

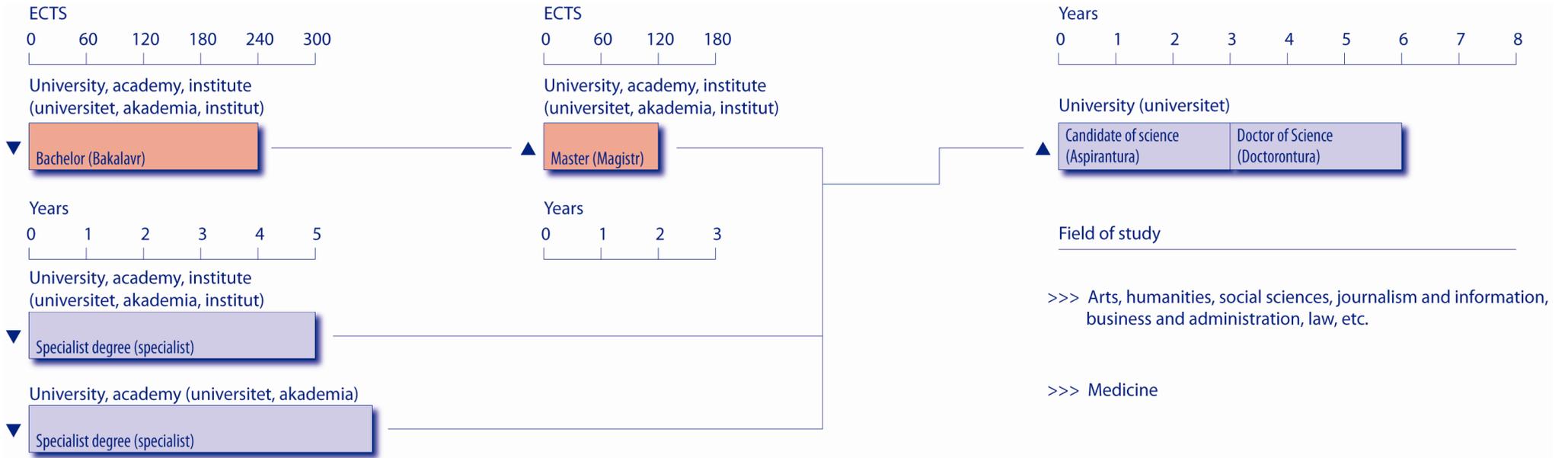


HIGHER EDUCATION IN Kyrgyzstan



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The higher education system in Kyrgyzstan



- Most common length of a Bologna cycle
- Other length of a Bologna cycle
- Programme outside the typical Bologna model
- Professional programme

ECTS

Credits according to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

		regulated at national level	decided at institutional level
ALL	programmes have admission requirements	▼	▲
SOME		▽	△

I. Overall description

1. Major characteristics of tertiary education in the country

Legislation covering the field of tertiary education

The period after the independence of Kyrgyzstan turned out to be a period of implementation of educational experiments to move towards a system based on democratic principles and on pluralism of values. The key guiding lines of the reforms were quality, efficiency, and accessibility.

In 2002, a Concept for Education in the Kyrgyz Republic was approved. Among the main priorities of these documents, the aspects of equality, accessibility, and quality of basic education are underlined.

In 2003, the new Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic was approved.

The activities of higher educational institutions, regardless of the legal form of ownership and departmental affiliation, are governed by a single law, the Law on Education dated 30 April 2003. According to this law, the education system is based on the following main principles:

- free access to elementary, secondary and higher education in public institutions within the limits set by the state educational standards;
- the possibility of receiving education on a commercial basis, including in state educational institutions;
- the humanistic character of education,
- independence of education from political and religious institutions and the secular character of education;
- academic freedom of educational organizations, academic integrity.

In 2008 a Sectoral Strategic Development Programme of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic was drawn up.

Types of tertiary education institutions

The higher education system of Kyrgyzstan represents a network of 50 higher education institutions, including 34 public and 16 private institutions. Private higher education institutions (HEIs) accordingly increased their role and in 2008-2009 they educated 10.5 % of the total amount of students.

The higher education system of Kyrgyzstan consists of four types of HEIs: universities (*universitet*), academies (*akademia*), specialised HEIs (for example, Kyrgyz National Conservatory, Bishkek Higher military specialised schools (*Uchilische* – in KG), institutes (*institut*).

A university is a higher educational institution which implements programmes of higher and post-graduate education in a wide range of specialisations; an academy is a higher educational institution, which implements programmes of higher and post-graduate education in fields of scientific activity; an institute is a higher educational institution or branch of a university, or academy, which implements programmes of higher and post-graduate education; a specialised higher education institution (HEI) is a narrow-profile higher educational institution, which implements higher and post-graduate education programmes. They implement programmes of higher education and post-graduate education in a wide range of specialisations. They also conduct pure and applied research, provide training, re-training of specialists, and they also train scientific and pedagogical staff (Ph.D., doctors of science).

Types of tertiary education programmes and qualifications

The following educational programmes are delivered by higher education institutions in Kyrgyzstan: Bachelor (*bakalavr*), Master (*magistr*), Specialist programmes (*specialist*) and also at post-graduate level, *aspirantura* and *doctorantura* (*Licentiate and Ph.D.*).

The Bachelor degree is defined as an academic degree of basic higher education, which gives entry to a Master programme and to specific employment in the labour market. The Master degree is an academic degree which gives entry to *Aspirantura* (*similar to a Licentiate*) and to specific employment in the labour market.

In Kyrgyzstan the Vocational Education system (VET) is divided into three levels, Primary Vocational Education, Secondary Vocational Education, and Higher Vocational Education.

From 1994 Primary Vocational Education (PVE) has been under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Kyrgyz Republic, while Secondary Vocational Education and Higher Vocational Education are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education. It is one of the bases of social and economic development and improvement and is an integral part of the system of continuous education. The Ministry of Education is

involved in PVE insofar as it defines the requirements for the general education subjects to be included in the vocational curriculum.

The Primary Vocational Education system comprises a network of centres that covers all regions of the country. Currently there are 112 vocational education institutions. Included in this number are 93 vocational lyceums, 10 vocational schools (*'professionalnye uchilisha'*), seven special vocational schools for penitentiary institutions, one juvenile school for convicted youth, and the Industrial-Pedagogical Vocational Technicum in Tokmok. Of the 112 educational vocational institutions, 64 are located in rural areas. 73 schools are financed from the national budget and 39 through regional budgets.

There are 78 Secondary Vocational Educational institutions consisting of technical schools and colleges. Seventy two of these are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education of the Kyrgyz Republic and six of them are private. The rest are managed by other ministries and governmental agencies, such as the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Health and the State Committee on Construction.

The students are taught by more than 3 500 teachers and masters working in Primary Vocational Education (PVE) and about the same number of teaching staff in Secondary Vocational Education. 74.5 % of the staff works full-time with the remaining 25.5 % engaged on a part-time basis staff.

The age for entering PVE is usually determined by the requirement that a person must have completed 9 or 11 years of general education. Students at the age of 16 years who have completed the 9th grade of general education are generally enrolled in educational programmes of two or three year's duration. Those who have completed the 11th grade of general education usually undertake a one year programme.

The PVE schools have educational programmes covering more than 155 professions. The introduction of the market economy, which was associated with an increase in self-employment as well as in hidden unemployment in the agricultural sector, required a revision of the list of these professions to better reflect the changed needs of the labour market. The following professions have been identified by the Ministry of Education as priority professions: small business entrepreneurs, importers/exporters, managers, office managers, secretaries, farmers, hotel administrators, travel agents, IT repair specialists, and typists with computer skills.

As of the beginning of the academic years of 2003 and 2004, secondary vocational schools have been offering programmes covering 25

professions. Non-state secondary vocational schools deliver training in a limited number of specialisations, such as: pedagogy, economics and management, processing technology, humanities and social sciences. Only 2.4 % of the total number of students is trained in these institutions.

VET is also provided by private training providers through non-formal education programmes. For example, NGOs, private training organizations, specialised professional organisations and individual trainers, including external international experts act as training providers. The Ministry of Education has a system of registering private training providers. The duration of training in NGO programmes is from one day to one week, while in specialised training organizations it is from several weeks to several months. Training in the non-formal education sector seeks to develop market skills and knowledge (business administration, including farming and agribusiness) and vocational skills (that is, skills in traditional crafts, the service sector and industrial skills).

The system of vocational education is currently being reformed. The basis for this reform is the 'Action Plan of the Kyrgyz Republic Vocational Education System Reforms until 2010' for Primary VET, the 'State Programme for the Development of Secondary Vocational Education and Training in the Kyrgyz Republic for the period 2005-2010', and the 'Action Plan for Reforming the System of Secondary Vocational Education in the Kyrgyz Republic for 2005-2010'. The outcome of the reforms should be the establishment of a modern system of vocational education, resulting in increased employment for adults, a reduction in poverty and unemployment for socially vulnerable groups of the population and an increase in labour production and labour competitiveness.

2. Distribution of responsibilities

The Ministry of Education and Science of Kyrgyzstan is responsible for formulating national education policy and its implementation, setting the standards for each level of formal education, curriculum development and introduction of innovative practices, teacher training, accreditation of higher education institutions, and international cooperation.

During the last 20 years priority was given to developing regional higher education institutions in the country. In 1991 most students (80%) were studying in the capital, whereas at present this figure has fallen to 53% with the remaining percentage (47%) studying regionally.

Nowadays HEIs have a high level of autonomy for defining their academic programmes

(within the framework of the state educational standards), forms and methods of teaching, for developing international collaboration. Providing autonomy for higher education institutions became the main tool in the reform of the higher education system and adapting it to the changing social and economical conditions.

There are also different public and non-governmental bodies operating in higher education: associations (the association of non-public higher education institutions (HEIs), Education Network Association ('EdNet'), association of higher education institution rectors, students' associations); independent companies for testing students; student unions in HEIs.

Student governments are a form of association of higher education students through which participation in management and higher education development are implemented.

Since September 2005 the new structure of HEIs was approved, (except HEIs of national and regional status). Also the new state-public form of university management was introduced by the Stewardship Councils.

The Ministry of Education and Science is the main agency responsible for the quality of education and the management of the education system.

Several institutions are regulated by both the Ministry of Education and Science and another ministry. This is the case of the Kyrgyz Medical Academy which depends on the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health, the Kyrgyz Academy (Ministry of Internal Affairs), the Diplomatic Academy (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), the Academy of Management (President's Administration of the Kyrgyz Republic).

In addition, eight universities are intergovernmental and their activities are overseen by Ministries of Education of different states (e.g. Kyrgyz-Russian Slavic University, Kyrgyz-Uzbek University, Kyrgyz-Turkish University 'Manas' or some non-public universities such as the American Universities in Central Asia, the Kyrgyz-Russian Academy of Education, the Kyrgyz-Kuwait (East) University, the International University Alatau, the University Agakhana.

In addition 10 branches of universities of different CIS countries also operate in Kyrgyzstan.

3. Governing bodies of the Higher Education Institutions

The MOES (Ministry of Education and Science) has responsibility for defining policy, standards and programmes, determining priorities,

conducting strategic planning and regulating the operation of the 31 public HEIs, including their branches and institutes at regional level. The MOES also allocates financial resources; monitors quality through its licensing and attestation department collects statistics and liaises with the Academy of Science for research priorities. The State Examination Board awards professional qualifications or academic degrees and issues a state education certificate based on final examination results. The Council of Rectors links many institutional managers together and cooperates to develop quality, internationalisation and a research agenda across the education system.

Public HEIs have more limited autonomy. Institutions are accountable to the MOES for programmes which are to be taught according to State standards and for the proper administration of scholarship funds, according to the established criteria. Their operation is governed by the Law on Education under which they can legally establish branches, 'transferring to them part of their assets.' [Law: Article 37] Rectors of public HEIs are appointed for five years by the MOES following election by secret ballot at a general meeting of the faculty. Rectors of private HEIs are appointed by the founders according to the institutional charter [Law: Article 38].

Each HEI has a Governing Board which is responsible for human resources policies at institutional level, including staff recruitment. The Law is silent about the composition of the Board and, consequently, it is not possible to determine the amount of employer participation. The Academic Council manages academic and research programmes. The State determines the number of scholarship (budget funded) students while the institution determines the number of fee-paying students. The Financial Committee is responsible for institutional budgets together with the management of extra budgetary (private) funds. HEIs evaluate student performance and are responsible for the organization and delivery of distance education courses.

The forms of university governance are the general meetings, trustees, academics and other councils or committees. The institutions' selection procedure and their competences, distribution of authorities between the council and the head of the educational institution are determined by the legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic and the Charter of the university. The direct management of the university is carried out by the Rector.

The appointment and dismissal procedures of the head of a public higher education institution are the remit of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic with the exception of higher education institutions having the status of 'national'. The heads of higher education institutions having 'national' status are

appointed and dismissed by the President of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Upon the expiry of the term of a head of a public higher education institution, the head retains the right to fill the position from an executive position (or equivalent title) out-of-competition for a period of three years, as long as the nominee worked in that institution before the nomination.

The heads of non-government higher education institutions and their departments are appointed by academic experts with academic degrees of related expertise and qualifications. The appointment procedure and the authority of a head are determined by the appropriate person in accordance with the Law on education and other legal acts of the Kyrgyz Republic and recorded in the Charter of the university.

The heads of departments of public universities are appointed from among the academics of relevant expertise and qualifications, under contract and on a competitive basis in the manner prescribed by the University charters.

The university is divided into faculties and departments.

The faculty of a university is a structural educational and scientific, administrative department that implements professional educational programmes of higher education, including postgraduate and additional professional education in a specific discipline or in several related specialties. It also conducts research activity in the relevant field of science.

The faculty may consist of departments, schools and research laboratories that carry out educational and scientific work in the subject of the faculty, and other departments.

The faculty is in charge of the overall management of the education and research activities of departments, laboratories and other units.

The feasibility of a faculty is determined by each higher education institution based on the available funds of the university.

Direct supervision of the faculty is carried out by the dean of the faculty, appointed under contract and on a competitive basis by order of the head of the university for up to five years. The dean is elected by secret vote in a general meeting of the faculty of the university from suitably qualified academics with a relevant profile and qualifications.

4. Financing

Of the 217 000 students in public HEIs, only 13.5% receive state scholarships, although this

proportion appears to be rising. In 2008-09, there were 5 705 scholarships which accounted for 17.8% of new admissions. Of these, 5 040 (88%) were awarded through the MOES with half of these going to teacher education (Education Development Strategy 2011-2020). So the dominant pattern remains in so far as public institutions receive the greatest amount of their revenue from fee-paying students. According to the OECD [Education at a Glance 2008] and other sources, it appears that the Kyrgyz Republic has one of the largest private funding sources in higher education in the world.

Public higher education institutions are funded from the national budget. Higher education represents 5.9% of the total state budget allocated to education.

According to the National Statistics Committee, the dynamics of the last five years demonstrate that the proportion of education expenditure in the national budget is significant, accounting for 20-23%. According to the Ministry of Finance, this amount represented 3.9% of GDP in 2001, 5% in 2005 and 6.5% in 2007. Expenditure on HEIs amounts to KGS 1 135 million in 2006 (0.99% of GDP).

Two departments within the Ministry of Education are responsible for financial management activities — the Financial Department and the Accounting Department.

The Financial Department is responsible for planning and calculation of expenditure and budget funds, drafting regulations, and compiling statistics on affiliated institutions. The Accounting Department is responsible for all the accounting within the ministry. It receives and processes payments from the public budget, pays the taxes and other state duties, controls budget performance, collects reports from affiliated institutions, and carries out financial analyses based on accounting data.

The financial plans of public higher educational institutions, including procurement, are reviewed by the Economic Unit and RMSPU (Rehabilitation, Monitoring, and State procurement Unit) of the Ministry of Education and Science. They have to be prepared according to the strategic plan for higher education, and must be updated and approved annually.

Despite the fact that in 2007 special attention was paid to the education system, 86% of all expenditure allocated for education was spent on salaries, deductions to the Social Fund, communal service payments, food, etc., and only 14% of these resources were spent directly on education. In 2007, the average expenditure per student in higher education amounted to KGS 12 569.

5. Students' contributions and financial support

The system of government financing has improved since the introduction of the National Testing System in 2002. The idea is that the system administers a universal admission test in all regions of the Republic which is free of charge and is open to all prospective students (high school graduates) willing to apply for government sponsorship of their studies. The top achievers are awarded government scholarships (as well as stipends). In previous times, universities were allocated quotas by the government and independently distributed their shares of government scholarships. The former system was highly criticised for being discriminatory, corrupt and ineffective. The National Testing System improved access to free education for young people from remote districts. Government financial support includes fees for Bachelor and specialist programmes and scholarships, but the government does not provide financial support for students of Master programmes. The government also supports students who are orphans.

Tuition fees in the Kyrgyz Republic vary. Because some HEIs formerly used low fees to attract students as an additional source of revenue, the MOES has established a base fee threshold of KGS 15 000 per annum for day students and KGS 13 000 for distance students in public institutions. However, individual HEIs appear to have some discretion over their fee structures--for example, we were told that in one regional university, the maximum fee is KGS 15 000 whereas to study economics in a large Bishkek HEI costs about KGS 29 000. Part-time and distance education are all fee-paying and on average cost less than full-time education. Tuition fees in private universities are nearly 25% higher than in public ones, (KGS 14 300 compared with KGS 11 500). Some of the more prestigious institutions charge higher fees; for example the American University charges USD 2 000 a year (about KGS 80 000) and the Yraim Professional Institute charges about USD 900 – although both these private institutions also have a comprehensive system of bursaries and needs-based grants. International students pay more in all institutions.

There are more than 32 000 school-leavers annually.

A grants commission draws up a list of recommended school-leavers based on the selection results.

These are grouped according to social categories of school-leavers as follows:

1. School-leavers from Bishkek;
2. School-leavers from regional centres and

towns,

3. School-leavers from villages;
4. School-leavers from schools in high mountain areas of the country;
5. School-leavers who have rights to benefits (invalids of different categories, orphans, discharged military personnel).

Grant competitions are held separately in each category so as to guarantee equal access to higher education in the different groups.

Another source of funding for HEIs is foreign investment in education. However, in recent years foreign investment has been decreasing. In 2007, foreign investment in education fell threefold as compared with 2004 and amounted to KGS 4 million.

At present, the Ministry is developing a mechanism for providing loans to students with the support of the OSCE.

6. Licensing, quality assurance and accreditation of institutions and/or programmes

The Quality Assurance framework in the Kyrgyz Republic has not kept pace with the rapid growth in higher education. Large increases in the numbers of students, the need for new degree structures and modernised programme delivery and the emergence of new institutions have all placed strains on the capacity and relevance of the existing centralised licensing and attestation activities of the MOES which cover both VET and HEIs.

In the current QA system, a licence is a simple assurance mechanism whereby all teacher qualifications, buildings, equipment and learning resources are reviewed as being fit for purpose. Attestation is a process whereby HEI programmes are checked against State standards using input indicators such as numbers of professors, students, type and amount of equipment, etc. It operates through the MOES which establishes an Attestation Commission composed of one or two members of the MOES staff and some academic staff from other HEIs. Attestation visits typically last for three-five days. Ideally, each HEI should work on its own self-assessment exercise before the commission visits. Once existing programmes or new courses meet attestation requirements, they can be continued. Otherwise, the programme must be discontinued. Every HEI has to go through the attestation procedure every five years.

There is an agreement that the functions of the existing Department of Licensing and Attestation in the MOES are to be further developed towards a full and independent

accreditation service, with an institutional rather than individual course focus. This new accreditation system will be more rigorous than the existing attestation service as it will be based on best practice US and European Quality Standards. Ministry staff estimates that only about 20% of universities are ready for this kind of quality assurance process at the moment. The Department of Licensing and Attestation currently employs 10 individuals, approximately 5 of whom have post graduate qualifications. These staff numbers will not be enough to cope with the needs of so many institutions and programmes and the MOES would require considerable further strengthening in order to implement the proposed new system. This is one area where continued donor support would be immediately very useful.

At present the external system of quality assurance includes the procedures of licensing and state accreditation (attestation). The State department of licensing and attestation of educational institutions was established in 1994 under the Ministry of education and science.

It is responsible for implementing the state policy in the area of licensing and state accreditation (attestation) of all educational institutions including higher education institutions.

The licensing of institutes of higher education was introduced in 1993. Since 1998 the licensing became a mandatory procedure every five years for all institutes of higher education and educational programmes. In 2001 the licensing of state educational institutes was cancelled which brought about an unregulated increase in the number of institutes being set up without necessarily sufficient resources. In 2003 since the licensing procedure was reinstated, the increase of newly-founded institutes, departments and units was reduced.

Currently, a higher education institute has the right to commence educational activity from the time the licence is granted by the State department on licensing and attestation of Kyrgyz Republic on the basis of the Commission of experts' conclusions. The aims and contents of examinations are set according to the state educational standards of higher education. The examination costs are borne by the university.

State accreditation (attestation) permits institutions to issue diplomas and degrees in line with the State Educational Standards. This accreditation procedure is implemented every five years. The accreditation decision is taken by the collegial body which is under the Ministry of Education and includes representatives of the Ministry of education, representatives of HEIs, etc..

The requirements of the State and expectations of society regarding the knowledge, capacity, ability of graduates are enshrined in the State Educational Standards for higher education.

The Ministry of Education and Science of Kyrgyz Republic set up a commission for implementing the attestation and approved its staff.

An expert, who checks the quality of educational activity, should base his/her assessment on the following criteria:

- the structure of departments from which students graduate and their management system;
- the dynamics of students;
- the quality of the graduate;
- the educational organisation in programmes;
- the results of the final attestation of graduates;
- the demand for graduates;
- internal HEI quality assurance on the graduation process of students;
- the level of teaching staff;
- the level of methodological, informational and library procurement in the educational programmes being assessed;
- the level of scientific-research activity;
- the level of technical supply.

The institutes of higher education which pass the attestation successfully may issue diplomas and degrees for a period of five years. In some cases (shortcomings, gaps) the attestation may be awarded for a shorter period only (one to three years).

The weaknesses of the current process are the following:

- the emphasis put on quantitative parameters (the number of square meters per student, numbers of staff, etc.) rather than on qualitative parameters;
- the static approach which does not provide a dynamic perspective (no long-term comparison with previous periods);
- the lack of objectivity in the evaluation carried out by the experts;
- external stakeholders not involved in the process;
- The results of the evaluation are not made systematically public.

Voluntary accreditation by other professional bodies, including international organisations is allowed by the Law. Nevertheless, such an

approach is quite rare considering the lack of such organisations in the country and the costs of such procedures.

In 2005, two universities – the Academy of Administration under the President of Kyrgyz Republic and the Bishkek Academy of Finance and Economics – passed the CAMEQ international accreditation of the Central Asia fund of management development (CAMAN).

The creation of an independent accreditation agency is foreseen within the framework of a TEMPUS project '*Central Asia Network Quality Assurance*'.

7. Admission

At present, the number of students in higher education amounts to 243 000. The number of students enrolled in private universities has nearly doubled compared with 2002 and reached 25 600 in 2009. Although the number of private universities has hardly changed, the attractiveness of private universities has considerably increased in recent years.

The State guarantees equal access to higher education. The breakdown of students by discipline in 2007 was the following: Business and economics - 24%, Law - 14%, Engineering - 18%, Management - 6%, Pedagogy and education - 30%, Health & related services - 5%, Interdisciplinary science and agriculture - 1%.

A student is admitted to the first year of study if he/she passed the entrance examination and has a certificate (*attestat*) of completion of secondary education or secondary professional education, or a diploma in primary professional education. Each matriculant/applicant receives a certificate indicating the number of accumulated points.

The 50 best matriculants/applicants who have the highest scores (usually above 220 points out of a maximum 240) receive an optional certificate giving them the right to be enrolled in any university and in any discipline of their choice without further need for competition.

Other applicants may participate in the competition for educational grants that is held in schools.

For this purpose, each university has a grant committee consisting of representatives of the education authorities as well as representatives of the universities.

Normative documents provide for independent observers, who are entitled to attend all meetings of the grant committees, but cannot interfere nor affect the process of selection and admission of applicants.

The admission procedure consists of three

rounds and gives applicants the opportunity to participate in several competitions and in various universities and, thereby, increases their chance of being enrolled in a higher education university.

The applicants have the right to be accepted by the university following the results of the national testing and entrance examination. The university conducts the entrance examination for:

- applicants who have not participated in the national testing or have scores below the threshold, but are willing to join fee-paying programmes;
- applicants who apply for correspondence, distance and evening classes;
- applicants who are foreign nationals.

The national testing is conducted yearly at the end of May, selection and admission to grant positions takes place between 10-23 July. The acceptance of applications starts from 10 July, entrance examinations for full-time education are held until 20 August and for correspondence courses - until 30 August.

8. Organisation of the academic year

The teaching process is based on the State Educational Standards. HEIs are free to select the evaluation systems, the forms and methods of teaching.

Usually the undergraduate semesters last for 17-18 weeks at level and post-graduate semesters for 15-16 weeks. The weekly workload for students' amounts to approximately 54 hours. A single course cannot exceed 30 hours a week.

In the late 90s a modular system was introduced in most higher education institutions. It includes for each semester a half-term and a final evaluation.

In most HE institutions, the academic year starts on 1 September and ends in June. The annual schedule (exam sessions, holidays, etc.) is prepared by the deans of the faculties and controlled by the department of educational process.

Since 2004, pilot projects aimed at introducing the ECTS have been developed within some higher education institutions. A national coordinating ECTS office was set up at the Ministry of Education and Science.

Institutions are obliged to inform all applicants and students about the organisation of studies on the basis of ECTS. Such information should be provided in a printed form in the Institution's Prospectus and also on the

website of the institution. One ECTS credit equals 30 academic hours. Each academic hour lasts for 50 minutes.

An individual student's trajectory is created with the support of an academic advisor on the basis of an individual learning plan which defines the number and sequence of study courses during the academic year or semester.

The number of ECTS credits in an individual student's learning plan should amount to 60 credits per year (30 per semester). For students on a scholarship, the annual number of credits cannot be less than 60. For fee-paying students, the minimum number of ECTS credits is 15 per semester and 30 for the whole year.

9. Curriculum content

At present, the higher education content in the Kyrgyz Republic is determined by the State educational standards of the second generation. In accordance with these documents each educational programme has a mandatory component (a list of compulsory subjects, their volume). The mandatory examinations make up roughly 60-70% of the total educational programme.

The existing state standards hamper the academic mobility of students, and do not provide opportunities to respond quickly to changes in the labour market. Therefore, at present the new state standards are being drawn up in the KR that will regulate the expected learning outcomes only for educational programmes. The competence approach (TUNING methodology) is being built into the new State educational standards. The results of the educational programmes at Bachelor and Master levels are now subject to the Dublin descriptors (Bologna).

10. Assessment, progression, certification and degree

In accordance with the Law on Education of the Kyrgyz Republic, graduates must receive final certification on completion of higher education programmes.

A list of mandatory final certification tests for academic fields and disciplines is set by the state educational standards on higher education.

Final degree-qualifying work is carried out at certain stages of higher education. For the degree of Bachelor, there is a Bachelor thesis or project, and for a Master degree there is Master thesis.

Current evaluation can be realised in different ways depending on the learning outcomes of the study module. Most commonly this

involves tests, problem-solving, case-studies, projects, essays, and role games.

11. Academic staff

Staff levels in higher education in the Kyrgyz Republic increased steadily up to 2007, but have since returned to 2002 levels, giving an overall student teacher ratio of approximately 18:1. The teaching loads in public institutions are, on average, heavy; for example, 850 hours for lecturers, 800 for senior lecturers and 750 for professors, with about 70% of classroom time. Of the total 13 025 staff in 2008/09, about one third teaches in more than one institution. Salaries have been historically low. In 2006 teaching staff in the public HEIs earned approximately USD 82 per month while those working in private HEIs earned USD 112. Many staffs in public HEIs supplement their salaries by teaching in private HEIs.

The requirements for the academic staff are set by the State educational standards on higher education.

The minimum requirements for the academic staff are indicated in the State educational standards, namely: basic education, an academic degree, work experience, etc.

The licence specifies the percentage of academic staff with degrees (candidate of science, Ph.D.). The proportion of academic staff with relevant degrees depends on the type of institution (university, academy, institute) as well as the type of educational programme (Bachelor, Specialist, Master). The main functions of the academic staff are to lecture, develop study materials (textbooks, recommendations, reading materials, training programmes and etc.) and develop programmes for evaluating student progress. Part of the academic staff is involved in the organisation of additional work with students and organisational processes of the university.

Employment in higher education institutes is carried out on a competitive and contractual basis.

12. Research activities

In accordance with the Education Development Strategy 2009-2011, more attention will be paid to promoting research at universities. Currently, only 12% of teaching staff at national universities are involved in research and development. In the last years Kyrgyz HEIs have made drastic budget cuts to research.

There are two separate and independent structures coordinating research activity in the country – the Ministry of Education and Science of Kyrgyz Republic (MOES), the National Academy of Science of Kyrgyz

Republic (NAS KR), and the academic institutes which are coordinating sectoral and HEI science.

The share of expenditure for research and development has remained constant since 2004 at 0.12% of GDP. In 2008, that amounted to about USD 5 million. This research budget is spent in the following way: 65% goes to the National Academy of Science (NAS), 24% - to the Ministry of Education and Science and 9% to the sector specialised institutes.

Physics, chemistry and technology are priorities for research funding, followed by agriculture, health and biosciences and then humanities. Priority sectors are mining; hydro-electric power industries; forestry science and environment science. Co-operation with industry comes through 'orders' for research. In 2008 NAS institutes received KGS 9.37 million from industry for research.

There are many Faculties of Science where research is carried out by academic staff and technicians within HEIs. Scientists on the MOES payroll are approximately 5 000, of whom 650 are Doctors of Science and 3 000 are *Kandidat Nauk* (similar to Licentiate).

13. University-enterprise cooperation

Employers have a very small role in higher education at present, especially in regards to curriculum development.

In 2007 a recommendation was made to update the State educational standards and in 2009 the process started and is ongoing.

14. International cooperation

The higher education system in Kyrgyzstan has been extending its international contacts, both in CIS and countries abroad. There are some twenty institutional agreements with the CIS countries, and about fifty agreements with

countries abroad. Over three thousand young citizens of Kyrgyzstan are currently studying abroad in universities in Russia, USA, Germany, France, Turkey, Malaysia, etc. through accredited exchange programmes.

It is expected that the implementation of the Bologna process will bring local and European universities closer, and help develop partnerships and facilitate education reform.

The current policy concentrates mainly on expanding international relations, promoting academic exchange and international recognition of Kyrgyz higher education, and improving connections with the international donor community.

Kyrgyzstan benefits from international programmes supporting student and teaching staff mobility such as ERASMUS MUNDUS, TEMPUS, UNESCO, UNDP, DAAD, Soros Foundation, IREX (International Research and Exchange Board), ACCELS (American Councils for International Education). In addition, mobility is also encouraged within the national initiative called 'Staff of the 21st Century'. Thanks to these measures academic mobility has increased substantially.

Kyrgyz universities mainly host students from CIS countries (Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan) and non-CIS countries such as Turkey, India, Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, China, Mongolia, Nepal, etc.

The main directions of international university activity are the establishment and development of international relations with foreign institutes of higher education, international educational funds and organisations; work with foreign students; cooperation and partnership with foreign scientific-research and setting up educational programmes; participation of university specialists in international conferences and hosting of experts from abroad.

II. Current challenges and needs

1. Trends and challenges

In Kyrgyzstan, the higher education sector is characterised by:

Non systematic and consequential educational policy

No comprehensive policy stipulating the

systematic modernisation of structure and content of higher education and removing contradictions in the system exists in higher education. Bachelor and Master degrees are not known on the labour market and there is scepticism regarding the equivalence of these degrees with the degree of specialist. This is an

obstacle for the introduction of the Master and Bachelor programmes and the gradual termination of specialist programmes. This situation causes a misbalance (shortage or excess) between the market needs and the education offer.

Ineffective quality assurance system

The two existing quality assurance mechanisms – licensing and attestation – are not of great effect as they are not used as monitoring instruments for improvement of quality. There are no appropriate criteria or standards to assess higher education institutions and there is no independent accreditation institution that would systematically control compliance with these standards.

Low quality of staff and material resources

The existing norms are out-of-date and do not comply with requirements of contemporary higher education. Low standards are used while recruiting academic staff. Officially, a Master degree is required for the position of a lecturer; however, in reality administrations hire people with Bachelor degrees or specialist diplomas to teach students at universities (60% of the total number of teachers have no degree).

Cost ineffectiveness of training of the state budget financed students

In 2008/09, the Ministry of Education and Science allocated 5 040 scholarships (of total of 5705) that is to say 88% of the total state scholarships available. Almost half of the scholarships have been allocated to students in majoring in education but most of them did not fulfil their commitments and changed to majors more in demand during their last year of study. In addition, only 76% of the students completed their training. Since the amount of the scholarships is much less than the real costs, higher education institutions have to compensate for the difference using the contribution made by fee-paying students.

Insufficient development of research at higher educational institutions

There is no adequate link between research and higher education. Efforts have been made to merge scientific and educational institutions, however, these efforts focused on formal aspects and many issues were not dealt with such as the development of scientific skills or ways of involving students in scientific work.

The modernisation agenda for higher education in Kyrgyzstan includes the following aspects:

Measure 1. To bring qualifications in line with the labour market needs

The objective is to create favourable conditions for higher education institutions to enable them to revise their structures and programmes in view of labour market needs.

Activities:

- To revise the existing accountability system ensuring more independence to HEIs to develop their own curriculum content;
- To adapt existing criteria and requirements for licensing and accreditation;
- To strengthen interaction between universities and the economy and stimulate HEIs by providing scholarships financed by the private sector;
- To identify qualification levels of HEIs in the framework of the national qualification structure
- To introduce a credit-hours system ensuring flexibility and allowing adults to 'return' to higher education in order to get the qualifications required for their **career development**.

Measure 2. To bring higher education quality in line with international standards in order to increase competitiveness and mobility of graduating students

The objective is to provide graduating students of Kyrgyz higher education system with advantages over those from other countries in the regional labour market.

Activities:

- To speed up the transition to the three cycle structure (Bachelor, Master, PhD), to raise public awareness on the value of these degrees and start a gradual phasing out of the specialist qualification;
- To introduce up-to-date teaching and assessment technologies in accordance with international quality standards;
- To bring national educational standards in line with existing qualification requirements involving external stakeholders;
- To strengthen relationships with higher education institutions from other countries and strategic partners of Kyrgyzstan;
- To investigate the possibility of introducing a credit accumulation system based on the workload of students and learning outcomes.

Measure 3. To introduce the system of teaching staff motivation

The objective is to improve the quality of

training and research and improve teacher qualifications.

Activities:

- To increase opportunities for career development for academic staff (training programmes, exchange programmes, grants for innovating in training or research, etc.)
- To include attestation of academic staff and integration of incentive mechanisms into the standards and requirements of the accreditation system;
- To reinforce qualification requirements for academic staff in particular through increasing the number of staff with doctoral degrees.

Measure 4. To develop a comprehensive quality assurance system

The objective is to create conditions for improving the accountability of administrators and academic staff.

Activities:

- To develop an external quality assessment system with involvement of independent experts and international accreditation agencies;
- To develop an internal quality support system to motivate administrative and academic staff to regularly review and report their individual results;
- To develop a system of indicators to measure the quality of education services and introduce accountability based on evidence (facts, statistics, information on measurable results);
- To achieve transparency in the management of financial and human resources and in decision-making

processes.

Measure 5. To revise existing financing mechanisms of higher education

The objective is to achieve a transparent and effective distribution of state funds in the higher education system.

Activities:

- To estimate minimal costs per student and use this amount as a basis for allocating funds to higher education institutions;
- To revise the criteria for granting state scholarships and introduce new clauses in scholarship contracts making it compulsory to return the scholarship in the case of changing major, leaving education or working on a different major;
- To introduce a transparent distribution system of state scholarships in accordance with market needs;
- To investigate possibilities of introducing a student loan system in cooperation with leading banks of the country.

Measure 6. To ensure legal basis for reforming of higher education

The objective is to establish a clear and comprehensive legal framework for higher education that would encourage the integration of science into the higher education system, collaboration between state and private sectors, definition of new norms (standards) on material and human resources and other aspects;

Activities:

Review of existing research and reports and preparation of a draft action plan leading to the necessary amendments to the legislation.

2. The Bologna Process

The Bologna cycle structure

Level of implementation of a three-cycle structure compliant with the Bologna Process	Extensive but gradual introduction/ongoing adaptations or extensions
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Student workload/duration for the most common Bologna programmes			
Bachelor programmes	240 ECTS (4 academic years)	Master programmes	120 ECTS (2 academic years)
Bachelor/Master cycle structure models most commonly implemented	240 + 120 ECTS credits (4+2 academic year)		

European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)

Legislation on ECTS	Legislation governing the arrangements for implementing ECTS has been introduced.
Level of implementation of ECTS	75 % or less institutions and/or 75 % or less programmes are using ECTS for both transfer and accumulation purposes. Various references are used to define the credits.

Diploma Supplement (DS)

Implementation of the Diploma Supplement	Other type of Diploma Supplement
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National Qualification Framework (NQF)

Stage towards establishing a National Qualification Framework	X	Not yet started formally.
		<u>Step 1</u> : Decision taken. Process just started.
		<u>Step 2</u> : The purpose of the NQF has been agreed and the process is under way including discussions and consultations. Various committees have been established.
		<u>Step 3</u> : The NQF has been adopted formally and the implementation has started.
		<u>Step 4</u> : Redesigning the study programmes is on-going and the process is close to completion.
		<u>Step 5</u> : Overall process fully completed including self-certified compatibility with the Framework for qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

National Quality Assurance System

National body for Quality Assurance		
Name	State inspection on licensing and attestation of educational institutions under the Ministry of Education and Science of Kyrgyz Republic	
Year of establishment	1994	
Status	Ministry	
Principal 'object' of the evaluations	Institutions plus programmes	
Body responsible for	Both public and private higher education institutions	
Main outcome of the review	X	A decision granting the reviewed institution/programme permission to operate/teach at certain levels/undertake research, etc.
	X	Advice on how the reviewed institution/programme can improve quality in specific areas.

Recognition of qualifications

Ratification of the Lisbon Recognition Convention	YES	2003
Adoption of national laws/regulations required to implement the Lisbon Recognition Convention	NO	
Institution responsible for recognising foreign qualifications for the purpose of academic study in the country	Ministry of Education and Science	
Institution responsible for recognising foreign qualifications for the purpose of work in the country	Ministry of Education and Science	

III. Participation in EU Programmes

1. Tempus

Kyrgyzstan has participated in the Tempus Programme since 1995.

1. Statistics

Number of projects in which one or several institutions in the country have been involved (as coordinator, contractor or partner)

	TEMPUS I and II	TEMPUS III	TEMPUS IV		
	1990-1999	2000-2006	2008	2009	2010
Joint European Projects	3	14	1	3	3
Compact Projects	8	0	0	0	0
Structural & Complementary Measures (Tempus III) Structural Measures (Tempus IV)	0	10	3	0	0
Total	11	24	4	3	3

Higher education institutions with highest TEMPUS participation during TEMPUS I to III (1990-2006)

Institutions	Total	Number of projects	
		JEP	SCM
KYRGYZ NATIONAL UNIVERSITY NAMED AFTER J BALASYGHIN	11	4	7
INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF KYRGYZTAN (BISHKEK)	8	1	7
ISSYK-KUL STATE UNIVERSITY	8	2	6
KYRGYZ ECONOMIC UNIVERSITY (BISHKEK)	8	3	5
OSH TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY	8	3	5
BISHKEK ACADEMY OF FINANCE AND ECONOMICS - BAFE	7	2	5
KYRGYZ AGRARIAN UNIVERSITY NAMED AFTER K. I. SKRIABIN (BISHKEK)	6	3	3

2. Impact of the TEMPUS Programme

Tempus projects have been the main instruments to implement the ECTS system in the national higher education system. Over the last years, ECTS has been widely used in the framework of bilateral agreements with EU universities through at least eight Tempus projects. In this regard, the most successful project was the *Elaboration of a Strategy for the Transition to ECTS in the Kyrgyz Republic* (2004) that aimed at studying the European experience in implementing the ECTS and studying its introduction in Kyrgyz universities. A working group on the transition to the Credit Transfer and Accumulation System consisting of teachers from Kyrgyz universities having experienced ECTS and international cooperation was established in 2004 following an Order from the Ministry of Education and Science. The working group designed a method to estimate the workload of major higher education programmes. These methods were then tested in seven pilot universities. The consequences of the introduction of ECTS in Kyrgyzstan went much further than expected and required a complete revision of the way

courses were structured and described.

The ECTS/Diploma Supplement National Bureau under the Ministry of Education and Science was established in 2007 in the framework of a Tempus pilot project to support further the introduction of ECTS and the European Diploma Supplement.

The ECTS National Bureau prepared a number of concept papers such as the Concept of Higher Education Development in the Kyrgyz Republic, the Education Development Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic until 2010, the Education Development Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2010-2020, etc. It also published an ECTS Introduction Handbook which was disseminated to all universities in the country. It organised a high number of ECTS trainings for university administration and teachers, and monitored the transition process to ECTS.

The testing phase was completed in 2008, and the conclusions reported to the Minister of Education. The decision to apply ECTS is taken independently by each university. For the time being ECTS is partially applied by pilot

universities which participated in the Tempus pilot project.

Tempus has also contributed to the establishment of the legal basis for a national quality assessment system that resulted in the adoption of the Law on education in 2003. Six Tempus projects developed higher education quality assurance systems in Kyrgyz universities. The most remarkable projects in this respect were *Reforming higher economic education in Kyrgyzstan* (1995), *Recognition of qualifications through the introduction of the European Credit Transfer System* (2005) and *Training of national teams of Bologna promoters in Central Asia* (2004). These projects contributed to developing and introducing an internal quality assurance system, including an anonymous written assessment system as well as a new student knowledge assessment system aiming to ensure a proper level of quality, both at programme and institutional levels.

The 13 universities participating in the project studied at length approaches to quality assurance in the framework of Tempus Centres on the promotion of the Bologna Process and support to Tuning Teams. *Tuning Educational Structures in Europe* is a university initiative which defines learning outcomes and competences at different levels for a series of disciplines and cross-disciplinary fields, such as history, mathematics or European studies. One

of the main purposes of Tuning is to develop a new methodology for re-designing high quality degree programmes and to enhance the educational offer on a regularly basis.

Based on the experience gained, in 2007 the Kyrgyz universities involved in the Tuning project carried out self-attestation procedures on the basis of the Tuning methodology. The academic community of the Kyrgyz Republic continues to work on establishing quality assurance systems (both at programmes and institutional levels). A Quality Assurance manual, based on the guidelines produced by the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) was developed by experts trained in the framework of Tempus projects and is now widely used.

A recently launched project is focusing on the establishment and development of an overall Central-Asian Quality Assurance System.

Tempus has also been active in supporting the transition to the three-cycle degree system, in particular through 10 projects focusing on the development of Bachelor and Master curricula. However, the higher education system continues to consist of two parallel sub-systems: the preparation of specialists in five years and the two-cycle system leading to Bachelor (4-year) and Master (2-year) degrees.

2. Erasmus Mundus

Erasmus Mundus (2009-2013) is a cooperation and mobility programme in the field of higher education with a strong international focus. It operates through three actions:

Action 1 – Erasmus Mundus Joint Programmes (Master Courses and Joint Doctorates)

Erasmus Mundus Joint Programmes are operated by consortia of higher education institutions (HEIs) from the EU and (since 2009) elsewhere in the world. They provide an integrated course and joint or multiple diplomas following study or research at two or more HEIs. Master Courses and Joint Doctorates are selected each year following a Call for Proposals. There are currently 123 Master and 24 Doctorate programmes offering EU-funded scholarships or fellowships to students and scholars from all over the world.

Action 2 – Erasmus Mundus Partnerships (former External Cooperation Window)

Erasmus Mundus Partnerships bring together HEIs from Europe on the one hand and from a particular region in the world on the other. Together the partnerships manage mobility flows between the two regions for a range of academic levels – bachelors, masters, doctorate, post-doctorate – and for academic staff. The programme is focused on geographical "lots" of countries or regions covered by the EU's financial instruments for cooperation. These lots include most Tempus countries. New partnerships are selected each year through Calls for Proposals.

Action 3 – Erasmus Mundus Attractiveness projects

This Action of the Programme funds projects to enhance the attractiveness, profile, image and visibility of European higher education worldwide. HEIs (and other key players in the HE sector) may apply.

More information: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus

Number of students/staff participating in the programme

Erasmus Mundus – Joint degrees (Action 1)

	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011
Students	3	3	3	2	1	3
Scholars	-	-	1	-	1	N/A

Nationals of the country participated in the programme for the first time in 2005-2006 (students) and in 2007-2008 (scholars).

Erasmus Mundus– Partnerships (External Cooperation Window, Action 2)

Year of Grant Allocation	2007	2008	2009
Undergraduate	15	17	10
Master	14	8	6
Doctorate	7	5	5
Post-Doctorate	6	4	3
Academic staff	11	9	7
Total	53	43	31

Institutions participating in the programme up to and including 2010

Institutions	Action 1 Joint Programmes	Action 2 Partnerships	Action 3 Attractiveness projects
Issykkul oblast tourism industry association		X	
Issykkul state university named after K.Tynystanov		X	
Kyrgyz agrarian university		X	
Kyrgyz national university named after Jusup Balasagyn		X	X
Naryn state university		X	
Osh technological university named after academician Kadyshev		X	
Talas state university		X	
The state agency for tourism under the government of the Kyrgyz republic		X	
BISHKEK ACADEMY OF FINANCE AND ECONOMICS		X	
KYRGYZ ECONOMICAL UNIVERSITY		X	
KYRGYZ STATE TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY NAMED AFTER I RAZZAKOV		X	
KYRGYZSKYI GOSUDARSTVENNYI UNIVERSITET STROITELSTVA, TRANSPORTA I ARCHITECTURY IMENI N. ISANOVA		X	

IV. Bibliographical references and websites

- Country Education Strategy 2009-2011, Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic
- Statistics from the Ministry of Education of Kyrgyzstan 2009 – 2008
- Review of Tempus projects' impact to higher education reformation in Kyrgyzstan 2009 – produced by Higher education reformation experts
- Law of the Kyrgyz republic "On Education" adopted as of 2003 (definition of HEIs)
- Ministry of education and science of the Kyrgyz republic, www.edu.gov.kg

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