

Developing Bespoke Tests for an International University

Cambridge Assessment Admissions Testing has been working with Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan, to develop and deliver bespoke admissions tests for the University's Foundation Year Programme (NUFYP).

This modern University was an initiative of President Nazarbayev. With the country experiencing economic growth, there was an accompanying need to establish a benchmark for higher education institutions within the country, driving the future knowledge economy in the region. In his annual address of 2006, the President stated that: *"In order to create a unique academic environment [...] we need to create a prestigious, world-class university."*

The institution aims to be the first research and world-class university in Kazakhstan, working according to international academic standards and with courses delivered in the medium of English. The University's status means that competition for places on its Foundation Year Programme is significant.

As a result, the University needed admissions tests that could help



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them to identify the strongest candidates from a growing number of applicants, enabling them to select students with the best chance of succeeding on the foundation year and excelling in their studies.

Cambridge Assessment Admissions Testing was approached to develop and deliver bespoke admissions tests in Mathematics, Critical Thinking, Physics, Biology and Chemistry – subjects that map to the foundation programme curriculum and assess the key skills that students need for success.

The team began the test development process in mid-2015, starting with an extensive period of consultation and a full needs analysis, in order to understand the local educational context and tailor the tests' content accordingly.

Lesley Price, General Director of the NUFYP, said of the development process: *"There was a lot of pilot work done initially, to make sure that the test was very appropriate for the students' situation in Kazakhstan."*

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Pilot versions of the new tests were developed and trialled with existing University students, before the tests were taken in February 2016. The Admissions Testing team provided preparation materials, oversaw the delivery of the tests in 14 cities across Kazakhstan, and ensured the University was given statistical analyses of candidate performance alongside their test results.

The advantage to the University of using admissions tests is that they provide a secure, fair method of assessing all applicants. The tests also help the transparency of the University's admissions process, reassuring parents and schools alike.

Speaking about the collaboration with Cambridge Assessment Admissions Testing, Lesley Price said: *"The relationship has been very important. We have to admit students to the programme based on merit. Having an admissions test delivered by such a world-class provider is important for credibility. [...] I would really recommend any institution to work with Cambridge Assessment. We found them to be a fantastic partner and very flexible."*

The success of the collaboration means that the original agreement to provide admissions tests – for one year, with the option to extend by another two – has now been extended by three years up to 2019.

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Lesley Price, General Director of the NUFYP

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About Cambridge Assessment Admissions Testing

Cambridge Assessment Admissions Testing has over 15 years' experience in developing and delivering admissions tests for educational institutions, governments and professional organisations worldwide. We are part of a not-for-profit department of the University of Cambridge.

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