focused on building organisational capacity of a wide range of civil society groups and broader public awareness of their essential contributions to society.

The University of Central Asia's Civil Society Initiative representative presenting evaluation forms to attendees to assess the results of training on "Promotion of consultative practices and peace-oriented local advocacy in Kyrgyzstan".

Citizen Engagement

Civil Society Initiative and the Open Contracting Partnership (OCP) arranged a webinar, "Viral procurement - How are state funds spent to fight coronavirus, and how to deal with it?", on May 26th 2020 with 10 speakers from Ukraine, Moldova, Mongolia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. More than 80 civil society experts from the Central Asia and CIS attended the event, which covered the following topics: world experience in the regulation and control of procurement to combat coronavirus; principles of open contracting and the possibilities of its application in the region; experience of using open data for the correct and rational procurement planning for fighting coronavirus. During the three-hour session, speakers presented their experience and discussed how civil society can influence the state to make prompt, rational and effective procurement to fight the coronavirus; how to calculate local needs for protective and medical equipment; and how to procure supplies efficiently from a chaotic and severely depleted market. The webinar is available in Russian at https://youtu.be/D_L0tB54Qgo.

Promoting Open Government Partnership

As co-initiator of the Commitment on Mining Data Disclosure in the framework of OCP, CSI conducted an evaluation interview for participants of the training “Promotion of consultative extractive practices and peace-oriented local advocacy in Kyrgyzstan”. Results of this assessment have been delivered to International Alert and the State Committee on Mineral Resources, and have been used to engage policy makers and representatives of other stakeholders at the local, national and regional levels. They have also been used to promote inclusive approaches to peacebuilding and conflict prevention in the mining sector. At the same time, special attention has been paid to the involvement of youth in the discussion of peace and security at the local, national, and regional levels.

Covid-19 Emergency Response Plan

CSI delivered online workshops on “Women’s Voices Amid the Covid-19 Crisis” to 20-women led organisations to help them develop ideas on best practices on Covid-19 responses. They were held as part of the Covid-19 Emergency Response project funded by the Canadian Government’s Foundation for Empowerment and Health in Asia programme.



Dastan Bekeshev, a Member of Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic, who is also sight impaired, addressing the gathering about the role of civil society during the Covid pandemic.

The workshops aimed to provide institutional capacity building trainings and technical support for women-led and gender equality-focused organisations. Participants were introduced to the following topics: addressing home-based and gender-based violence, economic consequences of the lockdown, practices and examples of various initiatives related to domestic violence and violence against children. The main goals of these workshops were to build a dynamic community of women-led organisations from across the target regions of Kyrgyzstan, to provide participants with international examples of initiatives related to emerging women practices in combatting Covid-19. The initiatives developed by organisations during workshops have been supported by small grants awarded by the Aga Khan Foundation in Kyrgyzstan.

Begaiym Murzalieva, a project beneficiary, implemented the project “Promotion of family gardening and the principles of agroecology” in the village of Acha-Kaindy in Naryn oblast. The project established a group of 9 families who created a family garden, and cultivated fruit-bearing plant and vegetables. All families were given training on cultivation and production of jams and natural juices. Participants also received information on improving the rights of poor families in rural areas, proper nutrition and food security, and the importance of good nutrition. They learned how to make eco-products from local raw materials. Under the supervision of an agronomist, families planted seedlings, and were taught how to care for and cultivate fruit shrubs.

A Narrative History of the Pandemic

CIS launched “Covid: A Narrative History” project in Kyrgyzstan. The pandemic gave rise to an intense public discussion in the media and social media on all aspects related to the pandemic experience, including questions regarding public authorities’ actions and policies. The activation of self-help groups, community organisations, volunteers, civil society organisations, and NGOs occurred on a scale never seen before. This project supports journalists in conducting interviews, collecting information and materials in various formats from a wide range of societal actors for a narrative history that helps individuals and society understand the sequence of development, typologies of problems encountered, and responses from various sectors of society.



Aga Khan Humanities Project

The Aga Khan Humanities Project (AKHP) collaborates with a network of 94-partner institutions in three Central Asian countries with over 400 trained instructors delivering eight interdisciplinary humanities courses developed by regional and international scholars. The courses explore abiding issues facing the individual and society through a pedagogy fostering critical thinking, academic writing, and rational debate. A regional ‘Debate Club’, a public lecture series, and cooperation on crafting master’s courses on contemporary Central Asia are among its other activities. AKHP, headquartered in Dushanbe, was established in 1997 by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture and became part of UCA in 2007.

A faculty member of AKHP conducting a teacher training session.

Debate Training and Tournaments

AKHP conducted Cross Debate Format (CDF) and British Parliamentary Debating trainings, and organised tournaments for about 150 students in 2020. For the first time during November and December AKHP developed Electronic Training Materials for the Cross Debate Format that were successfully tested via online trainings and mini tournaments by 40 participants from across Tajikistan. AKHP plans to implement online CDF trainings and mini tournaments in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan beginning February 2021, and conduct the first online National and Regional Tournament on CDF.

Curriculum Development

In 2020, AKHP developed and published Curriculum Materials and Teacher’s Guide (700 pages) for a Master of Arts (MA) course covering the “Central Asian Worldview: Past and Present”. It was successfully piloted in 2019 at the Chokan Valikhanov Institute of History and Ethnology, Committee for Science at Kazakhstan’s Ministry of Education and Sciences, Arabaev Kyrgyz State University, and the Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography of the Tajik

Academy of Sciences. Since February 2020, Five educational institutions in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan conducted officially AKHP MA courses on theme: “The Central Asian Worldview: Past and Present” for 55 MA students (as elective course);

- AKHP conducted research study with participation of MA students in Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan who passed AKHP MA course. All results will be part of MA updated course (as case studies from Central Asian perspective).
- In December, AKHP developed an additional option: Economic Data for the AKHP Interactive Electronic Ethnographic Map for Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan.

Faculty Development Programme

In September 2020 in Almaty, AKHP and UNESCO conducted a Forum on Pedagogical Innovative Practices in the Central Asia Region (online and offline formats) with the participation of 24 leading teachers from Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. As a result, two of AKHP’s FDP components presented at this Forum (MA Course and Cross Debate Format) will be included in UNESCO’s programme: School of Innovative Pedagogy that will be conducted in 2021 in Central Asia.

“Experience is the best teacher, and AKHP’s unique courses incorporate various experiences, making the learner step out of the regular thinking box to evaluate situations from as many perspectives as possible. This leads to improved critical thinking skills.”



- Nilufar Imomdodova, AKHP course participant.

AKHP Public Lecture Series

Established in 2012, AKHP’s Public Lecture Series provides a platform for inter-disciplinary discourse between the humanities and natural sciences disciplines. In 2020, AKHP organized 5 public lectures that were held online because of Covid-19, reaching over 500 people. UCA’s Public Lecture Series, and Online Lecture Series, are available for viewing in English or Russian on UCA’s YouTube channel. In 2020 AKHP also published a Public Lecture Series book for (2018-2019): Interdisciplinary Discourse Between the Humanities and Natural Sciences.



Students actively participate in Debate Clubs at AKHP.



Information Technology

While the impact of Covid-19 has been challenging for many, including the University of Central Asia, a positive outcome has been the acceleration of digital transformation. A strategic priority at UCA for some time now, digital transformation was hastened by the adoption of new technologies as the pandemic forced many activities, including learning, to move online.

SAP (KURAK) Rollout

The “SAP S/4 HANA Cloud” a cloud-based Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system, became UCA’s “digital core” during 2020, integrating all data and processes. This platform, together with MS Office 365, is now used by all staff and faculty, in all countries where the University operates.

SAP training for UCA’s core team.

Standardisation: UCA’s backend processes are standardized in all operational areas, across all office locations. UCA can perform all transactions through SAP with a predefined workflow and real time visibility in the system, by providing anywhere, anytime, any device access. This provides flexibility and mobility to employees.

UCA Website Project

- With support from the Department of Advancement and Public Affairs, the new UCA website is nearing completion with a formal launch in July 2021.
- All work is being done with a focus on mobile first design, and user-friendly content management of the site.
- Capacity building activities are ongoing to ensure that the required skills and competence is available in-house to fully support and maintain the website.

Online Public Lectures Held by the IT Department in 2020



When Covid-19 Leads to Digital Transformation

Dr. Ravi Pendse

Vice President for IT/CIO University of Michigan, USA

Dr. Ravi Pendse covers steps the university's technology organisation took, challenges they addressed, and lessons learned through the university's response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

youtu.be/Mz9ByHsDLck



Turning Data into Value with Process Mining

Josephine Hubert

Academic Alliance Manager at Celonis

The talk covers an introduction to Process Mining both from an academic and applied perspective, as well as a live demonstration of the software.

youtu.be/zCrup9RilyU



People-Centric Cyber Security: What are the Lessons Learnt from Covid-19?

Dr. Jessica Barker

Co-Founder and co-CEO of Cygenta

This session explores the human side of cyber security; why awareness, behaviour and culture are so important to cyber security; what lessons we are learning from Covid-19; and what we can do to better understand people-centric cyber security.

youtu.be/ByhoorLaXN0



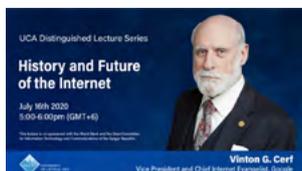
The Impact of Covid-19 on Cyber Security

Faheem Ali

Expert of Digital Transformation & Financial Inclusion.

How Covid-19 has created new risks in the cloud and cyber security. With many employees working remotely, how can they protect their information and data from being hijacked, particularly in a multi-cloud environment?

youtu.be/d1_o_qQ6mgk



History and Future of the Internet

Vinton G. Cerf

Vice President and Chief Internet Evangelist, Google.

The lecture covered the history as well as his vision of the future of the Internet.

youtu.be/MWSOP_0T7ps



Why Countries Need Digital Resilience Strategies

Watch the full conference to learn about digital resilience, and hear shared views from an international panel of cyber security experts. The Conference also discussed action plans for the government and other stakeholders to better manage crisis situations such as the Covid-19 pandemic.

youtu.be/murPofCHn_w



Key Technology Drivers of Higher Education During and After COVID-19

In this panel discussion, the CIO's of premier institutions from Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Pakistan share their experiences of the digitalization journey, and the pivotal role it has played in the continuation of education during the Covid pandemic, and the likely scenarios during the post-Covid era.

youtu.be/fX7JHQWMTcG



Learning from Korean Cyber Experience: Virtual Study Visit to KISA

The virtual workshop covers the following topics:

- Cybersecurity Framework in Korea: Policy and Regulatory Framework
- Introduction of Korean Computer Emergency Response Team/Coordination Centre
- Covid-19-specific Cyber Preparedness
- Cyber Incident Trend in Korea and Global Cyber Threats Analysis.

youtu.be/nLewwUima3w



Learning from Korea's Digital Response to COVID-19

The workshop introduces Korea's approach and best practices in combatting the Covid-19 pandemic. It highlights Korean policy measures based on public-private partnership and present examples of digital resilience in Government services and higher education.

youtu.be/yRx1pFNQYX8



Blockchain As Good Governance Technology

Governments, educational institutions and the private sector in Eurasia must take on the challenge of harnessing the potential of blockchain technology for good governance and development, said panelists at an online discussion organized by the University of Central Asia and StrategEast centre for a new economy in December 2020.

youtu.be/SKcdJu0Pi50



High-Tech Parks in Eurasia

The Ministry of Industry and New Technologies of the Republic of Tajikistan, in collaboration with University of Central Asia and StrategEast, organised a dedicated panel discussion for different ministries, committees, public and private organisations including representatives of development partners to discuss and explore the Eurasian experience in the creation of High Technology Parks.

youtu.be/lKp2ZH5Zxc

All Online Lecture recordings are available on UCA's YouTube channel at:

www.youtube.com/ucentralasia

If you would like to receive public lecture announcements, please subscribe to UCA News:

<http://bit.ly/UCAnews>



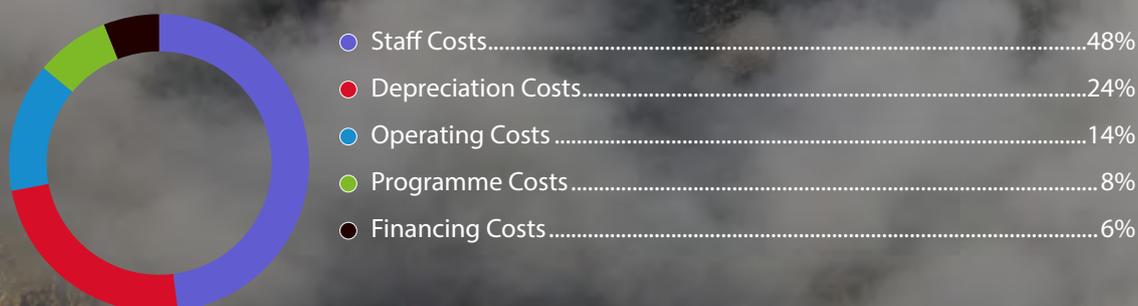
Financial Overview

Key Figures

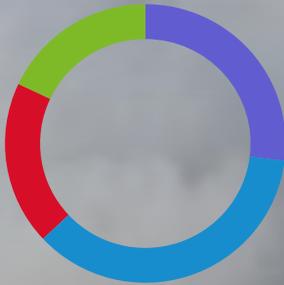
Total Investments, grants and revenues since inception (2000 - 2020):



Total Operating Expenses for 2020: US\$ 23.5 million



Total amount of grants received and distributed in 2020: US\$ 1.7 million



Donor Origin

United States	27%
European Union	36%
Canada	19%
Other	18%



Programme Beneficiary

Graduate School of Development	51%
School of Professional and Continuing Education	45%
Other Units	4%

Human Resource Profile Faculty & Staff



Khorog	29.6%
Naryn	24.1%
Bishkek	21.9%
Dushanbe	10.4%
Afghanistan	7.7%
Tekeli	6%
Bokhtar	0.3%



Central Asian	92,5%
International	7,5%



605
Total Number of
Faculty & Staff



37%
Female



63%
Male

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To The Governing Body of the University of Central Asia

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of the University of Central Asia ("the University"), which comprise of the balance sheet as at 31 December 2020, and the statement of income and expenses, statement of comprehensive income, and statement of cash flow for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the University as at 31 December 2020, and of its financial performance and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRSs).

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISAs). Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements section of our report. We are independent of the University as required by ISAs and have fulfilled our other responsibilities under its ethical requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Responsibilities of Management for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these financial statements in accordance with IFRS, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, management is responsible for assessing the Company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the Company or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

The Board of Trustees are responsible for overseeing the Company's financial reporting process.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

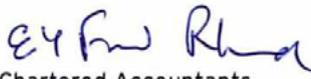




As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the planning and performance of the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control;
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the University's internal control;
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management;
- Conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Company's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Company to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation; and

We communicate with Board of Trustees regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.


Chartered Accountants

Audit Engagement Partner: Omer Chughtai

Date: 12 July 2021

Karachi

Institutional Partners

The following institutional partners have contributed to UCA's programmes, and their support is gratefully acknowledged.

Aga Khan Education Services
Aga Khan Foundation
Aga Khan Health Services
Aga Khan University
Almaty Management University, Kazakhstan
Almaty Oblast Administration, Kazakhstan
Awali Group, Canada
Badakhshan University, Afghanistan
Bamyan University, Afghanistan
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Department of Education of the Almaty Oblast, Kazakhstan
Department of Tourism of the Almaty Oblast, Kazakhstan
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst
Embassy of the Netherlands in Afghanistan
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Eurasian Humanities Institute
European Commission
European Computer Driving License Foundation
European Union of Kyrgyzstan
GFZ German Research Centre for Geoscience
Global Affairs Canada
Global Snow Leopard & Ecosystem Protection Program
High Technology Park of the Kyrgyz Republic
I. Arabaev Kyrgyz State University
Institute of Humanities in Khorog, Tajikistan
International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
International Development Research Centre , Canada
International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center
International Mountain Society
International Security and Development Center, Berlin,
Germany
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Khujand State University, Tajikistan
Kyrgyz Investment and Credit Bank
Kyrgyz National University
Kyrgyz Russian Slavonic University
Leibniz Institute of Agricultural Development in Transition
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Ministry of Education and Science of Kazakhstan
Ministry of Education and Science of Kyrgyzstan
Ministry of Education and Science of Tajikistan
Ministry of Finance of Afghanistan
Mountain Partnership of the United Nations Food and
Agriculture Organization
Mountain Societies Development and Support Programme
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Naryn Oblast Education Department, Kyrgyzstan
Naryn State University, Kyrgyzstan
Naryn Town Education Department, Kyrgyzstan
National Academy of Science of Kyrgyzstan
National Research University's Higher School of Economics,
Moscow, Russia
Osh State University, Kyrgyzstan
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Palladium, London, England
Pamir Energy Company, Tajikistan
Public Association for Innovative Practices
Russian Academy of Geography
Seneca College, Canada
Snow Leopard Trust
Soonchunhyang University
State Agency for Environmental Protection and Forestry,
Kyrgyzstan
Stockholm School of Economics, Riga, Latvia
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
Tajik Academic of Sciences
Tajik National State University
Tajik State University of Business and Politics in Khujand
Teacher Training College Ishkashim, Afghanistan
Teacher Training College Nusay, Afghanistan
Teacher Training College Shughnan, Afghanistan
The International Centre for Research in Agroforestry – World
Agroforestry Centre
The Worldwide Education Fund of the Dallas Foundation
The World Bank
United Nations Agency for International Development
United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization
United States Institute of Peace
United States Peace Corps
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University of Auckland
University of Bern, Switzerland
University of British Columbia, Canada
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Zurich University of Applied Sciences

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This Annual Report is also available
on the University website:



Photo: UCA Campus in Naryn, Kyrgyzstan.