

Experts' Report on the Accreditation of Study Programmes

at the
**National Research University
Higher School of Economics**
- Faculty of Social Sciences -

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3rd Meeting of the ZEVA Commission, July 10, 2018

Study Programme	Degree	Credit Points	Duration	Type of Programme
Political Science	Bachelor	240 ECTS	4 years	Full-time
Applied Politics	Master	120 ECTS	2 years	Full-time
Politics. Economics. Philosophy	Master	120 ECTS	2 years	Full-time

Date of site visit: 17-19 April 2018

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I. Final Vote of the Expert Panel and Decision of the Accreditation Commission

1. Decision of the ZEvA Commission (July 10, 2018)

The ZEvA Commission follows the experts' report and recommendations and takes note of the university's response.

The Commission decides to accredit the following degree programmes as offered by the School of Political Science at the Higher School of Economics:

- *Political Science (Bachelor)*
- *Applied Politics (Master)*
- *Politics. Economics. Philosophy (Master)*

The accreditation of the study programmes is valid for a period of five years.

2. Central Findings and Final Vote of the Expert Panel

The experts have come to the overall conclusion that the study programmes in Political Science offered at the Higher School of Economics fully live up to international standards. Students receive a state-of-the-art education that qualifies them for attractive positions both inside and outside academia. The School's strong focus on research methods, particularly quantitative methods, is unique in Russia and greatly enhances the graduates' career prospects. HSE also provides an excellent learning environment and infrastructure on its main campus in central Moscow.

The experts were very impressed by the excellent qualifications, international experience and professionalism of the faculty and staff, their high commitment to educational quality and continuous improvement. The School does not only stand out through academic excellence, but is characterized by a palpable spirit of open-mindedness, free, unbiased thought and by a clear outreach and commitment towards the global scientific community. This liberal tradition should be carefully maintained and protected, as it will be a central prerequisite for a sustainable future development of the School and the entire university.

2.1 Final Vote of the Expert Panel

The expert panel recommends the accreditation of the following study programmes as offered by the *School of Political Science at the Higher School of Economics*:

- Political Science (Bachelor)
- Applied Politics (Master)
- Politics. Economics. Philosophy (Master)

The accreditation of the study programmes is recommended for a period of **five** years.

To support the university and the School in their further advancement, the experts give the following general recommendations:

- The School's efforts to internationalize should be further continued. This includes recruiting more international faculty, attracting more regular, degree-seeking students from outside Russia and increasing the number of double degree programmes. Also, the international exchange of students and staff should be further intensified, for example by means of raising additional funds.
- Students should get the opportunity to learn additional foreign languages other than English.
- The experts strongly recommend facilitating the process of credit recognition and providing for more transparency, reliability and student support in this realm.
- The faculty members should have the option of taking sabbaticals and more opportunity for attending conferences and other activities outside their core responsibilities in teaching and research.

- The experts recommend monitoring the students' workload more closely, for example as part of course evaluation surveys.
- The experts recommend further enhancing, vitalizing and activating the alumni network by taking successful approaches of other universities as a model, as e.g. alumni notebooks, regular meetings, sport and charity events or mentoring programmes.

In addition, the experts give the following programme-related recommendations:

- The course syllabi should be revised to better reflect the actual teaching reality. The reading lists included in the syllabi should also be updated.
- The School should invite professionals from outside academia on a regular basis to provide students with first-hand information about job requirements in their professional field.
- Qualitative research methods should gain more weight within the curricula, especially at the BA level.
- The School should explore options for including more elective courses taught at other HSE faculties and schools, as e.g. the Law Faculty or the Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs.
- Measures should be taken to reduce the strong overlap between the Bachelor's programme and the Master's programme in Applied Politics. For example, it may be helpful to offer a selection of "intensive" courses especially directed at HSE Bachelor's graduates.
- The philosophy part of the PEP Master's programme should be enhanced. Ideally, this should include offering an adaptation course in the discipline.
- Adaptation classes in the PEP programme should be extended in scope.
- The three main disciplines within the PEP programme should be brought in closer touch with each other. The links between the three pillars and the interdisciplinary character of the programme should become more visible to the students.
- The intended learning outcomes of the PEP programme should more explicitly reflect the graduates' career prospects in business and industry.

II. Evaluation Report of the Expert Panel

Introduction: Purpose, Design and Context of the Accreditation Procedure

It is the purpose of this accreditation procedure to assess the quality of one Bachelor's programme and two Master's programmes in the field of Political Science run by the **Faculty of Social Sciences at the Higher School of Economics (HSE) Moscow**.

The assessment is based on the "Assessment Framework for the Evaluation of Study Programmes" as laid out in the "ZEVA Manual for the Evaluation and Certification of Study Programmes". This framework integrates the requirements of the "European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG)" (ENQA 2015), the "Framework for Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area" (2005) and the "ECTS User's Guide" (European Communities, 2015).

In line with the ESG, the assessment was organized as a peer review procedure, involving an expert panel composed of university professors in the discipline, one professional from outside academia and one student.

For the purpose of assessing the study programmes, the Faculty of Social Sciences at HSE was asked to submit a self-report in English containing a detailed description of the university, the faculty and the study programmes. Along with the self-report, a number of additional documents were submitted, including detailed course syllabi, CVs of teaching faculty, comprehensive statistical data as well as relevant rules and regulations. All documents were submitted in English translation. By special request of the expert panel, some additional information and documents were provided shortly prior to or in the course of the three-day site visit in Moscow in April 2018.

In Moscow, the expert panel conducted separate interviews with the leadership board of the faculty, the Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs, academic supervisors and programme coordinators, teaching faculty, students, graduates and employers. Also, the experts were given a tour of the university campus in central Moscow.

This report is based on the experts' assessment of the self-report and the results of the on-site talks. It will serve as a basis for the ZEVA Accreditation Commission to decide on the accreditation of the university's study programmes. In case the vote of the commission is positive, ZEVA will award its quality seal to the study programmes for a limited time period, after which the university can apply for re-accreditation.

The experts would like to thank all involved members of the HSE faculty and staff for the professional organization of the site visit and for the friendly reception at the HSE campus in Moscow.

1. General Aspects

1.1 Mission and Profile of the University and the Faculty

Within a period of only about 25 years, the Higher School of Economics (HSE) has developed into one of the most renowned higher education institutions of its kind in Russia and beyond. Since its establishment in the early 1990s, HSE has risen to the top league of Russian universities and – as one of about 30 universities – has been granted the status of a National Research University.

At present, about 35.000 students are enrolled at HSE. Apart from the main HSE campus in Moscow, smaller branch campuses have been opened in St. Petersburg, Perm and Nizhny Novgorod.

The university's core focus in research and teaching is still on Economics and Social Sciences, although the spectrum of disciplines has been constantly extended over the years, now including programmes in the humanities, engineering, physics and computer science. At present, HSE offers about 70 Bachelor's programmes and more than 150 Master's programmes.

In its development strategy dating from 2009, HSE has defined the following strategic goals (cf. self-report, pp. 12-13):

- *HSE will become one of the world's R&D leaders in several advanced areas of socio-economic science as well as in some areas of mathematics, computer science, and humanities;*
- *HSE will reorganize the teaching process to put more emphasis on students' individual work, reduce the teaching load on faculty members, and individualize learning trajectories;*
- *HSE will design and ensure world-level quality of teaching programmes and R&D work in areas where Russia is largely lagging behind the developed countries (for example, international finance, cognitive studies, economic analysis of law, quantitative methods and computer modeling in the socioeconomic sphere, knowledge management, and cliometrics), etc.;*
- *HSE will achieve world-level quality of all teaching programmes (this will include recognition of HSE programmes and courses by the leading foreign universities, having at least 50 percent of faculty members from each department and school publishing in international peer-reviewed journals, etc.);
[...]*
- *HSE will provide students with academic and extracurricular services required for efficient learning and personal development, as well as for successful careers, at the level of world's leading universities; [...]*

In the course of a large-scale structural reform in the year 2014, the academic units at HSE were re-organized into bigger faculties ("mega-faculties"), each one comprising a number of departments or schools. A major goal of this reform was to de-centralize the management structures of the university by assigning a higher degree of responsibility and decision-making powers to the collegial bodies at faculty level.

The study programmes in Political Science are offered by the School of Political Science, which originally started as the “Faculty of Applied Politics” and is now part of the Faculty of Social Sciences at HSE. Currently, the School has about 40 faculty members, including 20 full professors and 14 associate and assistant professors. The Head of the School of Political Sciences also holds the position of the faculty Dean.

Apart from the three programmes that are the subject of this evaluation report, the School runs a doctoral programme. In addition, it contributes to the HSE teacher training programme at the Institute of Education.

On the HSE website, the School describes its mission and profile as follows:

Our mission is to teach students contemporary political science and give them the skills needed for serious political research in the way it's done in the world's best universities.

This requires us to work to international standards in our own research and helps us to prepare a new generation of political scientists to work well in many professional fields.

We believe that political science can only be developed creatively in a free and democratic environment.

We are solving many serious problems:

- *We build our teaching programme on the basis of the most recent theoretical and methodological achievements in political science;*
- *We give students a basic grounding in history, philosophy, economics and law and with that knowledge they can master the whole range of disciplines in contemporary political science;*
- *What makes us unique is that our students have a professional training in contemporary methodology and rigorous qualitative and quantitative political analysis;*
- *Our most important task is to internationalize education and research, to develop international projects and partnerships.*

As opposed to other higher education institutions in the country, HSE does not follow a parochial path in Political Science, focused mainly on the Russian political regime, but aims at a close alignment with international standards and developments, i.e. the “global mainstream” of the discipline. Political Science is understood to be “about facts, not about norms”, as it was put during the talks in Moscow. Hence, the School puts a particular emphasis on a rigorous methodical training, especially in quantitative scientific methods, and on enhancing students’ capability for evidence-based research. Graduates of the School are to be able to compete with graduates from high-profile Western research universities, especially in the realm of research, but also in professional life outside academia. Accordingly, many of the School’s graduates do not (or not immediately) proceed to the next educational level, but take working positions outside academia, as e.g. in commercial companies, PR and communication agencies, in NGOs, the media, or in civil service.

Experts' Appraisal

In the course of the site visit, the experts have gained the impression that the image of the Faculty and School that is conveyed on the HSE website and in the self-report is accurate. The panel members were very impressed by the strong commitment to their institution of faculty members and students alike, and by the School's perseverance in pursuing its particular approach to the discipline of Political Science. Teaching and learning at HSE are obviously carried by a strong and authentic spirit of liberalism and open-mindedness, encouraging students to contribute actively and freely to academic discourse within and outside the university.

The School of Political Sciences has developed a unique profile and a clear definition of quality in teaching, learning and research. The experts are particularly impressed by the way in which the School has succeeded in constantly increasing its international reputation within the short space of two decades, in spite of the fact that the discipline as such did not exist at Russian universities until the end of the Soviet Union. The experts sincerely hope that the School of Political Sciences and HSE as a whole will keep its current standing in Russia and achieve its goal of joining the ranks of the top universities in the world in the near future. The general scientific approach and strategic self-positioning of the School seem to be most suitable for that purpose.

1.2 Internationalization

Increasing internationalization is a core strategic goal of both HSE as a whole and the School of Political Science in particular. According to the self-report provided to the experts, the university's main objectives in internationalization are to:

- *strengthen the international profile and reputation of HSE,*
- *develop key international academic partnerships,*
- *achieve international excellence in teaching and research,*
- *increase and diversify the international body of faculty and students.*

In order to reach these objectives, HSE has decided upon a number of strategic initiatives which are contained in a general action plan ("Global Competitiveness Programme") launched in 2013. In the realm of teaching and learning, strategic measures include

- *Introduction of a new major-minor study model and a system of tutorial support (individualized learning trajectories)*
- *Increasing the use of English as the language of education and communication by expanding the range of courses and educational programs offered in English*
- *Widening the range of joint programmes and courses conducted in conjunction with top international universities*

- *Supporting greater student mobility and exchange*
- *Upgrade of programme content to meet international standards and employee expectations*
- *Development of preparatory courses affiliated with Master's programmes, as well as preparatory training courses for international students*
- *Creating mechanisms for attracting talented students to Master's and Ph.D. programmes, including a scholarship fund for international students, summer/winter schools, and Olympiad competitions.*

Both in the self-report and during the talks in Moscow, the representatives of the School took a rather critical view at the achievement of their objectives in internationalization. Especially from the leadership's point of view, the overarching goal of increasing the university's international reputation and visibility is not yet reached to a satisfying extent.

Experts' Appraisal

The topic of internationalization was repeatedly and extensively discussed with HSE students, faculty and staff throughout the on-site talks in Moscow. As a result, the experts have gained the overall impression that HSE has already come a long way in enhancing its international profile – especially when keeping in mind that, like all Russian universities, HSE is facing considerable external challenges in this undertaking, including language barriers, financial obstacles, and not least a lack of solid, long-term relationships and networks with partners abroad. Without doubt, there is still need for optimization in some regards, but the general direction taken by the university is certainly promising.

The experts also see a plausible link between the institutional internationalization strategy and the three study programmes in Political Science: for instance, there are well-established partnership ties with foreign universities at programme level, allowing students (especially the undergraduates) to participate in student exchange. Partners include, for instance, the Universities of Antwerp, Prague, and Edinburgh, as well as several German universities. Furthermore, guest lecturers from foreign universities are frequently invited, and students are encouraged to participate in scientific conferences and summer schools abroad.

The Master's programme in "Politics. Economics. Philosophy" shows a particularly strong international profile: the programme is now taught exclusively in English and counts a considerable number of students from various European and non-European countries.

The experts encourage HSE and the School of Political Sciences to maintain the strong efforts that have already been taken at various levels. In the course of future development, the experts recommend paying particular attention to the following aspects:

Increase in incoming mobility

Presently, the overwhelming majority of international students at HSE are exchange students who spend only a limited period of time at HSE. Students from non-Russian speaking countries are generally reluctant to enroll in a programme that is taught in Russian only (which applies to the Bachelor's programme in Political Science as well as the Master's programme in Applied Politics). For this and other reasons, their overall number is rather limited across all programmes. The students and faculty also reported that international students often had difficulties in fulfilling academic requirements and usually had little contact to their Russian fellow students.

The university is already taking a number of measures to tackle these problems, as e.g. a buddy network for internationals, extra-curricular language classes in Russian (sometimes in the context of a special preparatory year) and an increase in English-taught classes and educational programmes.

The experts strongly support all steps that have already been taken. HSE should further pursue and intensify its activities to internationalize: for example, the percentage of fully enrolled internationals should be further enlarged, especially in the Master's programmes. Possible low-threshold ways of attracting foreigners to HSE could be summer schools, student-organized conferences or other educational units.

Furthermore, increasing the number of double degree programmes could also contribute to boosting student mobility rates. Apparently, this issue is problematic, especially when it comes to forging co-operations with American universities, but the School should nonetheless remain open for new partners and keep this item on its internationalization agenda.

Increase in outgoing mobility

The on-site talks have shown that if HSE students go abroad they usually do this in the context of exchange programmes at undergraduate level. For Master's students there is little or no funding in the form of stipends/scholarships available, which seems to be a major obstacle. HSE should therefore take increased efforts to provide more funding options for students willing to study abroad.

The on-site talks with the students revealed a lack of transparency regarding the recognition of credits earned at other universities. Students are apparently uncertain about the recognition criteria and receive too little support from the university in identifying and selecting creditable courses at their host university. Therefore, the experts strongly recommend facilitating the process of credit recognition and providing for more transparency, reliability and support in this realm. This will most likely have a positive effect on students' general motivation to study abroad.

If possible, HSE students should also have the opportunity to learn a number of other European languages apart from English, which is already very widely used at HSE inside and outside of class. A certain level of proficiency in the national language may also make it a lot easier for students to enter exchange programmes or to continue their studies at foreign universities.

International profile of faculty and staff

It is an important strategic goal of HSE and the School of Political Science in particular to recruit highly qualified staff from outside Russia. In recent years, the School has invested a lot of effort into international recruitment, with varying success. In spite of increasingly unfavorable external conditions, the experts encourage the School to further pursue this path, as the international profile and reputation of the faculty members will most certainly be a key element of future success. Also, it was pointed out during the on-site talks that the current shortage of qualified academic staff on the Russian market forces the university to recruit lecturers and researchers elsewhere.

At present, the overall picture is already quite satisfying from the experts' point of view: several faculty members possess extensive international experience and/or have received large parts of their academic education at universities abroad, especially at top level research universities in the United States or Europe.

A promising way of raising the number of international teaching staff is the recently introduced international track of recruiting. High-profile foreign post-doc researchers are offered temporary positions at HSE which include teaching obligations (in English). While pursuing their proper research projects, these international scholars are fully accepted members of the School's faculty. As a result, there has more recently been a notable raise in the number of high-profile foreign applicants to HSE.

International staff exchange should also be further intensified. To this end, the university should make active use of available funding sources and staff mobility programmes, as, for example, Erasmus+ or the programmes of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).

All other aspects concerning the quality of the teaching faculty will be discussed in the following chapter.

1.3 Teaching Faculty

At present, the School of Political Science counts more than 40 faculty members, including 20 full professors and 14 associate and assistant professors. As a general rule, faculty members are employed on a temporary basis and have to undergo a process of internal re-evaluation (and re-application) on a regular basis. Only very few fully tenured professors are exempt from these regulations. All professional activities of the staff members (research output/publications, results of course evaluation, projects, etc.) are included in the evaluation process and also have an impact on individual salaries (performance oriented bonus system), with particularly high financial incentives for publications in peer-reviewed scientific journals. There is also an annual "Best Teacher Award" to reward particular excellence in teaching, which also comes with a financial bonus.

There are multiple options for further professional development especially for junior staff, including research centers and a special support programme for young scholars. However, as was reported during the site visit, senior members of staff often find themselves unable to participate in further training or scientific conferences due to their multiple obligations in teaching, research and administration.

Experts' Appraisal

The experts were very impressed by the academic credentials, professionalism and openness of the faculty leadership and the members of the teaching staff they met during the on-site talks in Moscow. The body of teachers and researchers at the School of Political Science is very diverse in terms of worldviews, age and background, yet the atmosphere is shaped by a strong team spirit and openness, profiting from relatively flat and transparent hierarchies. Communication and interaction between teachers and students, as well as between teachers and administrative staff seems to be working very well. As far as the experts can see, there is a good match between the qualifications of the teaching faculty and the general profile of the study programmes.

The number of teaching staff at the School also seems sufficient to the experts, even though it also became clear that the teachers' overall workload usually leaves little room for side activities. From the experts' point of view, the system of incentives and bonuses applied at the faculty is certainly effective – however, incentives of a non-monetary nature might be even more attractive for the faculty members. In particular, HSE should consider providing more opportunities for senior staff to take sabbaticals for research and other purposes and to attend conferences for networking and further professional development.

1.4 Learning Environment and Student Support System

The infrastructure, resources and student services provided at HSE are described in detail in the self-report. In addition, the experts were given an extensive tour of the HSE premises in central Moscow, including the library, and got a chance to talk to some members of the administrative staff responsible for providing support and advice to students, as e.g. programme coordinators or the International Coordinator of the faculty.

Student services include a career center and a center for psychological counselling. Student dormitories are also provided, but are located at a considerable distance from the HSE campus, hence many students spend a considerable time each day commuting. However, there are numerous workplaces for students on campus, as, for example, in the library or in separate rooms that are put at the students' disposal.

HSE takes high efforts to create equal opportunities for students with disabilities. For instance, a social project was launched in 2016 with the aim of improving the learning environment for disabled students. As a general rule, disabled students may receive special assistance during the final state examination by using technical aids or by taking the exam in

an alternative format. Student volunteers act as special consultants and tutors to disabled fellow students in order to support them in their academic progress. Most of the HSE building infrastructure is also accessible to individuals with mobility impairments.

HSE takes further equal opportunities measures for the benefit of socially vulnerable or disadvantaged students: for instance, special scholarships or other forms of financial assistance are provided.

Experts' Appraisal

The experts have come to the conclusion that the students of the School of Political Science are provided with an excellent learning environment in Moscow. Infrastructure and equipment are modern and in good condition, providing limited, but sufficient workspace for both students and lecturers. In recent years, the quality of the infrastructure and learning environment seems to have been enhanced significantly. An additional building has been under renovation for some time now and, as soon as it gets re-opened, is likely to further improve the general situation. The central location of the campus is already a big advantage in itself, even though the long commuting distance to the dorms certainly increases the general level of stress and exhaustion felt by some students.

The resources of the library are regarded as fully adequate for the students' needs, comprising all major Political Science journals (either online or in print) and a large supply of publications in English. According to the faculty members, new publications are usually ordered at their demand without difficulties. The only critical point mentioned from the students' side was the online platform in the library, which is apparently not particularly user-friendly.

The experts commend HSE on the way in which students are constantly guided and supported by academic and non-academic staff alike, as well as by their fellow students in the context of mentoring/buddy programmes. This goes particularly for students with special needs, as e.g. internationals or disabled students. Volunteering as mentors or tutors also provides a great opportunity for students to further develop their social skills and prepares them for active citizenship. Teaching and learning at the School of Political Science are clearly aimed at producing articulate, confident and independent personalities.

Considering all that, the experts were not surprised to find that the students and graduates of the Political Science programmes were critically-minded, yet very enthusiastic about their university and their studies and displayed a high level of satisfaction and commitment to their institution during the on-site talks.

1.5 Quality Assurance

The internal regulations of HSE stipulate that the main responsibility for the quality of the study programmes lies with the faculties.

Various measures for the quality assurance and enhancement of teaching and learning have been implemented at HSE. These activities involve all relevant internal and external stakeholders, including students, teaching staff, employers and alumni.

As a general rule, students evaluate each of their classes based on standardized online survey questionnaires which also include the option of making free comments. Participation in the evaluation is compulsory for students. The surveys serve to determine the students' level of satisfaction with the quality of their courses, programmes and teaching staff. The results of the surveys are made available to the teachers and – in aggregated form – to other interested parties within the university (as e.g. deans, academic supervisors and programme managers) and serve as a basis for the continuous improvement of the programmes. As mentioned above, a “Best Teacher Award” has been introduced as an incentive for lecturers to provide high-quality teaching.

In addition, students may also provide face-to-face feedback to their teachers or, in case of general complaints, use the so-called “Expressive Button” hotline. Via this anonymous hotline, participants in the educational process at all HSE campuses may provide all kinds of feedback, lodge complaints or queries, or give recommendations for improvement.

In addition to that, HSE conducts numerous other internal quality surveys on a regular basis, as e.g. student life surveys, applicant surveys or faculty surveys.

Employers and alumni are also actively involved in the quality assurance of the study programmes: for instance, the HSE alumni center conducts regular written surveys to receive feedback regarding the competencies and employment prospects of HSE graduates and on the general quality of the programmes. The on-site talks have also shown that potential employers are often in close touch with the university, especially in the context of student internships, and hence provide a lot of informal input, too.

Experts' Appraisal

During the on-site talks, the experts got the overall impression that quality assurance is taken very seriously by all parties involved. Students confirmed that their voice was usually heard, and that course evaluation led to noticeable changes and improvements. The “Expressive Button” hotline is also a good idea that seems to be working well in practice.

HSE makes use of a wide variety of instruments for the continuous monitoring and review of its programmes. Apart from written surveys, these also include the analysis of performance indicators as e.g. dropout rates or the number and profile of applicants.

In the course of the site visit, the results of a focus group analysis conducted at the School of Political Sciences were submitted to the experts. In the context of this analysis, students of the Bachelor's programme in Political Science and of the Master's programme in Applied Politics were interviewed in small groups about their opinions regarding their study programmes. With the consent of the students, the results of the interviews were forwarded to the programme management for further use. One of the consequences drawn from the sur-

veys was, for instance, the decision to introduce two specialization tracks in the Master's programme (cf. Chapter 2.3).

As regards course evaluation, the experts recommend expanding the survey questionnaires by additional questions, especially concerning student workload. It became clear during the on-site talks that this aspect still seems to be a "blind spot" in quality assurance. For the sake of educational quality, it would nonetheless be helpful to monitor it more closely, as course requirements do actually seem to be a challenge at times, especially for those students who work part-time. As an alternative to integrating such questions into course evaluation, separate workload surveys at programme level may be another option.

Another particularly strong point is the tight network between the university and the employment market, which is especially facilitated by the compulsory internships that all students have to absolve. By repeatedly accepting HSE students as interns, many employers stay in touch with the teaching staff on a permanent basis and get a chance to provide regular feedback not only on the performance of the interns, but on the study programmes in general. In many cases, the internship supervisors are HSE graduates themselves.

The talks with the graduates of the School revealed that the alumni network could be further strengthened, even though a lot of effort has already been taken in this realm. As yet, contacts between the alumni appear to be rather loose and very much dependent on private, individual initiatives. Hence, the experts recommend further enhancing, vitalizing and activating the network by taking successful approaches of other universities as a model, as e.g. alumni notebooks, regular meetings, sport and charity events or mentoring programmes.

1.6 Transparency and Public Information

All key information on the School and its study programmes (intended learning outcomes, profile, contents, course syllabi, etc.) can be found on the HSE website, both in English and Russian language. Also, there is extensive additional information available for international students, concerning, for example, admission regulations and exchange programs, possible sources of funding etc.

University-wide regulations on student assessment, term papers and theses, projects and internships are officially documented and accessible to students at all times.

The experts commend HSE on the high degree of transparency and easy accessibility of its website especially for foreign applicants and the interested public outside Russia. For all enrolled students, maximum transparency regarding course requirements and assessment procedures is also warranted.

2. Assessment of the Study Programmes

2.1 Structure and Profile of the Study Programmes: General Outline

In terms of structure, the study programmes follow the Russian “4 + 2” model, which comprises four-year undergraduate programmes (240 credit points) and 2-year Master’s programmes (120 credit points). HSE was the first university in Russia to adopt this two-tier model and has now fully disestablished the pre-Bologna “specialist” programmes.

The study programmes are based both on Federal Educational Standards that are binding for all higher education institutions in the country, and on HSE’s own standards, which it is entitled to apply due to its status as a National Research University. The self-report names the following innovative features that distinguish HSE educational programmes from those offered by other universities (cf. p. 16):

- *General cycle of courses in all Bachelor’s programmes: taken by students from different departments, these courses are to broaden intellectual horizons and to cast a firm foundation for the development of a scientific worldview;*
- *Bachelor’s students get not only a specialized education in a selected area (Major), but can also choose a secondary specialization in a different area (Minor) to complement the Major;*
- *Master’s and Bachelor’s programmes offer a lot more research, project and internship activities than required by federal educational standards.*

As already mentioned above, the School of Political Science generally puts a very strong emphasis on providing students with a solid methodic education, especially in the realm of statistical and mathematical methods. Accordingly, these play a central role in all curricula, especially at undergraduate level and in the Master’s programme in Applied Politics. Students are taught to draw on these methods both in the context of academic research and in non-academic professional environments. To this end, they regularly get involved in projects and internships/work placements inside and outside the university that give them the opportunity to apply their theoretical knowledge in practice.

Apart from proficiency in mathematics and statistics, the School also places high value on developing students’ academic writing skills and their general capability of critical, analytical thought. Hence, research seminars and regular paper-writing are of particular importance both at Bachelor’s and at Master’s level. Otherwise, a mixture of teaching methods is applied in most educational units, as e.g. lectures, in-class discussion, self-learning and project work. Some courses are fully or partly taught online via the platform Coursera.

The applied methods of student assessment are also very diverse, ranging from regular written assignments, research essays and text analyses to projects and presentations. Active participation in class also has an impact on the overall course grade.

For each educational component, a detailed course syllabus is provided which describes the intended learning outcomes and contents of the course, the applied methods of teaching and assessment, the credits awarded and the estimated workload involved. Also, a detailed reading list is included in each syllabus.

Experts' Appraisal

From the experts' point of view, the talks in Moscow have confirmed that the School of Political Science has so far been successful in reaching its educational goals. Graduates confirmed that studying at HSE had prepared them well for the requirements of work life. Both graduates and employers named strong analytical skills as a particularly distinguishing feature of HSE graduates, along with the capability to think creatively and independently. Scientific methods are not studied as an end in themselves, but in order to apply them to practical problems in a large variety of professional fields and contexts, as was impressively demonstrated by the graduates interviewed on site. In this respect, the internships seem to fulfil their function as central didactic elements very well.

Regardless of that, some of the graduates involved in the on-site talks (especially those working for public or municipal bodies) still reported that they had not had a sufficiently clear and realistic idea regarding the exact profile and requirements of their jobs at the time of application. In order to prevent students from taking wrong career decisions, the experts recommend inviting potential employers for talks or career workshops with students on a regular basis.

The experts commend the School of Political Science on the solid methodic education it provides to its students, which is a "unique selling point" on the Russian higher education market and significantly boosts the graduates' careers. Students are thoroughly introduced to both qualitative and quantitative methods, although it seems to the experts that qualitative approaches are rather underrepresented in the programmes as compared to quantitative ones, especially at BA level. Therefore they recommend giving qualitative methods some more weight within the curricula and generally providing students with a broader understanding of the relevance and the adequate application of these methods, based on their respective research questions. The School should not cut down on research design courses, as these are of central importance for the development and, in particular, for the practical application of methodological competences.

As far as IT skills are concerned, it should be ensured that students are not only familiarized with professional data-processing applications, but also learn how to work with standard office software.

Also, the School should always devote at least a minimum share of the (core) curriculum to area studies and international relations to make sure that all students (especially at undergraduate level) acquire at least a basic understanding of these fields. A sound understanding of the area of Western Europe and the general trends in the European Union would be of particular importance in this context.

As mentioned above, the course syllabi are very detailed and therefore provided a good basis for the experts' assessment of the study programmes and a transparent source of information for the students. At least part of the syllabi, however, leave the impression that classes are overloaded with contents, which, as the on-site talks have revealed, is not actually the case, as not everything mentioned in the syllabi is always (fully) covered in class. Hence, the experts recommend a thorough revision of the syllabi in order to align them more closely with the teaching reality. In the course of that, the reading lists for the courses should also be updated.

As far as the experts can see, the methods of teaching and assessment applied at the School are adequate, well-balanced and in line with the educational goals of the programmes and courses. The experts particularly appreciate the School's strong emphasis on dialogue and open discussion between students and teachers.

2.2 Bachelor's Programme "Political Science"

Key Data

Annually, HSE offers 60 state-funded places and 50 places for fee-paying students on the Bachelor's programme in Political Science. There is an additional small quota of places for foreign citizens. Even though the programme accepts more students each year than any other Political Science programme in the country, admission is highly selective, as the number of applicants usually exceeds enrolment capacities by about 5-7 times.

Applicants to HSE must have achieved excellent overall scores in the Russian Unified State Exam (school leaving certificate). Applicants also receive additional credit for successful participation in further tests or skills competitions. In addition, the university conducts its own entrance examinations for some places. Winners of Russian high school Olympic competitions can be accepted without exams. Also, there is a special selection procedure for applicants willing and able to pay fees.

According to the self-report submitted to the experts, the average annual student dropout rate lies around 9%. To reduce this rate, students may now sit exams for three times instead of two. In case students fail an exam three times, they may switch to an individual curriculum.

The large majority of Bachelor's graduates continue their studies at Master's level, many of them at universities abroad. Of those graduates who are working, especially many are employed in the PR and communications sector, as a graduate survey of the class of 2017 has shown.

Intended Learning Outcomes

The intended learning outcomes of the Bachelor's programme in Political Science are briefly described on the HSE website and in the info brochure of the Faculty of Social Sciences, where the programme profile is summarized as follows:

Students in the Political Science Bachelor's programme at HSE receive fundamental training (in economics, mathematics, quantitative and qualitative methods, philosophy, political theory, history, etc.) and practice-oriented instruction (in comparative politics, data analysis, political management and campaigning, and other areas). Students graduate with a unique combination of knowledge and skills that enables them to pursue successful academic and professional careers in the spheres of public administration, media, public policy, and government relations.

A more detailed description of the intended learning outcomes can be found in the official HSE educational standard for the programme, which is available on the HSE website. This document lists the following universal competencies that all Bachelor's graduates in Political Science should be able to demonstrate:

- *Effective learning skills, ability to acquire new competencies, including in different areas, outside of one's professional area of focus*
- *Ability to identify the scientific essence of given problems in one's professional area of focus*
- *Ability to solve problems in one's professional area of focus on the basis of analysis and synthesis*
- *Ability to evaluate demands for resources and plan out their use for solving professional tasks*
- *Ability to work with information: find, evaluate and use information from different sources, as required for solving research and professional tasks (e.g., on the basis of a systemic approach)*
- *Ability to engage in research, including analysis of problems, setting goals and objectives, identifying the subject and focus of a given study, as well as selecting research approaches and methods, and evaluation of research quality*
- *Ability to work effectively in a team*
- *Ability to communicate effectively, depending on relevant goals and given situations*
- *Ability to think critically and interpret one's experience and practices, as well as analyse one's own professional and social experience*
- *Ability to engage in productive and/or applied activities in an international context*

Also, the graduates should possess the following professional competencies:

- *Ability to identify and establish an issue/problem for the analysis of political phenomena and processes, as well as determine research objectives and put together a research plan*
- *Ability to select and apply research methods, which are adequate to the defined goals*

- *Ability to supervise and take part in the organization and implementation of managerial processes in government bodies at various levels, as well as political and business structures, in order to achieve goals or objectives set by the leadership of such institutions*
- *Ability to search for, gather, process, analyze and store information required for the achievement of given objectives*
- *Ability to take part in the organization and implementation of political campaigns, and achievement of goals determined by the leadership or clients*
- *Ability to assign functional roles to team members while planning political projects, as well as to prepare necessary documentation (e.g., relevant specifications)*
- *Ability to participate in the distribution of information through various means and channels of mass and individual communication, in the course of promotional campaigns*
- *Ability to carry out applied analysis of phenomena and processes in politics, relying on political science methods for the purpose of providing support to decision-making processes*
- *Ability to document research and analytical outcomes, based on the results of scientific and applied research, in various academic papers (e.g., reviews, analytical reports, publications on social and political topics, etc.), depending on the target audience*

Furthermore, the desired qualification profile of the graduates is outlined as follows:

Graduates of Bachelor's programmes in political science can pursue careers in such areas as:

- *academic research projects, with a particular focus on matters related to political science, as researchers qualified to take part in such projects jointly with research teams;*
- *at public and municipal authorities, as well as international organizations, as staff members qualified to take part in the development and implementation of solutions and policies established by such bodies and organizations;*
- *administrations of political parties, media editorial teams, commercial and public organizations, international organizations engaged in various project-based activities (e.g., consulting, expert, research and analytical work), as well as political outreach activities, as staff members qualified to take part in the development and implementation of solutions and policies established by such institutions.*

Graduates of Bachelor's programmes may pursue professional careers in various social, political, cultural and economic domains in Russia and worldwide. In regards to politics, they may seek employment at public and municipal bodies (at the federal and regional level), local

self-government bodies, political parties, social and political movements, and contemporary organizations concerned with international relations and global politics.

In terms of social and cultural matters, students shall gain expertise in political culture and general political attitudes. In terms of economics, they shall learn about the interaction of government and business, as well as the political and other interests of different groups in the economic community.

Experts' Appraisal

From the experts' point of view, the intended learning outcomes are formulated in a very detailed, yet precise manner and fully match the actual profile of the programme. It becomes very clear from the description that the programme takes a rather broad, comprehensive approach to the discipline that also touches upon neighbouring or related disciplines like Economics and Philosophy to prepare students for professional activities in various fields. Also, students are to acquire fundamental academic research skills, but not (yet) the competence to conduct their own projects or lead a project team, which would be a goal more appropriate for the Master's level.

The experts regard the intended learning outcomes quoted above as fully adequate for a Bachelor's programme in the discipline of Political Science. The taxonomies of the European Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area (Dublin Descriptors) are also clearly reflected in the programme's educational goals. The intended learning outcomes are published online and are thus fully accessible at all times both to the students and the interested public.

Contents and Profile of the Programme

During the first year, students attend a number of courses that belong to a "general cycle" or "block" within the curriculum which is meant to provide students with a solid basis in scientific thought. Most recently, this cycle included introductory classes in Philosophy, Sociology, Psychology, Higher Mathematics and Logic, but on principle, the composition of courses in this part of the programme may vary slightly from year to year.

First year core courses include introductory units on political science and the history of political thought, as well as other fundamental areas like mathematics and statistics, economic theory or the political history of Russia and foreign countries. This core curriculum is complemented by foreign language training (English), a research seminar and a seminar on "professional orientation", which also provides an introduction to central methods of political science.

From the second year onwards, students can specialize either on the field of "Political Analysis" (with a stronger focus on research and mathematical methods) or on "Political Management" (where the emphasis is on application in practice). There are specialization courses for each of these tracks and a large pool of electives on various political science topics that are

open to students of both specializations. Internships, projects and research seminars are recurrent curricular elements each year. Furthermore, all students choose a second (minor) subject in addition to the Political Science major.

The non-elective part of the curriculum consists of courses on political sociology, comparative politics, political theory, political regional studies, international relations and other topics.

The programme finishes with the Final State Certification exam, which includes the preparation and defense of a Bachelor's thesis.

Experts' Appraisal

From the experts' point of view, the School of Political Science has created a very comprehensive, state-of-the-art undergraduate programme that lives up to international standards. The concept of providing a broad knowledge base in political science, combined with a solid, thorough methodological education and relatively wide elective options, has proved to be successful, as the on-site talks have confirmed. In spite of high academic demands, students are given enough room to find out about their personal interests and inclinations and receive all knowledge and key skills they need to continue their education at top-level universities in Russia or abroad. In case they decide against a career in research, multiple alternative career paths are open to them. The high importance attached to internships, projects and foreign language training should also be mentioned as a particularly strong point of undergraduate education at the School of Political Science.

To further strengthen the interdisciplinary element of the programme, the experts recommend extending the pool of electives to courses offered by other HSE faculties and schools, as e.g. the Law Faculty or the Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs. In particular, many courses from the Bachelor's programme in International Relations will most likely be of equally high interest and relevance to the students of Political Science.

The experts also recommend putting a stronger emphasis on the empirical study of Russian politics from an early stage. During the talks in Moscow, current students as well as the employers pointed out that an in-depth understanding of political processes in Russia was of central importance for graduates in political science, whereas instructors mentioned that undergraduate students often had big knowledge gaps in that particular realm.

2.3 Master's Programme "Applied Politics"

Key Data

The Master's programme in Applied Politics was launched in 1999. It was the first – and for a long time the only – graduate programme in Political Science offered at HSE and one of the first of its kind in the country.

Every year about 20 students graduate from the programme, and an average of about 30 students (usually a mixture of Bachelor's graduates from HSE and other Russian and foreign

universities) is newly enrolled. In 2018, 30 state-funded places on the programme were offered, with some additional fee-paying places. As for the Bachelor's programme, there has been a continuously high interest in the Master's: throughout the past few years, there have always been more applicants than places, with an average acceptance rate of about 50-75%.

The average student dropout rate from the programme has been quite low in recent years (less than 4% dropout during the first year of study). Graduates of the programme find work in various sectors and professional fields, as e.g. state and municipal authorities, commercial companies, in the media, or in research and analytics.

Intended Learning Outcomes

The HSE educational standard for Master's programmes in Political Science describes the general qualification goals that apply to graduates of all programmes in that particular discipline. These include a wide set of systemic, professional, instrumental and social competencies. According to the standard, all Master's graduates are to be qualified for different types of professional activities: scientific research, management and administration, project work, analytical work and education (teaching). For each of these areas, a number of typical tasks and activities are listed that the graduates should be skilled for, adding up to a comprehensive picture of the desired qualification profile.

Quoting from the programme framework, the self-report describes the intended learning outcomes as follows (cf. p. 61): *the main goal (mission) of the Applied Politics Master's Programme is to train qualified specialists who can (1) apply their knowledge of political theory and practice to provide expert evaluation and consulting services to different governmental and non-governmental, Russian and foreign organizations, (2) develop, organize and conduct various qualitative and quantitative political and socioeconomic studies of different content and complexity using diverse methods and information sources, organize and conduct situation analysis and brainstorming, (3) use interdisciplinary knowledge acquired in the EP to optimize processes in the domain of communicational politics, (4) employ modern computer technologies for data-mining and analysing information and work with Russian and foreign digital databases, (5) make short and long-term socioeconomic and political forecasts and evaluate the political risks of strategies and actions, and (6) draft high-quality analytic and other documents.*

From September 2018, two separate specialization tracks will be offered within the programme: students will be able to focus either on "Applied Methods of Political Analysis" or on "Applied Political Technologies: GR, Electoral Campaigns and Political Consulting". According to the programme website, the "Applied Methods" track *"is primarily focused on training researchers who are capable of competing both in global political science and on the market for high technology products that can be used in political processes"*, whereas the "Applied Technologies" track aims at training political strategists with *special expertise in political management, interactions with state authorities (GR), organization of electoral campaigns and political marketing.*

During the on-site talks, the academic supervisor of the programme explained the reason for this curricular reform: by introducing the two specializations, the School responds to the demand of the labour market for political scientists with a more clear-cut profile. Also, it had proved difficult for students to qualify equally well in both directions, i.e. to achieve all intended learning outcomes of the programme to a satisfactory degree.

Experts' Appraisal

As for the Bachelor's programme, the experts conclude that the intended learning outcomes of the Master's programme in Applied Politics are formulated with great care and in great detail. The qualification profile of the graduates becomes very clear from the descriptions and is fully adequate for an educational programme at Master's level.

The experts commend the School on its plans to introduce two distinct study tracks, modelled on what is already practiced at Bachelor's level. In this way, it will become easier to reconcile the – somewhat conflicting – goals of educating top-class researchers on the one hand and high-profile experts for the non-academic employment market on the other. In addition, the new curricular structure may also help to raise interest in the programme among HSE's own Bachelor graduates, many of whom opt for alternative paths upon receiving their first degree. Among others, unclear career prospects may be one reason for this.

Contents and Profile of the Programme

The curriculum of the Master's programme is composed of several "cycles" or blocks: first of all, there is a cycle of two general Political Science courses which are compulsory for all Master's students of this discipline at HSE. These courses are taught in English by lecturers from Columbia University and Yale University, respectively.

The cycle of "programme courses" has a compulsory core component and an elective component and stretches across both academic years, comprising a total of more than 50 credit points. This cycle makes up the heart of the programme profile, but, as outlined above, is currently being re-designed with the aim of introducing two specialization tracks.

The third cycle – credited with a total of 52 ECTS – is dedicated to internships and research work, which includes a term paper in the first year, two research seminars and the final Master's thesis. The defence of the thesis is also the central part of the Final State Examination. In addition, two internships must be absolved which may have different formats: most students choose a "standard" work placement internship at state or municipal government agencies, political parties, commercial or non-profit organizations, or civic associations. Alternatively, students may actively participate in empirical socio-political field research, political campaigns or the organization of political events. Each internship comprises a minimum of four weeks.

The university also offers extracurricular adaptation courses in Mathematics and Political Science, especially for those students who did not receive their first degree from HSE or who do not possess a sufficient knowledge base in these subjects.

At present, the educational units of the programme can be grouped into three major thematic areas, as illustrated in the self-report: Research Methods, Political Management and Russian/Comparative Politics. All three strands have approximately the same weight within the curriculum. Also, students may freely choose one course from the so-called “MAGO-LEGO” pool, which contains more than 60 HSE courses on a large variety of topics. Students may choose a course from a related field or from a completely different subject area, depending on their own preferences and interests.

A substantial percentage of the courses are taught in English and/or in blended learning formats. Frequently, high-profile guest lecturers from foreign universities are invited to teach classes.

Experts' Appraisal

The experts are convinced that the Master's programme in Applied Politics provides students with all personal and professional qualifications required on the Russian labour market for political scientists, or – although the title of the programme may suggest otherwise – for a future career as researchers.

For students more inclined towards research, the School provides excellent opportunities to further develop their skills, as, for instance, in the context of research internships and research seminars, or by becoming involved in one of the School's research groups and labs. Students are constantly encouraged to actively participate in research, to publish their research results and to participate in scientific conferences whenever possible. It comes as no surprise that many graduates of the programme are now enrolled in Ph.D. programmes, both at HSE and at leading universities the US. The new curricular structure with its two separate tracks will certainly contribute to further sharpening the graduates' qualification profiles.

In terms of academic requirements, there is not always a clear difference between the courses at Bachelor's and Master's level, as was confirmed by the focus group analyses with students and also by some of the graduates during the on-site talks. Especially the ones who had received both the Bachelor's and the Master's degree from HSE reported that the Master's courses sometimes lacked complexity and did not always provide the desirable level of in-depth knowledge.

This strong overlap is probably not quite as palpable for students with a Bachelor's degree from other institutions, let alone foreign students. Regardless of that, the School should take measures to further sharpen the academic profile of the Master's programme and to set it more clearly apart from the undergraduate programme. This may include, for example, offering some more advanced elective courses primarily directed at HSE Political Science graduates.

2.4 Master's Programme "Politics. Economics. Philosophy"

Key Data

Unlike the programme in Applied Politics, which has been existing for many years, the programme "Politics. Economics. Philosophy" (in short: PEP) was launched only five years ago. Meanwhile, two classes (about 20 persons) have graduated from the programme, and a total of more than 40 students were enrolled in 2017 (two cohorts including 14 foreign students from 12 countries), the large majority of them on tuition-free, state-funded places. The programme is now taught entirely in English.

In line with its interdisciplinary profile, the programme is open to students of various educational backgrounds. About one third of the student body is made up of HSE graduates in Political Science or other subject disciplines (Economics, International Relations, Philosophy, Law, History etc.).

The PEP programme has a comparatively high average student dropout rate of around 20%, and it takes many students a substantially longer time than the standard two years to graduate. This is mainly attributable to the fact that many students are working part-time, but also to false assumptions about the programme as such (some students did not drop out completely, but transferred to the Applied Politics programme instead).

Intended Learning Outcomes

In the self-report submitted to the experts, the intended learning outcomes of the programme are illustrated by the following quotation from the programme framework:

Goals of the "Politics. Economics. Philosophy" programme:

- 1. Preparing experts for government agencies and non-governmental organizations (companies, the Third Sector) who can develop and implement strategic solutions and participate in political management (the motivation for choosing this Master's programme for such students is the accumulation of social capital)*
- 2. Attracting to the HSE academic Master's programmes the most motivated students willing to engage in interdisciplinary research and capable of continuing their studies at HSE Doctoral programmes or PhD programmes in foreign universities (the motivation for choosing this Master's programme for such students is the accumulation of academic capital)*
- 3. Inculcating contemporary approaches to the organization of higher education in the humanities and social sciences based on the principles of interdisciplinarity and the comprehensive analysis of the current problems of contemporary society and developing interdisciplinary cooperation between HSE faculties.*

[...]

Graduates of the "Politics. Economics. Philosophy" Master's Programme will become specialists in the management of social processes, i.e., taking and implementing fundamental

political decisions beyond (or, more precisely, “above”) the tasks of routine administration and management ... They must be ready to engage in such professional tasks as:

- *Political and economic analysis of developed and implemented government programmes, plans of action, draft regulations, and toolkits*
- *Identifying the interests of political actors at the national and international levels and proposing mechanisms for accommodating the interests of different political actors between themselves and harmonizing them with the political and social and economic aims of political entities and the demands of socioeconomic development*
- *Designing and supporting the implementation of strategic development programmes in the political and socioeconomic spheres*
- *Political analysis of the results of applied economic and sociological studies with the help of qualitative and quantitative methods*
- *Organizing and managing the work of interdisciplinary research, analytic, expert and project teams and organizations and their subdivisions*
- *Designing and conducting collective research projects for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of political programmes and improving the effectiveness of political management.*

On the HSE website, the profile of the programme is outlined as follows:

The mission of our PEP programme is to provide an opportunity for a cohort of bright, ambitious and motivated students to master two basic areas – economics and political science – as well as to broaden their philosophical outlook, develop critical thinking and social communication skills, and enhance their social and academic capital.

The PEP programme is designed for graduates of undergraduate programmes of participating faculties at HSE and other leading universities who aspire to strengthen their intellectual capacity and acquire additional skills, or to master new professional and career tracks. It is intended to provide new opportunities for the most talented young people motivated to absorb new ideas, tools, and techniques developed in the social sciences. It is open to graduates with a solid background in quantitative methods (mathematics, econometrics, computer modelling, etc.) striving to apply them to the most pressing social and economic problems, as well as to young philosophers and social theorists concerned with gaps and controversies in contemporary social sciences.

The programme offers two professional career tracks for its students:

- *Experts and consultants in the field of strategic decision-making in either public bodies or non-governmental organizations (government, ministries, political parties, PR agencies, business analytical centres, NGOs, etc.)*
- *Analysts, researchers and teachers in academia who are motivated to continue their studies in PhD programmes at leading universities in Russia and abroad.*

Experts' Appraisal

From the experts' point of view, the special profile and target group of the PEP programme become very clear from the descriptions. The skills to be acquired by the students, as well as the career trajectories opened up by the programme, are described precisely and in great detail. It also becomes very clear that the programme imparts a qualification at Master's level – not by training narrow specialists, but by broadening the students' knowledge base and intellectual horizons.

The expert panel was particularly impressed by the students and graduates of the programme who took part in the on-campus talks in Moscow. According to them, the programme does achieve its goal of teaching students to approach and analyse a problem from different angles and perspectives. This broad mindset has proved to be a true asset to the graduates in their professional lives. Even though the descriptions of the programme suggest otherwise, PEP graduates do not necessarily pursue a career in the political sphere or in science and research, but work in a wide variety of fields, many of them for commercial companies rather than in the public sector. It may therefore be worthwhile to amend the intended learning outcomes of the programme to include career prospects in business and industry.

Profile and Content of the Programme

In terms of ECTS credits, the three main disciplines of politics, economics and philosophy have approximately the same weight within the curriculum. A fourth block of courses is dedicated primarily to research methods, particularly methods of data analysis. There are also several units dedicated to contemporary Russian politics.

The “general cycle” of courses and the selection of “MAGO-LEGO” courses are the same as described for the Master's programme in Applied Politics (cf. Chapter 2.3). The majority of core courses are compulsory, with a total of only three electives out of which first year students may choose one. Internships and research are another major programme component consisting of weekly research seminars, a term paper and the Master's thesis.

Like all programmes of its kind, the PEP programme has to deal with one key dilemma: it attracts students from very diverse educational backgrounds who do not possess the same level of proficiency in all core disciplines of the programme and often lack part of the knowledge they need to follow the classes. To close these gaps and harmonize the students' entrance qualifications, adaptation courses in mathematics, political science and economics are offered during the first semester.

Like all students at the School, the PEP students are strongly encouraged to actively participate in research, either by means of internships or by joining one of HSE's own research groups and laboratories.

Experts' Appraisal

The experts commend HSE on developing an interdisciplinary Master's programme – a concept for which there is not yet a tradition in Russian higher education. In spite of certain difficulties that have appeared during the initial phase, the experts are quite optimistic regarding the future development of the programme: the on-site talks have left no doubt that the programme contributes substantially to the students' intellectual, personal and professional development, and provides them with a qualification comparable to that of graduates from similar programmes in (Western) Europe. Not surprisingly, the general interest in the programme is now constantly on the rise.

One of the most convincing features of the PEP programme is its strong international profile: first of all, it is closely modelled on European precursors, particularly in the UK. As it is taught exclusively in English, it attracts an increasing number of students from all around the world. Hence, both Russian and foreign students can benefit from a learning experience in multinational, multicultural groups. The programme has also forged co-operative ties with two German universities (Witten/Herdecke and Bayreuth) that offer similar programmes. Student exchange agreements have been signed, and there are further plans for co-operation in research, too. It should also be stressed that numerous visiting lecturers from abroad are invited to the programme on a regular basis.

As already mentioned above, the experts' general impression is that the students actually achieve the intended learning outcomes. By and large, the curriculum is carefully designed and well-tailored to the students' needs, yet the experts see some room for optimization and therefore make the following recommendations for further development:

The philosophy part of the programme seems slightly underdeveloped to the experts compared to the other two main pillars. Hence, HSE should think about enlarging the share of philosophy courses within the curriculum (especially considering that the majority of the students do not have a background in philosophy).

Based on the outcomes of the on-site talks with students and graduates of the PEP programme, the experts also recommend further extending the scope of the extracurricular adaptation courses, as the time reserved for the adaptation phase is apparently not yet fully sufficient for everybody. In addition, a bridging class in philosophy should be offered.

As in many interdisciplinary programmes, students often struggle to connect the different parts of the programme. Hence, more courses should be introduced that bring the three disciplines closer together and demonstrate the ways in which they can benefit from each other. The three fields should be more effectively merged and blended to avoid creating disciplinary "silos" that do not engage in a genuine interdisciplinary dialogue. However, the School already has a clear understanding of these difficulties and has initiated measures to overcome them. The experts appreciate these initiatives and recommend further developing them.

Finally, the School should aim at a more even distribution of student workload across the year, especially in support of those students who have to work part-time.

III. Appendix

1. University's Response to the Expert Report

Teams of the School of political science and the Faculty of social sciences are very grateful for recommendations provided by ZEvA. Some of the mentioned problems have already been recognized (as it has been with teaching languages, certain difficulties in efforts for internationalization, misbalances in teachers' workload). A lot of details have become available through accreditation process, including gaps in subjects of students' surveys (e.g. regarding workload), lack of transparency and reliability in the process of credits/ECTS recognition, insufficiently institutionalized alumni network, etc.

It is obvious that some flaws might be occurring due to information biases and unnecessary complexity of bureaucratic procedures. For example, on page II-6 (section "Increase in outgoing mobility") it is said that "on-site talks have shown that if HSE students go abroad they usually do this in the context of exchange programmes at undergraduate level. *For Master's students there is little or no funding in the form of stipends/scholarships available*, which seems to be a major obstacle". In fact, there is no actual difference in number or quality of support measures, but the given opinion makes us think about improving the availability of information on the mentioned exchange support programs for Master's students, especially those who come from other universities.

The commentaries from ZEvA experts are fair and highly valuable for us and will help us to improve our educational programmes.

With that being said, some comments on programme-related recommendations are provided below.

Bachelor's Programme "Political Science"

The recommendations on the improvement of the Bachelor's Programme (concerning courses on law, IR and Russian politics) are very valuable and reasonable. The need for these improvements has been at least partially recognized by the Academic council of the Programme as well. The following activities are undertaken to address the highlighted problems.

First of all, earlier educational plans included the course "Law" provided by the Law Faculty but subsequently it was substituted for the course "Logic" due to several reasons (one of them was that the course on law didn't meet our expectations with regard to its content). However, current educational plans include a course "Administrative Law" offered by the Faculty of Law which will be obligatory for the students of the "Political Management" track. The content of this course is fully in line with our requirements.

In general, the interaction with other structural departments of NRU HSE is very intensive: a significant part of courses from our educational plans is implemented by other fac-

III Appendix

1 University's Response to the Expert Report

ulties and departments, including the Department of Higher Mathematics, The School of Philosophy, the Faculty of Computer Sciences, the School of Sociology, the Faculty of Economics and so on. As far as the courses in IR are concerned, we have one which is held fully in English. Indeed, we are interested in broadening this part of curriculum, and we are exploring opportunities to do it. A closer cooperation with the Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs is, of course, a possible option. However, the general approach to IR practiced at the Faculty of WE and IR is a bit different from the approach to political science which is traditional to our School and educational programme and which we consider as one of our advantages. The difference is concerned with our reliance on methodological practices of the mainstream international political science, whereas our colleagues from the Faculty of WE and IR are much more practically (policy) oriented. Both approaches have their advantages and drawbacks. We are interested in finding a lecturer from one of the Western universities who could be responsible for the course while sharing our understanding of how the science of IR can be taught and practiced.

Second, the problem with content related to Russian politics on early years of study was acute and this year we have modified our educational plans to mitigate it. Namely, the course specifically on Russian politics ("Contemporary Politics of Russia" by Nikolay Petrov, one of the leading specialists on the topic in Russia and in the world) has been shifted from the 4th to the 2nd year, thus making it one of the courses from the "formation years" of our students. We hope that it might influence their professional interests as well, including the broadening of the research agenda which is open to them for their term papers and general professional development.

Also a new course on the "Administrative Law" mentioned above is important for the better understanding of the legal aspect of Russian politics.

Master's Programme "Politics. Economics. Philosophy"

Recommendations of the ZEvA team rightly point at certain features of the programme, of which some (such as strengthening of inter-disciplinary ties within the programme, as well as regulation of student workload) are already in the focus of the Programme team, while others (extension of adaptation courses and enlarging the share of philosophical component) should be added to its agenda. Independent and professional assessment of the programme is both encouraging and helpful.

Master's Programme "Applied Politics"

We are deeply grateful for the highly professional and thorough expertise provided by the ZEvA team; and we appreciate sincerely its evaluation of the Programme's performance. It encourages us to continue our efforts to improve the Programme. One of the most important directions is reducing the overlap between courses on Bachelor's and Master's levels - that is the major recommendation given to us by ZEvA experts. We believe that the current reform, focused on introducing two specializations within the Programme, will help to solve this problem reasonably effectively and quickly. And we are very thankful to ZEvA experts for supporting our reform strategy, - a very important issue in the Programme's development.