ALIGN

ACHIEVING AND CHECKING THE ALIGNMENT BETWEEN ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES AND QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORKS

Co-funded by the Tempus Programme of the European Union

PEER REVIEW REPORT

An Evaluation of the Alignment of the Two Academic Programmes:

«Master's degree programme. Applied Linguistics: Teaching English as a Foreign Language»

«Master's degree programme. Ecology and Environmental Management, Environmental Risk Management in the Arctic (ERMA)»

and their Quality Assurance at «NArFU» University

2016

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1. Introduction

The ALIGN project seeks to enhance the intelligibility, consistency and transferability of qualifications through development and implementation of mechanisms for Higher Education Institutions (HEI) to achieve alignment with Qualifications Frameworks (QF) and for European Quality Assurance (EQA) to check such alignment.

It aims at:
- promoting a better understanding of HEIs and EQAs of the role of QFs, their structure, the differences between the different kinds and levels of student achievement:

- building on the capacity of HEIs to write and assess Learning Outcomes (LO) that define the various types of student achievement;

- building on the capacity of the HEIs to use the QF alignment to facilitate student transfer, joint qualifications and benchmarking;

- enabling the EQAs to check whether proposed LOs and their assessment mechanisms match the QF descriptors at each level by establishing mechanisms for ensuring consistency of judgments across institutions.

2. The Peer-Review Process

The aim of the Peer Review process is to review two academic programmes, and the quality assurance principles and processes that relate to the approval/validation, review and enhancement of academic programmes at the university. The panel will seek to advise the university (through discussion and a written report) on the nature and extent to which

(a) the two selected academic programmes have been aligned with European (European Higher Education Area) standards and national qualification frameworks;

(b) the HEI's quality assurance processes are aligned with European and national requirements and expectations; and provide

(c) any recommendations that may help the university to further the alignment of its academic programmes and quality assurance processes with European and national standards.

The panel visiting NArFU consisted of the following members:

- Andre Govaert (Chair), Visiting professor KULeuven / Gastdocent KULeuven, Chairman KSDH / voorzitter RvB Katholieke scholen Destelbergen Heusden, Ambassador University East-Sarajevo.

- Zbigniew Palka, Professor, Dr hab., Head of Department of Algorithms and Programming, Faculty of Mathematics and Computer Science, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland.

- Đurđica Dragojević Professor, Expert Advisor for International Cooperation, Department for International Cooperation, Croatian Agency for Science and Higher Education, Zagreb, Croatia.
- Oksana Matveeva, Deputy Head of the Accreditation Office, National Centre for Public Accreditation.
- Olga Nizhevich, Director of the Centre of International Academic Mobility, Department of International Cooperation, NArFU (local expert).
- Liudmila Siluanova, Deputy Director of the Higher School of Economics and Management, NArFU (local expert).
- Olga Veselkova, PhD in Philology, Director General of the “Lingva plus” LLC, Arkhangelsk (Employer, Academic Programme in Linguistics).
- Zoya Kosheleva, Student, Academic Programme in Linguistics (“Lingva Plus” LLC).
- Andrey Syomushin, Deputy Director of the Northern branch of the Polar Research Institute of Marine Fisheries and Oceanography named after Knipovich (PINRO), PhD in Biology.
- Anastasia Tomilova, Student, Academic Programme in Ecology (NArFU, quality engineer, education quality monitoring unit, Department of Academic Development, NArFU).

3. Observations on the Documentation Submitted and the Conduct of the Site Visit

NArFu provided the following documentation:

1) *Self-Evaluation Document (SED) (NArFU, 2016)*;
2) *Programme Handbook "Master's degree programme. Applied Linguistics: Teaching English as a Foreign Language" (NArFU, 2016);*
3) *Programme Handbook "Master's degree programme. Ecology and Environmental Management, Environmental Risk Management in the Arctic (ERMA)" (NArFU, 2016);*
4) *Information about Quality Assurance at NArFU (NArFU, 2016).*

The documents were of very high quality: containing all relevant information, readable and up-to-the-point. After the Panel warned of some omissions in one of the documents, a corrected version was quickly produced.

The format of «Programme Handbook» is especially worthy of mention as an example of good practice, as it can be easily used also by students and other stakeholders.

During the site visit the Panel was also able to read a sample of master theses from both programmes.

I will thank the management of NArFU for the huge hospitality and their interest in this peer review and in the ALIGN project. I will note the professionalism of the staff who served in the panel, the helpfulness and honesty of the whole staff, the students and the other stakeholders during the meeting with the panel. The professional organisation and support by the staff of the programmes ensure that our work could be conducted as efficiently and effectively as possible. I will stress that I was impressed by the openness and mature behaviour of the students. I will underline the perfect cooperation with the National Centre for Public accreditation during the whole review process.

4. Review of Two Academic Programmes

4.1 Programme "Master's degree programme. Applied Linguistics: Teaching English as a Foreign Language"

(The expectation of the panel will be: **In designing, delivering and monitoring an academic programme, the programme team (including its teachers and supporters of student learning) will meet the appropriate European and national standards and requirements.)**

The panel has used a rating-scale to assess each of the «10 indicators of good practice for alignment of academic programmes». Each assessment may be accompanied by a short commentary on the rating given.

INDICATOR 1	ASSESSMENT
The academic programmes are properly titled and lead to awards at the appropriate level, consistent with European and national frameworks for higher education qualifications, and the Dublin Descriptors for Masters' awards.	**fully achieved**
Comment: The programme title was changed several times to make it clear, accurate and fit for the purpose of informing prospective learners and other stakeholders. The programme has undergone several revisions to ensure that it is aligned with the frameworks, and it is to be hoped that this work will continue in the future. Admitting students with Bachelors of different profiles is unusual in the context of EHEA; however, it is a requirement of the Russian law and the programme strives to bring all graduates to the Masters level regardless of their background.	

INDICATOR 2	ASSESSMENT
The academic programmes are informed by and consistent with professional/industry standards/requirements, where appropriate.	**fully achieved**
Comment Occupational standards are still being developed by corresponding professional committees and do not cover all of the professional fields yet. The occupational standard "Educator" has thus been used, together with the Irish Qualifications Framework for the same standard. The programme is also structured as a preparation for one of the foundational global standardized tests for English teachers (The Teaching Knowledge Test -TKT). Feedback from employers on programme quality is received through surveys and questionnaires channelled via the University's Department of Academic Development, and these efforts should be continued to take into account industry requirements.	

INDICATOR 3	ASSESSMENT
The aims of the programmes are appropriate for the student intake, and can be realised through students' attainment of the programme/module learning outcomes.	**largely achieved**
Comment The programme staff has done excellent work on alignment in this aspect, as shown by the documents submitted. However, as noted, although required by law, it is unusual that students are admitted without the necessary knowledge in linguistics and pedagogical research skills usually acquired at the Bachelor level. Students themselves appreciate such an opportunity, and with motivation the majority manage to graduate.	

INDICATOR 4	ASSESSMENT
All learning outcomes at module level are at the appropriate level, and are assessed through fair, valid and reliable student assignments/tests.	**fully achieved**
Comment NArFU has developed a number of internal regulations (e.g., Regulations of Students Assessment and Progression Control for Higher Education Degree Programmes) that define formative/summative assessment as well as re-assessment opportunities. Students are aware of assessment tools and are quite satisfied with them, while some students wish to balance assignments/tests in terms of increasing projects, topical case-studies etc. Students have an opportunity to write and defend their Master's thesis in English. There were 2 such cases on the programme that the review panel learned about from the students during the meeting with students.	
INDICATOR 5	**ASSESSMENT**
Throughout their course of study, students are able to monitor their academic progress and development, and receive advice on how they can improve and enhance their work.	**fully achieved**
Comment Student academic support and advice are provided by the Programme Coordinator and module leaders; and, when it comes to the dissertation and individual research, by the appointed personal research supervisor through tutorials and written feedback. Students are able to monitor their academic progress via University electronic resources (e.g.,Tandem and SAKAI e-learning environment student personal area) and can also receive advice on how they can improve their work. Not all teachers provide as detailed feedback as students may wish by default, but all are ready to provide it upon request.	

INDICATOR 6	ASSESSMENT
The teaching and learning activities employed within the modules are informed by reflection on professional practices, and designed to enable students to develop the knowledge, skills, abilities and professional competencies that will enable them to achieve the modules' learning outcomes.	**fully achieved**
Comment Knowledge, skills, abilities and professional competencies are developed through a variety of activities including interactive forms (case studies, problem-based tasks, forums, presentations etc.) where students are supposed to analyse language-use for teaching or communication purposes, to design and interpret teaching materials. In addition to what is offered in the programme, it is a strength of this programme that most students also work part-time as teachers, with the programme readily accommodating their work. While a library session is provided on the use of library resources with emphasis on electronic databases, students might profit from additional training and support in this aspect as they sometimes face problems in accessing books and journals in English.	

INDICATOR 7	ASSESSMENT
The structure of the programme ensures the progression of students' learning, and provides appropriate opportunities for student choice.	**fully achieved**
Comment There is no doubt that the programme structure ensures progression with individualised help offered to students. While the University does offer some common elective courses, the offer should be increased to also include entrepreneurship and other generic skills, as well as foreign languages (especially Norwegian, where most mobility is taking place). Currently, the elective courses are not really elective. The programme has excellent mobility rates, though many students decide to forgo recognition of courses taken abroad simply to acquire more knowledge.	

INDICATOR 8	ASSESSMENT
The credits ratings (national and ECTS) for modules are properly aligned with the designated student workloads for the modules.	**largely achieved**
Comment Credit ratings are aligned with national regulations and institutional documents. However, there is a lack of understanding of credits (ECTS) as a combination of workload and learning outcomes, and research into the actual workload of courses can be introduced. For example, the research thesis is done through research in practice, and surely deserves more than 6 credits (ECTS).	

INDICATOR 9	ASSESSMENT
Students are provided with clear and current information about the learning opportunities and support available to them.	**fully achieved**

Comment

Students are provided with electronic support for four disciplines (Principles and Methods of TEFL, Second Language Acquisition, Information and Communication Technologies in TEFL, Pedagogical Philosophy) based on the SAKAI e-learning environment that helps them to build a flexible training schedule and use individual tracks in cases of academic mobility. Students are quite happy to use these tools and these efforts are to be continued.

The Programme Handbook is an example of good practice in communication with students. The website also provides excellent information while it is at the moment not completely up-to-date due to numerous changes in the programme. The E-learning environment also provides personalized information, while it has faced some technical difficulties since it was launched.

INDICATOR 10	ASSESSMENT
The design, delivery and monitoring of the academic programmes is «student centred», engaging students collectively and individually as partners in the development, assurance and enhancement of their educational experiences (e.g., through effective representation of the student voice, discussions about opportunities for course enhancement, involvement in quality assurance processes, and the monitoring and evaluation of student experiences).	**largely achieved**

Comment

The programme is in many ways truly student-centred, especially when teaching is considered. Work with disabled students seems to be exemplary.

While student representation at NArFU is generally well structured, Masters students need to be encouraged to participate, possibly by offering credits for such activities. Lots of progress has been made in involving students as partners in course design and quality assurance, and these efforts should be continued.

Assessment of the Expectation for Alignment of the Academic Programme

Learning outcomes
In Russia there is no National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and occupational standards are not up-to-date (with the programme staff unsatisfied with the current Federal Educational Standards - FSES). We have received a good and clear list of learning outcomes which were up-to-date. They are aligned with the EQF and FSES, and with the draft NQF which specifies 3 types of competence. They are also sufficiently program-specific, at the level of Masters education and fitting domain-specific demands. Now, of course, they have to be assessed continuously and in cooperation with the stakeholders.

Students come with different backgrounds, so there is a lot of variation in competencies at entry. More research into module options to equalise the level of students, and support them in acquiring lacking competencies, is needed. A real bridging programme/ adaptive courses should exist and this should not be done solely on an individual student basis.

Curriculum
The curriculum is very well designed and transparent. Changes should be introduced only for the next generation or year: what is stated in the handbook should not be changed for the current generation as students could raise formal complaints.

Learning and teaching methods, assessment, and curriculum are adapted to intended learning outcomes. Credits are properly connected to courses but there is no real determination of student workloads.

Elective courses are not really elective; this should be improved at the university level with generic skills courses (e.g., entrepreneurship). Additional foreign languages should exist as electives (e.g., Norwegian, Russian for foreigners). More programme-level benchmarking with other institutions' learning outcomes and study programs should be done in the future; mobile students' experiences and peer reviews can also be used for this purpose.

There is a number of boards and councils taking care of the quality of study programs, however the coordination of the curricula with the work field can be improved.

Students
We have met mature, enthusiastic, very open students. They agree that assessment is very well organised and transparent. Practical training is well organised, helped additionally by the fact that many students already work part-time. Student representation should be encouraged more at the Masters level. There is good cooperation between students and teachers and individual supervision. Support to students with disabilities is very well organised. Internationalisation is at a very high level (from opportunities and information on mobility to diploma supplements). While this is all new, students, including prospective students, should be better informed on learning outcomes, assessment methods etc. – the student handbook is an excellent step in this direction.

Results achieved
The exit qualification is very clear. It is still too early to say if the intended learning outcomes are reached because this system has just been introduced. The level of the Masters theses we saw is ok and the internationalisation level is very good.

The website should be updated and improved, as the current information is not up-to-date (it does not contain the new name etc.). E-learning should be improved – the technical aspects of the online system, the blending methods (e.g., enabling real-life discussions even for online courses) etc. Cooperation with the library should be improved as students should be better trained in finding literature and sources independently. The library should be better equipped, especially with books in English and access to international journals, and opening hours should be longer.

4.2 Programme «Environmental Risk Management in the Arctic»

The expectation of the panel will be:

In designing, delivering and monitoring an academic programme, the programme team (including its teachers and supporters of student learning) will meet the appropriate European and national standards and requirements.

The panel has used a rating-scale to assess each of the «10 indicators of good practice» for alignment of academic programmes. Each assessment may be accompanied by a short commentary on the rating given.

INDICATOR 1	ASSESSMENT
The academic programmes are properly titled and lead to awards at the appropriate level, consistent with European and national frameworks for higher education qualifications, and the Dublin Descriptors for Masters' awards.	**fully achieved**
Comment While the programme title seems overtly specific, the students emphasised mention of the Arctic as what attracted them to the programme. The programme is interdisciplinary and admits students from various backgrounds. This is not an issue at the moment, as most students take the programme as a «master after master» (after a specialist degree) or as a first step in PhD research, but this might be reconsidered in the future.	

INDICATOR 2	ASSESSMENT
The academic programmes are informed by and consistent with professional/industry standards/requirements, where appropriate.	**largely achieved**
Comment There is no national occupational standard for "Ecologist" approved. Therefore the aims and intended learning outcomes of the degree programme cannot be aligned to the requirements of the occupational standard, but the programme has been aligned to the draft standards.	

INDICATOR 3	ASSESSMENT
The aims of the programmes are appropriate for the student intake, and can be realised through students' attainment of the programme/module learning outcomes.	**largely achieved**
Comment According to the programme's criteria of admission, everyone can apply and be accepted to the programme. And of course it is to be expected that students with a Bachelor (or specialist) degree in natural science will achieve the programme's aims, while others might face difficulties. Presently, this does not seem to be an issue for students or staff.	

INDICATOR 4	ASSESSMENT
All learning outcomes at module level are at the appropriate level, and are assessed through fair, valid and reliable student assignments/tests.	**fully achieved**
Comment Students are aware of assessment and re-assessment tools and quite satisfied with them, while during the panel meeting it became clear that some students were required to balance assignments/tests in terms of increasing projects, topical case-studies, etc. Assessment tasks are developed for each module of the programmes (also via SAKAI e-learning environment), accompanied by grading schemes and these are communicated to students appropriately. Formative assessment is built into the learning and teaching strategy through feedback on completion of individual and group assessment tasks. It is a good practice implemented in NArFU that students are involved in composing the questionnaire on "Students' Satisfaction".	

INDICATOR 5	ASSESSMENT
Throughout their course of study, students are able to monitor their academic progress and development, and receive advice on how they can improve and enhance their work.	**fully achieved**
Comment As above, the use of the e-learning environment SAKAI and individualised research support should be commended.	

INDICATOR 6	ASSESSMENT
The teaching and learning activities employed within the modules are informed by reflection on professional practices, and designed to enable students to develop the knowledge, skills, abilities and professional competencies that will enable them to achieve the modules' learning outcomes.	**fully achieved**
Comment Some reading lists could be updated, but it should be commended that they are all audited. Students would benefit from additional training in English and possibly other languages relevant for the Arctic region.	

INDICATOR 7	ASSESSMENT
The structure of the programme ensures the progression of students' learning, and provides appropriate opportunities for student choice.	**fully achieved**
Comment As noted also for the EFL programme, there is no doubt that the programme structure ensures progression with individualised help offered to students. The programme is module-based and built on interdisciplinary principles. Students have different background and interdisciplinary teachers' team is a strong point of the programme. It makes it much easier for students to manage with difficulties they meet and ensures the progression of their learning.	

While the University does offer some common elective courses, the offer should be increased to include entrepreneurship and other generic skills, as well as foreign languages (especially Norwegian, where most mobility is taking place). Currently, the elective courses are not really elective.

The module principle of the program implementation provides a lot of opportunities for student mobility to foreign partner university with recognition of their study period abroad. The programme has excellent outgoing mobility rates, however many students decide to forgo recognition of courses taken abroad simply to acquire more knowledge. In collaboration with university international department the number of incoming mobilities to the program should be increased.

INDICATOR 8	ASSESSMENT
The credits ratings (national and ECTS) for modules are properly aligned with the designated student workloads for the modules.	**largely achieved**

Comment

The credit ratings are aligned with national regulations and the institutional documents. However, there is a lack of understanding of credits (ECTS) as a combination of workload and learning outcomes, and research into the actual workload of courses can be introduced. For example, as in the EFL programme, the student research thesis is done through research in practice, and surely deserves more than 6 credits (ECTS).

INDICATOR 9	ASSESSMENT
Students are provided with clear and current information about the learning opportunities and support available to them.	**fully achieved**

Comment

As in the case of EFL, the Student Handbook and SAKAI are examples of good practice.

INDICATOR 10	ASSESSMENT
The design, delivery and monitoring of the academic programmes is «student centred», engaging students collectively and individually as partners in the development, assurance and enhancement of their educational experiences (e.g., through effective representation of the student voice, discussions about opportunities for course enhancement, involvement in quality assurance processes, and the monitoring and evaluation of student experiences).	**largely achieved**
Comment As is the case with the EFL programme, the programme is in many ways truly student-centred, especially when teaching is considered. Work with disabled students seems to be exemplary. While student representation at NArFU is generally well structured, Masters students need to be encouraged to participate, possibly by offering credits for such activities. Lots of progress has been made in involving students as partners in course design and quality assurance, and these efforts should be continued.	

Assessment of the Expectation for Alignment of Academic Programme

Learning outcomes

It is unclear what kind of professional the program is preparing and this should be thought through. The programme could maybe be better offered as master-after-master (which is now the case effectively but not officially).

In Russia there is no NQF and Occupational Standards are not up-to-date; there is only a draft for the «Ecologist». We have received a good and clear list of learning outcomes which were up-to-date. They are aligned with EQF and FSES, and with the draft NQF which specifies 3 types of competence, and are specific for the programme. Now, of course, they have to be assessed continuously and in cooperation with the stakeholders.

Students come with different backgrounds and there is a lot of variation in competencies at entry. More research into module options to equalise the level of students, and support them in acquiring lacking competencies, is needed. A real bridging programme/ adaptive courses should exist and this should not be done solely on individual student basis.

Curriculum

The curriculum is very well designed and transparent. Learning and teaching methods, assessment, and curriculum are adapted to the intended learning outcomes.

Credits are properly connected to courses but there is no real determination of student workloads.

Elective courses are not really elective; this should be improved at the university level with generic skills courses (e.g., entrepreneurship). Additional foreign languages should exist as electives – as well as additional academic English, and various Arctic languages especially.
There is a number of boards and councils taking care of the quality of study programs. However, the coordination of the curricula with the work field can be improved. The students should all have outside practice, not only in the University laboratories.

Students
We have met mature, enthusiastic, very open students. They agree that assessment is very well organised and transparent. Practical training is well organised while there should be better cooperation with stakeholders, and all students should be trained in using the laboratories. Student representation should be more encouraged at the Masters level. There is good cooperation between students and teachers and individual supervision. Support to students with disabilities is very well organised. Internationalisation is at a very high level (from opportunities and information on mobility to diploma supplements). While this is all new, students, including prospective students, should be better informed on learning outcomes, assessment methods etc. – the student handbook is an excellent step in this direction.

All stakeholders confirm that there are no problems with resources, and the laboratories seem to be well equipped.

Students and stakeholders are not really involved in programme design and approval, and this should be improved. They should also be motivated to do this, e.g., employers should be invited to hold lectures, teach, sit at the assessment committees, serve as experts, etc.

Results achieved
It is still too early to say if the intended learning outcomes are reached because this system has just been introduced. The level of the Masters theses we saw is ok and the internationalisation level is very good.

5. Review of Quality Assurance for Academic Programmes

The Expectation of the Panel will be:

In setting and maintaining standards and assuring quality, the university will operate clear and effective processes for the design, approval, delivery, monitoring, and support and development of its academic programmes in accordance with European and national standards and requirements.

The panel has used a rating-scale to assess each of the 10 indicators for alignment of quality assurance. Each assessment may be accompanied by a short commentary on the rating given.

INDICATOR 1	ASSESSMENT
There are clear criteria against which academic programmes are assessed in the programme approval, monitoring and review processes.	**fully achieved**
Comment: Programs are developed in accordance with the FSES and occupational standards. A number of institutional documents have been developed on programme development, realization, monitoring and review.	

INDICATOR 2	ASSESSMENT
The roles and responsibilities for programme design, development, approval and monitoring are clearly articulated.	**fully achieved**
Comment: NArFU has quite a clear system of articulating responsibilities for programme design, development, approval and monitoring that is regulated by a number of local regulations (e.g., Regulation on launching new degree programmes, Regulation on developing module syllabi for degree programmes). The degree programme stakeholders roles and responsibilities at different stages of the programme life cycle are described in detail in the document "Information about Quality assurance at NArFU." There are four bodies responsible for programme design, development, approval and monitoring which include the Academic Council (with seven subcommittees), the University Education Board, the Student Council and the Department of Academic Development. It is a strength that the system works both vertically and horizontally, and involves all stakeholders given the chance. As noted already, students and employers should be more actively encouraged to participate in the process of program design.	

INDICATOR 3	ASSESSMENT
Students are involved in programme design and in the processes of programme development, approval, monitoring and review.	**largely achieved**
Comment: Students are involved in the working group that develops «Conception of the Degree Programme» and a set of teaching and learning documents and materials for the programme (at the design and launching stage). Their roles and responsibilities at different stages of the programme life-cycle are described in the document "Information about Quality assurance at NArFU. However, student involvement is at an early stage and it seems that students need additional encouragement to fully participate as partners.	

INDICATOR 4	ASSESSMENT
There are effective policies which ensure that the academic standards for credits and awards are rigorously maintained at the appropriate level, and that student performance is judged against these standards.	**fully achieved**
Academic standards and assessment are well regulated at the national and institutional levels. Employers' and foreign peers' involvement can be used more often in the future.	

INDICATOR 5	ASSESSMENT
There are clear and effective policies and processes for assessing the recognition of prior learning and supporting student mobility between courses of study and institutions.	**fully achieved**
Comment NArFU actively develops networking cooperation and delivers programmes with national and international partner universities and Supercomputer University Consortium. Both mobility and recognition are well regulated at the institutional level; mobility is well supported and it seems there is even a possibility to recognize informal learning. However, students are not informed of the latter, and sometimes even willingly forgo recognition of formal learning as noted above.	

INDICATOR 6	ASSESSMENT
Knowledge of professional standards/requirements and external expertise (e.g., from subject experts, employers and professional associations) is used to inform the design, development, approval and monitoring of academic programmes.	**fully achieved**
Comment: While employers already participate as teachers, they could also be involved on more short-term basis as experts in assessment, to hold workshops etc. As national standards can be insufficient (while they are adhered to), various methods of communication with employers and employer associations need to be used.	

INDICATOR 7	ASSESSMENT
There are appropriate arrangements to train and support academic and professional/administrative staff who are involved in the design, delivery, approval and monitoring of academic programmes.	**fully achieved**
Comment: There are regular staff training and re-training courses organized by the University and within projects, and the system already functions very well. The University has a module-based accrual system of university staff in-service training which allows the staff to choose training modules (as well as MOOCs and webinars) devoted to the design, delivery, approval and monitoring of academic programmes. Training is viewed in the context of life-long academic development of the staff and organized in a number of priority fields of academic development. However, in the future a real professionalization plan is needed and a real coaching system should be introduced, which will become possible from the next year when study programme coordinators will become in charge of staff management. This plan should be implemented also in cooperation with students. Academic mobility for staff should also be used and planned for.	

INDICATOR 8	ASSESSMENT
There are clear policies and processes in place to ensure the integrity of student assessment (e.g., though marking schemes, moderation processes, examination board regulations), and the effectiveness of these policies is regularly reviewed.	**fully achieved**
Comment: The policies and processes of the student assessments are clearly described and confirmed during the peer review visit.	

INDICATOR 9	ASSESSMENT
The policies and processes of programme design, development, approval and monitoring are regularly reviewed in order to ensure the effectiveness and continuous enhancement of current practices.	**fully achieved**
***Comment**:* Review of processes for programme design, development, approval and monitoring is carried out via external statutory audits, external public audits and Internal Quality Assurance procedures. Academic and industry subject experts' consultations are initiated by the University to enhance practices. Programme and module reviews take place annually and the results are considered by University administrators. Students should participate more actively in both internal and external reviews to make sure their needs are taken into consideration.	

INDICATOR 10	ASSESSMENT
There are effective policies in place to ensure that staff appointed to teach and support student learning on academic programmes are appropriately qualified, and that delivery of the programmes is supported by the appropriate learning resources.	**fully achieved**
***Comment**:* While the resources seem to be excellent (apart from the library English resources) students might require additional training in using them.	

Assessment of the Expectation for Alignment of Quality Assurance

Very good documents on alignment, programme development and other elements of the European Standards and Guidelines have been created. A very enthusiastic team is working at different levels on quality improvement and developing a flexible system.

Surveys of student opinion and experience are used and followed up. There is a real willingness to improve, however the involvement of students and other stakeholders could be better. The career centre has just been reorganized and its work along with the work of the Alumni Association will be very relevant in this regard. Students and other stakeholders are not really involved in programme design and approval and this should be improved; they should also be motivated to do this, e.g., employers should be invited to hold lectures, teach, sit at the assessment committees, serve as experts, … Student representation should be more encouraged at the Masters level, possibly by offering credits and other forms of motivation.

It should be noted that surveys and statistics should not be the only method of receiving feedback – often it is enough to use qualitative methods and discussions with stakeholders. Peer review can be used more often, also between programmes. Information received from different groups of stakeholders should be compared. Quality assessments should also serve as a basis for discussions with staff and students.

6. Summary of Findings

The panel received very good report and very clear study handbooks. They were not oversized and were up to the point, and could serve as an example of good practice for other Align programmes.

We had open and honest discussions with all groups and we have seen that there is a very good cooperation in and between the teams, as well as with the central quality management centre, so there is a mixture of top-down and bottom-up cooperation.

Learning outcomes

In Russia there is no NQF and Occupational standards are not up to date; for most programmes there are FSES (Federal Educational Standards). We have received a good and clear list of learning outcomes which were up-to-date. They are aligned with EQF and FSES, with the draft NQF which specifies 3 types of competence, and they are in fact specific for the two programs. Now, of course, they have to be assessed continuously and in cooperation with the stakeholders. LOs are at the level of Masters education and fitting domain-specific demands.

Students come with different backgrounds, there is a lot of variation of competencies at entry. More research into module options to equalise the level of students, and support them in acquiring lacking competences, is needed. A real bridging programme/ adaptive courses should exist and this should not be done solely on individual student basis.

Additional tutoring should exist – in English for Russians, and Russian for foreigners (also English if needed) – for ERMA students especially. ERMA could also maybe be better offered as master-after-master.

International students mentioned that their application requirements differed from those for the Russian nationals; however, it was further clarified that the admission procedure is the same both for international and Russian nationals and the additional documents included in the application package were a requirement for the candidates applying through the Russian Federation Scholarship Programme.

Curriculum

The curriculum is very well designed and transparent. Learning and teaching methods, assessment, and curriculum are adapted to the intended learning outcomes.

Changes should be introduced only for next generation or year, what is stated in the handbook should not be changed for the current generation as students could have formal complaints.

Credits are properly connected to courses but there is no real determination of student workloads.

Elective courses are not really elective; this should be improved at the university level with generic skills courses (e.g., entrepreneurship). Additional foreign languages should exist as electives – as well as additional academic English for ERMA students.
More programme-level benchmarking with other universities' LOs and study programmes should be done in the future.
There is a number of boards and councils taking care of the quality of study programmes, however the coordination of the curricula with the work field can be improved. Especially in the ERMA programme they should have outside practice.
E-learning should be improved – the online system, the blending methods etc.
Cooperation with the library should be improved, students should be better trained in finding literature and sources independently and opening hours should be longer.
The website for EFL program should be updated and improved, as the current information is not up-to-date (it does not contain the new name etc.).

Students
We have met mature, enthusiastic, very open students. They agree that assessment is very well organised and transparent. Practical training is well organised while there should be better cooperation with stakeholders in ERMA program, and all should be trained in using the laboratories. Student representation should be more encouraged at the Masters level. There is good cooperation between students and teachers and individual supervision. Support to students with disabilities is very well organised. Internationalisation is at a very high level (from opportunities and information on mobility to diploma supplements). While this is all new, students, including prospective students, should be better informed on learning outcomes, assessment methods etc. – the student handbook is an excellent step in this direction.

Staff
We have met highly enthusiastic and positive staff who are ready to make changes. Their qualifications, numbers and age-structure are ok. They are internationally oriented and try to have good contact with their professional field. There are lot of professionalization activities. A real professionalization plan is needed and a real coaching system should be introduced which will be enabled from the next year when study programme coordinators will become in charge of staff management. This plan should be done also in cooperation with students. Academic mobility for staff should also be used and planned for.

All stakeholders confirm that there are no problems with resources, and the laboratories seem to be well equipped. The library should be better equipped, especially with books in English and access to international journals.

Quality management system
Again, a very enthusiastic team is working at different levels on quality improvement and developing a flexible system. Surveys of student opinion and experience are used and followed up. There is a real willingness to improve, however the involvement of students and other stakeholders can be better. The career and alumni centre has just been set up and its work will be very relevant in this regard. Students and stakeholders are not really involved in programme design and approval and this should be improved; they should also be motivated to do this, e.g.,

employers should be invited to hold lectures, teach, sit at the assessment committees, serve as experts, …

It should be noted that surveys and statistics should not be the only method of receiving feedback – often it is enough to use qualitative methods and discussions with stakeholders. Peer review can be used more often, also between programs. Information received from different groups of stakeholders should be compared. Quality assessments should also serve as a basis for discussions with staff and students.

Results achieved

It is still too early to say if the intended learning outcomes are reached because this system has just been introduced. The level of the Masters theses we saw is ok and the internationalisation level is very good.

The EFL exit qualification is very clear, while in ERMA it is unclear what kind of professional they are preparing and this should be thought through.