

## Prime Minister of Tajikistan Inaugurates UCA's Learning Centre in Kulob



H.E. Qohir Rasulzoda, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan (second from left), and Mr Davlatali Said, Governor of Khatlon Region (third from left, first row) touring the newly inaugurated SPCE's Learning Centre in Kulob.

On 4 January 2024, His Excellency Qohir Rasulzoda, Prime Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan, inaugurated the University of Central Asia's (UCA) newly established Learning Centre in Kulob, Khatlon Oblast. Prime Minister Rasulzoda was accompanied by Mr Saidzoda Rahim Hamro, Minister of Education of the Republic of Tajikistan, Mr Davlatali Said, Governor of Khatlon Region, and Mr Bakhtiyor Nazarzoda, Mayor of

Kulob. "I am very impressed with the quality of instructors at this centre of UCA. Their selection is solely on merit and that is extremely important to provide high-quality of teaching," – remarked Prime Minister Qohir Rasulzoda while touring the facilities of the Kulob centre.

In line with UCA's mission of promoting the socio-economic development of Central

Asia, SPCE provides young people and adults with short-cycle professional and vocational training that improves employment and income-generating opportunities. SPCE's Learning Centre in Kulob is the eighth such facility established and operated by SPCE in Tajikistan and the 16<sup>th</sup> across UCA's Founding States and in Afghanistan. In 2024, UCA plans to establish one more Learning Centre in Danghara, Tajikistan.

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## President of Kyrgyz Republic Presents a Prestigious Award for Academic Excellence to UCA Student



Kyzhibek Zhanibekova receiving the prestigious award from His Excellency Sadyr Japarov, President of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Kyzhibek Zhanibekova, a senior student at the University of Central Asia's (UCA) School of Arts and Sciences (SAS), was recently honoured with the Presidential Award for Academic Excellence, one of the most prestigious awards in the Kyrgyz Republic for university students.

The award has been established by the President of the Kyrgyz Republic to recognize and celebrate the most talented university students in the Kyrgyz Republic for their outstanding academic excellence, research record, and active community engagement.

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## SPCE Trains Over 200 English Language Teachers in Kazakhstan



English language teachers participating in SPCE training programme in Tekeli, Kazakhstan.

UCA's School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE), in collaboration with the Education Departments of Zhetysu region, Kazakhstan and Zhetysu University recently organised advanced training sessions for English language teachers in the region. The objective of this learning session, attended by more than 200 educators from secondary schools, colleges, and universities, was to enhance their language instruction standards.

Dr Hamid Khan, Assistant Professor at UCA's School of Arts and Sciences, was the instructor of the training. Dr Khan introduced participants to innovative approaches for enhancing language teaching, with a particular focus on lexical teaching. The attendees learned about new teaching techniques, developed their communication skills, and gained a better understanding of the usage of modern technologies in classrooms.

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Since 2006, SPCE has successfully graduated over 240,000 learners; of these 1300 have been trained as entrepreneurs who have created 1,500 jobs. The School also operates in Khorog a Technical and Vocational Education Training programme that prepares electricians, welders, auto mechanics, plumbers and construction workers.

"UCA highly appreciates its collaborative efforts with the Government of the Repub-

lic of Tajikistan to improve the quality of learning opportunities for the people of the country. We are confident that this newly established learning centre of SPCE in Kulob will make a significant contribution to the social and economic development of the city and broader Khatlon region," – noted Dr Shamsh Kassim-Lakha, Chairman, Board of Trustees, University of Central Asia.

The SPCE Learning Center in Kulob, similar to SPCE's other centres, will offer a wide

range of internationally certified courses in languages (English, German, and Russian), technology (Computer Literacy, Programming) and accounting (International Accounting Practice, Finance, and Management Accounting). It will also be a centre for Language Testing. The faculty and staff of the Kulob Learning Centre have been recruited from among the residents of Kulob and Khatlon Region, reflecting UCA's commitment to fostering socio-economic growth in the region.

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## President of Kyrgyz Republic Presents a Prestigious Award

The selection is undertaken by a high-powered committee chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister. The honour includes a personalised certificate signed by the President of the Kyrgyz Republic and a cash award of 60,000 Kyrgyz Soms (approx. USD 670).

Nominated by UCA, Kyzhibek was one amongst the only 75 students nationally who qualified to receive this rare distinction.

Following the award ceremony, Kyzhibek spoke to the UCA news team on her journey with the University of Central Asia.

**UCA News:** Congratulations on your award.

**Kyzhibek:** Thank you. I attribute my success to my passion for learning and dedication to excellence. Behind this award are years of hard work.

**UCA News:** Tell us a little bit about yourself.

**Kyzhibek:** I was born and raised in Osh and

graduated from the Aga Khan School in Osh. Coming from a family of academicians and teachers, love for knowledge is ingrained in my DNA.

**UCA News:** What influenced your decision to join UCA?

**Kyzhibek:** As students at the Aga Khan School, we were introduced to UCA through UCA's student recruitment team. My mother, who visited UCA in 2019 for teacher training, was so impressed with the University that she also strongly encouraged me to choose UCA.

**UCA News:** How has your time at UCA transformed your personal and academic life?

**Kyzhibek:** I joined UCA at the age of 16 and now I am on the verge of graduating. Over the past five years, UCA has become a second home for me. The University offers excellent teachers who are also inspiring mentors. UCA's emphasis on English lan-

guage proficiency has significantly contributed to how fluently I am able to speak the English language. The wealth of resources made available by UCA to its students allows them to bring their projects to life.

I also gained valuable lessons in teamwork by mentoring incoming students. I play the guitar, dance, run marathons, take part in basketball events, and draw and write.

Given my major in Communications and Media, videotaping, editing, and recording podcasts are integral to my creative expression. Interestingly, many incoming UCA students have mentioned watching my YouTube videos about UCA prior to joining.

A highlight for me will always be the opportunity I received, thanks to UCA, to attend the winter school at the Glasgow School of Arts. That experience broadened my horizons and exposed me to different perspectives on design.

# Advancing Decarbonisation of Transport in Central Asia

The Institute of Public Policy and Administration (IPPA), a unit of the University of Central Asia's (UCA) Graduate School of Development (GSD), in collaboration with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), recently hosted the second SIPA Summer School on the Decarbonisation of Transport in Central Asia at the OECD Centre in Istanbul, Turkey. The event brought together experts, policymakers, and stakeholders from UCA's Founding States as well as from Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Mongolia. Other co-organisers of the event included the International Transport Forum (ITF) and the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD).

The Summer School initiated an in-depth exploration into the decarbonisation of the transport sector across Central Asia. The IPPA presented key findings from its study on sustainable transport infrastructure initiatives undertaken by the participating countries. This research aims at guiding Central and Southeast Asian countries to align their energy, transport, and industrial infrastructure investments in line with the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals on low-emission development pathways.

In addition, IPPA, in collaboration with the



*SIPA summer school participants engaging in discussion of policies on transport decarbonisation.*

IISD, conducted training on cost-benefit analysis using the SAVi (Sustainable Asset Valuation) tool for evaluating transport infrastructure programmes in Central Asia.

The participants reflected on their learnings, with Aslan Jarmukhanov from Kazakhstan noting, "The module on assessing projects from the perspective of environmental friendliness and social issues proved particularly valuable." Similarly, Tolkunay Taalaibekova from Kyrgyzstan shared, "I never thought that systems analysis is used in the transport sector. It was a great ex-

perience, which made us think that every decision we make affects climate change around the world."

SIPA Summer School serves as a platform for cross-border cooperation, knowledge exchange, and fostering sustainable solutions for the decarbonisation of the transport sector as the region's stakeholders continue to collaborate towards a greener and more sustainable future.

Further information and materials from the Summer School can be accessed [here](#).

## UCA Launches Studio at the Ololo Planet

In response to the increasing need of connecting classroom teaching to industry needs, UCA's School of Arts and Sciences (SAS), opened a production studio at Ololo Planet, Kyrgyzstan's largest co-working space, to serve as a platform for UCA students and alumni to hone their hard and soft skills through real-world projects.

The Ololo Planet Studio will also help UCA's students and alumni connect with a wider community of start-ups and businesses to boost networking and employability opportunities. The Studio will also host visibility and networking events to further build stronger academia-industry linkages.

The School of Arts and Sciences runs undergraduate programmes in Naryn, Kyrgyzstan and Khorog, Tajikistan offering four majors (Computer Science, Communications and Media, Earth and Environ-



*Dr Soheil Ashrafi, Chair of the Communications and Media department, School of Arts and Sciences, extends a warm welcome to students, alumni, and partners at the soft opening of the Studio.*

mental Studies, and Global Economics). It has so far graduated 198 students. 66% of its students come from rural, remote areas, and 80% from Founding States. 52% are women. Graduates of SAS have secured admission for their graduate studies to some of the reputed universities globally such as Brown, Duke, Michigan, and National University of Singapore.

## Promoting Evidence-Based Decision Making in Naryn

The University of Central Asia's Civil Society Initiative (CSI), Graduate School of Development, in partnership with Naryn State University (NSU), has launched a specialised training programme to advance research skills and contribute to evidence-based decision-making. Forty faculty members from NSU and representatives of various civil society organisations participated in the inaugural training.

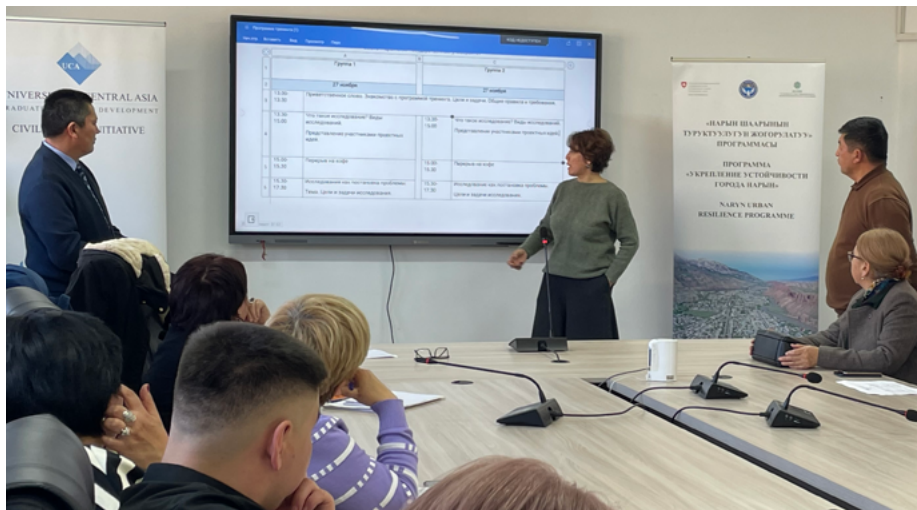
The seven-day training covered topics such as research design, data collection techniques, data analysis, interpretation of results, and writing research proposals. In addition to enhancing research skills, the programme also included a component on acquiring research funding, offering participants practical guidance on developing competitive research proposals.

Aizharkyn Zhunusakunova, NSU's Head of Master's, Postgraduate, and Doctoral Programmes, shared her impressions from the learning programme: "We learned the importance of researching problems that have practical relevance."

A highlight of the programme was the upcoming small research grant competition, designed to support diverse disciplinary research perspectives. The outcomes of these research projects will benefit a wide range of stakeholders, including local authorities, civil society organisations, and the local community in Naryn. This initiative will contribute to well-informed decision-making

and the implementation of effective strategies and initiatives aimed at fostering community resilience in Naryn. This ongoing research is part of the newly formed Center for Collaborative Research, Naryn Urban Resilience Programme (NURP).

Further information about NURP can be found [here](#).



*Dr Aizharkyn Kozhobekova (centre), Director, CSI presenting at the training session.*

## UCA Celebrates the 95th Anniversary of Kyrgyz Literary Legend - Chyngyz Aitmatov

On the occasion of the 95th anniversary of the legendary Kyrgyz author, Chyngyz Aitmatov, The University of Central Asia hosted a week-long series of events in Naryn to highlight and honour Aitmatov's profound literary and cultural contributions. Several of the events were held in collaboration with Naryn State University (NSU), public schools in Naryn and the local Naryn drama theatre.

The festivities included engaging book club sessions at UCA's School of Arts and

Sciences (SAS) campus in Naryn. UCA faculty member and filmmaker, Nursultan Stanaliev, delivered a session on the adaptation of Aitmatov's works in Kyrgyz cinema. A significant moment of the celebration was the inauguration of the Chyngyz Aitmatov Corner at the SAS Library, providing students and researchers with access to a comprehensive collection of his works. The celebration welcomed main actors from Aitmatov's renowned works and featured a thought-provoking panel discussion that

explored the enduring relevance of Aitmatov's works and its impact on contemporary literature and society.

Trivia and entertainment evenings at the SAS Naryn campus allowed participants to test their knowledge of Aitmatov's life and works. One of the evenings provided a multifaceted exploration of the writer's literary legacy through various artistic disciplines, including world literature and poetry, dramaturgy, music and choreography, painting and sculpturing, and world languages. The celebration reached new artistic heights with an innovative and mesmerising performance of Aitmatov's literary masterpieces by "Salt Peanuts", the renowned Kyrgyz jazz band.

The Art Faculty at NSU collaborated with students from UCA, NSU, and local schools to create artworks dedicated to the writer. The celebrations concluded with an event in the Naryn Drama Theater with stage captivating performances based on Aitmatov's iconic story of "Jamiliya". The event was followed by musical performances celebrating Aitmatov's legacy through songs inspired by his writings.



*"Jamiliya" performance by UCA and NSU students.*

# University of Central Asia signs MoU with Naryn State University to Promote Sustainable Development of Naryn



Professor Christopher Gerry with Dr Ermek Baibagyshev signing the Memorandum of Understanding between UCA and NSU.

The University of Central Asia (UCA) and the Naryn State University (NSU) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen collaboration in various areas related to the improvement of the quality of life of the people of Naryn and its surrounding areas. The Memorandum was signed by Professor Christopher Gerry, Acting Rector and Dean of the Graduate

School of Development, UCA, and Dr Ermek Baibagyshev, Rector of NSU.

The Memorandum builds on the longstanding partnership between the two universities under UCA's Mountains Universities Partnership (MUP) initiative, where UCA has supported a range of efforts including the establishment of a digital library as well as milk

and meat processing laboratories at NSU.

The MoU will formalise and expand the collaboration between UCA and NSU, including with the support of the Naryn Urban Resilience Programme (NURP), a five-year project supported by the Swiss Fund (SECO) to help transform Naryn into a resilient urban settlement, equipped to prosper economically, socially, and culturally.

Specific initiatives outlined in the MoU include professional development opportunities for NSU faculty through UCA's Certificate Programme on Urban Resilience, establishing collaborative research centres, developing entrepreneurship skills through curriculum developments, and enhancing facilities at NSU, including digital infrastructure. The two universities will also jointly promote knowledge and learning techniques related to urban resilience among UCA and NSU students and faculty members.

This partnership between UCA and NSU signifies a shared commitment to transforming Naryn into a vibrant, sustainable, and resilient university town.

## 75 Afghan Students Graduate from SPCE's Entrepreneurship Programme

UCA's School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE) Learning Centre in Faizabad, Afghanistan, recently commemorated the graduation of 75 youth who successfully completed the SPCE's Entrepreneurship, Marketing, and Communication programme. The inclusive design of the month-long programme facilitated the participation of learners from remote areas of Afghanistan, as well as Afghan nationals from Uzbekistan and India.

Students were equipped with skills to develop communication plans aligned with market needs and create brand identities that would distinguish them from competitors.

Expressing their gratitude, participants lauded SPCE and its instructors, particularly acknowledging the programme's accessibility to a wider audience through online delivery.

"This programme has not only equipped me



SPCE graduates in Afghanistan sharing a moment of joy and pride following their successful completion of the programme.

with a deep understanding of strategic marketing, branding, and effective communication techniques, but has also opened doors to endless opportunities" shared Abdul Basit Akbari, a graduate of the SPCE programme.

## SPCE participates in the Digital Economy Tour in China



Farrukhsho Fraidonov delivering a presentation on SPCE at the CAREC event in Hangzhou, China.

UCA's School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE), represented by Farrukhsho Fraidonov, Country Head for Tajikistan, participated in the "Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Innovation Week and Digital Economy Tour" held in Hangzhou, China.

The event, attended by more than 60 representatives from nine countries, including UCA's three Founding States as well as Mongolia, Pakistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, was a platform for sharing knowledge and exploring innovative solutions in promoting digital economy

through regional collaboration. Participants represented governments, universities, enterprises, incubation platforms, and venture capital institutions.

Farrukhsho Fraidonov presented SPCE's objectives and activities at the plenary session entitled, "Commerce Education Landscape and Talent Development Overview in Central Asia". He emphasised the need for research on the e-commerce labour market to identify specific specialisations and talents required for the field. Fraidonov proposed designing relevant courses to facilitate the development of this sector.

## Embracing the Roots: UCA Alumni Reunion

The alumni of UCA's School of Arts and Sciences (SAS) gathered in Dushanbe and Bishkek to reconnect with their beloved Alma Mater. Facilitated by UCA's Co-oper-

ative Education Programme Department, the two-day event was a seamless blend of professional development opportunities and cherished reminiscences.



Alumni Reunion - Tajikistan.



Alumni Reunion - Kyrgyzstan.

The reunion included hands-on workshops by field experts from a range of specialisations including design thinking, professional branding, product and project management, and stress management. The workshops concluded with vibrant networking sessions with UCA's esteemed corporate partners, fostering valuable connections and potential collaborations.

The platform was also an event to formally introduce the newly formed UCA SAS Alumni Association. All alumni were invited to become active members of this dynamic alumni community.

### UCA Alum Meets Deputy Prime Minister of Kyrgyz Republic



UCA alumna Suyuna Dadybaeva (Class 2021, Communications and Media), currently pursuing her postgraduate studies at the prestigious National University of Singapore's (NSU) Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, met with Mr Edil Baisalov, Deputy Prime Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic in Singapore, during his recent visit to NSU. (Photo courtesy: Mr Edil Baisalov's Instagram page).