

 <b>NAZARBAYEV UNIVERSITY</b>	<b>Autonomous organization of education</b> <b>Nazarbayev University</b>		
	<b>Approving body:</b>	Academic Council	
<b>Regulatory Framework for Graduate Programs and Courses of autonomous organization of education Nazarbayev University</b>			
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<b>Related documents</b>	1. Graduate Programs Framework (26.02.2014) 2. Nazarbayev University Learning and Teaching Strategy 3. Nazarbayev University Assessment Strategy NU Academic Policies and Procedures for Graduate Programs		

### Glossary

**Comprehensive examination:** An assessment given within a PhD program that measures a student's subject area competency and ability to successfully complete research culminating in a thesis.

**Course Learning Outcome (CLO); Program Learning Outcome (PLO):** Learning outcomes are statements that describe the knowledge or skills students should acquire by the end of a particular assignment, class, course, or program, and help students understand why that knowledge and those skills will be useful to them.

**Cycle:** The three sequential levels identified by the Bologna Process (cycle-1/Baccalaureate, cycle-2/Master's and cycle-3/Doctorate) within which all European higher education qualifications are located.

**Dublin Descriptors:** The Dublin Descriptors developed by the Joint Quality Initiative are proposed for adoption as the cycle descriptors for the framework for qualifications of the European Higher Education Area. They offer generic statements of typical expectations of achievements and abilities associated with awards that represent the end of each of a Bologna cycle.

**ECTS:** The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) measures the student workload required to achieve the learning outcomes of a program of study; it is based on understanding that 60 ECTS are awarded on the basis of the workload undertaken by a full-time student during one academic year.

**EHEA:** The European Higher Education Area refers to those countries that are signatories to the Bologna Declaration.

**EQF:** European Qualifications Framework is a common European reference framework that serves to make qualifications more readable and understandable across different countries and systems. The EQF aims to relate different countries' national qualifications systems to a common European reference framework.

**Graduate Course:** A taught program element consisting of a discrete, time-delimited unit of instructional/learning activity with an assigned ECTS value and CLO's aligned to EQF level 7 (master's, cycle-2) or 8 (PhD, cycle-3).

**Graduate Program:** A program of study culminating in the award of a master's (cycle-2) or doctoral (cycle-3) degree.

**Graduate Thesis:** A document submitted by a candidate which summarizes the research and findings completed for a master's or doctoral degree.

**Transferable (core) skills:** Personal and professional development which build the aggregate ability of graduates to apply knowledge and knowhow to support career success and social responsibility. Examples include communication, leadership, conflict resolution, interpersonal skills, professional ethics, and entrepreneurial skills.

## Chapter 1. General Provisions

1. The Regulatory Framework for Graduate Programs and Courses (hereinafter - Framework) defines an EHEA compliant institutional common approach to principles and structures for master's (cycle-2) programs, except for the MD program, and PhD (cycle-3) programs offered at the autonomous organization of education Nazarbayev University (hereinafter - NU).

2. The Academic Quality Committee ensures compliance of all graduate programs and graduate program elements with this Framework.

3. The Framework establishes common elements for NU master's (cycle-2) and NU PhD (cycle-3) programs which:

1) recognize that Kazakhstan is a Bologna signatory;

2) provide for the introduction of student-centered, good-practice curricular elements that share common points of reference, improve transparency and deliver a compatible educational experience for all NU graduate students;

3) articulate NU master's (cycle-2) and NU PhD (cycle-3) programs using ECTS credits to measure the volume of student work for taught courses as well as to provide a time-frame guide for research expectations;

4) facilitate the sharing of experience with other higher education institutions in Kazakhstan;

5) describe curricular elements for master's (cycle-2) programs that:

allow students to deepen their knowledge in the discipline and to initiate a related research study;

integrate taught elements (courses/seminars) with research elements;

develop skills and competencies necessary to provide access to PhD (cycle-3) programs;

provide progression flexibility by offering core and elective courses;



include interdisciplinary elements;  
 prepare graduates for entry to the labor market;  
 ensure achievement of all NU Graduate Attributes through alignment of CLO's and PLO's; and

are consistent with external reference points applicable to the EHEA, particularly with respect to qualification frameworks and benchmark subject competencies.

6) describe curricular elements for subject specialist PhD (cycle-3) programs that:

recognize the inherent distinction, interdisciplinary and creativity of PhD (cycle-3) programs as primarily a research degree in which graduates create original knowledge of international recognizable standard;

integrate taught elements (courses) with research elements;

provide progression flexibility by offering core and elective courses;

include interdisciplinary elements;

provide for transferable skills training to prepare graduates for careers both within and outside academia;

ensure achievement of all NU Graduate Attributes through alignment of CLO's and PLO's; and

are consistent with external reference points applicable to the EHEA, particularly with respect to qualification frameworks and benchmark subject competencies.

## Chapter 2. Master's Program Structure

4. The Framework aligns NU master's requirements with EHEA program volume, duration and level recommendations sufficient to qualify for the award of a cycle-2 degree.

5. Table 1 identifies the NU approach to program duration, volume of work, required curricular elements and permissible variations for NU master's (cycle-2) programs except the MD degree; NU master's (cycle-2) programs:

1) must include taught disciplinary and interdisciplinary elements normally distributed as core (compulsory) and elective courses or seminars;

2) must include PLO's aligned with the Dublin qualification descriptors at EQF level 7;

3) must include transferable skills embedded in core or elective courses or as stand-alone taught elements;

4) which are classified as "Research Intensive" must include a research proposal, thesis, and thesis defense;

5) which are classified as "Professionally Oriented" must include a research element.

*Table 1 Master's (Cycle-2, EQF Level 7) Required Program Elements*

Award	Program Volume (ECTS)	Duration (months*)	ECTS Program Element Volume (%)
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	Stand ard	Variatio n	Stand ard	Variati on	Taugh t Elem ents	Variati on	Research & Practical Elements	Varia tion
Non-STEM (Research Intensive)	120	-30	24	-3	80	-20	20	+20
STEM (Research Intensive)	120	-30	24	-3**	75	-20	25	+20
Master's (Professionally Oriented)	120	-30	24	-10	90	-20	10	+20

\*Consecutive months except for block delivered, professionally oriented master's programs designed to facilitate access by working professionals.  
\*\*Standard limits may be amended for approved block-delivered programs.

#### 6. Master's (cycle-2) program registration and completion time limits.

1) Except when on approved academic leave, students must maintain continuous registration in every program semester or term.

2) Students must normally complete all degree requirements within 5 years, including any leave periods, of the initial program registration date.

#### 7. Research restrictions:

1) Required research elements must be approved following the procedures established for the program.

2) Required research elements must be conducted under the direction a formally appointed NU faculty supervisor.

3) Schools or departments are under no obligation to approve research topics for which adequate supervision and resources cannot be approved.

8. Master's (cycle-2) programs are encouraged to include an external internship where appropriate to the PLO's.

9. Specific requirements to an NU master's (cycle-2) program are provided in the approved Program Admission Rules.

### Chapter 3. PhD Program Structure

10. EHEA values diversity and flexibility as innovation drivers in doctoral (cycle-3) programs and specifies neither credit volume nor program length although it is generally acknowledged that doctoral completion normally falls in the range of 3-6 years. NU supports a "structured" PhD (cycle-3) doctoral program format comprised of taught elements and research milestones as specified by Table 2.

11. Table 2 defines the common elements necessary to qualify for the award of a PhD (cycle-3) degree including:

1) a total credit volume of 240 ECTS consistent with a program duration normally requiring a minimum of 4 years (48 consecutive months) of study comprised of 8 regular (fall and spring) semesters and 4 summer terms;

2) PLO's aligned with the Dublin qualification descriptors at EQF level 8;

3) a taught phase including:



120 - 60 ECTS required and elective disciplinary and interdisciplinary courses or seminars; and

course-embedded or stand-alone transferable skills.

4) a comprehensive exam which:

offers a format appropriate to the discipline;

may not have ECTS workload credit assigned;

has pass/fail grading; and

is a prerequisite for submission of the research proposal.

5) a research phase, comprising 120 - 180 ECTS which includes:

a research proposal and defense with pass/fail grading;

independent research; and

a thesis and defense with pass/fail grading.

*Table 2 PhD (Cycle-3, EOF Level 8) Required Program Elements*

Award	Program Volume (ECTS)		Duration (months)		ECTS Program Volume (%)			
	Standard	Variation	Standard	Variation	Taught Elements	Variation	Research & Practical Elements	Variation
PhD	240	0	48	0	50	-25	50	+25

12.NU PhD (cycle-3) degrees are awarded in a specific field of study/discipline and must align with the Framework of Table 2.

13.Research restrictions:

1) Required research elements must be approved following the procedures established for the program.

2) Required research elements must be conducted under the direction a formally appointed NU faculty supervisor.

3) Schools or departments are under no obligation to approve research topics for which adequate supervision and resources cannot be approved.

14.As part of professional training and in support of NU's teaching mission, all PhD (cycle-3) students are required to contribute to the teaching mission of the university, normally by appointment as a Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA).

15. Except when on approved academic leave, students in PhD (cycle-3) programs must maintain continuous registration in every program semester or term.

16.PhD (cycle-3) students must normally complete all degree requirements within 6 years of the initial PhD program registration date.

17. Admission to a NU PhD (cycle-3) program:

1) Entry to a NU PhD (cycle-3) program normally requires completion of a recognized master's (cycle-2) program.



2) Specific requirements to an NU PhD (cycle-3) program are provided in the approved Program Admission Rules.

3) Students admitted to an NU PhD (cycle-3) program may, at the discretion of the Program Admissions Committee, qualify for course waiver of specified taught elements subject to the following conditions:

a course waiver removes the requirement for a specific course although the total program credit requirement remains;

not all cycle-2 courses completed may qualify for waiver;

course waiver may not be applied to taught credit earned more than 5 (five) years prior to the date of the student's initial program registration;

the comprehensive examination and research elements are not subject to course waiver consideration;

course waiver may be granted only for previous coursework at EQF level 7 or 8, or equivalent, in which a minimum grade of "B+", or equivalent, was obtained;

course waiver may not be granted for previous coursework graded on a Pass/Fail basis;

course waivers must be recommended by the Program Admissions Committee on admission of the candidate to the program and approved by the school Dean or delegate;

a maximum of 40% of taught element ECTS credits may be waived.

4) Students admitted to an NU PhD program who fail the comprehensive examination on the 2<sup>nd</sup> attempt will normally be dismissed from the program.

#### **Chapter 4. Graduate Course Structure**

18. All taught graduate program elements shall specify the volume of learning and teaching hours, including time for class hours (contact hours), directed learning and self-study; typical student workloads are 25-30 h/ECTS credit.

19. Taught graduate elements must normally be delivered within the approved fall/spring semesters or the summer term.

20. ECTS credits are awarded through the successful achievement of designated CLO's approved for master's (cycle-2) or PhD (cycle-3) programs.

21. Specific graduate course requirements:

1) Graduate courses are recommended to have a volume of 6 ECTS with a variation of + 2 ECTS.

2) Graduate courses shall be assessed with letter grades defined in the approved Course Specification Form and consistent with NU Academic Policies and Procedures (APP) for Graduate Programs.

3) Graduate ECTS credit may not be assigned to cycle-1 bridging courses.

22. Graduate seminar series which require regular attendance, but which do not include assessed activity, typically visiting lecturer and research lecture series, may not be assigned ECTS credit.

23. Graduate seminar courses which require attendance and assessed activity, typically involving student presentations, literature discussion and/or lecture, may be assigned ECTS credit and shall be assessed with letter grades defined in the approved Course Specification Form and consistent with NU Academic Policies and Procedures (APP) for Graduate Programs.



24. ECTS credit specifications for graduate research elements should define the expectation for the volume of work required based on approximately 60 ECTS/annum (1,500 – 1,800 h) for full-time study.

1) ECTS credit is assigned to the master's (cycle-2) or PhD (cycle-3) research proposal and thesis as an approximate guide for the minimum volume of student work expected.

2) Research elements are normally graded on a Pass/Fail basis consistent with NU Academic Policies and Procedures (APP) for Graduate Programs.

3) Thesis (research, submission, and defense) and, in approved cases, internship elements normally continue across all program semesters until complete and qualify for "in progress" grading.

25. Each master's (cycle-2) and PhD (cycle-3) taught course must be described by a specific Course Specification Form which lists clearly differentiated EQF level 7 (cycle-2) or EQF 8 (cycle-3) learning outcomes mapped to the approved program learning outcomes.

## **Chapter 5. Graduate Learning Experience**

26. Departments or schools offering graduate programs are encouraged to offer flexible progression pathways that develop both depth and breadth of knowledge by providing:

1) a sequence of required core courses that builds a solid foundation in research methods, scientific writing, literature evaluation, and ethical conduct in research as well as develops essential subject area knowledge at EQF level 7 (cycle-2) or 8 (cycle-3) as appropriate;

2) a pool of disciplinary and interdisciplinary elective courses that provides opportunity to build on core knowledge at EQF level 7 (cycle-2) or 8 (cycle-3) as appropriate; and

3) opportunities for student mobility by completing courses or research elements at approved external institutions.

27. Every graduate program must define a Program Specification Form and curriculum maps that clearly link taught and research element learning outcomes to the PLO's and the NU Graduate Attributes.

## **Chapter 6. Associated Policies**

This Framework should be used in conjunction with the NU Academic Policies and Procedures for Graduate Programs (APP), the NU Learning and Teaching Strategy, the NU Assessment Strategy and specific NU Program Admission Rules. It should be reviewed every two years.