

**The Admission Policy and Procedures to PhD programs at the autonomous organization of education Nazarbayev University**

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## Section 1. Purpose and Application

1.1. These Policy and Procedures to the PhD programs at the autonomous organization of education Nazarbayev University (hereinafter – Policy and Procedures) establish the policy and procedures for the management and compliance during the admission process.

1.2. These Policy and Procedures are applied to the PhD programs (hereinafter – Programs) of the Schools at the autonomous organization of education Nazarbayev University (hereinafter – University) and its applicants applying to Program.

## Section 2. Definitions

2.1. Basic definitions and meanings of the abbreviations and capitalized terms used in these Policy and Procedures are:

2.1.1. **Admissions Committee** – an advisory and consultative body of the University established to be responsible for evaluating and shortlisting applications to the graduate programs of the University;

2.1.2. **Admissions Department** – the unit of the University designated to facilitate admission to the Foundation, undergraduate and graduate programs of the University;

2.1.3. **Admission period** – a set of deadlines for applying to the University, which includes online registration, documents review, evaluation processes and enrollment, which may consist of one or more admissions rounds;

2.1.4. **Admission round** – an admissions term of processes starting from application throughout the enrollment to the Program;

2.1.5. **CGPA** (Cumulative Grade Point Average) – a calculation of the average of all of a student's grades contributing to the degree;

2.1.6. **Conditional admission/enrollment** – a type of admission/enrollment of applicants to the Program with a term or terms specified in the Decision on enrollment;

2.1.7. **ETS** (Educational Testing Service) – a private nonprofit educational testing and assessment organization; administers international tests including the TOEFL;

2.1.8. **External expert** – a representative of other School of the University or a Partner Institution under the relevant Agreement or an internationally recognized university and/or research institute which has relevant resources (intellectual, scientific, methodological, educational, technological, technical, human) and implements its activities in one or several of the following spheres: scientific-research, modern methodology and education technology, development and implementation of educational programs, etc., that is involved in conducting reviews and evaluations of applicants, as well as serving as external readers or evaluators to assure quality assurance;

2.1.9. **GMAT** (Graduate Management Admission Test) – a standardized test used to measure verbal reasoning, quantitative reasoning, analytical writing and



critical thinking skills, developed by GMAC, the Graduate Management Admission Council (USA);

2.1.10. **GRE** (Graduate Record Examinations) – a standardized test used to measure verbal reasoning, quantitative reasoning, analytical writing and critical thinking skills, developed by ETS, the Educational Testing Service (USA);

2.1.11. **IELTS** (International English Language Testing System) – a standardized English proficiency test. The only version of IELTS test accepted within the admission and selection process is Academic IELTS, which is intended for Applicants planning to study in English. IELTS Online test is not accepted within the admission and selection process;

2.1.12. **Personal account** – online service that provides personal space on the University website (admissions.nu.edu.kz) upon registration;

2.1.13. **Program** – PhD program at Nazarbayev University;

2.1.14. **School** – Schools of the Nazarbayev University in which the PhD programs are offered;

2.1.15. **TOEFL** (Test of English as a Foreign Language) – a standardized English proficiency test developed by the Educational Testing Service (ETS). The only version of TOEFL accepted within the admission and selection process is TOEFL iBT test (hereinafter – TOEFL). TOEFL iBT Home Edition is not accepted within the admission and selection process;

2.1.16. **University** – autonomous organization of education Nazarbayev University;

2.1.17. **Zero Year of Graduate Programs** – a two-semester, non-credit bearing, full-time intensive English and refresher course of study for students accepted into the University graduate degree program but who lack the English requirement necessary for immediate entry into the Schools (except the PhD in Business Administration program of the Graduate School of Business).

2.2. Terms and definitions not used in these Policy and Procedures shall be defined by the internal documents of the University.

## **Section 3. Main Provisions**

### **3.1 . Admission Requirements**

3.1.1. Admission to the Program shall be merit based and competitive.

3.1.2. In order to be eligible for inclusion in the selection process for admission to the Program, all applicants shall meet the provisions of these Policy and Procedures.

3.1.3. Minimum admission requirements to the Programs shall be developed by the Schools separately and approved by the decision of the Academic Council upon approval of the Admissions Department before admission period and are not subject to change during admission period.

3.1.4. The Schools cannot set lower requirements, than specified below:

1) The absolute minimum requirement for English language proficiency for admission to a Program is an overall IELTS test score of 6.5, with sub-score



requirements no less than 6.0, or the equivalent TOEFL iBT score as posted on the ETS website;

2) the absolute minimum requirement for English language proficiency for conditional admission to Zero Year of Graduate Programs is an overall IELTS (except IELTS Online test) test score of 5.5, with no more than one sub-score of 5.0, or the equivalent TOEFL iBT (except TOEFL Home Edition) scores as posted on the ETS website;

3) the absolute minimum requirement of the number of subjects taught in English is 70 % out of 100% for applicants who earned their degree in English according to official confirmation by a university of study.

3.1.5. Test certificates are considered valid if their results do not expire by the date of application submission by applicants.

3.1.6. The relevance of the academic and experiential background, and the equivalency and appropriateness of earlier degrees, will be determined by the Admissions Committee.

3.1.7. Transfer credits of applicants are carried out according to Academic Policies and Procedures for graduate programs of the University.

## **3.2 . Application process**

3.2.1. Applicant applying to a Program is required to:

1) complete and upload the online Application form posted in a Personal account;

2) upload to the Personal account scanned copies of documents required in accordance with the minimum admission requirements to a Program and submit the application by the indicated deadline;

3) pay the non-refundable registration fee unless exempted by the Managing Council of the University. The amount of registration fee shall be approved by the Managing Council of the University.

3.2.2. Graduates of higher educational institutions in Kazakhstan, except for graduates of the University, must upload an official electronic report of valid test certificates required by the Programs. The test certificates shall be provided to the University through an electronic version from a Test Administrator with the obligation to submit a scanned copy.

3.2.3. The Admissions Committee and/or Admissions Department may request additional documents when necessary.

3.2.4. Admission period, number of rounds and all deadlines related to admission to the Program are set by the Admissions Department and approved by a Dean of School or his/her designated person and are published on the website of the University.

3.2.5. All submitted documents shall be in English or with notarized English translation, if other not specified in the minimum admission requirements.

3.2.6. Applicants may apply only for two graduate level programs offered by the University in one academic year. In case of admission to both programs, applicants must choose only one program.



3.2.7. Submission of a complete application package does not guarantee admission to the Program.

3.2.8. Providing false and/or incomplete information in a personal account will result in exclusion from the selection process or dismissal from the University in case of enrollment. Applicants who falsify documents or violate test/interview procedure requirements shall be disqualified from the selection process or dismissed from the University in the case of enrollment and are not allowed to apply to University programs of any level for any type of funding in the future.

3.2.9. Final year Master's or Doctor of Medicine (or equivalent) Applicants recommended for admission must provide scanned copies of their Master's or Doctor of Medicine (or equivalent) degree diplomas and transcripts, except those, who are subject to conditional enrollment according to Clause 3.5.17.

3.2.10. Applicants recommended for admission must verify their final transcripts of a Master's degree or Doctor of Medicine diploma (or equivalent) based on one of the following options prior to the enrollment:

1) official hard copy sent directly to the Admissions Department via postmail by previous institution of study;

2) official soft copy sent directly to the Admissions Department email address from corporate email address of the previous institution of study;

3) the final transcript verified by the official digital credential services, provided to the Admissions Department's email directly by the service;

4) diplomas and transcripts of graduates of the University should be verified by the University system;

In case of impossibility to fulfill the above-mentioned options due to circumstances of force majeure, the following options can be considered:

1) provision of a scan copy of a certificate on nostrification of a diploma issued by the legal authorities of the Republic of Kazakhstan;

2) provision of a scan copy of an apostille document of a foreign educational institution;

3) provision of a scan copy of notarized diploma and transcript.

4) applicant provides a hard copy of an official final transcript to the Admissions Department. The original hard copy will be returned to an applicant/student upon verification by the Admissions Department.

3.2.11. Decisions of the Admissions Committee are not subject to appeal.

### **3.3. Admissions Committee**

3.3.1. The Admissions Committee is authorized to review, evaluate applications and make recommendations with respect to admissions decisions.

3.3.2. The Admissions Committee procedures must comply with the internal documents on conflict of interests and confidentiality.

3.3.3. The Admissions Committee members are responsible for ensuring that the admission procedures comply with these Policy and Procedures and the minimum admission requirements defined in clause 3.1.3. of these Policy and Procedures.



3.3.4. Each program should have its own Admissions Committee and Secretary.

3.3.5. The Admissions Committee is composed of faculty members from the School affiliated to the Program and should include one External expert or more.

3.3.6. The total number of voting members of the Admissions Committee shall not less than 3 (three). In addition to voting members, the Admissions Committee may include non-voting members. In the case of a tie vote, the Chairperson of the Admissions Committee or his/her designated person makes a decision.

3.3.7. The activities of the Admissions Committee are managed by the Chairperson of the Admissions Committee (hereinafter – the Chairperson). Membership of the Admissions Committee, including the Chairperson, shall be approved by the decision of the Provost of the University or his/her designated person.

3.3.8. The Admissions Committee may have a Vice Chairperson. The Vice Chairperson shall be appointed by the Decision of the Provost of the University or his/her designated person. In the absence of the Chairperson of the Admissions Committee, his/her powers shall be exercised by the Vice Chairperson.

3.3.9. The Secretary of the Admissions Committee shall be appointed by the Decision of the Provost of the University or his/her designated person. The Secretary is not a member of the Admission Committee.

3.3.10. In the absence of the Secretary of the Admission Committee, the Chairperson of the Admission Committee or his/her designated person upon consultation with the Dean of the School appoints the replacement Secretary with indication of such replacement in the Admission Committee meeting minutes.

3.3.11. The Secretary of the Admissions Committee is responsible for:

- 1) accuracy of information containing Minutes of the Admissions Committee meeting minutes;
- 2) coordination of activities of the Admissions Committee, including organization of the Admissions Committee meetings;
- 3) execution of Minutes of the Admissions Committee meetings;
- 4) invitation of shortlisted applicants to the interview;
- 5) maintaining applicants' application packages and interview evaluation results (where applicable);
- 6) close cooperation and interaction with the Admissions Department on admission issues;
- 7) ensuring the match of language of Minutes of the Admissions Committee meetings;
- 8) collecting signatures and registration of the meeting Minutes of the Admissions Committee ;
- 9) ensuring the safety of Minutes until being transferred to the University Joint Archive;
- 10) implementation of other activities in accordance with the instructions of the Admissions Committee and its Chairperson.

3.3.12. Admission to the University programs is based on the principle of meritocracy, which implies the selection of applicants on the basis of their academic





achievements, providing everyone with equal opportunities at admission, and facilitating the selection of the most promising and talented students without the influence of external factors. Each applicant for admission to the Programs shall be evaluated individually, fairly, comprehensively and consistently by members of the Admissions Committee. In this regard, the Admissions Committee members shall develop and adopt the most effective methodology/process/selection criteria, which will identify applicants whose life experiences, personal attributes, past academic achievements and career goals conform to those of the Schools and who are most likely to contribute to and benefit from, the Schools learning environment.

3.3.13. Methodology/process/selection criteria must be applied equitably during the selection processes and should be attached to the Minutes of the first meeting of Admissions Committee for the correspondent academic year.

### **3.4. Admissions Committee Meetings**

3.4.1. Meetings of the Admissions Committee shall be held as needed during the admissions period with a quorum, defined as the simple majority of the Admissions Committee voting members present.

3.4.2. The Admissions Committee may take votes and make decisions in the meeting through video or audio conferences or in other interactive ways of communication. Such participation shall be recognized in determining the quorum. The means of interactive participation of a voting member of the Admissions Committee shall be indicated in the minutes of the meeting.

3.4.3. Decisions of the Admissions Committee shall be taken by simple majority of the votes of those voting and counted in determining the quorum. The Chairperson has the deciding vote in cases of tied votes. In cases in which the Admissions Committee has a Vice Chairperson, in the absence of the Chairperson, tied votes shall be resolved by the decision of the Vice Chairperson.

3.4.4. Decisions of the Admissions Committee are final and recorded in the Minutes of the meetings by the Secretary of the Admissions Committee according to the specified requirements for preparing Minutes of meeting at the University. The Minutes of the meetings shall include a ranking of all recommended applicants, applicants placed on a waiting list, rejected applicants. The Admissions Department is allowed to exclude from a ranking the applicants who refused the admission offer or to participate in competition for any reason, including those who did not participate in the orientation week. The working language of the Admissions Committee meetings is English. The Minutes in English and Kazakh shall be signed by the Chairperson and the Secretary of the Admissions Committee or their designee(s).

3.4.5. The Minutes of the Admissions Committee meetings are confidential and are not the subject for dissemination to the third parties, except for employees of the University in the frame of their duties.

3.4.6. All the Minutes of the Admissions Committee meetings are duly stitched, numbered, scanned by the Secretary of the Admissions Committee, registered and transferred to the University Joint Archive.



3.4.7. Scanned copies of the signed Minutes shall be provided by the Secretary to the Admissions Department prior to the start of an academic year according to the academic calendar of a year of enrollment.

3.4.8. The Admissions Committee members and non-voting members, who participate in the selection process (for example, interviewing), must be familiarized with the Regulations for managing documents and information containing confidential data at the autonomous organization of education Nazarbayev University and with the Policy and Procedure on Conflicts of Interest.

### **3.5. Admission terms and procedure**

3.5.1. Applicants meeting the following eligibility criteria can take part in the competition:

- 1) Students in the final year of Master's or Doctor of Medicine program (or equivalent) of higher education institutions;
- 2) Applicants who have graduated Master's or Doctor of Medicine program (or equivalent) from higher education institutions;
- 3) Minimum admission requirements set by the Schools.

3.5.2. The admission process to the Program within one admission round consists of the following stages:

1) First Stage – the Admissions Department reviews application packages in the Personal account and checks the compliance with the minimum entry requirements for the Program according to the minimum admission requirements to these Policy and Procedures.

The Admissions Department provides the Admissions Committees with information on applicants' status on compliance with the entry requirements and complete package of documents before an applicant can progress to the next stage of the selection process.

2) Second Stage – the members of the Admissions Committee review application packages that meet admission requirements according to the methodology developed by the Admissions Committee. The number of Admissions Committee members evaluating application packages is specified in the methodology.

3) Third Stage – the members of the Admissions Committee conduct an interview with shortlisted applicants. Applicants can be interviewed either in person or via videoconference by the Admissions Committee. If necessary, the Admissions Committee may assign interviewers who are not members of the Admissions Committee: representatives of Schools, the University alumni, external experts or representatives of a strategic partner. The number of designated interviewers for interviewing applicants shall not be less than 2 (two).

4) Fourth Stage – the Admissions Committee members create a ranking of applicants based on the Second stage and Third stage results and make recommendations on admission. The weight of each stage is left to be decided by the admission committee. The University graduates with honors can be recommended for admission to a relevant discipline without placing into ranking. Relevancy of a discipline is determined by the Admissions Committee.



3.5.3. Incomplete applications can be progressed to the Second and Third stages only upon the Admissions Committee's decision otherwise should be rejected by the Admissions Committee.

3.5.4. Members of the Admission Committee cannot participate in evaluation of the applicants to those whom they give recommendation letters according to the developed Methodology.

3.5.5. After conducting a selection process, the Admissions Committee recommends successful applicants for admission to the Programs unconditionally or on a conditional basis.

3.5.6. Applications not progressed to enrollment are rejected by the Admissions Committee.

3.5.7. In case of impossibility to arrange/take either of required entry examinations due to circumstances of force majeure the Admissions Committee is entitled to replace main exams indicated with other exam alternatives. In doing so, the Admissions Committee develops and approves effective selection methodology and evaluation criteria by indicating in the Admissions Committee meeting's minutes.

3.5.8. Applications not progressed will be rejected by the Admission Committee.

3.5.9. Applicants recommended for admission to the Program and placed on a waiting list or rejected applicants will be notified via electronic transmission by the Admissions Department within 10 (ten) working days of the Admissions Committee's decision.

3.5.10. The Admissions Committee shall place the applicants who fully meet admission requirements of a relevant Program and passed competition stages according to clause 3.5.2. of these Policy and Procedures, but who were not admitted to the Programs due to limits in the number of available places on a waiting list. Applicants' order on a waiting list should correspond to the final ranking order. It is strongly recommended that the number of applicants on a waiting list of each program is not less than 20% of all eligible applicants for admission to a program. Should a place in the Programs become available prior to the first day of classes according to the Academic Calendar of a year of enrollment, it will be offered by the Admissions Department to the applicants in the waiting list, in order of rank, by notification on admission. Admission of the international applicants on the waiting list shall be considered individually in accordance with the duration of obtaining a visa to Kazakhstan.

3.5.11. Applicants recommended for admission by the Admissions Committee who received notifications on admission must officially notify the University by accepting or refusing the admission offer in accordance with dates written in an admission offer by filling the Enrollment confirmation form in their Personal accounts. Otherwise, applicants will not be enrolled in a program and admission offers will be sent to the next most highly ranked applicants from a waiting list.

3.5.12. Enrollment to a Program shall be formalized by the decision of the Provost of the University or his/her designated person based on recommendation of



the Admissions Committee, approved quotas for allocated source of funding and Memos from Schools, which specify attendance of applicants on Orientation week.

3.5.13. The Decision on Enrollment shall specify the source of funding for each admitted applicant.

The sources of funding shall be determined as follows:

- 1) the state educational order;
- 2) a specific scholarship and/or sponsorship.

3.5.14. Applicants enrolled to the Zero Year of Graduate Program students are considered as students of the Program to which they were conditionally enrolled. In order to change from conditional status, students must successfully complete the Zero Year of Graduate Programs by passing all English and content courses in accordance with Academic Policies and Procedures for the Zero Year of Graduate Programs of the University.

3.5.15. If the Zero Year of Graduate Programs student fails to achieve the required passing grades and/or the attendance requirement, he/she shall be dismissed from the University in accordance with the internal rules of the University.

3.5.16. Zero Year of Graduate Programs students are accepted with the expectation that they will continue to the Program to which they applied and for which they were interviewed. Students will not be allowed to change their Program of study during Zero Year of Graduate Programs.

3.5.17. Besides conditional enrollment associated with the Zero Year of Graduate Programs, the conditional enrollment can be practiced in some exceptional cases upon approval of the Provost or his/her designated person. The Provost or his/her designated person retains the right to deny the conditional enrollment. The Admissions Committee recommends to the Provost or his/her designated person for approval of the conditional enrollment in the following cases:

1) The applicant indicated in subclause 1) of clause 3.5.1 of these Policy and Procedures including students of the University recommended for admission may be enrolled conditionally based on evidence from graduating university that an applicant has completed an educational program and an applicant expects formal issuance of the final transcript and/or diploma by a specified date. In that case, the decision on enrollment shall prescribe the period of time within which an applicant shall provide the necessary documents to the University.

2) Students of the University in their final summer semester of study may be considered for conditional admission to the Program without the diploma and/or official final transcript based on the memo from a School of study of the University indicating that the applicant is eligible to graduate and fulfills the program requirements and will receive his/her diploma in the next degree conferral. These applicants can be considered for admission with the condition that they submit the final transcript and diploma by the end of the first Fall semester according to the Academic calendar of a Program of the year of enrollment.

The minutes of the Admissions Committee will record:

- 1) Reasons for granting conditional enrollment;
- 2) Timeline for the fulfillment of terms of conditional enrollment, which cannot be more than one year from the date of enrollment.



To change the status of a conditionally enrolled student, all terms must be fulfilled. In the event of failure to fulfill the terms of conditional enrollment, the student will be dismissed from the Program based on initiation of the process by the School. The Schools and Admissions Department must notify each other of the fulfillment or non-fulfillment of the conditions of admission. In case of non-fulfillment the School has to follow the procedures specified in the Regulations on Leave of Absence, Dismissal and Voluntary Withdrawal for students of the autonomous organization of education Nazarbayev University.

3.5.18. Applicants who have already earned a PhD degree under the Republic of Kazakhstan state fund and/or Bolashak international scholarship are not eligible for enrollment under the “state educational order” to the Program with or without Zero Year of Graduate Programs.

3.5.19. The number of admitted students shall not exceed the number of places allocated to the Program.

3.5.20. Awarding applicants the University grants, scholarship shall be carried out according to the procedure established by the internal documents of the University.

3.5.21. The Admissions Committee in cooperation with the Admissions Department shall resolve issues not regulated by these Policy and Procedures independently and resolution of these issues must be included in the Admission Committee meeting minutes.

3.5.22. Application stages that are not indicated in Clause 3.5.2., additional sub-stages and methods adopted by the Schools have to be included in the minimum admission requirements mentioned in clause 3.1.3. of these Policy and Procedures.

3.5.23. All documents and other materials submitted by or for applicants in connection with their application for admission to the Programs become the property of the University and are subject to the University’s rules and regulations concerning confidentiality.

3.5.24. All information related to the selection process of applicants is confidential.

#### **Section 4. Waiver**

4.1. The Provost of the University is eligible to waive any provision of these Policy and Procedures.

#### **Section 5. Temporary Provisions**

5.1. Not applicable

#### **Section 6. Revision**

6.1. These Policy and Procedures to the Program shall be reviewed within one year after approval and completion of the admission round and revised if necessary.



## Section 7. Related Documents

7.1. Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On the Status of Nazarbayev University, Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools and Nazarbayev Fund” dated January 19, 2011 No. 394-IV.

7.2. Charter of the autonomous organization of education Nazarbayev University approved by the decision of the Supreme Board of Trustees dated 18 April 2013 #2.

7.3. Policy for preparing some internal administrative documents on core activities and students contingent in the autonomous organization of education Nazarbayev University, approved by the Executive Vice President dated 29 September 2022, #83-Н/К.

7.4. Procedures for preparing some internal administrative documents on core activities and students contingent in the autonomous organization of education Nazarbayev University, approved by the Executive Vice President dated 29 September 2022, #83-Н/К.

