Life Changing Opportunities
UCA and SPCE Locations
University of Central Asia

The University of Central Asia (UCA) brings the power of education and human ingenuity to address the socio-economic challenges of Central Asia, particularly its mountain communities. As such it is a “development university” of a new type, thoroughly innovative in both its mission and programmes, and benchmarked to meet international standards of excellence. UCA’s endeavours are enhanced and supported by the commitment and partnership of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) which spans 30 countries.

Through an institutional culture embracing all disciplines and people, and strategic partnerships with institutions in both Central Asia and overseas, UCA is fostering inclusiveness, mutual respect, and pluralism. Its doors are open to men and women of all faiths, races, and nations who seek a rigorous preparation for active citizenship and responsible leadership in all areas of social and economic life pertaining to mountain communities.

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

His Highness the Aga Khan, Chancellor, UCA
Amina Orozobekova, 10 years old, enrolled in SPCE’s mental math courses in Naryn. Six months later she won first place at the International Mental Arithmetic Competition in Dubai where she competed with 200 youth from 15 countries including Japan, China, Russia and Malaysia. She is continuing her studies at SPCE.

School of Professional and Continuing Education

A vitally important part in achieving the mission and objectives of UCA is the School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE). Founded in 2006, SPCE has 11 locations, including four in Northern Afghanistan, and has graduated over 120,000 learners, of which 50 percent in Central Asia and 40 percent in Afghanistan are women (compared to a national average of 23%).

Not only are SPCE courses popular with young adults, but older learners also need new skills and continuing education to survive in a rapidly changing job market and global competition. SPCE is the leading provider of post-secondary, short cycle professional education in Central Asia, covering a broad range of entrepreneurship skills, vocational training, English language classes, mental math skills for children, business planning, and the use of technology to manage small businesses, to name a few of its over 400 course modules. These are provided in a flexible learning format that improves their employment and income generating opportunities and opens pathways for lifelong learning.

SPCE employs 176 full-time and 330 part-time staff, 100% of whom are nationals who have received extensive professional development. To ensure quality instructions, it has published more than 350 textbooks in support of its programmes, and as demand grows, distance learning and live streaming of classes will take on increasing importance to widen its reach.

In SPCE Courses in Northern Afghanistan, women average 40% of the graduates, whereas the national average is 23%.
The programmes of SPCE are preparing young people for admission to the best universities regionally and abroad, by filling knowledge gaps that exist in local state schools. For example, in Naryn town, out of 475 students who took SPCE’s university preparatory programme in 2018, 91% gained admission, and of that number 73% won tuition free placements, including two students who received the coveted Gold Certificate from the President of Kyrgyzstan for outstanding scores.

Unique in its focus on promoting entrepreneurship, SPCE graduates have established over 150 businesses in mountain communities, 45% by women. Of significance are the 62 businesses launched by Khorog learners in Tajikistan, 75% of which are located in mountain villages rather than towns. In Naryn, Kyrgyzstan, through an arrangement for micro financing from the Kyrgyz Investment and Credit Bank (an AKDN institution), 68 businesses were opened, 47% by women. Through SPCE’s entrepreneurship programme, several hundred new jobs have been created in societies which have traditionally suffered high unemployment rates. In addition, vocational training is in much demand at SPCE, especially Tour Operators, Small Business Management, Auto Mechanics, Electricians, Computer Repair, and Carpentry.

SPCE offers an array of international certifications and is an authorised centre for three English language examination boards, among them the Cambridge Assessment English, International Computer Driving License (ICDL), and London Chamber of Commerce and Industries Examination Board (multiple fields), as well as CIPAEN (international accounting network). This allows graduates to obtain internationally recognised credentials in their own communities.

Since 2006, SPCE has graduated over 120,000 learners.
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.”

- Over 90 percent of the graduates said that their goal to obtain skills for employment or higher education had been met.
- 88% of the graduates noted that SPCE provided skills enabling them to remain in their community.
- 77% said studying at SPCE resulted in increased civic engagement.

Perhaps SPCE’s most important accomplishment is the creation of a learning environment unique to the region: a relaxed relationship between instructors and students, open debate, and the availability of faculty for individual assistance. Across four countries, student evaluation of courses are consistently high. The highest rating (90%) was for the fairness and respect that the instructors showed towards students. SPCE is a model of an educational institution that has no equivalent in Central Asia, and virtually none in international practice.

Chubak Jakypov (right) from Uchkun village in Naryn, and a graduate of SPCE’s Small Business Management programme, developed a business plan to establish a poultry farm and secured a loan. Today the farm has 10 employees and supplies eggs and poultry throughout the Naryn region. Chubak has become a role model, and was elected head of his village’s local governing body.

“A computer literacy class.”
Aga Khan Development Network

The programmes and activities of UCA and SPCE are supported by the wider projects and experience of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), which operates in 30 countries and employs over 80,000 professionals in the fields of health, education, culture, and economic development. AKDN brings together a large number of agencies, institutions, and programmes created over the past 60 years that reflect and respond to the complexity of the development process. Moreover, with decades of experience and well-established institutional and programmatic roots in Central Asia, AKDN is a trusted partner of high mountain peoples, whose remote communities are now also being served by SPCE.

AKDN has projects in 30 countries and 80,000 employees.

A welding class.
Opportunities for Partnering with SPCE

Even though SPCE charges modest fees to ensure sustainability, there are many students, from the 12,000 who take its courses every year, who cannot afford the cost of fees and books. Donor generosity and support plays a vitally important role in ensuring that deserving students have access to these life-changing courses. A broad range of gift opportunities enables donor participation from US $100 to US $200,000, and specific “packages” can be prepared to respond to the needs and wishes of donors:

$100:
- Cost of an English language course from basic to intermediate. The ability to read, write, and converse in English truly opens up a wealth of opportunities.
- A set of six text books can be provided to deserving students in the Accounting Programme.

$200:
- Pays for the entire Entrepreneurship Programme, teaching students how to take an idea to market, write a business plan, and apply for a loan. A new business creates jobs, gives the economy a boost, and enhances the quality of life of the community.
- Covers the cost of producing a video lecture, enabling many students to participate in distance learning from remote villages.

Munira Mirmamadova launched a restaurant and coffee shop in Khorog town after graduating from SPCE’s entrepreneurship programme, she now manages a KFC (Khorog Fried Chicken), and is exploring further expansion.
$300:
- Enables a student to enroll in the Accounting Technology Certificate Programme, from basic to managerial accounting and tax laws. Accounting expertise is in much demand in the growing economies of Central Asia, and jobs are plentiful.
- Pays for the cost of producing a new course to respond to the needs of the local population.

$500:
- A popular programme at SPCE is TVET (Technical Vocational Education and Training), which provides marketable skills in auto mechanics, electrical repair, plumbing, and carpentry.
- Cost of training an Accounting Instructor with an international certification (CAP/CIPA). Training of teachers continues to pay long term dividends.

$1000:
- Enrols a deserving student in the Preparatory Programme which provides skills to successfully apply and gain admission to reputable universities. This programme is vitally important for filling gaps in the local educational system and giving students in remote villages a competitive advantage. A truly life-changing opportunity.
- Provides training for an SPCE instructor to attain top international qualifications in teaching English as a Foreign Language, and impact the lives of hundreds of young and adult learners.

Mirbubu Abdyjaparova, a graduate of SPCE’s entrepreneurship programme, won tenders to provide local suppliers and schools with better quality sour cream, curd/ cottage cheese and milk. She is distributing to markets beyond her village.

91% of students from SPCE’s preparatory programme gained admissions to reputable universities.
$5000:
- Creates a new SPCE programme, English for Academic Purposes, at various learning centres. This has been particularly popular in Afghanistan where more women attend this course than men. There is a demand to establish more such programmes.
- Helps purchase a typical package of equipment for vocational training, such as carpentry, or auto mechanics.

$10,000:
- Establishes a Revolving Fund to provide seed money for entrepreneurs to start or grow their businesses. These loans are interest free, to be paid in 2-3 years, so that the funds can be used to finance another start-up venture. Typical loans range from $5000 to $10,000 and have a payback success rate of 100 percent, and often more money is returned than borrowed. The alternative is for these entrepreneurs to get commercial micro financing which often carry high interest rates, and can adversely impact their cash flow.
- With higher amounts of donations, endowments can be established, which can be named after someone the donor wishes to honour, so that funds for designated programmes can be utilised in perpetuity.

For more information on ways to donate and support the programmes of SPCE, please contact the Department of Advancement & Public Affairs: APA@ucentralasia.org
Tel: +996 (312) 621 979

Kalyikul Ysyraliev, a graduate of the Entrepreneurship Programme, built his first greenhouse in 2013 with the support of a loan from the Kyrgyz Investment and Credit Bank and UCA, and has been supplying vegetables and roses to the local community for the past five years.
# SPCE Programmes

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| Technical & Vocational Education | Apprenticeship-based model  
                                | Auto-Mechanics, Plumbing, Metalworking, Carpentry, Mobile Telephone Repair                                    |
| Tourism                       | Mountain Tour Operator, Guide Training                                                                       |

Community Outreach: Teaching mathematics, IT, and English in remote villages.

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