




UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL ASIA



A dramatic landscape of snow-capped mountains under a cloudy sky. The mountains are rugged and partially covered in snow, with some peaks shrouded in mist. The foreground is a brown, grassy field with a small stream or pond. The sky is filled with heavy, grey clouds.

“By creating intellectual space and resources, this University will help turn the mountains that divide the nations and territories of Central Asia into the links that unite its peoples and economies in a shared endeavour to improve their future well-being.”

His Highness the Aga Khan,
Chancellor, University of Central Asia
Charter Signing Ceremony, 31 August 2000
Astana, Kazakhstan



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Innovative business leaders, responsive governments, competent public servants, an engaged civil society - these are the building blocks of resilient societies. All depend on strong educational institutions.

As an environment for higher learning, the imposing mountain terrain of Central Asia presents a unique vantage point for the region. Endowed with abundant natural resources and a varied and rich cultural heritage, Central Asia has significant assets. Yet achieving economic growth in a more globally connected era requires skilled and educated citizens, able to build a brighter future while preserving the past and protecting the environment.

The University of Central Asia (UCA) is a world class centre for knowledge and learning, connecting isolated rural communities with the global community and building the human capital needed for modern economies and stable governance.

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 is distinguished by its three schools: the undergraduate School of Arts and Sciences, the Graduate School of Development and the School of Professional and Continuing Education. The University also includes the Central Asian Faculty Development Programme, and the Aga Khan Humanities Project. In response to the needs of rural mountain communities, UCA has established its two Campuses away from major urban centres, in Naryn (Kyrgyzstan) and Khorog (Tajikistan). The Tekeli Campus (Kazakhstan) is in the planning stage. They are on the historic Silk Road, and UCA hopes to be at the heart of the economic and intellectual transformation taking place in the region. As a University, it is uniquely positioned to bring together emerging leaders in business, civil society, and public service, and also brings with it the broader commitment and partnership of the Aga Khan Development Network.





SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

UCA's undergraduate School of Arts and Sciences (SAS) began classes in 2016 in Naryn, Kyrgyzstan, and offers Computer Sciences, and Media and Communications, as majors. SAS offers a five-year undergraduate programme that cultivates the knowledge and skills students need to integrate different approaches to solve problems and create innovations in professional life and public service. The construction of the Khorog Campus was completed in 2017, and offers Economics, and Earth and Environmental Sciences, as majors. The Tekeli campus in Kazakhstan is currently in the planning phase, and will offer Engineering Sciences and Business Management majors.

Students admitted to UCA have a demonstrated record of academic achievements. They are winners of academic competitions, presidents of student government, passionate advocates for the disadvantaged, talented artists and musicians, award-winning athletes, and enthusiastic volunteers who lend a hand in their communities. While many students joining UCA come from urban centres, 70% are from secondary cities and small villages. About 82% are from Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.

Classrooms are designed for flexible study space.





Education Improvement Programme

The University's **Education Improvement Programme** is a long-term initiative that engages a total of 60 government secondary schools, 20 in each of the three Founding States of UCA: Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. The programme is designed to enhance students' academic achievements and opportunities for entry to high-quality universities nationally, regionally, and internationally, and to be equipped for responsible citizenship.

Working with education ministries, district education officers and school staff, and within the framework of the national curricula, EIP accents Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM), Information Communication Technology (ICT), and English. It aims to develop competencies such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and communication, required for full participation in economic, social, and cultural life in the 21st Century. Through ongoing research, monitoring and evaluation, the programme aims to provide a model that can be scaled up and replicated nationally and regionally.

At the Naryn Campus, UCA faculty conduct professional development sessions for secondary school teachers from Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan.



Teachers relax in the Faculty Lounge

Central Asian Faculty Development Programme

Through its **Central Asian Faculty Development Programme (CAFDP)**, UCA has partnered with international affiliate universities to provide opportunities for prospective faculty members to engage in advanced study and research abroad. UCA aims to fill at least 50 percent of its faculty positions with highly qualified Central Asian nationals with international experience and recognised credentials. The programme provides funding to outstanding PhD candidates in disciplines that are academic priorities for the University.



Cement batching plant in Naryn

Economic Impact and Building University Towns

Economic development is at the heart of UCA's construction strategy, which strengthens existing enterprises and promotes the establishment of new ones. In the first phase of campus construction, UCA operations created more than 1,400 jobs in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, with 80% (Naryn) to 95% (Khorog) being local residents. The University also created over 200 permanent new faculty and staff jobs in Naryn and Khorog, where over 80% are filled by Central Asians.



Student Dormitories are designed for privacy as well as interaction

When all phases of construction are completed, UCA will have generated more than 350,000 days of employment for construction works, secondary employment on and off-campus, with a projected economic benefit of over US\$750 million.

In addition to offering students an international standard of university experience and facilities, UCA is partnering within its town development project framework with local government and Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) agencies. Together they are developing mountain towns into vibrant university communities, while boosting local economies. This framework



The Aga Khan Health Services Medical and Diagnostic Centre provides healthcare to Naryn residents and UCA students, faculty and staff.

includes AKDN initiatives for social sector development in education and health, hospitality and tourism, enterprise development and rural improvement.

Projects in Naryn include a Medical and Diagnostic Centre, rehabilitation of the Seitaaly Jakypov Park, strengthening infrastructure and connections to the broader region by constructing the three-kilometre Naryn-Baotovo diversion road, and providing 24-hour water supply and paving the access road to Tosh-Bulak village. UCA is currently working with the Naryn Town Municipality on the Naryn town development master plan. This exercise aims to promote the social

and economic development of the town through a concerted, planned approach to ultimately improving the quality of life of its inhabitants and visitors. Specifically, the planning process will help identify opportunities for economic growth, improved infrastructure, and support Government-led efforts to transform Naryn into an economic, touristic, cultural, and intellectual hub.

In Khorog, UCA has paved roads to Dasht village from the main town, a gravel road to Upper Dasht village and an access road from the community of Khitjd. The University also installed streetlights in the area. To extend quality healthcare services to the Khorog community, an Aga Khan Health Service Medical Centre has been built in 2019. It has also established two kindergartens and a training centre for early childhood educators.

UCA brings the power of education and human ingenuity to the challenges and potentials of mountain communities in Central Asia. Through innovative and relevant research, it is providing access and resources to a growing diversity of learners, and enabling a new generation of graduates to address the needs of the region and drive socio-economic development, while preserving and promoting the rich cultural heritage of Central Asia.

The Student Life Building offers attractive spaces for learning and social interaction.





GRADUATE SCHOOL OF DEVELOPMENT

The Graduate School of Development (GSD) consists of UCA's Institute of Public Policy and Administration, the Mountain Societies Research Institute, the Cultural Heritage and Humanities Unit and the Civil Society Initiative. Over 100 peer-reviewed research publications have been produced through GSD since 2011 and are available for free download from UCA's website. GSD aims to generate knowledge through research that has practical application to mountain communities. The School is multi-dimensional, interdisciplinary, and is designed primarily as a professional graduate school.

Institute of Public Policy and Administration

The Institute of Public Policy and Administration (IPPA) was established in 2011 to strengthen public policy in Central Asia. It provides in-depth analysis on current and emerging policy issues facing the region, and improves the analytical capacity of governments and civil society to use evidence-based research in the decision-making processes. Launched in 2018, IPPA also offers an Executive Masters in Economic Policy to Afghan civil servants, as well as other Central Asian governments.

Life in Kyrgyzstan conference is an annual event where experts share new insights on a range of social and economic developments in Kyrgyzstan and the Central Asia region.





Mountain Societies Research Institute

The Mountain Societies Research Institute (MSRI) conducts trans-disciplinary research to help inform and contribute to the Sustainable Mountain Development agenda in Central Asia. Its research includes themes such as natural resource management, land systems and livelihoods, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity conservation, climate change, and achieving Sustainable Development Goals. Its publications are also available for free download from UCA's website.

The objectives of MSRI are to:

- Serve as a knowledge hub for scholars, development practitioners, and policy makers.
- Enhance regional capacity to conduct sound research relevant to mountain societies.
- Disseminate knowledge among mountain stakeholders, including the co-development and co-teaching of UCA's academic programmes.

The programme and research of MSRI focuses on the challenges and potentials of high mountain societies.





Cultural Heritage and Humanities Unit

The Cultural Heritage and Humanities Unit (CHHU) was launched in 2013 to generate new dialogues on Central Asian heritage and identity. It preserves the rich and diverse cultural heritage through research, documenting, archiving, and supporting work of regional scholars through the UCA Cultural Heritage Book Series.

In 2012, the discovery of a Turkic kurgan or burial site, complete with skeletons of a human and horse, created excitement on UCA's Naryn campus. The territory has long been of interest to archaeologists. In 1953, archaeologist Ahmad Kibirov discovered a large cemetery on the Aigyrzhal site, where many burial mounds had been previously destroyed.

UCA was aware of these sites based on studies by archaeologist Dr. Kubat Tabaldyev of Kyrgyz-Turkish Manas University. The artefacts were carefully relocated under the supervision of community leaders. During a seismic study, older remains and petroglyphic drawings were found. UCA then approached Tabaldyev to lead an archaeological survey of the area.

That same year, Tabaldyev worked with UCA's School of Professional and Continuing Education to publish his seminal work, *Ancient Monuments of the Tien-Shan*, as part of the UCA Cultural Heritage Book Series.

His team discovered internment sites and artefacts spanning the



Stone, Bronze, early Iron and Middle Ages, indicating continuous settlement of the area for over 5000 years. In 2014, Russian archaeologist Yuriy Sergeevich Khudyakov joined Tabaldyev, finding a 7th century Turkic kurgan (burial site) and artefacts.



Clay vessels from the Saka (850 - 350 BCE) period found whilst excavating Aygyrzhai 2 burial mounds. It was a ritual to place vessels with food next to the deceased.







Civil Society Initiative

The **Civil Society Initiative (CSI)** was established in 2017 to foster an enabling policy and administrative environment for civil society in Central Asia and assist in the development of a broad spectrum of civil society actors. CSI's initial geographical focus is Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan, with a longer term goal to expand to other countries. With extensive outreach, both rural and urban, it aims to facilitate networks to exchange knowledge, know-how and practice to advance the work of civil society organisations. CSI also aims to support the development of UCA as an international institution of higher education and build human capacity in the region.

Taking a regional approach focused on building domestic institutional and leadership capacity, with a long-term perspective, CSI's primary focus is on the development of:

- **Skills:** Providing training opportunities and professional development.
- **Knowledge:** Promoting research, communication, and creating a platform for dialogue between policy makers and civil society
- **Resources:** Raising public awareness of philanthropy, and promoting income generation

CSI Workshop on promoting "Citizen Engagement with Open Government Data" held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

THE SCHOOL OF PROFESSIONAL AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

The School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE) which was launched in 2006, provides post-secondary and continuing education, giving young people and adults professional and vocational qualifications in a flexible learning format that improves employment and income generating opportunities. The School has trained more than 172,000 students across 60 programmes and courses at 16 learning centres throughout Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Afghanistan.

An independent evaluation by the Canadian Bureau for International Education, the College of the Rockies in Canada, and the Institute of Education at the Higher School of Economics in Moscow, reported a high degree of satisfaction with the School's programmes. The evaluation garnered empirical evidence and asked authoritative field experts to critically examine its programmes, quality assurance processes, organizational structure, and other aspects of its operations. The evaluation highlighted that "SPCE has set up a remarkable quality assurance programme."

SPCE classrooms are designed to promote teacher-student interaction.









THE AGA KHAN HUMANITIES PROJECT

The Aga Khan Humanities Project (AKHP) was founded in 1997 by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture and joined UCA in 2007. It fosters critical thinking and academic writing skills through an integrated humanities curriculum. AKHP develops and delivers resources, public lectures, training and courses within a multi-disciplinary framework. To date, it has graduated over 180,000 learners.

AKHP's innovative curriculum incorporates material from the rich oral and written cultures of Central Asia and Eastern and Western classical texts. The series of textbooks is designed to fill the knowledge and methodological gaps in the study of the humanities in Central Asia; explore and promote pluralism; highlight Central Asian cultures within a context of universal values; and encourage the development of pedagogy and critical thinking skills in ethical reflection, cultural interpretation and aesthetic appreciation. It also aims to deepen understanding of diverse ideas and values through content analyses of different cultural and intellectual traditions. The curriculum is taught in AKHP's Humanities in English programme and at partner universities around the region.


AKHP Central Asian Debate Tournament in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.




UCA Academic Partners	Programmes
Seneca	Preparatory Programme
 UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO	Computer Science
 UTS UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY	Communications and Media
 THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA	Earth and Environmental Sciences
 Stockholm School of Economics in Riga  HIGHER SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS NATIONAL RESEARCH UNIVERSITY	Economics
 University of Victoria	Co-operative Education Programme
 UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE	Central Asian Faculty Development Programme




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