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SYNTHESIS OF ISSUES AND PROPOSITIONS ON IMPROVEMENT OF LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF THE CYCLE 3 PROGRAMME IN KAZAKHSTAN

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Independent Kazakh Agency for quality assurance in education (IQAA)
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**Synthesis of Issues and Propositions on Improving the Legal Framework of Cycle 3 Programmes
Issues and propositions on the regulatory framework:**

CYCLE 3 STUDIES

Salzburg principle	Regulatory field	Issue	Proposition for improvement
<p>I. The core component of doctoral training is the advancement of knowledge through original research. At the same time it is recognised that doctoral training must increasingly meet the needs of an</p>	<p>Admissions</p>	<p>There are cases when applicants with low level of foreign language proficiency, skills in academic writing and research admitted to PhD programs, since current practice of entry examination does not allow to reveal the certain number of skills and knowledge expected from the PhD candidates.</p> <p>Standard entry requirements include international (IELTS (minimum 6 points), TOEFL, etc.) or local language proficiency certificates and exams in professional subjects.</p> <p>However in local test centres applicants take English exams in written form that does not check their speaking skills and real language competences in general.</p> <p>As to professional exams taken in oral or in the form of tests, they do not fully disclose the research potential of the applicants. In this regard, HEIs could benefit from using essay as the entry assessment tool and include research proposal as well as statement of purpose in the list of supporting documents required from the applicants.</p>	<p>In the standard rules for admission to education in HEIs, indicate that along with a mandatory list of documents, applicants must submit an international certificate of knowledge of foreign languages (IELTS (minimum score 6), TOEFL, etc.) and take professional exams in the form of an essay.</p> <p>In addition, the academic skills of the applicants could be checked through mini research proposal and statement of purpose. These documents then can be discussed with the applicant during admission process to verify how he/she will do the proposed research in the program. It is not mandatory to proceed working on the proposed topic, but on the contrary as the scope of the student can grow in the program he/she can change the topic.</p>

<p>employment market that is wider than academia.</p>	<p>Content of the program</p>	<p>Lack of knowledge of research methodology and inability of social science students to conduct a field research limits their research projects, as they are less evidence-based and descriptive. Consequently, such research looks less rigorous and seldom accepted by international peer-reviewed journals.</p>	<p>It is vital to introduce various research methodology courses that will enable our PhD graduates to apply the most appropriate research approaches and tools. Such courses can be of various levels either on qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods research.</p> <p>As one of the steps to improve PhD research we can suggest initiating master degrees in research methodology. It will be either useful for those who will work in industry or business in future, but primarily will prepare strong applicants for PhD programs</p> <p>In addition, it is vital to develop research pedagogy and increase research methodology qualification of the PhD faculty. Focus should be done to use in class papers published in well-known international journals. Reading and analyzing them students will see how research is done in West.</p> <p>It is also worth noting that not only graduate schools and department should be responsible for research training in doctorates, but on the contrary the university should strive to create an appropriate research environments motivating students to learn. In this regard, libraries could be involved as not only holders of resources and books, but also centers facilitating research interest through providing extra-curricular workshops on how to search for literature, use various databases, compile bibliography, use reference management tools, etc. Such a technical assistance to doctoral students will improve their wellbeing and reduce the feeling of isolation, when students are left “to suffer silently”.</p> <p>Finally, the current issue in social sciences and humanities is the descriptive character of research. Students have limited skills in writing argumentatively. Thus, language departments can be involved or separate writing centers can be created at universities to foster these skills in students either in Russian, Kazakh or English.</p>
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	Approval of PhD thesis topic	<p>The key idea of PhD is to promote research, whereas university research priorities can restrict students' interest to research.</p> <p>Students should have passion to what they research. They should look inward and this should be promoted by supervisors.</p> <p>Another question arises whether chosen topic will be useful for the society, and this is the task of the student to prove that the chosen topic is worth being investigated.</p>	<p>In this regard, we would suggest introducing the practice of research proposal defense. Research proposal is an initial step when a student in detail explains what he/she will investigate, why, how. Moreover, what implications and significance his/her research has for the community. This very stage will, first, increase quality of final dissertations; second, there will be no need to undergo any additional ratification procedure in case of the decision to change the topic because of changed ideas, concepts, data, etc. Thus, proposal defense will serve as a quality assurance tool when not promising PhD projects can be rejected. Proposal defense can be done at the end of the first year or the beginning of the second year that is ideally in the current conditions – first semester is usually given for courses, while second semester for reading on future research topic and summer will given for writing proposal.</p> <p>Moreover, two months is not enough to finalize with a research topic. Usually it takes a considerable time while a PhD student finds his/her research focus, research stance, niche.</p>
II. Embedding in institutional strategies and policies: universities as institutions need to assume responsibility for ensuring that the doctoral	Admission The program management	<p>Admission into the PhD programs is carried out only once a year, which limits the chances and wastes the time of the applicants.</p>	<p>Draft the amendment to the Law "On Education" and indicate two periods of admission to PhD programs: summer and winter.</p>
		<p>There are no part-time PhD programs in Kazakhstan. The stipend of the students are not sufficient to cover living expenses and learning needs (buying books, getting access to some peer-review journals, which are not available through free access system in</p>	<p>To introduce a part-time PhD programs with a duration of 5 years.</p> <p>In addition, to prevent problems with timely defense of</p>

programmes and research training they offer are designed to meet new challenges and include appropriate professional career development opportunities.		<p>the university, traveling to Almaty to get access to National library and etc.), which leads to employment of the PhD candidates.</p> <p>Self-funded students even more need to get employed to pay the fee.</p> <p>The schedules of lessons are not communicated with the students and adopted to their work schedule. As a consequence employed students lack of time and opportunity to do a dissertation and defeat it, , which is a concern of universities and the system as a whole.</p>	the thesis not to allow full-time PhD students to get employed.
	Academic support	<p>The content of the program is overloaded with extra and sometimes needless modules (disciplines), instead of delegating time and effort on research methodology and conducting research.</p>	Universities need to pay more attention to research methodology in the content of program, reduce the number of disciplines to 2 (specialization discipline, research methodology).
		<p>Students have clear understandings of formal requirements of PhD programs (publications, credits, etc.), however they do lack understanding of what research requirements they have to meet.</p> <p>No clear benchmarking: research stages, components, qualities, etc.</p>	Based on national framework, every university should elaborate its own policies regulating PhD programs. Such policies should describe in-detail academic and research timeline for students, research requirements (including clear explanation what research is), guidelines on how to conduct PhD project, how to defend a dissertation, evaluation criteria, etc. These documents should serve as handbooks for PhD students to reference when they have some questions.
		<p>Due to absence of any kind of support in learning to use software applications in conducting a research (data collection, analysis), PhD students can not fully apply their potential and do a high quality research.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Application of data collection and analysis software should be included in the content of PhD study programs to support students in conducting a high quality research and develop their professional competences.
	Administrative support	<p>Mostly doctoral candidates are not provided with appropriate administrative support by the university staff.</p>	<p>To provide support for doctoral students in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – approval of the topic – in the search and approval of a foreign research consultant <p>preparation of documentation for the academic internship and participation in foreign research conferences by</p>

			allocating an appropriate paid staff or increase the quality of the formal structures in charge of above mentioned areas.
V. The crucial role of supervision and assessment: in respect of individual doctoral candidates, arrangements for supervision and assessment should be based on a transparent contractual framework of shared responsibilities between doctoral candidates, supervisors and the institution (and where appropriate including other	Resources National (domestic) supervision	In Kazakhstan and almost all Post-Soviet states, PhD dissertations should reflect the findings of academics` research conducted in the same area. However these theses are available in Almaty and Astana only. For instance, Kazakhstani dissertations are not available on-line. The students can approach them in Almaty only, while Russian scholars` works are available in Astana and Almaty only.	Ministry and universities should provide on-line access to dissertations of Kazakhstani and Russian scholars free of charge to support doctoral students.
		The rights and duties of the supervisor and the PhD student are not clearly stated.	To put into practice the conclusion of a tripartite agreement among the university, the PhD candidate and the supervisor.
	International supervision International supervision	Since the supervisors are in most cases are full-time academics their workload is divided into teaching and supervising activities, whereas the amount of time and workload delegated for the latter one is less than expected. Thus, the amount of supervisor`s salary is low.	To increase the salary of national supervisors by raising the coefficient of workload dedicated to PhD thesis supervision.
		Lack of regulations on the activities of the foreign consultant.	Development of a mechanism for financing and remuneration of labor of a foreign supervisor.
	Assessment	Due to lack of effective system of monitoring supervisors there is an increasing trend of untimely defense of doctoral dissertations.	Universities delivering PhD programs should systematically conduct monitoring of supervisors and effectiveness of their work. For instance, the institution should demand the schedule, time, place of consultations and report on the results of consultations of doctoral students from the supervisors.

partners).			
X. Ensuring appropriate funding: the development of quality doctoral programmes and the successful completion by doctoral candidates requires appropriate and sustainable funding.	Assessment	The forms of formative and summative assessments in Kazakhstani universities do not contribute to the development and evaluation of critical thinking, academic writing skills and awareness of research methodology required for the successful writing and defense of a doctoral dissertation.	To revise the forms of the formative and summative assessment in doctoral programs. The main form of formative assessment of doctoral students should be research papers (essays) or projects. Summative assessment should be conducted only in the form of defense of the thesis.

Other amendments offered	Thesis defense	Members of the dissertational council do not receive any payment for their work, thus they are less motivated to conduct their duties and come to the meeting of the dissertational council. This complicates the provision of a quorum. In addition, all expenses for travel, accommodation and food for reviewers from other cities and countries are covered by doctoral students.	“Typical Provisions on the Dissertation Council” should reflect the following. All expenses of the dissertational council, including the work of the academic secretary, chairman, members of the dissertational council, reviewers, travel expenses, accommodation and food for reviewers from other cities and countries should be covered by universities.
	Admission	Admission into the PhD programs is carried out only once a year, which limits the chances and wastes the time of the applicants.	Draft the amendment to the Law "On Education" and indicate two periods of admission to PhD programs: summer and winter.

	<p>Submission of the thesis</p>	<p>A month before the defense of the dissertation the PhD candidates along with the abstract of the thesis, references are obliged to publish the full text of the dissertation.</p> <p>The publication of the full text of the undefeated thesis could lead to plagiarism.</p>	<p>Require the publication of dissertations of doctoral students after awarding them a PhD degree.</p>
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