UCA Workshops Boost Quality of Education in Central Asia

The University of Central Asia’s (UCA) Education Improvement Programme (EIP) conducted professional development workshops for 171 teachers of English, math, chemistry and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Dushanbe (Tajikistan), Naryn (Kyrgyzstan), and Taldykorgan (Kazakhstan) in January. The workshops focused on enhancing the knowledge of teachers on specific subjects, as well as creating innovative activities, strategies, and skills to develop students’ curricula and competencies. The workshops also provided a platform for teachers to collaborate and share learning.

In Kyrgyzstan, an additional two-day workshop was organised by EIP for 21 school Directors and Deputy Directors. The workshop focused on teaching participants how to develop, monitor, and evaluate a School Development Plan, and was delivered by Dr. Duishon Shamatov, faculty member of Nazarbayev University. “I have attended many seminars and workshops, but none of them were as fruitful as this programme organised by the University of Central Asia,” said Aida Kerimbaeva, Director of School #4 in Naryn.

Workshop participants are now tasked to apply their new knowledge and skills to their classrooms. EIP will provide additional support in the coming months, as they continue working to improve the quality of education in Central Asia, and promoting the social and economic development of the region. Read more: https://ucentralasia.org/Resources/Item/2509/EN

Young Entrepreneurs Train for Business Success

Unique in its focus on promoting entrepreneurship, graduates of UCA’s School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE) have established over 150 businesses in mountain communities of Central Asia - 45% by women. Through SPCE’s entrepreneurship programme, several hundred new jobs have also been created in societies which have traditionally suffered high unemployment rates.

In January, 100 young entrepreneurs aged 18-28 years old were enrolled in SPCE’s entrepreneurship training programme. These students already have a business, or are developing a startup. Participants from several regions of Kyrgyzstan, including Bishkek, Osh, Naryn, Kochkor, Suzak, Bazar-Korgon and Aravan have had a unique opportunity to increase their capacity and skills in order to develop and grow their businesses. Participants with the best 30 business plans at the training will be selected, and invited to pitch in front of a panel of judges. Thereafter ten finalists will receive monetary grants to implement their projects.

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Young Entrepreneurs Train for Business Success

This programme is being offered free of charge, and includes intensive training with leading trainers on business promotion. It is organised as part of the “Demilgeluu Jashtar” project, and is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Under this project, over 400 young people will receive entrepreneurship training, and the best projects will receive funding for their ideas each year.

Internship Programme Provides Networking Opportunities in Los Angeles

UCA undergraduate students, Aigerim Dzhaanbaeva (right) and Roza Amanbekova (left), had a unique opportunity to attend the Asian World Film Festival in Los Angeles (USA) as part of UCA's cooperative education programme.

“I could have never imagined that I would be watching great movies in the theatre, and be able to ask questions to the film directors and actors sitting with me,” said Aigerim. “I met many professionals in the film industry who are passionate about what they do, and it helped me to expand my network, and imagine a future career in this industry.”

UCA's students were involved in the organisation of the festival, and had a chance to work with people from around the world. “Being an intern at the Asian World Film Festival was a life changing experience for me,” added Roza. “I learnt a lot about the film industry, explored the variety and beauty of Asian cultures, and am now motivated to start my career in the film industry.”

UCA's cooperative education programme links undergraduate students with a number of organisations in different fields for internship placements. By graduation, students complete a minimum of nine months of work experience.

Students Represent UCA at Debating Championship in Bangkok

Four undergraduate students represented the University of Central Asia at the 40th World Universities Debating Championship (WUDC). It was hosted by Assumption University in Bangkok (Thailand) from December 27th to January 4th.

UCA students competed alongside over 240 participating universities from 50 countries around the world. WUDC is the world's largest debating tournament, and one of the largest annual international student events in the world.
Jobs of the Future Conference held in Tekeli

Over 100 Grade 10 and 11 students gathered in Tekeli (Kazakhstan) for a “Jobs of the Future” conference, organised by UCA on January 31st. Participants learnt about what skills and competencies will be in demand in the future, as well as how UCA’s undergraduate curriculum helps to meet the job requirements of modern times.

The main speakers at the conference included Bernard Musyck, Associate Professor of Economics at UCA, Raikhan Sissekenova, UCA Government and Public Relations Representative in Kazakhstan, Madina Junussova, Research Fellow of UCA’s Institute of Public Policy and Administration, Meruert Suleimenova, Kazakhstan Student Recruiter, as well as Dias Kabykenov, third year Economics student at UCA.

SPCE Builds English Skills of Naryn Youth

Grade 5 students studying at UCA’s School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE) in Naryn participated in a Games Club on January 23rd. Participants reviewed their vocabulary in a variety of categories and contexts, and also constructed English sentences through interactive games. The session was led by Instructors Rakhat Akylova and Ainura Alakaeva.

This activity was organised for SPCE students enrolled in the English Access Microscholarship programme, which provides free English language classes to students through after-school sessions. It is funded by the United States Embassy in Bishkek.

SPCE Course Promotes Access to Safe Drinking Water

Forty-two participants from rural areas of the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO) successfully completed a training on the maintenance and repair of water systems. The training was organised by UCA’s SPCE in Khorog, and aimed at improving the knowledge of participants on the theory and practice of water supply systems repair.

Practical exercises enabled students to develop new skills, and learn about improving access to safe and clean drinking water in rural areas of GBAO. The programme was implemented by UCA’s SPCE in cooperation with the Aga Khan Foundation’s Mountain Societies Development Support Programme. It was organised in the framework of the “Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation Management in Tajikistan” project, and funded by Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.
TVET Trainees Learn Business Management in Afghanistan

It was implemented by UCA's SPCE in cooperation with the Aga Khan Foundation Afghanistan. It was supported by the Government of the Netherlands under the Afghanistan Community-Led Economic Stability Project, and the European Union under the TVET Action for Alternative Livelihood for Irregular Migration Project.

Entrepreneurship Training in Khatlon

UCA's SPCE conducted business planning courses in Khorog (Tajikistan) for 18 students (54% women) from remote areas of the Khatlon region of Tajikistan. In January, they defended their business plans to a panel of judges, and presented projects on opening new cafes, bakeries, sewing workshops, and poultry farms, among others.

The programme was organised by UCA's SPCE as part of the “Thrive Tajikistan: Partnership for Socio-Economic Development” project, an alliance between the United States Agency for International Development, and the Aga Khan Foundation. Within this project, UCA's SPCE will be offering entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship trainings to over 350 people in 16 targeted Tajik cross-border districts of GBAO and the Khatlon Oblast of Tajikistan.

Massage Therapy Training Launched in Tajikistan

Fourteen participants from two districts of GBAO and Khorog successfully completed a training on the basics of massage therapy. The course offered therapists an opportunity to upgrade their skills and gain new practical knowledge. The training was implemented by UCA's SPCE in cooperation with the Texas School of Continuing Education and Recruitment, and Ignite The Spark (USA). This initiative is aimed at launching massage centres in Ishkashim and Rushan districts of GBAO, as well as in the Khorog town.

Graduates Celebrate Completion of Computer Literacy Programme

Forty-one students graduated from the International Computer Driving License (ICDL) programme, an advanced international computer literacy qualification in January.

The training programme was offered by UCA's SPCE in Faizabad (Afghanistan), and included 6 modules covering Computer Essentials, Word Processing, Spreadsheets, Using Databases, Presentations and Online Essentials. Congratulations.
New English and IT Courses Promote Professional Development

UCA’s School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE) launched new English and IT courses for the management team of Badakhshan University in Faizabad. “The University of Central Asia is a valued partner of Badakhshan University, and SPCE provides a great opportunity for us to obtain professional development training to enhance skills in English and Information Technology,” said Qasim Aria, Director of Badakhshan University, on the first day of classes.

Building Gender Responsive Classrooms in Afghanistan

Nineteen students from Badakhshan University have successfully completed a six-day seminar on Gender Responsive Learning Environment (GRLE), and received certificates of attendance. GRLE supports the improvement of gender equality in the education environment. The seminar covered topics on gender related expressions, gender responsive classrooms, schools, management, language and lesson planning, as well as stereotypes. It was organised by UCA’s SPCE, offered as part of the Pathways to Innovation Project, and funded by Canada’s International Development Research Centre in partnership with the Aga Khan Foundation Canada.

Young Afghans Boost Mental Math Skills

Children aged 7 to 14 years old are learning mental math at UCA’s School of Professional and Continuing Education in Ishkashim (pictured) and Shugnan (Afghanistan). Students are learning how to add and subtract mentally by using only an abacus. The classes are led by mental math Instructors Mawjigul Sultani and Nazarmah Asmati.

The mental math programme is offered as part of the Pathways to Innovation Project, and is funded by the Canada’s International Development Research Centre in partnership with the Aga Khan Foundation Canada.

Common Ethno-Cultural Patterns of Kyrgyz and Uzbeks

UCA’s Cultural Heritage and Humanities Unit (CHHU) has published a monograph on the “Common Ethno-Cultural Patterns of Kyrgyz and Uzbeks” by Dr Abdymitalip Murzakmetov. It was edited by Elmira Kochumkulova, Head of UCA’s CHHU. This publication is part of CHHU’s Cultural Heritage Book Series, and is available for free download from UCA’s website in English and Kyrgyz.

Even though the Uzbeks have been the largest minority group in Kyrgyzstan, no in-depth research has been made on their cultural traditions. This monograph is the first study dealing with life cycle events, such as birth, children’s upbringing, marriage and funeral rites of Kyrgyz and Uzbeks, and discusses how they are connected to diverse rituals, folk beliefs and superstitions. The research for this study was conducted together with the author’s students throughout a ten-year period between 2000-2010.
Spotlight: Early Childhood Education on the Rise in Khorog

Favziya Shonazmieva, resident of Porshnev village in the Shugnan district of Tajikistan, wanted to continue working after becoming a mother. After not finding a suitable kindergarten or preschool centre in her neighbourhood for her child, she came up with the idea of establishing a modern Early Childhood Development (ECD) centre. Although Favziya had the necessary facilities to establish the centre, she did not know how to start a business, or how to run it. Determined to seize every opportunity to realise her dream, she enrolled in UCA’s School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE) business planning course in Khorog.

“Before attending SPCE’s 6-month business planning course, I lacked knowledge and skills about running a business,” said Favziya Shonazmieva. “During this course, I learnt new concepts on financial literacy, marketing, and business communications. It also strengthened my self-confidence to run my own business.” As part of the business planning course, Favziya also went to Dushanbe on an internship where she learnt about the operational side of an existing ECD centre.

After completing SPCE’s course, she opened an educational centre with only three children, and began a marketing campaign by printing banners, and promoting her business on social media. “Knowing how to properly market my business really worked,” said Favziya. Now, in its third year of operation, the ECD centre has become a home to 60 kids during the day, and she has employed 5 staff members.

“What makes SPCE a unique school, is that it does not leave you halfway,” said Favziya. “As an SPCE graduate, the School always informs us about different networking opportunities, where we are introduced to startups and business leaders, who share their challenges, and secrets to success.” Through regular participation in these events, Favziya received furniture donations from the Institute for Professional Development and the “Madina” non-governmental organisation. She also received equipment from the Aga Khan Foundation’s ECD programme to set up her centre.

Favziya is full of new ideas and plans to make them a reality. In the future she wants to work with retired women in her town to write fairy tales and songs about their local culture and history. She plans to use these learning materials at her centre, and also wishes to share them with other children in the community.

SPCE Shares Impact of its Programmes at International Conference

Nurbek Nisharapov (right), Head of UCA’s School of Professional and Continuing Education in Naryn participated in the 7th International Conference on Education and Social Sciences in Dubai. On January 21st, Nurbek delivered a presentation on entrepreneurs living in rural mountainous regions, and business activities of the Eurasian Economic Development.

He spoke about SPCE’s short cycle education for youth and adults, entrepreneurship programmes, as well as shared insights on curriculum development, using Information and Communications Technology in teaching methods, and working with students with learning disabilities. Scholars from Japan, Iran, Iraq, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Philippines, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and the United States are also participating in the conference.
Admissions Open for UCA’s Undergraduate Programmes

The University of Central Asia offers undergraduate programmes in Computer Science, Communications and Media, Earth and Environmental Sciences, and Economics at its residential campuses in Naryn and Khorog.

UCA offers a five-year undergraduate programme, consisting of a preparatory year to upgrade English, math and science skills. Its broad-based liberal arts and sciences education builds critical thinking, analytic, and technical skills across disciplines, and offers courses dedicated to UCA’s undergraduate specialisations.

"The students at UCA have amazing storytelling skills. What we are trying to do is to encourage our students to look twice at the things they would normally walk past, and encourage them ask questions about what is happening in their communities and the world." said Lucy Palmer, Visiting Faculty in Communications and Media at UCA.

UCA has highly qualified faculty with a 1 to 9 faculty-student ratio, and the language of instruction is English. UCA guarantees financial aid to all students, and full scholarships are available. The financial situation of a student is not a barrier for admission to UCA.

"The future is here," said Neal Gallagher, Visiting Professor in Computer Science at UCA, who is from the United States. "Computer Science and IT now enters every aspect of our everyday life, and things are changing so fast that we constantly have to be learning new things."

Learn more about UCA’s undergraduate programme and how to apply at: http://www.ucentralasia.org/admissions.

Media Interviews Highlight UCA Programmes

Prof. Dr. S. Sohail H. Naqvi, Rector at the University of Central Asia was interviewed on the TV1 Kyrgyzstan channel on January 15th 2020.

He spoke about the University, its programmes, and how UCA is contributing to the development of Naryn and the region: https://youtu.be/9qvxHAZhsIA.

Watch more news coverage on the University on YouTube: www.youtube.com/ucentralasia
Shaukat Ali Khan, Chief Information Officer at UCA was interviewed on the TV1 Kyrgyzstan channel on January 29th. Sergei Dolzhenkov and Irina Shin from TV1 Kyrgyzstan asked Shaukat about the University, latest trends in the global IT sphere, as well as how UCA is contributing to digitisation in the region. https://youtu.be/24EaNt7UEU0. He was also interviewed on Channel 5: https://youtu.be/xiK92PWnRDe

Myrza Karimov, Head of UCA’s Co-operative Education Programme, was interviewed by Omurbek Sataev, well-known journalist and producer of NextTV in January. Myrza discussed the overall situation of higher education in Kyrgyzstan, including the role of government, the need for more public university funding, the importance of innovative teaching methods, as well as the role higher education plays in the image and reputation of a country. They also discussed UCA, and how it differs from other universities in the country, such as its curriculum, cooperative education programme, high quality of UCA faculty, and scholarship opportunities for students: https://youtu.be/20JsoeszPLU

Nurlan Nogoibaev and Aigerim Dzhaanbaeva, undergraduate students at UCA, shared their stories about why they chose to study at UCA in a recent interview on Osh TV.

They emphasised UCA’s outstanding faculty, state-of-the-art and comfortable study and living facilities, an active student life, and their unique experiences in UCA’s co-operative education programme: https://youtu.be/SP6onranSIQ

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Education at UCA has no borders. UCA has not only accepted international students representing nine countries, but also sends students to complete internships in different countries around the world.

“I am studying Earth and Environmental Sciences. When I graduate, I want to return to my hometown in Kenya, and use these new skills to address environmental problems,” said UCA student. Edgar Wangira. Learn more in Russian or Kyrgyz.

The NTS Kyrgyzstan TV channel recently visited the University of Central Asia in Naryn and produced a series of videos about UCA’s undergraduate programmes, its School of Professional and Continuing Education, as well as projects from the Aga Khan Development Network in Naryn town. Follow UCA’s YouTube channel for more videos: https://youtu.be/1aY7dVGrIgw
Undergraduate students representing eight countries are learning the Kyrgyz language at UCA’s Naryn campus. Taught by Rahat Akylova, Kyrgyz Language teacher at UCA, students have been practicing in the Naryn community and on field trips to the Naryn Drama Theatre, Ruh-Ordo, and Issyk-Kul. “It is always easier to study a language by communicating with native speakers,” said Rahat. Learn more in Russian or Kyrgyz.

“Preserve the environment, engage in sports, and understand the principles of building relationships in a multicultural world” – these are some areas of focus at UCA, noted by NTS TV channel. Emir Abaskanov and Kanykei Mairambekova share information about the student-led Eco-warriors environment club that has collected over 250 kg of paper, 50 kg of cardboard and 30 kg of glass last year for recycling on campus. The club hopes to work with the Naryn municipality, and expand its recycling initiatives to all schools and public spaces in the Naryn town. Learn more in Russian or Kyrgyz.

“UCA is a springboard to the future”, noted journalists from NTS TV channel, during a recent visit to Naryn. UCA’s Naryn campus has 138 students, 52 of them are from Kyrgyzstan, and the curricula have been developed in partnership with academic institutions from Canada, USA, Sweden and Russia. “The campus is residential, and very convenient, as in the evening students work with faculty on certain projects,” said Samat Turdumamatov, Lecturer of Mathematics at UCA. Learn more in Russian or Kyrgyz.

UCA’s School of Professional and Continuing Education offers programmes to students from 6 to 60 years of age. Qualified instructors teach English, Chinese, Turkish, German, Russian and Kyrgyz languages, as well as Accounting, Information Technology, and Computer Literacy. The School also offers entrepreneurship programmes, which has trained entrepreneurs on how to open and expand their businesses. Talant Niyazbekov, SPCE alumni, is selling eco-friendly products for tourists, produced by local craftsmen. Learn more in Russian or Kyrgyz.

Since 2016, Naryn residents can complete their medical tests in the Aga Khan Medical and Diagnostic Center, opened with support from the Aga Khan Health Services. As one of the agencies of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), patients can now undergo medical tests and receive advice in one day, rather than travelling long distances to another city to see a specialist. In addition to the centre, Naryn’s central park has been renovated into a “Smart Park”, which features leisure areas, built sports facilities, and free WiFi access. Learn more in Russian or Kyrgyz.

The University of Central Asia’s Cultural Heritage and Humanities Unit is pleased to announce a call for papers for the 5th International Congress of the Association of Anthropologists and Ethnologists of Kyrgyzstan. The event will cover the “Role of Culture in the Socio-Economic Development of Central Asia”, and will be held in July at UCA’s campus in Naryn (Kyrgyzstan).

The deadline to submit papers is March 20th 2020. The best research papers will be published as part of CHHU’s peer-reviewed Research Paper Series. Learn more in English, Russian and Kyrgyz.