**Conducting the entrance examinations for postgraduate students.**

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Higher School of Kazakhstan should strive to achieve world-class education and entry into a unified educational space. To achieve these goals it is necessary to implement the parameters of the Bologna Process, which includes a three-level system of higher education and quality assurance in higher education.
For this purpose since 2004 a multi-structure of higher and postgraduate education: Bachelor - Master - Doctorate (PhD) has been introduced in Kazakhstan.
Until that time, entrance examinations for admission to colleges and graduate, postgraduate and doctoral programs were conducted by the universities. However, it had several disadvantages:
- Schools have practiced different rules of admission, entrance examinations differed in form and content;
- Applicants from other cities had significantly less chances to enter than the locals;
- The process of assessment applicants’ knowledge have influenced on many subjective factors;
- There was no uniform state standard of education for all disciplines at all levels of training. For the same specialty, each university had its own curriculum and standards that were very different from each other, resulting in one high school graduates had virtually no opportunity to continue their postgraduate studies at another university.

For the purpose of providing uniform requirements for entrance examinations for admission to the Bachelor - Master – Doctorate studies, as well as providing social justice, fairness and reliability evaluation of test results since 2004 by the order of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan for all universities, regardless of their organizational-legal status and ownership , entrance examinations for admission to master's, doctoral studies in general subjects (foreign languages​​, philosophy) have been held in the form of testing.
 The state has a policy to increase the quantity and quality of the staff with a degree. Centrally it is kept records and monitored the organizations that provide with post-graduate education, and their contingent of students, as well as forecast the necessary human capacity building. According to this forecast government order in leading state universities is determined.

Implementation of admission is regulated by the Model Regulations of admission to educational organizations that implement vocational training programs of postgraduate education (hereinafter - the Regulations) approved by the Government of RK from January 19, 2012 № 109.
According to the Regulation entrance examination on foreign, Kazakh and Russian languages ​​shall be carried out on the technologies developed by the National Testing Center in the form of a comprehensive test at the regional centers.

The entrance examination is designed to assess the language proficiency level determines the level of formation of communicative skills on listening and reading, as well as the formalizing of speech (lexical-grammatical test). The tests are based on international tests.

The test consists of 100 questions. All tests are presented in closed form. Each task requires selection of a single correct answer from five variants proposed.
Testing time is 180 minutes. The average run-time of one task: 1-2 minutes.
The test consists of 3 modules.

Module 1 - **Listening.** For the first module of the test CD-player is used to listen to audio compact disc containing four texts. For each text in the book, the questionnaire is given to test applicants understanding the texts.
Listening Test contains 20 tests. The testing run time is 45 minutes.
Module 2 - **Lexical-grammatical test.** Checks the level of knowledge of grammar and lexicology. Lexical-grammatical test contains 50 tasks. Run time is 75 minutes.
Module 3 - **Reading.** The test consists of texts and tests, checking understanding of the applicants of submitted texts. Reading module contains 30 tests. Run time is 60 minutes.
For each correct answer 1 point is assigned, for a wrong answer - 0 points. The total score is recorded in the examination sheet, and a certificate is given according to this score.

In the competitive examination under the state order the applicant's score is transferred to 4-grade scale as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Grades on 100- grade assessment scale  | Grades on 4- grade assessment scale |
| 90 - 100 | Excellent(5) |
| 75 - 89 | Good (4) |
| 50 - 74 | Satisfactory (3) |
| 0 - 49 | Failed(2) |

In order to prepare for testing NTC forms the basis of tests including tasks, texts for reading module and recordings for listening module.
 For each form of training: Master's and Doctoral studies there is a test database on 5 subjects. The process of forming the base includes training of developers and test experts, inviting well-known testers, organizing and carrying out of development, repeated examination of the tests, as well as the annual update and maintenance of databases.

In order to prepare applicants for testing NTC annually publishes manuals of 4 000-5 000 copies.
The software is developed on:
- Forming the test database
- Acceptance of applications of candidates in both linear and basic institutions
- Classroom forming
- Distribution of applicants to the classrooms
- Distribution the passes for the examination
- Processing of test results
- Printing of certificates

From June 20 to July 20, applications of candidates of universities and research institutes are accepted.

Regional centers carry out development of a database of applicants, classrooms, distribution the passes for the examination, testing. NTC is provided with integrated centralized telecommunication network to contact with regional centers.

After closing the database of applicants test materials are formed, packaged and delivered to the regional centers by special communication. All stages of the test database and books, questionnaires, packing and deliver of examination materials in the sector are controlled by the regional centers for the protection of state secrets. The work is conducted separate rooms. The rooms in which these works are carried out are with limited access and involved employees have access to information constituting state secrets.

Entrance examinations are held from August 1 to August 20. Monitoring compliance testing technology, the management of the progress of the appeal and ensure the rights of applicants are assigned to the Representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Chair of the Appeal Commission, invited from all regions of the country, trained and assigned to regional centers with regard to their place of work, place of birth, work experience.

To review applications of candidates who do not agree with the results of testing the Appeal Commission is formed at the regional centers, and to resolve outstanding issues and ensure the rights of applicants on the basis of NTC Republican Appeals Commission (hereinafter - the RAC) is formed, whose members are involved from all regions of the country. RAC reviews statements from all the regional centers.

According to the statistical analysis of entrance examinations 2004-2011 the number of applicants for Postgraduate studies increases every year: from 4571 people in 2004 up to 23,274 people in 2011 (fivefold!). In this regard the number of regional centers and days of testing increase.

**The distribution applicants in the context of the testing language during the period 2008-2011**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Testing language | The number of applicants yearly | The percentage of applicants % from the total number | The number of applicants who has not received the passing score | The percentage of applicants % from the total number |
| Kazakh | 243 | 0,35 | 3 | 1,23 |
| Russian | 176 | 0,25 | 17 | 9,66 |
| English | 63577 | 91,60 | 8268 | 13,00 |
| German | 4768 | 6,87 | 1324 | 27,77 |
| French | 641 | 0,92 | 171 | 26,68 |
| **Total** | **69405** | **100,00** | **9783** | **14,10** |

According to statistics from the last 3 years, 90% participated in the pass entrance examinations in English.

National Testing Center has many years’ experience in creating the test database for language examinations; the technology of testing is annually improved.

The practice of conducting examinations proved the success of a centralized system of admission to postgraduate studies. In order to obtain more knowledge in their chosen area of specialization for the further successful research or professional activity, thousands of qualified undergraduates are admitted to postgraduate studies thanks to these fair, safe and proven procedures of admission.

Analysis of the results of admission to postgraduate studies determines the level of foreign language knowledge of the applicants. Statistical analysis of these results reveals the defects and affect on the increase in bachelor’s teaching at higher institutions of the country.

To meet the current needs of the republic in the preparation of highly qualified personnel, the system of admission to the postgraduate studies develops, updated and improved, taking into account the features of the educational system of the country, trends in education in the world and the requirements of integration into the Bologna process.

In this regard the meeting with a representative of ETS Global was held in the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, where issues of cooperation in the field of education were discussed. The meeting resulted in a Memorandum on Cooperation in the field of educational assessment.

ETS (Educational Testing Service, USA) is known for its research and development of assessment tools in education. ETS currently administers more than 50 million tests annually in more than 9000 places around the world. ETS produced such well-known and widely used tests like TOEFL, TOEIC , SAT and GRE.

TOEFL ITP (Institutional Testing Program), developed for internal use in academic institutions as a means of determining the level of foreign language.

TOEFL ITP test is a paper format and consists of 3 parts, each assesses specific skills. This is a test of multiple choice, candidates answer questions by filling in the form of answers.

To date, NTC considered ETS proposal to cooperate for the entrance exams for languages ​​and assessment of test results.

To determine an effective means of assessment language skills, NTC offers to apply TOEFL ITP tests for entrance examinations to postgraduate and doctoral studies.