



UNIVERSITY  
OF CENTRAL ASIA



# ANNUAL REPORT 2021

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.

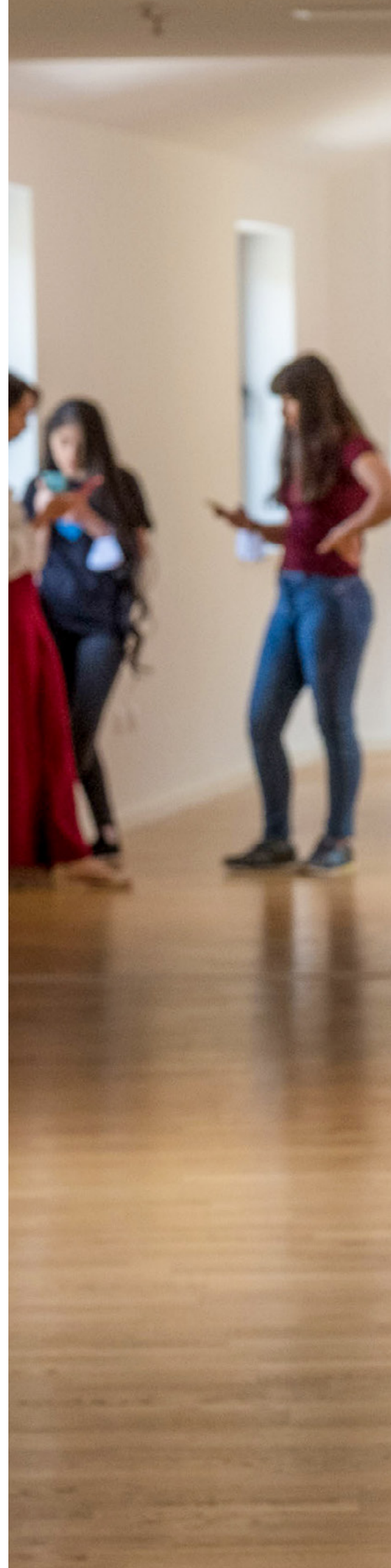
For more information: [www.ucentralasia.org](http://www.ucentralasia.org)

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Cover photo:  
Graduation Procession at the  
First UCA Convocation.







## Message from the Chairman

**Guided by the vision of the Chancellor, His Highness the Aga Khan, and the Patrons who are Presidents of the Founding States of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan, the University of Central Asia (UCA) achieved a major milestone in its young history with the graduation of its first cohort of undergraduate students from the School of Arts and Sciences.**

This brought the University one step closer to realizing the vision of the Chancellor and the Patrons of UCA as a “single transnational institution of higher education that will bring the power of education and human ingenuity to the economic and social challenges of mountain societies of Central Asia and elsewhere.”

The year 2021 marked several important milestones at UCA. The live-streamed First Convocation ceremony held simultaneously at the Khorog and Naryn campuses brought together students, family members, faculty, and well-wishers across multiple countries and time zones around the world. In his congratulatory address to the graduates, the Chancellor spoke of the strong bonds forged by UCA across many frontiers, and the potential for addressing the challenges of development in the region. His Excellency Sadyr Japarov, President of the Kyrgyz Republic, noted in his remarks that the future of any country depends on its intellectuals and educated youth. On behalf of the graduating class, Val-edictorian Karlygash Kussainova appreciated the Chancellor’s vision and wisdom in creating this opportunity by establishing a world class educational institution in the remote mountain regions of Central Asia.

The second major milestone was the 15th anniversary of the founding of the School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE). Established in 2006, SPCE has 17 Learning Centres and 300 qualified staff across Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Afghanistan, educating over 180,000 learners. This year, SPCE launched two Centres for Entrepreneurship in Naryn and Khorog, to provide start-up as well as post-investment business advice and training support for small business leaders and farmers.

The third milestone was the 10th anniversary of the Graduate School of Development (GSD). Its Mountain Societies Research Institute signed three Memoranda of Understanding with the Government of Kyrgyzstan to collaborate on vital scientific questions in the fields of global warming, climate change, sustainable development, and providing society with evidence based data for decision making, synthesis, scenario analysis, modelling, and other tools of development.

As was the case with educational institutions around the world, Covid continued to pose extraordinary constraints on UCA in 2021, especially as Covid regulations varied from country to country. Despite these unprecedented circumstances, the management, faculty, staff, and students rose to the challenges at every turn, building on the experiences in 2020, and further streamlining its operational and academic framework.

The achievements and initiatives of UCA which follow in these pages are a tribute to the vision and support of the Chancellor and Patrons, the wisdom of the Board of Trustees, and the dedication of its faculty and staff. The University is most fortunate to have the support of its many academic and funding partners as well as agencies of the Aga Khan Development Network, and the devotion of its many donors, supporters, and volunteers. On the behalf of the Board of Trustees I extend our warmest appreciation to them all.

**Dr. Shamsh Kassim-Lakha**  
Chairman, Board of Trustees

# Message from the Rector

**The University continues to build upon its reputation as an institution committed to addressing the socio-economic and environmental challenges in Central Asia, particularly its mountain communities.**



UCA students face the challenges of a rigorous academic experience and carving out their niche in an ever-changing world. Faculty address the challenges of educating the next generation of regional leaders and thinkers, as well as some of Central Asia's most pressing problems through research, creativity, and innovation. Staff face the challenges of providing the highest level of service that make UCA campuses and teaching centres exemplary.

The highlight for the University of Central Asia in 2021 was the graduation of its inaugural cohort of 57 undergraduate students on June 19, which has been elaborated in the Chairman's message. Seventy-five percent of graduates were from the Founding States (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan), 21% from Pakistan and 4% from Afghanistan. Fifty one percent of the graduates were female, and some 70% came from rural areas.

The high profile graduation, was a culmination of five years of hard work, dedication, and perseverance of the first cohort of undergraduate students. The event was also a celebration of the spirit of collaboration of teams from UCA working with volunteers from the Aga Khan Development Network across four continents. UCA graduates have since been admitted to post-graduate programmes in leading international universities including Simon Fraser University, University of Michigan and University of Paris.

Another notable achievement for UCA was the launch of its first executive education programme, "Thought Leadership", in collaboration with the University of

Cambridge and the Judge Business School. The programme was designed to support Tcell, a mobile network brand in Tajikistan, which is an agency of the Aga Khan Development Network, to help position it for growth in a post-pandemic environment.

The Civil Society Initiative of the University, launched a major initiative on gender equity and strengthening women's organizations through the support of a \$500,000 grant within the framework of the Government of Canada funded Regional Programme, "Foundations for Health and Empowerment Education and Advancing Gender Equity through Civil Society."

While the University has had an extraordinary year, there is of course more to be done. Significant work in 2022 will focus on enhancing the academic experience of faculty and students, continued growth in teaching and learning, enhancing research, and ensuring our values are reinforced by our day-to-day interactions.

I hope you enjoy learning more about the University's major initiatives and accomplishments in 2021, and I extend my deepest appreciation to the ongoing and vital support of the Chancellor, the Governments of the Founding States, the Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, students, and all our well-wishers and supporters.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "S. Sohail H. Naqvi". The signature is fluid and cursive.

**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 degrees in Computer Science, and Communications and Media are offered at the Naryn campus, and 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.



## Strategic Priorities

The main strategic priorities for the development of the School of Arts and Sciences in 2021 comprised (1) ensuring timely and successful graduation of the first cohort as well as their placement in graduate schools of high reputation or facilitating relevant employment, (2) getting national accreditation and going through national attestation in Tajikistan, (3) developing research infrastructure which would allow SAS to gradually become a research-intensive school, (4) enhancing the quality of education and introducing scholarship for teaching and learning approaches.

## Alumni Association

The UCA Alumni Association (UCA AA) was formed by the first graduates in September 2021 with the objec-

tive of engaging and connecting alumni and current students and creating sustainable lifelong connections of the alumni with the university and each other. The key areas of UCA Alumni Association's mandate are organizing workshops for UCA students/graduates devoted to the preparation for further academic development or professional roles; fundraising for scholarships for exceptional students; organizing and participating in the events where the students would meet other alumni associations in Central Asia; participating in recruitment activities like Open House events to share their experience at/after UCA and so on. The Alumni Association is led by the UCA's graduate, Ms Karlygash Kussainova. On November 06, 2021, the Association organized its first online event on graduate school opportunities for UCA graduates and students,

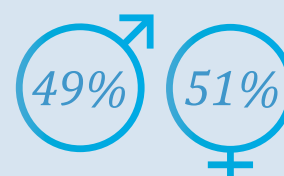
### UCA's First Graduation

# 57

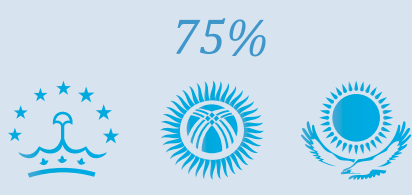
In 2021, the first cohort of **57 students graduated** from the UCA.

#### Out of these 57 alumni:

- Computer Science ..... 19
- Communications and Media..... 17
- Global Economics..... 14
- Earth & Environmental Sciences..... 7



28 graduates were male and 29 female.



From Central Asian Countries



Regional and International Countries



A total of 26 graduates were from urban locations, and 31 are from rural areas.

# 40



After graduation, 40 are currently employed: 7 in Kyrgyzstan, 19 in Tajikistan, 7 graduates in Pakistan, 3 in Georgia, 2 in Kenya, and 2 in Russia (as of December 2021). Out of 11 alumni continuing their education, 6 were accepted to graduate schools:

University	Location	Students
University of Northern British Columbia	Prince George, British Columbia, Canada	5
Simon Fraser University	Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada	1
University of Michigan	Ann Arbor, MI, USA	1
Eötvös Loránd University	Budapest, Hungary	1
SZABIST University	Karachi, Pakistan	1
University of Tsukuba	Tsukuba, Japan	1
University of Paris	Paris, France	1



1



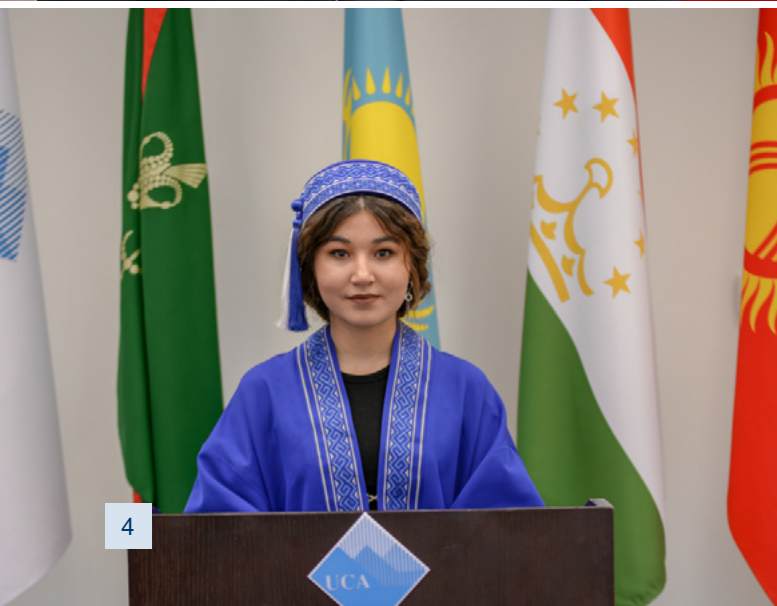
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**Clockwise:** 1. Graduation Procession in Naryn.  
2. His Excellency Sadyr Japarov, President of the Kyrgyz Republic, conveying his message of congratulations to the graduates.

3. His Highness the Aga Khan, Chancellor of the University of Central Asia, addressing the Convocation.

4. Karlygash Kussainova, Valedictorian of the Class of 2021, addressing the Convocation.





5. Graduates at the First UCA Convocation.

6. Dean Maxim Khomyakov and Galina Baiterek, Head of Education Department of the President's Apparatus of the Kyrgyz Republic, present UCA and State Degrees to Jyldyz Sarieva.

7. Proud parents admiring their daughter's UCA Degree.



Spores of *Alternaria* species under the microscope (40x) in the Wet Laboratory of University of Central Asia, Khorog. Project name: Phenotypical and morphological characterization of potato (*Solanum tuberosum*) diseases in GBAO.

during which it covered such topics as different types of graduate programs, required documentation, types of English proficiency tests and different ways of searching for suitable universities and scholarships.

Currently, the UCA Alumni Association is planning its second event that would focus on employment after graduation. During this event, the alumni will share their own experiences, give useful tips and indicate relevant sources for the students to prepare for the job application process.

### National Accreditation in Tajikistan

The University of Central Asia in Khorog, Tajikistan, has been officially accredited by the Ministry of Education and Science, marking another major milestone in its history as a private, not-for-profit, secular university, serving the needs of mountain communities in Central Asia. The Agency responsible for accreditation in Tajikistan, in a unanimous vote on 20th March 2021, granted attestation and accreditation to UCA's undergraduate programme at the School of Arts and Sciences. The accreditation status is for a five-year period until March 2026, when a routine reappraisal will be conducted.

### SAS-supported Research Projects

Within the framework of the Faculty Contestable Research Fund (FCRF), a number of projects have been launched and implemented in 2020-2021. Many of them were implemented in collaboration between SAS, GSD and external partners. The overall annual budget of these projects was to US\$ 20,000.

Team Members	Project Title	Fund Amount	Status
Murodbek Laldjebaev, Azmat Hussein, Jakub Polansky	Assessment of energy poverty-health nexus in Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan and Tajikistan, using Demographic Health Surveys (DHS) and Life in Kyrgyzstan (LiK) datasets.	\$4980	Finished in December 2021
Soheil Ashrafi, Michael Garbutt, Altyn Kapalova, 2 students	Looking at Embodied-Looking: A Phenomenological Study of Gallery Visitation Experience.	\$5000	Finished in July 2021
Rebekah Ramsay, Aida Smailova, Elmira Köchümkulova, Altyn Kapalova, Nursultan Stanaliev, Evangelia Papoutsaki, Sul-tonbek Aksakalov	Elderly Perspectives from the Margins: Oral Histories of Rural Kyrgyzstan (Jalalabad Region).	\$4095	In progress
Nurlan Torokeldiev, Saltanat Mambetova, Ben Jarihani, Maksim Kulikov, Vasila Sulaymanova, Muslim Bandishoev	The Genetic Landscape of Nuclear DNA Diversity and Adaptive Divergence of Juniperus species from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan: Implications for Conservation.	\$5000	In progress
Saltanat Mambetova, Barfiya Palavonshanbieva, Sadriya Marodmamadova, Behrooz Ross-Sheriff	Phenotypical and morphological characterization of potato ( <i>Solanum tuberosum</i> ) diseases in GBAO.	\$5000	In progress

Preparations for the national attestation and accreditation process began in April 2020, when the Khorog Campus team gathered and organized documents demonstrating its adherence to Tajikistan's higher education standards. The attestation and accreditation committee appointed by the Agency started its review on 1st March 2021 and completed it by 14th March 2021.

### Research Clusters

Establishing research clusters is a key SAS project for the creation of modern research infrastructure. While the cluster on Climate Change and Sustainable Resource Management in Central Asia is still under discussion, the research cluster on Modernity in Central Asia: Culture, Society and Environment has already launched several innovative projects.

One of them is a project on Pamiri languages, which is being implemented in close collaboration with the school of linguistics of Higher School of Economics (Moscow), the Russian Academy of Sciences (Moscow), and the Institute of Humanities (Khorog).

An international seminar on Pamiri Languages: Perspectives of Research and Development was organized at UCA's Khorog campus. The seminar brought

together researchers and experts to discuss the study, teaching and learning of Pamiri languages in various socio-cultural, educational, and geographic contexts of Central Asia.

### Centre of Teaching, Learning and Technology

As far as academic quality assurance is concerned, the newly established Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology has started to play a pivotal role in creating mechanisms and approaches to comprehensive curriculum review of all academic programmes. From digitization of the curricula to introducing platforms for blended teaching and learning as well as implementing programmes of professional development for SAS faculty members and academic staff. An important element of the quality assurance procedures is the introduction of methods and approaches of scholarship in teaching and learning.

Further improvements of the Quality Assurance process led by the Centre for Teaching, Learning, and Technology is one of the most important SAS strategic priorities for the next several years.

Dr. Kholiknazar Kuchashoev (left), Associate Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences in Khorog, briefing the Accreditation Committee members in one of the laboratories on campus. Dean of SAS, Dr. Maxim Khomyakov, is third from left.



# International Office

**The International Office (IO), now in its second year of operations, has had another productive year. The office aims to provide leadership in the pursuit of academic and operational excellence through international cooperation and strategic partnerships. The aim is to enable UCA to be recognised as an international and regional hub for research, teaching excellence, and a university that best prepares students for global citizenship and leadership.**

The International Office's vision is best described in the words of His Highness the Aga Khan, UCA's Chancellor, *"What this University is all about is not only the power of education but also the power of international cooperation. It is a power that can change people's lives. It is important to know that what we are doing here will be a valuable example of international cooperation for the future not only here in the region, but also for people far beyond the region."* (UCA Naryn Campus Inauguration Ceremony, October 19, 2016).

The work of the International Office falls under four broad areas of operations:

- **Institutional Strengthening:** Forge the most effective global networks
- **Strategy and Consultation:** Help construct, structure, negotiate, and facilitate academic and strategic partnerships across the university.
- **Maintain Global Relevance:** Adopt best practices in line with international quality standards across university activities.
- **Academic Development:** perhaps, by far the most important role, in facilitating opportunities for graduate, doctoral and postdoctoral studies to faculty, staff, and undergraduates through UCA's flagship Central Asian Faculty Development Programme (CAFDP).

## Highlights

A total of eleven graduate study scholarships (USD \$2.8m) were awarded from Simon Fraser University (SFU), German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), and the University of Cambridge. In addition, UCA faculty were welcomed at some of the best universities in the world including Cambridge, Oxford, and Harvard for post-doctoral studies. Two full graduate studies scholarships were granted by SFU for women in Central Asia in computer science, for the next five years.

## Faculty Development with Simon Fraser University

With the signing of the MOU partnership in 2020, Simon Fraser University (SFU) has already established itself as one of UCA's most significant and preferred partner. With generous funding, the UCA-SFU Central Asian Faculty programme was initiated providing access and further developing UCA faculty. Under this programme, three UCA faculty members are now in the second year of their PhD programs and one UCA alumni started a master's degree in Computer Science at SFU.

With the success of the CAFDP programme, UCA-SFU International Offices, with a UCA faculty PhD candidate, are to present lessons learnt from this partnership at the prestigious Asia-Pacific Association for International Education (APAIE) Conference. The joint presentation titled, Bringing Equity Diversity and Inclusion into International Collaborations, will be presented at the 2022 Conference. In 2022, SFU and UCA hope to further strengthen their partnership by collaborating on student and faculty mobility, curriculum development and pathways to sustain and expand CAFDP, and UCA's flagship faculty development programme.

UCA remains grateful to Professor Andrew Petter (President Emeritus of Simon Fraser University and Professor in its School of Public Policy), for his guidance, support, and generosity of time, and for serving as a member of the UCA's board of Trustees.

## MOU with the University of Cambridge (UK) and Cambridge Trust

UCA's longest collaborating partners, both the University of Cambridge and Cambridge Trust, have been strong supporters for over a decade. An MOU with the University was signed in February 2020 in Cambridge, and a renewal of MOU with Cambridge Trust was also signed in the same year, for a further three years. To date, four candidates have received their doctoral degrees and two their master's at Cambridge, all funded

by the Cambridge Trust as part of CAFDP. One UCA Faculty member also completed a post-doctorate training at Cambridge.

### **Programme for Central Asian Scholars with DAAD**

Extending over a decade-long relationship with the German Academic Exchange Service Scholarships Programme for Central Asian scholars, UCA and DAAD have further agreed to extend cooperation in higher education over the next three years through the renewal of a Memorandum of Understanding between the two institutions. In total, 15 scholarships are available to Central Asian scholars over the next 3 years to pursue doctoral studies at leading German universities.

For the academic year of 2021-2022, four scholarships have been awarded to candidates from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

### **Executive Education with Tcell Tajikistan**

The University of Central Asia, in collaboration with the University of Cambridge and the Judge Business School (CJBS), designed a unique Executive Education Programme on “Thought Leadership” to support thirty-three senior executives at Tcell, in Tajikistan. Key as-

pects of the course included business and innovation, digital transformation, and business resiliency. The course was delivered through a blend of in-person and live online classes conducted by UCA and faculty from partner universities (Lahore University of Management Sciences, HEC Paris and HSE Moscow) at UCA’s Khorog campus. UCA is currently expanding its Executive Education Portfolio.

### **Memorandum of Understandings**

With an emphasis on regional partnerships, MOUs have been signed with three universities in Russia - Ural Federal University, Higher School of Economics and Tomsk State University, and the Centre for Economic Research in Pakistan (CERP).

An MOU has been signed with the University of Northern British Columbia specifically for graduate studies for UCA students. Scholarship funding is expected to follow.

### **UCA Alumni Graduate Studies Placement**

The International Office has worked with UCA’s Class of 2021 to facilitate graduate studies admissions for 11 alumni in Canada, France, Japan, Hungary, Pakistan, and the USA.



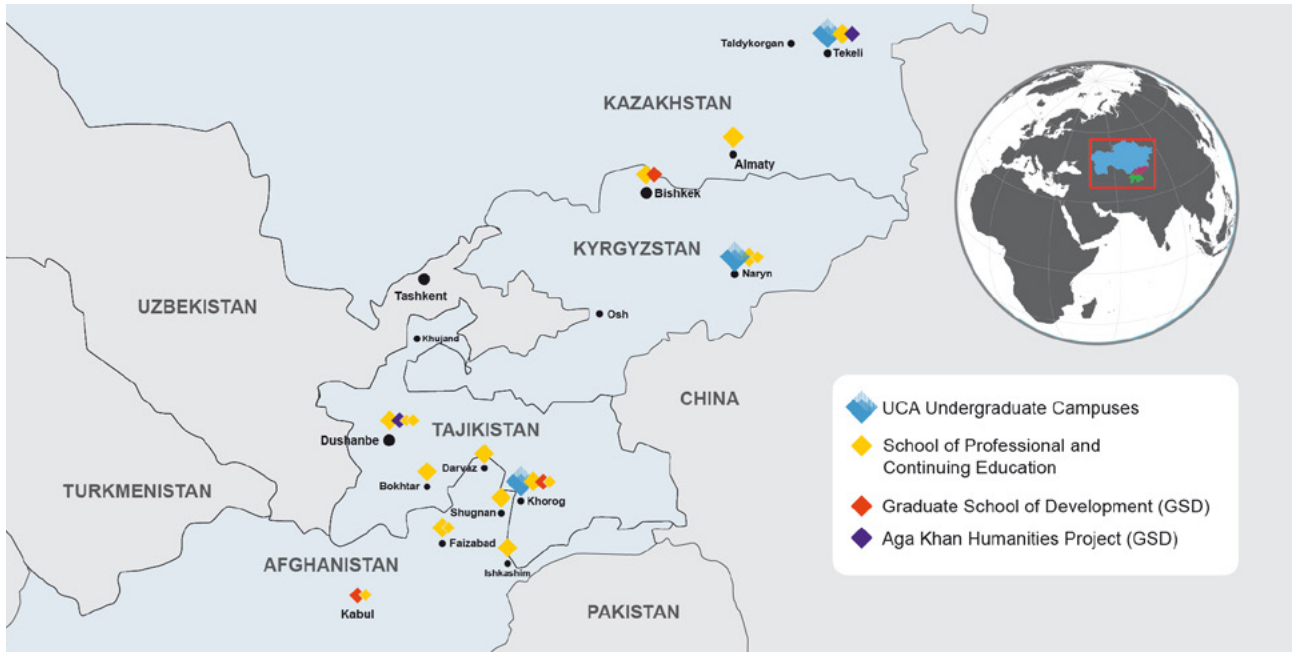
At the signing of the Partnership Agreement at the University of Cambridge (L to R): Mr. Naguib Kheraj (UCA Trustee), Princess Zahra Aga Khan (UCA Trustee), Prof. Stephen Toope (Vice-Chancellor, University of Cambridge), Dr. Shamsh Kassim-Lakha (Chairman, UCA Board of Trustees), and Prof. Dr. S. Sohail H. Naqvi (UCA Rector).

Aduchieva Nurzat, "Kyzga Sep" - Cultural handicrafts startup.  
Graduate of SPCE Entrepreneurship - Business Plan Development Programme,  
Naryn, Kyrgyzstan.

A woman with her hair styled in a bun, wearing a white traditional Kyrgyz blouse with a blue bow at the neckline, is holding a large, square, blue and red embroidered pillow. The pillow features a complex, symmetrical red pattern with yellow and white stitching. In the background, there are stacks of colorful fabrics and four framed portraits of men on the wall. The setting appears to be a workshop or a display room for traditional crafts.

## School of Professional and Continuing Education

Celebrating its 15th anniversary in 2021, the School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE) has remained a leading provider of post-secondary, short-cycle continuing education in Central Asia and Afghanistan. SPCE has 17 Learning Centres across Kyrgyzstan (2), Tajikistan (7), Kazakhstan (2), and Afghanistan (6), where SPCE staff provide young learners, teenagers and adults, with professional and vocational qualifications in a flexible format that boost skills development and capacity building for further employment, job creation and educational mobility.



The year 2021 was full of challenges due to the continued pandemic, border conflicts between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and the fall of Afghanistan to the new political regime. Despite these hardships, SPCE concentrated on the implementation of the five main pillars aligned with the approved 2025 Five-Year Strategy focused on maximizing the impact of new opportunities by becoming Digitally Native; focusing on Entrepreneurship; reaching Marginalized Learners; maintaining Financial Sustainability; and ensuring Quality Assurance.

SPCE’s Project Management Office along with the Cambridge Assessment English Center organised approximately 500 webinars for internal and external teachers centred around the implementation of new pedagogies. SPCE kept a focus on capacity building of its staff and teachers across all countries to boost digital literacy skills and adapt to online learning modes.

In 2021, SPCE offered a number of internationally recognized exams, and approximately 924 tests were taken through the School’s Learning Centres based in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. The most popular were Professional Development Exams for high school teachers.

**Programmes and Key Statistics**

During the past 15 years, 189,900 learners have graduated from 17 SPCE Learning Centres across Central Asia and Afghanistan, of which 52% are women. Among the most popular certificate programmes are: Executive Entrepreneurship Programmes in Agribusiness, IT Sector, and Tourism implemented as part of the Accelerate Prosperity (AP) in Asia project; Entrepreneurship and

**SPCE Enrolments 2020-2021**  
 In 2021 SPCE boosted the enrolment to 23,036 students with 1333 students graduating from Bokhtar (TJ); 6693 students in three centres of Dushanbe (TJ); 3801 in Khorog (TJ); 546 in Tekeli (KZ); 248 in Almaty (KZ), 1095 in Bishkek (KG); 2336 in Naryn (KG); and 6942 in Afghanistan. SPCE plans to diversify the enrollment to reach people worldwide via high-quality online courses.

**Programmes Students**

Certificate Programmes .....	311
Short-term Programmes.....	8881
Short-term Courses.....	9406
TVET .....	14
Professional Development.....	249
Outreach Programmes.....	253
International Projects.....	2148
Seminars.....	1774
<b>Total Enrolment .....</b>	<b>23,036</b>

Business Planning; Academic Achievement Programme for teenagers backed by Cambridge Assessment English standards delivered with the International Certification from the Cambridge Assessment; ICDL (IT component); Mental Math for children, and Accounting, followed by International Certifications of CAP (Certified Accounting Professional) or CIPA (Certified International Professional Accountants). In 2021, SPCE boosted the online component of both teaching and learning processes. During the reported period, 50 new concept notes and policies were produced, of which six are related to the newly developed online programmes



Ms Bridgette Walker, Deputy Chief of Mission at the US Embassy in Tajikistan (left) awarding graduates for successfully completing the English for Government Officials and Journalists Programme.

including the Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA), Cybersecurity, Python, and Robotics.

SPCE town campuses and Learning Centres (LCs) employed over 190 full-time and 300+ part-time staff, with almost 100% of employees being nationals of the three Founding States of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Staff and faculty members at SPCE continuously receive professional development related to their areas of expertise.

In 2021, SPCE increased the enrollment rate by 28% with 6,693 students enrolled across three LCs in Dushanbe (TJ), 3,801 in Khorog (TJ), 1,333 students in Bokhtar (TJ), and 42 in newly opened LC in Khujand; 546 in Tekeli (KZ) and 248 in the newly opened Almaty (KZ); 2,336 in Naryn (KG); 1,095 in Bishkek (KG); and 6,942 in Afghanistan.

The LCs based in Tajikistan and Afghanistan announced the Cambridge Assessment Testing System (CATs) programme, allowing students to study English online at their own pace. The programme did not witness a high success rate, and needs further development.

Almost all LCs purchased new books for the Young Learners Programme (ages 7-12), Academic Achievement Programme (ages 12-18), and the Math and English components.

### Notable Achievements

In 2021, SPCE delivered numerous short-term courses and professional development programmes in online and offline formats, including the Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT), and Training of Trainers on Social Entrepreneurship and Business Planning. SPCE is one of the

leading providers for many international qualifications in the region, such as the International Computer Driving License (ICDL), Certified International Professional Accountant Examination Network, Cambridge Assessment English Centre, and Teaching Qualification Center.

### Kyrgyzstan

- SPCE Kyrgyzstan continued working on outreach programmes providing ORT (Republican Test for Entrance in the National University) preparation courses in Bishkek and its nearby villages. As part of the programme, Bishkek LC conducted professional development courses for schoolteachers. SPCE Naryn also delivered a preparation programme for madrasah students in Naryn for ORT.
- The Accelerate Prosperity in Asia project was implemented by SPCE Bishkek for 20 participants from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. The next two cycles are under development and will be implemented in 2022-2023.
- As part of the Local Impact project, newly established courses on 21st century skills were delivered for marginalized and talented youth of Naryn Oblast. More than 200 young people studied Python, Programming, Cybersecurity, and Robotics/Automation. Within the framework of the project, Bishkek LC offered Conversational English Language courses to reach the vulnerable layers of the community.
- Cambridge Assessment Centre (SPCE Kyrgyzstan branch) offered an online part-time professional development certificate course – Certificate of English Language Learning to Adults (CELTA) – for a period of two-month for nine internal and two external candidates. CELTA is known as the gold standard of teaching qualification across the world.
- In January 2021, SPCE Kyrgyzstan successfully concluded the Entrepreneurial Training Project in Bishkek supported by PEAK Enterprise and Innovation Programme implemented by the Development Alternatives Incorporated (DAI). The Project concluded with the graduates successfully pitching business ideas to investors and representatives of PEAK and UCA.
- SPCE Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan conducted a three-month Media Literacy training for 530 in-service and pre-service teachers, funded by the Regional English Language Office (RELO) under the US Embassy of Kazakhstan.



- MediaAct project funded by the Erasmus European Commission project was concluded in 2021 with the successful development of an e-course and e-book on Conflict Management among Youth and Media Workers.
- With the objective of creating job opportunities in mountain communities, SPCE, with generous support from The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), inaugurated a dedicated Centre for Entrepreneurship (NCE). The Training for Teachers (ToT) was organised during the Entrepreneurship and Business Incubation Programme for 12 trainers from Kyrgyzstan. An international trainer delivered the 10-module programme, and seven trainers developed their unique modules adapting the learned methodology to local context. The programme developed is now being delivered to aspiring and experienced entrepreneurs, students, and innovators with the goal of producing job creators in the region. NCE activities are supported by representatives from the Oblast and National Government offices, Japan International Cooperation Agency, and the Naryn Oblast Regional Association of Entrepreneurs.

## Kazakhstan

- SPCE Tekeli organised the IELTS preparation course and conducted the first official examination in Tekeli allowing residents to take the exam locally without traveling to Almaty.
- More than 100 students participated in the Tekeli City English Language Olympiad, where winners received certificates of achievement from SPCE and the City Education Department.
- SPCE Kazakhstan implemented the Science and Data Journalism project funded by the US Embassy educating participants about the skills and knowledge of producing scientific articles in English language and conducting a thorough analysis of different trends.
- SPCE Tekeli conducted outreach activities by offering free English language courses in nearby villages and plans to further expand the project in the coming years.
- A state tender was secured to deliver a Master Class about best international practices in the tourism sector to resort administrators in the Almaty region. The project was implemented by Alla Peressolova, an international expert in tourism with certification from the United Nations World Tourism Organisation.
- A new Learning Centre in Almaty was inaugurated



Dilovar Butabekov, SPCE Director, addresses the audience during the opening ceremony of NCE in Naryn, Kyrgyzstan.



Certified technical training for electricians delivered by SPCE Tajikistan in GBAO as part of the Local Impact project.

in November 2021, with a focus on providing educational services in the fields of Data Analysis and Visualization.

### Tajikistan

- SPCE Tajikistan has been implementing US Embassy-funded projects: English for Journalists (135 students), English for Ministries (63), English Teaching Mentor Programme (29), and English Without Borders (20) across LCs in Dushanbe, Bokhtar and Khorog.
- One of the more successful programmes offered at SPCE – the Academic Achievement Programme (AAP), continues to deliver fruitful results. AAP students from grades 8, 9 and 10 secured first positions in the regional Olympiad organised by the Regional Education Department. Also, 69% of AAP learners were admitted to local and international universities.
- SPCE Tajikistan signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Pamir Energy and Badakhshan Energy as part of the Local Impact: A Transformative Partnership in Asia and Africa project funded by USAID and the Aga Khan Foundation, USA. SPCE further collaborated with the Technological Park of the Tajik Technical University for the development of course curriculum within the Energy Plus component of the Local Impact project. SPCE also signed an agreement with Pamir Energoservice to develop a concept for delivering Electrician Polygon and Laboratory training.
- SPCE signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Aga Khan Foundation in Tajikistan, to provide the Academic Achievement Programme in schools in the rural districts (AAPiD) of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO).

- SPCE also signed an MoU with the Aga Khan Agency for Habitat (AKAH) to develop and deliver a Construction Training Programme for 80 students funded by AKAH. The developed training programme will also be attended by trainees from AKAH.
- A Centre for Entrepreneurship (KCE) was established in Khorog to provide consultations, training, and support to medium and small-scale businesses in GBAO for capacity building and networking.

### Afghanistan

- In collaboration with the Canadian Development Exchange (CADEX), SPCE delivered an English Language Programme to 36 English language instructors for upper-intermediate and advanced levels. Teachers from Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan went through Conversational English Programme (C1) and English for Academic Purposes (B2-C1) trainings. CADEX also delivered training for Conversational English Pedagogy Training from B1-C1 levels for 17 instructors from Afghanistan LCs.
- SPCE office in Kabul strengthened its relationship with different ministries and the AKDN diplomatic office during the pandemic and unstable political situation. The diplomatic mission is supporting educational initiatives by providing facilities of the Aga Khan Education Services in Afghanistan to further increase the enrollment rate in 2022.
- The 2nd cycle of the International Executive Entrepreneurship Programme within the framework of the AP Asia project was launched in the Kabul LC.
- Despite the sudden shutdown of LCs for almost four months due to political instability in Afghanistan, all centres continued to deliver courses for English language, Entrepreneurship, and Gender Responsive Learning Environment training, meeting annual goals and objectives.
- Coordinator of SPCE's Continuing Education Unit (CEU) along with two IT instructors participated in a Python and Cybersecurity training in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, under Local Impact - Future of Work component. The training was organised for capacity building of staff.
- SPCE-CEU IT instructors in collaboration with all LCs of Afghanistan developed an internal Assessment Testing System for ICDL preparatory programme.

# Graduate School of Development

In 2021, the Graduate School of Development (GSD) celebrated its 10th anniversary of being at the forefront of research in the region. Comprised of the Institute of Public Policy and Administration, the Mountain Societies Research Institute, the Cultural Heritage and Humanities Unit, the Civil Society Initiative, and the Aga Khan Humanities Project, GSD is a vibrant centre of research and professional education with new and exciting challenges on the horizon.



MSRI Research Expedition to Glacier Nishtar Facing Hindu Kush through the Peak Karl Marx (6,723 m) in the Shakhdara Range in Pamir Mountains, GBAO, Tajikistan.

# Institute for Public Policy and Administration

**Institute for Public Policy and Administration (IPPA) continued its contribution to public policy and administration in the Central Asian region by conducting research on regional issues, and publishing and disseminating important findings.**

## **Public Health: Improving Community Health and Wellbeing**

To improve community health and wellbeing, throughout 2021, IPPA conducted research with a particular focus on children, women of reproductive age, and adolescents.

Countdown 2030 for Women, Children and Adolescent Health in Tajikistan is a global study tracking the progress of life-saving interventions for reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health and nutrition. IPPA's research, the first comprehensive systematic assessment of selected health indicators and outcomes in Tajikistan, was supported by UNICEF and implemented in partnership with the Government of Tajikistan, the SickKids Centre for Global Child Health (Toronto, Canada), AKF Tajikistan and the Aga Khan University. IPPA's analysis of the country progress on women, children, and adolescent health will help build the country's capacity for data analysis that is essential for developing future health and nutrition programs. The project will be finalized in 2022.

Mitacs Private Sector NCD Kyrgyzstan Project examined the increasing role of the private sector in the prevention and management of non-communicable diseases. IPPA undertook this research in collaboration with the Centre for Global Child Health at the Hospital for Sick Children. The private sector's role has been under-researched. IPPA identified significant stakeholders in this sector and conducted a survey in Kyrgyzstan that will inform the policy recommendations of the final paper.

As part of the Foundations for Health and Empowerment project, IPPA examined the issue of medical equipment maintenance and repair in Tajikistan. While enormous investment is made in purchasing equipment, because of the lack of trained technicians locally, large sums are paid to bring expertise from other countries. The project examined the issue and suggested a training programme for medical equipment technicians that could be offered by UCA's School of Professional and Continuing Education. The project was funded by

Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development and AKF Canada, and implemented by AKF Tajikistan and UCA.

Kyrgyzstan has made significant progress in reducing child mortality compared to other countries in the region, despite its relatively low per capita income. However, maternal mortality is still high. Using the available birth registration system, Trends and Determinants of Newborn Mortality in Kyrgyzstan: A Countdown Country Case Study, the project carried out a comprehensive assessment of trends and determinants of reproductive health and the health of mothers, newborns and children under five years in Kyrgyzstan. IPPA translated its main paper into Russian and published it in the IPPA Working Paper series for regional dissemination; the study team leader, Prof. Z. Bhutta, delivered a keynote presentation at the Life in Kyrgyzstan Conference (see next page).

## **The Resilience of Socio-Economic Systems in Central Asia to COVID-19**

With financial support from the Food and Agriculture Organization, IPPA studied the gendered impacts of COVID-19 on agriculture, food security and nutrition in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. The study provides insights on best practices to deliver pandemic response and recovery programmes in vulnerable rural communities. The study showed that the pandemic disproportionately affected rural women due to pre-existing gender inequalities in all three countries. Due to limited decision-making power in rural families, women have fewer opportunities to access resources and assets required to benefit from farming activities. The research participants included 3,000 men and women from rural areas of three countries. The study suggested that a higher number of rural women had no savings and faced reduced food consumption in comparison to men. Multiple research outputs of the study will be published in 2022.

## **Sustainable Development of Local Communities**

IPPA participated in a study to understand the nature of

conflicts surrounding large-scale infrastructure development and mineral extracting projects in rural Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. With funding from the Economic and Social Research Council (UK) and Global Challenges Research Fund, this project was a collaboration between the University of Oxford's School of Geography and the Environment, the Independent Research Institute of Mongolia, and IPPA. The publications produced in the framework of this project (including a collection of essays published by Routledge, UK) examined the social and environmental impacts of mining on local communities and causes of conflict.

In 2021, IPPA continued working on the USAID-funded project on energy knowledge sharing and dialogue across the Tajik-Afghan border. The research benefits households in Tajikistan and Afghanistan, and institutions involved in education and health provision. IPPA surveyed fifty respondents in Tajikistan. UCA could not collect data in Afghanistan due to the change in the political situation and will complete the study using existing data sources.

### Annual Life in Kyrgyzstan Conference

The Seventh Life in Kyrgyzstan (LiK) conference brought together over 100 participants worldwide to discuss recent socio-economic developments in Central Asia. The Conference connected experts focused on human development who want to understand how people's lives and livelihoods are shaped. The 2021 Conference was organized by IPPA, the Leibniz Institute of Vegetable and Ornamental Crops, and the International Security and Development Centre in partnership with the American University of Central Asia, Mercy Corps, the World Bank, and the United Nations Population Fund. UCA was represented by 13 participants in the Conference, including five UCA alumni and students from the School of Arts and Sciences.

### Disseminating Research

IPPA became the first Central Asian institution to partner with the Elsevier's Social Science Research Network (SSRN). With over one million papers in its library, SSRN is one of the world's most popular repositories for research in social sciences, including economics, law, corporate governance, and humanities. By partnering with SSRN through its Research Paper Series, IPPA joins an online community of interest devoted to the rapid dissemination of scholarly research. From Harvard and Yale to RAND and World Bank, research institutes and think tanks use SSRN to disseminate knowledge.



Abandoned mining site in Chatkal (Credits: Almaz Tchoreev).

In 2021, IPPA disseminated 4 eJournals to nearly 10,000 registered users through SSRN's distribution lists. The eJournals focused on economic growth, regional trade, labour market trends, gender, social cohesion, and conflicts in Central Asia and Afghanistan. As a result, Roman Mogilevskii (Associate Director of IPPA)'s paper, 'The Impact of Kumtor Gold Mine on the Economic and Social Development of the Kyrgyz Republic' was listed on SSRN's Top 10 per cent downloads in the categories including Development Economics and Mining, and Environment. Currently, IPPA's selection of papers has more than 3,000 downloads, and the institute contributes to nearly 30% of all works available at SSRN on the topic of the 'Economy of Kyrgyzstan'. In 2021, IPPA released five new studies in its Working Papers series.

#### WP 59: Addressing Local Conflicts in the Mining Industry in Kyrgyzstan

Nazgul Kulova

#### WP 60: Farmers Perception of Climate Change, its Impact, and the Risk of Extreme Weather Events: Evidence from the Central Highlands of Afghanistan

Asadullah Jawid

#### WP 61: Trends and Determinants of Newborn Mortality in Kyrgyzstan: a Countdown Country Case Study

Kamalim M., Wright D. E., Aksir, N and others

#### WP 62: Social Entrepreneurship and Challenging Geographical Areas

Gulnara Djunushalieva

#### WP 63: Understanding Gold Mining and Social Conflicts in Kyrgyzstan

Saipira Furstenberg and Kemel Toktomushev

#### WP 64: Reclamation in Kyrgyzstan: Causes of Conflict After Cessation of Mining

Almaz Choroiev

# Mountain Societies Research Institute

**In 2021, the Mountain Societies Research Institute (MSRI) worked on projects with regional and international research institutes and universities that address food security, local income generation, sustainable water supplies, and soil and water conservation throughout the region. MSRI was also involved in training and capacity-building activities to improve natural resources management and food security. MSRI is headquartered at the UCA's Khorog campus, with a branch in Bishkek at UCA's Central Administration premises.**

## Natural Hazards and Disaster Mitigation

MSRI continued implementing the Climate Change Adaptation in Afghanistan (E3C) project in collaboration with AKF Afghanistan. The project's objective was to improve the resilience of communities and ecosystems in the Panj-Amu River Basin to climate change and promote its sustainability for the benefit of rural communities. In 2021, MSRI's team identified the scope of vulnerability assessment and produced socio-economic and rangeland, climate, and policy reports. The project mapped the areas at risk of landslides, classified landslide types, and determined their frequency. Two capacity-building trainings were organized based on sound scientific data on vulnerability assessment around ecosystems, biodiversity, and communities.

## Natural Resources Management and Food Security

The JuniperCA project, conducted in Tajikistan, was aimed to optimize the multifunctional use of juniper forests. In 2021, together with local and German partners, MSRI conducted a detailed investigation of the juniper forest system and its use in western Zerafshan valley over the past two years. The research allowed the creation of a database to establish strategies for protecting juniper forests through sustainable use. The socio-economic and cultural contexts of forest use were also investigated. The project's field guide for forest practitioners and other research findings from Zerafshan valley were presented at a symposium organized by UCA in December 2021.

MSRI is also involved with THRIVE Global Development Alliance project in Tajikistan co-funded by USAID and AKF USA. MSRI supported and conceptualized three research projects. For the *Conservation and Restoration of Unique Local Wild Relatives of Plants* project in Khatlon, Tajikistan, in partnership with Kulob Botanical Garden, MSRI organized an expedition to identify and, using GPS, documented the locations of wild relatives of native trees. Two additional THRIVE research

projects were conducted in GBAO: a joint effort with the Pamir Biological Institute on the examination of wheat varietal trials in Ishkashim; and together with the Pamir Agricultural Research Centre, yak breeding was studied. Final reports and publications arising from this research are being produced.

Walnut collection and animal husbandry play a vital role in the income generation of the local population in Kyrgyzstan. This resulted in a selective planting of walnut trees, cutting off other species, and overgrazing that suppressed natural regeneration and lost genetic diversity. MSRI, with the AKF Mountain Societies Development Support, worked on the *Conservation and Research of Wild Fruit Species in the Western Tian Shan* project to address these issues. It investigated conditions in two nature-protected areas in Kyrgyzstan – Sary-Chelek Biosphere Reserve and Padysha-Ata Nature Reserve, and the Kara-Alma forestry unit. These areas still contain rare species of apple and pear trees. However, the species are threatened with extinction because of human and climate change impacts. MSRI did environmental and socio-economic surveys that involved mapping tree groups in the forest and interviewing members of 220 households in the target villages. The research that addresses conservation and community development needs will be published in 2022.

MSRI's *Remote Sensing for Crop Yield Forecasting* project, funded by the World Bank, continued in 2021. The project developed a methodology and a GIS portal for crop mapping and crop yield estimation using non-commercial satellite images and field data. To produce accurate mapping, the team required high-resolution imagery due to specific mountain terrain and fragmented crop fields. The project chose three pilot districts of Tajikistan to collect field data and optical imagery. As part of the capacity building and knowledge transfer, MSRI conducted training for the Tajikistan Ministry of Agriculture on GIS and the basics of remote sensing application in agriculture and on methodologies

to map the cropping areas and modelling estimates of crop productivity using open satellite imagery. MSRI installed the GIS online portal at the Ministry of Tajikistan's local server. The GIS portal is currently being tested by the Ministry and will be fully functional in March 2022.

*The Global Environment Facility Small Grants Program (GEF SGP) in Kyrgyzstan was finalized in 2021, and MSRI completed the country strategy that will guide the activities of the GEF SGP Operational Phase-7. MSRI worked with local stakeholders and national partners to ensure that the views of small grant recipients were considered. The final MSRI document presented in July 2021 advances nature-based solutions for community-level environmental initiatives.*

### Land Degradation

Northern Tajikistan is known for extensive surface and landslide erosion contributing to significant sediment loads in the Vakhsh river system. MSRI, as part of several World Bank-funded projects in the Pamir-Alay range, studied the impact of the erosion processes and estimated the sedimentation that impacts the hydro-power reservoir. Water samples collected in 2019 and 2021 were sent to UCA Khorog campus laboratories for analysis. HYDROC, the German partner in this project, further studied the results. MSRI confirmed that numerous landslides cause sediment and large-scale erosion, and subsequent field studies identified the "hot spots" that were the prime contributors to this process. This research will improve the effectiveness of management interventions to prevent excessive sedimentation of reservoirs.

### Water Resources

MSRI, supported by a USAID grant, studied changes in water supplies and associated runoff that impacted the production of hydropower and agriculture in Tajikistan and showed wide variations in the climate of Pamir mountains over 20 years. While the high elevation glaciated portions of the Vakhsh basin saw temperature increases, this was offset by higher snowfall resulting in little change in glacier mass. Shifts from snow to rainfall in the central Pamirs increase the vulnerability of water supplies in this dry region. However, little temperature change has occurred in areas of the Panj and Vakhsh basins with larger-scale agricultural production. There has been an overall increase in rainfall, thus potentially benefiting farmers. These early findings underline the importance of examining climate information through a narrower lens and gaining better insights into the



MSRI colleagues visit Ishkashim, Afghanistan, to study climate change adaptation.

year-to-year variability of snowfall. To address this latter point, MSRI is implementing a small field study on soil depth and water equivalent near the UCA campus in Khorog.

### Social Dynamics

Labour migration and remittances account for almost a third of Kyrgyzstan's GDP, and while its aggregate importance is understood, its impact on specific communities is not well known. The multi-year Migration Governance and Agricultural and Rural Change (AGRUMIG) funded by EU Horizon-20 supported MSRI's study of the impact of remittances on rural economics. The study included interviews of 304 migrant households in Naryn, Jalal-Abad and Batken oblasts in 2021. Research shows that migration is a livelihood strategy for farmers and remittances from family members play a significant role in the livestock sector. Remittances have increased the number of livestock; however, this has put a considerable strain on the natural resource management system which has not been able to adapt to these changes. The growing investment in the acquisition of animals is causing the degradation of pastures. One of the expected outputs of this project includes the development of a positive migration policy with tangible indicators and evidence-based solutions.

MSRI's 2021 study of farming systems in lower and middle elevation mountainous areas assessed sustainable development pathways. Data from 235 farms in 50 mountain villages of Chuy and Naryn oblasts were collected and analyzed. The analysis revealed two distinct mixed crop-livestock farming systems, and the study examined the technological innovations required to support agricultural development and sustainability.



## Cultural Heritage and Humanities Unit

**The Cultural Heritage and Humanities Unit (CHHU) advances the University’s mission of preserving and developing Central Asia’s rich cultural traditions and heritage through research, documentation, teaching, and public outreach. CHHU works with a network of regional and international scholars, cultural practitioners, and institutions to achieve its goals.**

### **Giving Voice to Regional Scholarship**

CHHU continued to promote regional scholarship and new dialogues on cultural heritage and identity. In 2021, four studies on the history and musical traditions of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO), Tajikistan, were released in CHHU’s Research Papers series.

It also supported scholars of the Institute of Humanities in Khorog, GBAO, to complete the fifth volume of the Pamiri Folklore Series. CHHU published a music textbook, ‘Ethno-solfeggio’, that notates a selection of Kyrgyz songs and instrumental melodies in teaching music. This is the first publication of its kind, and it will be made available to all music schools and musicians in Kyrgyzstan.

CHHU initiated a research project, *The Oral History of Rural Kyrgyzstan*, consisting of over 100 recordings of eyewitness testimonies of the inhabitants from the Naryn and Jalal-Abad oblasts. The interviews are being

processed in collaboration with the Media and Communications Department of UCA’s School of Arts and Sciences and the “Sanjyra” research centre. They will be available on a newly established website, offering a rich store of information about rural life in the Soviet period and antecedent historical memories.

### **Cultural Production Project**

Cultural heritages are dynamic because every generation interprets and contributes to unique identities. CHHU has launched a Cultural Production project to engage contemporary audiences in a dialogue on heritage using multiple formats such as creative texts, oral histories, films, photo essays, animation, and music performances. The project also aims to promote the creative industries, bio-cultural diversity, and eco-cultural tourism and works with regional and international partners. To date, a set of interesting films and videos have been released.

The Flying Horse, a documentary film about the native

Description of a photo



Kyrgyz horse directed by Aibek Baiymbetov (CHHU Research Fellow) and produced as part of the project *Voices from the Roof of the World*, was released on Kyrgyz TV channels. Another short documentary *Akkel* (Grace), also directed by Baiymbetov, devoted to Kyrgyzstan's oral heritage, won several awards including a third prize for the "Best Film" at the Snow Leopard Guardian of the Mountains Festival.

CHHU supported the production and screening of eight documentary films as part of the televised expedition: *Remains of the Past*, featuring historical and cultural sites of the Naryn oblast for the Culture, History, and Language channel of the Kyrgyz TV and Radio Corporation.

A documentary film, *The Road of Hope and Heritage*, was produced with the support of the Resilient Silk Road Heritage Network Project funded by the UK's Global Challenges Research Fund. It addresses the hopes and concerns of mountain communities in the Alai region of Kyrgyzstan and Gilgit-Baltistan of Pakistan about the socio-economic impact of significant infrastructural developments in High Mountain Asia. The film is being shown during the travelling exhibitions of Central Asian artists in Bishkek, Tashkent, Dushanbe, and Peshawar in the first half of 2022.

## Museum Initiative in Kyrgyzstan

CHHU works with museums to improve their management and build larger audiences. In 2021, CHHU organized several online seminars focusing on rural museums. The seminars, attended by 50 participants, were offered in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture, Information, Sports and Youth Policy. In May, CHHU organized an online conference on the Future of Museums: Experience and Development Trends that discussed museum issues during the COVID-19 pandemic.

State museums, the central repositories of the country's cultural and historical heritage, face serious funding problems and need to think of ways to strengthen their role as independent social and cultural institutions. For this purpose, CHHU, together with the Ministry of Culture, Information, Sports and Youth Policy, and the National Commission for UNESCO, supported the first National Museum Forum Sustainable Museum: Driver of Regional Development. In September, the forum organized in the Issyk-Kul region brought together 50 museum specialists with international participants. The forum participants examined the innovations that could expand and diversify the museums' audiences.

CHHU research fellows – Aibek Baiymbetov (first from left) and Altyn Kapalova (standing: sixth from right) visited Northern Pakistan as part of the Resilient Silk Road Heritage Network Project.



# Civil Society Initiative

The Civil Society Initiative (CSI) enriches development thinking by bringing to the foreground the importance of associational life in the well-being of communities, society, and civil society organizations as drivers of efforts to give people a voice in policy and governance. CSI aims to foster a more enabling policy environment for civil society's development, including measures that unlock the potential of philanthropy to support activities for public benefit. This year CSI has launched an initiative on civil society's engagement in advancing gender equity.

## Responding to COVID-19 in Kyrgyzstan

There was an acute need for reliable information in the mass media about COVID-19. CSI, supported by the British Embassy and the Soros Foundation based in Kyrgyzstan, developed a website ([www.covidstories.kg](http://www.covidstories.kg)) giving journalists and the general public access to 600 interviews with representatives of public authorities, health experts and civil society representatives. This included links to videos, sites, and other material related to society's experience during the pandemic. The pandemic also saw an unprecedented mobilization of civil society and selfless acts of courage. The site hosts 185 interviews that provide an oral history of people's experiences and is being updated with new stories. CSI also held a public presentation on the Voices of Kyrgyzstan project.

## Promoting Dialogue Between Government and Civil Society

Kyrgyzstan is a member of the Open Government Partnership comprised of 78 countries committed to working with civil society in shaping government agendas. In 2021, CSI signed an agreement with the Open Government Partnership central office to improve the quality of dialogue between civil society and government in Kyrgyzstan. CSI organized a series of workshops, *Achyk ðkmøt* (Open Government) with 234 government agencies, civil society organizations and media in seven oblasts to discuss the concern of transparency in the National Action Plan for the categories of health-care and education, and its budget. The Open Government Coalition that supports the Partnership mission gained 250 new members following the workshops.



Dr Toktomushev presenting a paper on Understanding Citizenship to UCA staff.



**COVID: Voices of Kyrgyzstani People**



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL ASIA



British Embassy Bishkek



CSI's efforts were implemented with the support of the Prime Minister's Office, the OSCE representation in Kyrgyzstan, and the Secretariat of the Open Government National Forum.

CSI also organized online parliamentarism with speakers from Mongolia, Moldova, Russia, and Kyrgyzstan, where parliamentarians and experts participated as part of the Open Parliament International Alliance. The discussions were centered around social and economic development issues and how these are addressed by presidential and parliamentary systems.

**Understanding Citizenship**

Citizenship is about the relationship between an individual and the state, to which the individual owes allegiance and, in return, receives protection. CSI commissioned Dr Kemel Toktomushev, IPPA's Senior

Research Fellow, to study the meaning of citizenship in contemporary Kyrgyzstan, and the paper was published in CSI's Discussion Papers Series.

**Advancing Gender Equality**

In 2021, CSI launched the School for the Advancement of Gender Equality (SAGE), a series of capacity-building activities for civil society organizations engaged in promoting women's rights and gender equality. SAGE is supported by the Advancing Gender Equity through Civil Society (AGECS) programme funded by the Government of Canada and AKF Canada. SAGE recruited 60 representatives from women's organizations and the mass media from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to participate in a regional programme that develops skills to map out issues, and practice-focused and effective advocacy.

# Aga Khan Humanities Project

The Aga Khan Humanities Project (AKHP) is a network of partner institutions and instructors in Central Asia who deliver interdisciplinary humanities courses developed by regional and international scholars. AKHP courses explore abiding issues facing the individual and society and foster critical thinking, academic writing, and rational debate. A regional ‘Debate Club’, public lecture series, and cooperation on crafting master’s courses focused 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.

## New Director

In December 2021, Dr Abdulmamad Iloliev was appointed AKHP’s Director. He obtained an undergraduate degree in History and Pedagogy from the Dushanbe State Pedagogical Institute before entering the Institute of Ismaili Studies (IIS)’s Graduate Programme in Islamic Studies and Humanities (London). He obtained M.Phil. and PhD degrees in Middle Eastern Studies and Islamic Studies from the University of Cambridge. He held research and teaching posts in the United Kingdom, including Senior Research Associate at IIS and Research Fellow at the University of London’s School of Oriental and African Studies. Dr Iloliev is the author of three monographs, peer-reviewed articles and book

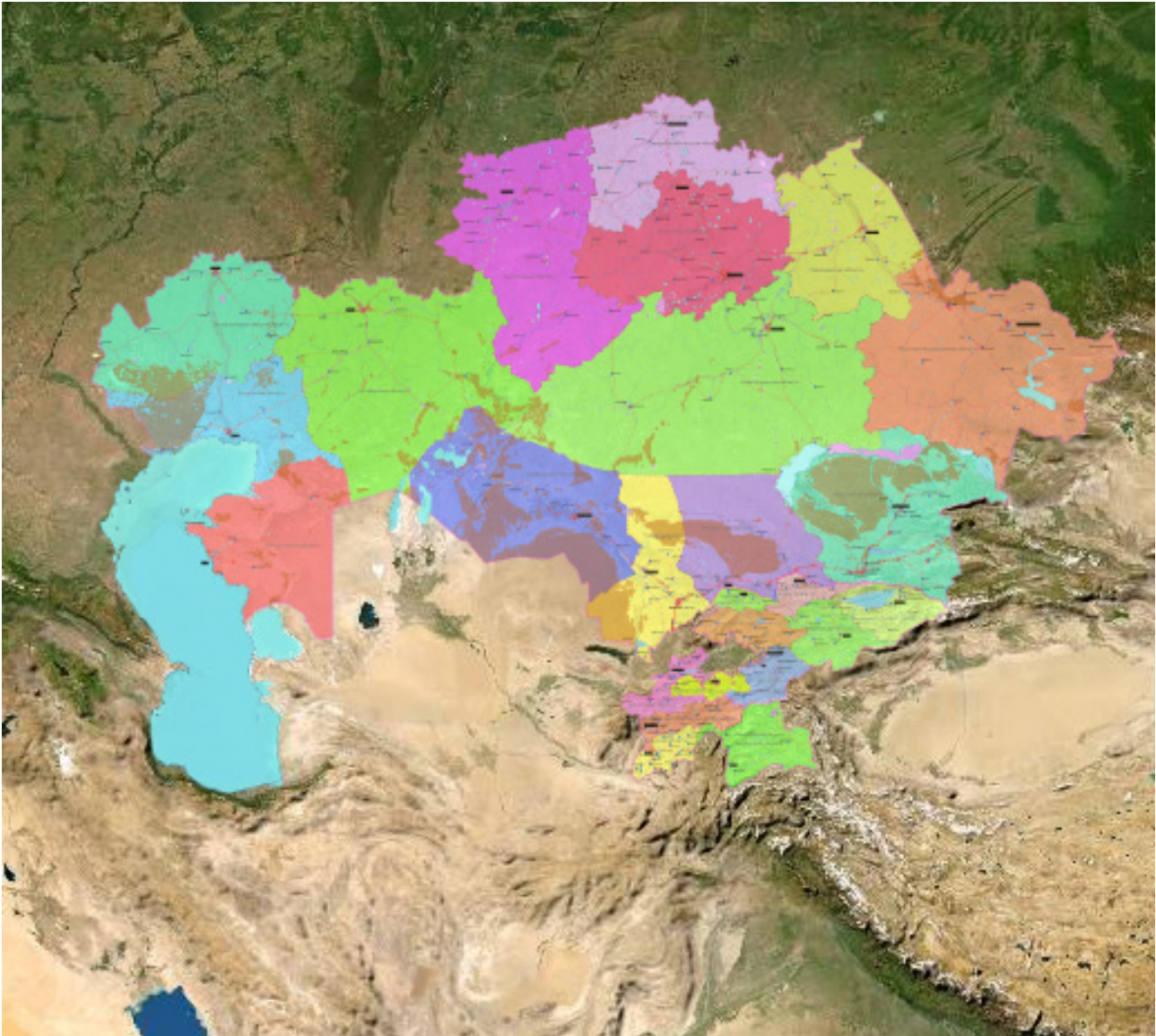
chapters, and has translated ten books. He succeeds Acting Director Dr Pulat Shozimov, through whose efforts the Project expanded its reach and introduced new programmes. Dr Shozimov will continue his engagement with AKHP as Senior Fellow.

## Debate Programme

Participating in debates builds students’ confidence and exposes them to knowledge across several disciplines. In 2021, AKHP engaged 300 students by providing training on the Cross-Debate and British Parliamentary debate formats and conducted three national and one regional online tournaments.



Participants of the Debate Tournament organised a celebration of the 9th Anniversary of AKHP’s Debate Club.



An Interactive map of the region developed by AKHP. The map is an open-access digital database providing general statistical and demographical data and detailed information about migration, economic, and ecological indicators covering 30 years (from 1990 to 2019).

### **Humanities Course for Master's Students**

AKHP launched an initiative to develop a humanities course for students in master's programmes on the Central Asian studies for several universities in the region. The AKHP course on the History of Central Asia was developed by scholars from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. The learning resources and teacher's guide were used in master's programmes at four universities taken by over 50 students.

AKHP organized a regional conference where students of the history course presented research papers. In addition, AKHP developed an Interactive Electronic Ethnographic Map for Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan as a learning resource for several courses. The map is an open-access digital database providing general statistical and demographical data and detailed

information about migration, economic, and ecological indicators covering 30 years (from 1990 to 2019).

### **Faculty Development**

AKHP staff were invited as speakers at the UNESCO Summer School on the Quality of Education through the Convergence of Culture attended by 120 teachers from Central Asian countries, as well as Russia, and Azerbaijan.

### **Public Lecture Series**

Established in 2012, AKHP Public Lecture Series provides a platform for interdisciplinary discourse between the humanities and natural sciences disciplines. In 2021, AKHP organized 12 public lectures online, reaching over 700 people.

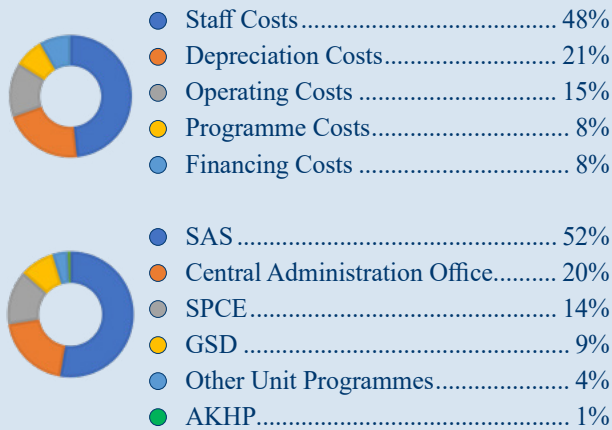
# Financial Overview

Total Investments, grants and revenues, from inception until 2021:



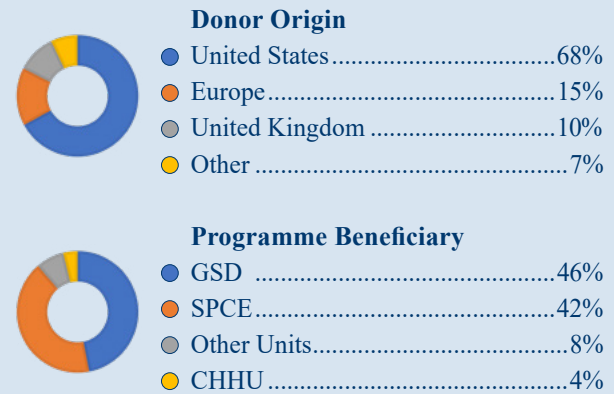
## Operating Expenses in 2021

Total Operating Expenses: US\$ 24.5 million



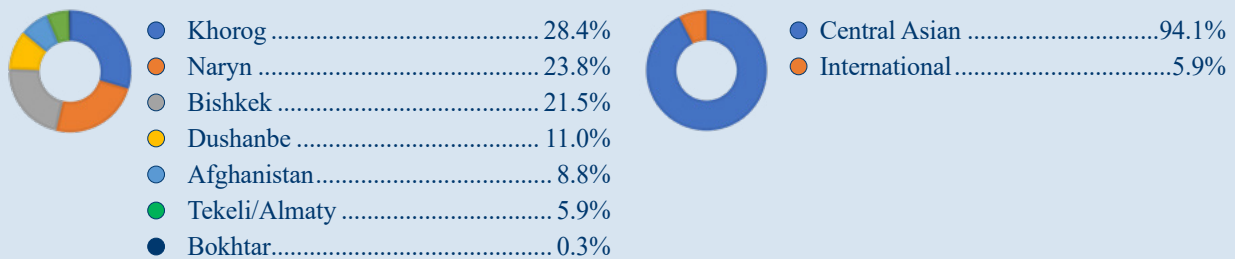
## Distribution of Grants Received in 2021

Total grants received: US\$ 2.5 million



# Human Resource Profile

## Faculty and Staff



# Audit Report



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## INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT

To the Board of Trustees of University of Central Asia

### Report on the Audit of the Financial Statements

#### Opinion

We have audited the annexed financial statements of **University of Central Asia** (the University), which comprise the statement of financial position as at 31 December 2021, income and expenditure account, the statement of comprehensive income, statement of changes in funds balances and statement of cash flows 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 2021 and 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 in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

#### Responsibilities of Management and Those Charged with Governance for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with IFRSs, 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 University'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 University or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

  
KPMG Taseer Hadi & Co., a Partnership firm registered in Pakistan and a member firm of the KPMG global organization of independent member firms affiliated with KPMG International Limited, a private English company limited by guarantee.



KPMG Taseer Hadi & Co.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the University's financial reporting process.

#### **Auditors' 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 auditors' 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 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 University's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditors' 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 auditors' report. However, future events or conditions may cause the University to cease to continue as a going concern.

*KPMG*





KPMG Taseer Hadi & Co.

- 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.

We communicate with Those Charged with Governance 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.

**Other Matter**

The financial statements of the University for the year ended 31 December 2020, were audited by another auditor who expressed an unmodified opinion on those financial statements on 12 July 2021.

The engagement partner on the audit resulting in this independent auditors' report is **Amyr Malik**.

Date: 27 August 2022

Karachi

**KPMG Taseer Hadi & Co.**  
**Chartered Accountants**

# 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  
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Embassy of the Netherlands in Afghanistan  
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