ABAI KAZAKH NATIONAL PEDAGOGICAL UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF HISTORY AND LAW

«Approved by»
Dean of the Faculty of History and Law
G.K. Kenzhebayev _____.
_____ 2024

7M02203 – Religious Studies
development plan
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

for 2023-2029

ALMATY, 2024

The EP Development Plan was prepared on the basis of the following documents:

1. Development Program of the Non-Profit Joint-Stock Company "Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University" for 2023–2029, approved by the Board of Directors (Minutes No. 9 dated 20 December 2023);

2. Action Plan for the implementation of the Development Program of the Non-Profit Joint-Stock Company "Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University" for 2023–2029, approved by the Management Board (Minutes No. 22 dated 16 January 2024);

3. Key performance indicators of the Development Program of the Non-Profit Joint-Stock Company "Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University" for 2023–2029;

4. Abai University Internal Quality Assurance Policy and Standards, approved and enacted by Order No. 05-04/641 of 15 September 2023 of the Acting Chair of the Management Board – Rector of Abai KazNPU.

Approved
at a meeting of the Academic Council of the Faculty of History and Law
Minutes No. "__" ____ 2024
Chair _____ G.K. Kenzhebayev

Reviewed
at the department meeting for the 7M02203 – Religious Studies EP
in the Humanities field
Minutes No. "__" ____ 2024
Head of Department _____ T.K. Auelgazina

Abai University creates a harmonious educational environment centred on the learner, the acquisition of knowledge, professional socialisation and adaptation; it fosters respect for the future profession and develops critical-thinking and tolerance skills.

FOREWORD

The Educational Program Development Plan provides for the systematic enhancement of the 7M02203 – Religious Studies EP during 2023–2029.

Code and name of the field of education: 7M02 – Arts and Humanities

Code and name of the training area: 7M022 – Humanities

Educational program group: M051 – Religious Studies and Theology

The program strategy is aimed at training specialists with advanced theoretical knowledge, a strong research culture, and expert analytical competence in Religious Studies, while expanding cooperation with employers in research, education, and state–religion relations.

Mission of the educational program: We train educators who can anticipate the needs of contemporary education by drawing on advanced methods, national heritage, and international approaches. We enhance the prestige of the teaching profession and serve as a driving force for human-capital development.

Goal of the educational program: to train Masters of Arts who have mastered contemporary theories and methodologies of Religious Studies and are capable of conducting scholarly analysis of religious processes and undertaking research, teaching, and expert work in the field of religion in accordance with the principles of academic integrity, freedom of religion, and interfaith tolerance.

CURRENT SITUATION ANALYSIS

General information about the educational program

Developers of the EP Development Plan	**Department representatives: Tungysh Talgatovich Abylov, Ali Bolatbekovich Agibayev, and Tolkyn Kudaibergenovna Auelgazina.** **Employers: Almasbek Duissenbekuly Shagyrbai, PhD, Associate Professor, Head of the Centre for Religious Studies at the Institute of Philosophy, Political Science and Religious Studies, Committee of Science, MSHE RK; Asylbek Karimovich Izbairov, Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor, Director of the Institute for Geopolitical Studies.** **Student representative: Akerke Adalkyzy, second-year master's student.**
Academic degree:	Master of Arts under the 7M02203 – Religious Studies Educational Program
Year launched:	2018
Language of instruction:	Kazakh, Russian
Mode of study:	full-time
Duration of study:	2 years
Credit volume:	120
Distinctive features of the EP	The distinctive feature of the 7M02203 – Religious Studies EP is its combination of interdisciplinary and secular scholarly study of religion, analysis of religious texts and traditions, assessment of the religious situation in Kazakhstan and worldwide, expert evaluation of public policy on religion and interfaith relations, and research on religion in the digital environment. The program prepares master's students for research, teaching, and expert analytical work.

Graduate model	professional and social responsibility; an evidence-based worldview; academic integrity; analytical and critical thinking; multilingual communication; respect for confessional and cultural diversity; knowledge of Religious Studies theories and methods; objective analysis of religious processes; well-reasoned presentation of research findings; and understanding of the principles of freedom of religion and secularism.
Types of professional activity	✓1. Educational and teaching activity: teaching Religious Studies courses in higher education institutions on a scholarly and methodological basis. 2. Research activity: studying the history, philosophy, sociology, psychology, and anthropology of religion, as well as contemporary religious processes. 3. Expert and analytical activity: analysing the religious situation, religious texts and materials, and religious content in the mass media and digital environment. 4. Information and communication activity: preparing evidence-based information on interfaith relations, secularism, and freedom of religion. 5. Organisational and managerial activity: participating in the development of religion-related projects and programs in government bodies and research and civil-society organisations. 6. Social and educational activity: fostering tolerant interaction, civic responsibility, and a culture of conflict prevention in conditions of religious and cultural diversity.
Academic mobility partners (internal and external)	*External academic mobility and research cooperation: Istanbul University, Bursa Uludağ University, Gazi University, and Ankara University (Türkiye); University of Gdańsk (Poland); Tallinn University (Estonia); Sofia University (Bulgaria); Chonnam National University (South Korea); and Cyprus International University. Partner in a neighbouring country: Mirzo Ulugbek National University of Uzbekistan. Domestic partners: the Institute of Philosophy, Political Science and Religious Studies of the Committee of Science, MSHE RK; centres for the study of religious issues; and relevant government and civil-society organisations.*
Graduate employment	100
Availability of a licence appendix for the field of training	№ 0137373
Key partner organizations	Institute of Philosophy, Political Science and Religious Studies of the Committee of Science, MSHE RK; regional centres for the study of religious issues; government bodies responsible for religious affairs; and research and civil-society organisations.
Expected final outcomes of the EP Development Plan	- improving the quality of students' and academic staff's educational, research, and professional activities; introducing innovative and digital technologies for teaching Religious Studies; developing textbooks and teaching materials in Kazakh; expanding joint programs and research projects with domestic and international universities; strengthening master's students' research and expert competence; and increasing academic-staff publications in

	highly ranked journals indexed in Web of Science and Scopus.

Key risks of the educational program

Risk	Potential consequences	Management mechanisms and measures
Competition in the education market	Decline in applicant numbers and insufficient program visibility	Systematically communicate the program's research and expert strengths; strengthen career-guidance work; involve employers and graduates in information campaigns; and provide regular information on grants and internships.
Student population	Decline in the student population	Implement student-retention measures; conduct targeted career guidance; maintain systematic engagement with graduates; and increase the number of practice-oriented Religious Studies courses and research projects.
Economic crisis	Reduced ability of students to pay and limited academic-mobility opportunities	Provide information about instalment-payment options; offer individual learning pathways; and advise students on participation in grants, research projects, and internal support mechanisms.

	Strengths	Weaknesses
Internal factors	- The program aims to develop the competence of Religious Studies researchers and experts; it benefits from the strong research capacity of its academic staff, experience in studying religion, secularism, freedom of religion, and interfaith relations, established links with the Institute of Philosophy, Political Science and Religious Studies and specialist centres, opportunities for interdisciplinary and practice-oriented learning, a student-centred approach, digital resources, and regular monitoring.	Insufficient joint and dual-degree programs with international universities; a limited range of contemporary Religious Studies textbooks in Kazakh; unstable levels of international academic mobility and visiting international faculty; and limited activity of the alumni association.
	Join international research networks; introduce new courses under academic freedom; develop research on the digital transformation of religion, artificial-intelligence ethics, religious freedom, and social cohesion; conduct joint applied projects with government and civil-society organisations; and develop online courses and trilingual educational resources.	**Intense competition in the education market; misinformation and ideological polarisation concerning religion; reduced demand for fee-based study due to economic instability; movement of qualified researchers to other organisations; and external constraints affecting international cooperation.**
External factors	- Use the opportunities provided by academic freedom; integrate master's research with departmental research projects; participate in international education fairs and scholarly events; provide regular information on internships and vacancies; develop students' research, expert, and independent-learning skills; and expand distance and blended-learning technologies.	Intense competition in the education market; economic crisis and rising tuition fees; information risks relating to religion; and limited opportunities for international academic exchange.

3. KEY OBJECTIVES FOR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Area 1. Expanding access to the University's educational services

No.	Performance indicators	Unit	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
1.	Student population in the 7M02203 – Religious Studies EP	persons	1	-					
2.	Admissions to the 7M02203 – Religious Studies EP	persons	1	-					
3.	Number of graduates from the 7M02203 – Religious Studies EP	persons	1	-					

Area 2. Innovative support for educational activities

No.	Performance indicators (share, percentage, number)	Unit	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	Responsible parties	Form of completion
1.	Decision on the EP type (existing, new, innovative, interdisciplinary, additional, or joint EP)	units	E – 1	E – 1	E – 1	E – 1	E – 1	E – 1	E – 1	graduating department	EP documentation
2.	Participation in educational-program rankings	actual	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	graduating department	EP ranking results
3.	EP accreditation	actual			+					graduating department	Accreditation result
4	Completion of post-accreditation monitoring	actual				+				graduating department	Monitoring results
5.	Updating EP content to reflect labour-market and professional requirements in the field of religion	actual	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	graduating department	Updated EP and expert opinions
6.	Analysis of EP compliance with the University Development Strategy	actual	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	graduating department	Department meeting minutes
7.	Conducting round tables on integrating Religious Studies competencies into the educational process	actual	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	graduating department	Reference report and minutes
8.	Number of Religious Studies specialists involved in teaching	persons	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	graduating department	Agreements and memoranda
9.	Analysis of academic-staff capacity for EP development	%	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	graduating department	Department staffing schedule
10.	Share of academic staff who completed professional-development courses in the subject area	%	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	graduating department	Certificates and diplomas
11.	Share of EP graduates employed during the first year after graduation	%	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	graduating department	Employment results
12.	Share of state-funded graduates employed in the EP field during the first year	%	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	graduating department	Employment results
13	Share of EP graduates participating in evaluation of educational-service quality	actual	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	graduating department	Document confirming commission membership
14	Availability of integrated learning	actual	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	graduating departme	Report

	materials for inclusive education and the teaching of Religious Studies									nt	
15	Development of new or updated educational modules reflecting the needs of the Religious Studies field	actual	+	+	+	-	+	-	+	graduating departme nt	Report
16	implementation massive open online courses in Religious Studies	actual	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	graduating department	Course developmen t
17.	Student participation in determining EP content	actual	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	graduating department and students	Participation among the EP developers
18.	Number of employers participating in evaluation of specialist-training quality	units	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	graduating depart ment	Agreements, memoranda, and expert opinions
19.	Share of students participating in evaluation of academic-staff teaching performance	%	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	graduating department and students	Survey results
20	Number of Religious Studies teaching guides developed in Kazakh	units	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	graduating department and students	Course materials
21	Number of teaching publications developed by academic staff for the EP	units	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	graduating departm ent	Teaching publications and textbooks
22	Developing a digital ecosystem for Religious Studies education: creating an online platform with video lectures and interactive materials for core specialist courses; developing original online courses in Religious Studies; introducing digital-humanities and data-analysis approaches; using Open Book, Open Task, Critical Thinking, and Take-Home Exam assessment formats; and applying proctoring and digital assessment tools in compliance with academic-integrity requirements.	actual	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	graduating departm ent	

Area 3. Internationalisation of the program

No.	Performance indicators (share, percentage, number)	Unit	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	Responsible parties	Form of completion
1.	Inter-university partnership within the EP: dual-degree EP	units	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	graduating department	Joint and dual-degree EP
	with international universities	units	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
	with Kazakhstani universities	units	-	-	+	+	+	+	+		
2.	Number of EP students participating in internal outbound academic mobility	units	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	graduating department	Order and student transcript
3.	Number of EP students participating in internal inbound academic mobility	units	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	graduating department	Order and student transcript
	academic mobility										Order and student transcript
4.	Number of academic staff participating in internal outbound academic mobility	units	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	graduating department	Order and report
5.	Number of academic staff participating in internal inbound academic mobility	units	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	graduating department	Report
6	Number of international scholars engaged	units	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	graduating department	Report
7.	Number of academic staff participating in external outbound academic mobility	units	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	graduating department	Report

Area 4. Expanding research and innovation

No.	Performance indicators (share, percentage, number)	Unit	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	Responsible parties	Form of completion
1.	Number of academic staff participating in educational and research projects	persons	1	-	-	1	1	1	1	graduating department	Report
2.	Number of academic staff participating in fundamental and applied Religious Studies research	persons	5	3	2	1	1	1	1	graduating department	Repor

3.	Number of articles in Q1–Q3 Journal Citation Reports journals or journals with a Scopus CiteScore percentile	units	7	7	2	5	5	5	5	graduating department	Database indicator
4	Online lectures by international scholars on religion, secularism, and public security	actual	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	graduating department	Media coverage and social-media links
5	National round table on freedom of religion, secularism, and interfaith harmony	actual	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	graduating department	Proceedings, media coverage, and social-media links
6	Number of research projects conducted within international cooperation	units	-	1	1	1	1	1	1	graduating department	Report
7	Number of academic-staff publications in journals recommended by the Committee for Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education	units	17	7	7	5	5	5	5	graduating department	Report
8	Number of faculty members participating in the national "Best University Teacher" competition	units	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	graduating department and student	Competition result
9	Student research publications	actual	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	graduating department and student	Report
10	Number of students participating in research and competitions	units	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	graduating department and student	Report
11	Activities of research centres and laboratories: Centre for Policy, Culture and Religion Studies	actual	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	graduating department and student	Classroom facilities

Area 5. Improving infrastructure and facilities

No.	**Performance indicators (share, percentage, number)**	**Unit**	**2023**	**2024**	**2025**	**2026**	**2027**	**2028**	**2029**	**Responsible parties**	**Form of completion**
1	Upgrading computer equipment	actual	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	graduating department	Infrastructure modernisation
2	Procurement of research and educational software	actual	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	graduating department	Infrastructure modernisation
3	Procurement of audio, video, and fieldwork	actual	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	graduating department	Infrastructure

	equipment for Religious Studies research										modernisat ion
4	Expansion of the library collection with contemporary Religious Studies literature	actual	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	graduating department	Infrastructu re modernisat ion
5	Procurement of furniture for learning and research spaces	actual	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	graduating departmen t	Infrastructu re modernisati n

Area 6. Career-guidance work within the EP

No.	**Performance indicators (share, percentage, number)**	**Unit**	**2023**	**2024**	**2025**	**2026**	**2027**	**2028**	**2029**	**Responsible parties**	**Form of completion**
1	Online and offline presentations for bachelor's graduates and prospective applicants on the content of the 7M02203 – Religious Studies EP, comprehensive testing, required documents, research opportunities, and career pathways	actual	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	graduating department	Report and social-media links
2	Round table "Career Pathways for Religious Studies Specialists: Research, Education and Expertise"	actual	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	graduating department	Report and social-media links
4	Consideration of career guidance and master's admissions at department meetings and organisation of working groups in the main areas of activity	actual	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	graduating department	Student population report and minutes
5	Online methodological seminars for EP graduates and regional specialists	actual	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	graduating department	Report and minutes

Area 7. Student-development work within the EP

No.	Performance indicators (share, percentage, number)	Unit	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	Responsible parties	Form of completion
1	Activities conducted in accordance with the Faculty and Department student-development plans	actual	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	graduating department	Report and social-media links
2	Engaging young people in social projects that foster volunteering, humanism, responsibility, and Kazakhstani patriotism	actual	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	graduating department	Report and social-media links
3	Activities on academic integrity, ethical conduct, and anti-corruption culture	actual	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	graduating department	Report
4	Meetings with prominent Religious Studies scholars on "New Directions in Religious Studies Research in Kazakhstan"	actual			+	+	+	+	+	graduating department	Report
5	International research and practice conference "Social Cohesion amid Religious and Cultural Diversity"	actual			+	+				graduating department	Report