



**COLLEGE OF
SOCIAL SCIENCES**
KIMEP UNIVERSITY

A photograph of three students in a library. A woman in a white sweater is in the center, holding an open book and looking at it. To her left, a man in a blue hoodie is also looking at the book. To her right, another man in a blue hoodie is looking at a book titled 'KIMEP TIMES'. They are standing in an aisle between bookshelves filled with books. Large windows in the background let in bright light.

KIMEP UNIVERSITY TO CREATE A REVITALIZED DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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THE CHAIR OF THE NEW DEPARTMENT SHARES HIS VISION

Dr. Nygmet Ibadildin defended his Ph.D. in Political Science at the University of Tampere, School of Management (Finland) in 2011. Dr. Ibadildin's research interests entail the political economy of natural resources, institutional development, post-Soviet institutions, and discourse analysis. He is currently teaching international relations at KIMEP University and holds the position of Chair of the Department of Political Science and International Relations. Dr. Ibadildin shares his thoughts about the restructuring of the department and his experience as a pillar of the KIMEP community.



1. What is your vision for the new Department of Political Science and International Relations? How will the updates to the department benefit students?

The Department of Political Science and International Relations envisions a future where our graduates emerge as influential leaders and scholars who shape the global, regional, and local landscape through their expertise, ethical leadership, and commitment to social justice, freedom, and equality. We aspire to be recognized internationally as a leading academic institution in the fields of international relations and political science, renowned for our excellence in teaching, research, and community engagement.

2. How should students decide to study Political Science versus International Relations at KIMEP?

I think the choice to study Political Science or International Relations depends upon the interests and inclinations of the students and their future career plans. If a student wishes to pursue domestic politics, then a Political Science major may be a better fit while those interested in an international path will want to pursue International Relations. Students can take a double major if they want to be prepared in all aspects of both disciplines.

3. What distinguishes KIMEP University from other universities in Kazakhstan and Central Asia in the fields of international relations and political science?

KIMEP is truly a unique university in Kazakhstan as it creates a friendly, safe, and creative atmosphere for all the students. It has the highest academic standards and we have had professors in the Department from all over the world like Stanford, Oxford, Sorbonne, and Rutgers. Our graduates have gone on to study at LSE, Harvard, Australian National University, and Kings College of London.

4. You have been teaching at KIMEP University since 2002. Why would you recommend KIMEP University to prospective students?

Your student years are one of the most important times in your life. You make important choices regarding your profession, interests, networks, and environment. KIMEP will change you and help you improve in terms of maturity, responsibility, and learning skills. You will be involved in many academic and research activities along with a vibrant student life.

A WORD FROM THE DEAN OF THE COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Dr. Gerald Pech is Dean of the College of Social Sciences and Associate Professor in the Department of Economics. He received his Ph.D. from Ruhr- University Bochum and held teaching and research positions at numerous universities in Germany, Scotland, Ireland, and Bulgaria. His fields of specialization are applied game theory and the economic analysis of institutions. As Dean of the College of Social Sciences, he has overseen the development of the new Department of Political Science and International Relations.



1. Tell us about the curriculum for the new Bachelor in Political Science degree and the opportunity for students to have a double major in Political Science and International Relations. Why would a prospective student want to study Political Science?

The new Bachelor in Political Science (BAPS) shares many features of the existing Bachelor in International Relations (BIR) but it also focuses on the qualitative and quantitative analysis of domestic politics. For students who want to continue with the established program in International Relations but are interested in aspects of Political Science, there will be an option to do a "double major" by choosing their electives so that they simultaneously fulfill the requirements of the BIR and the BAPS programs.

Why study Political Science? It is important for any government to understand how policies win public support and how to effectively communicate with voters. A degree in Political Science opens the door to government departments, international organizations, research institutes, or political consultancy and it also provides a solid foundation for further studies.

2. What distinguishes KIMEP University from other universities in Kazakhstan and Central Asia in the fields of international relations and political science?

At KIMEP, students will study in programs that are comparable to a major in Political Science or in International Relations at leading US universities such as John Hopkins University, UCLA, or the University of Southern California. Like all programs at KIMEP University, students are given choice within their programs and they are encouraged to develop critical thinking skills.

3. You have chosen a model similar to the ones used at Johns Hopkins University for the new department. What motivated your choice? What benefits do these changes provide to students?

John Hopkins University is a leading American university that offers world-class programs in Political Science and International Relations (there it is called "International Studies"). At John Hopkins University students can also double major in Political Science and International Relations. At KIMEP, we want to offer our students the same choice of programs because we feel that this way we can best align our offerings with students' preferences in terms of their future careers.





STRUCTURE OF BACHELOR'S OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND BACHELOR'S OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS MAJORS

Students can choose to major in Political Science, International Relations, or both. The courses for each program are detailed below:

Required Subjects in Political Science	Required Subjects in International Relations
Comparative Politics	Theories of International Relations
Political Analysis	History of Diplomacy 1648 to 1815
Data Analysis for Political Science	History of Diplomacy 1815 to 1945
Introduction to Statistics	Diplomatic and Consular Service
Politics and Institutions of Kazakhstan	International Institutions and Law
Introduction to Political Theory	Foreign Policy of Kazakhstan
Political Science Electives	International Relations Electives
Political Sociology	International Trade
Public Opinion and Polling	Security Studies
Political Parties, Campaigns and Elections	Environmental Politics, Development and Global Governance

Opportunities for double major: Students studying in the BIR program can obtain a double major in International Relations and Political Science by selecting six required subjects in the other field.

DISTINGUISHED KIMEP FACULTY SHARE THEIR THOUGHTS ON THE NEW DEPARTMENT

Dr. Assylzat Karabayeva joined KIMEP University in Fall 2023 as an Assistant Professor. She earned her Ph.D. in International Relations from the International University of Japan. Dr. Karabayeva has also studied and worked in the US, Switzerland, and the UK. Her research interests include Central Asian regionalism, the World Trade Organization (WTO), and political, economic, and social transformations in Eurasia.



1. How will the new structure of the Department of Political Science and International Relations benefit KIMEP students?

Starting this year, the Department of Political Science and International Relations is introducing a new bachelor's degree program in Political Science. This is in addition to the existing bachelor's program in International Relations, which has been successfully implemented. The curriculum of these programs has been enriched with new, pertinent courses, including Politics and Institutions of Kazakhstan, Political Analysis, Public Opinion and Polling, and Data Analysis. Students will be offered a great opportunity to choose a double major without being restrained in choosing the most interesting courses for them. New faculty members from leading Western universities are joining us to provide high-quality education, conduct innovative research, and foster critical thinking and analytical skills among our students.

2. How will KIMEP's education prepare students to be future leaders in international relations and political science in Central Asia?

In Central Asia, few universities offer comprehensive courses covering political philosophy, comparative politics, populist studies, and ethics in international affairs. KIMEP's Political Science and International Relations Department stands out as one of these institutions. These courses are indispensable for understanding and addressing contemporary challenges, and KIMEP excels in providing them. The department boasts a faculty comprised of highly qualified experts in their respective fields, whose extensive networks and mentorship opportunities greatly benefit students embarking on their early career journeys.



Dr. Nurseit Niyazbekov holds a Ph.D. in Politics and an M.Sc. in Sociology from the University of Oxford and earned his Bachelor's degree from KIMEP University. His research interests include political culture, social movements, post-Soviet democratization, Central Asian affairs, and protest mobilization. Previously, he was a visiting research fellow at the University of Michigan and Science Po. He frequently consults international media and think tanks on matters of Central Asian affairs.



1. What advantages will the new Political Science degree curriculum offer students?

In line with President Tokayev's vision of building a 'New Kazakhstan' which is based on the principles of a more responsive and hearing state, the new Political Science degree aims to accomplish two goals simultaneously: educate more politically engaged citizens and prepare professional cadres for the Kazakh government. Both goals require in-depth knowledge of how political institutions function vis-a-vis each other and civil society. It is not just the knowledge, but also the skills that the program will develop in students to adapt to rapidly changing domestic and foreign political challenges and opportunities.

2. Given your breadth of international experiences, how would you describe what makes KIMEP's political science and international relations offerings distinctive?

KIMEP's Department of Political Science and International Relations is extremely well-known and well-integrated in the field of Eurasian Studies both inside and outside of Kazakhstan. Students and faculty regularly benefit from guest lectures and research talks by distinguished scholars and policymakers specializing in political developments in Kazakhstan and beyond. In addition, the department community enjoys access to major global databases of state-of-the-art research that enables the production of world-class publications. Due to such a rich resource base and expertise, our department frequently hosts visiting scholars from the world's leading universities that advance the department's scholarship.

Dr. Xiaotong Zhang comes from China. He holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from the Université Libre de Bruxelles (Belgium). He joined KIMEP University this year as both a full-time professor and director of KIMEP's China and Central Asian Studies Center (CCASC). Dr. Zhang has extensive experience teaching in China and is currently working on a book project titled China's New Economic Statecraft. In the interview below, he talks about his choice to join KIMEP and his vision regarding teaching international relations and political science.



1. Why did you choose to join KIMEP University? Why is it important for international relations and political science students to have a strong understanding of China and how will your expertise help students achieve this?

The reason I chose KIMEP is because of its central location in Central Asia. Geopolitics is one of my favorite research subjects, and Kazakhstan is a country with multi-vector relationships with all the major players in the world, including Russia, the United States, the European Union, China, Turkey, and many others. I find this to be a crossroads of cultural, religious, political, commercial, and people-to-people exchanges. So, my academic interest really prompted me to choose KIMEP. Secondly, KIMEP is very international. They have world-class faculty members, which provide me with an ideal working environment where I can easily converse with colleagues from around the world.

The central research subject of international relations and political science focuses on war and peace. The importance of understanding China for our students stems from its status as a major country whose policies and development trajectory have significant implications for global peace and security prospects. Moreover, as the world's second-largest economy, China wields considerable influence over the sustainability of global development.

My research areas encompass geopolitics, economic diplomacy, and China's external relations with other major countries, particularly with the United States and the European Union. Additionally, I have amassed many years of practical experience. This expertise enables me to offer students deep insights into China's domestic politics and foreign policy. I have numerous case studies, based on my own experiences, to share with students. This unique blend of practical and academic knowledge serves as a valuable asset for students aiming to better understand China's role in world affairs.

2. What advantages does KIMEP's China and Central Asian Studies Center (CCASC) provide to students of the Department of Political Science and International Relations?

The China & Central Asia Studies Center (CCASC) was launched in 2017 by the College of Social Sciences at KIMEP University. The center primarily focuses on the growing influence of China in Central Asia, keeping an eye on the unfolding events and political processes across the broader Eurasian region. CCASC offers students numerous opportunities to study alongside renowned scholars, serve as research assistants for visiting scholars, and participate in a variety of public lectures and roundtables on topics such as US-China relations, the Russia-Ukraine War, the Belt and Road Initiative, the digital economy, and climate change. Equally important, CCASC serves as a platform for research excellence, enabling students to collaborate with faculty members to enhance their research capabilities.



UPDATES FOR KIMEP'S DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

- The Department of Political Science and International Relations offers:
 - Bachelor of International Relations,
 - Master of International Relations,
 - Joint degree, Master program in Central and East European, Russian and Eurasian Studies,
 - Beginning in Fall 2024, a Bachelor program in Political Science.
- The programs in International Relations train experts and aspiring leaders in the international arena to take on challenging positions as diplomats, consular agents, international affairs analysts, and advertising specialists.
- The program in Political Science prepares graduates for roles as political analysts, political advisers, political consultants, and in the field of public policy.
- All programs offer internship opportunities in ministries, the cabinet office, and the Akimat.
- The Master's program trains students to become proficient researchers.
- The China and Central Asian Studies Center, which is closely connected to the Department, offers the opportunity to join a vibrant academic environment with frequent workshops on topical events and high-profile visitors and guest speakers.
- Students of the department can take advantage of international exchange opportunities with leading universities throughout the world and benefit from studying at KIMEP University where there is a large international student population.

KIMEP ALUMNI PERSPECTIVES ON THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Gauhar Zhumadilda graduated from KIMEP in 2022 with a Bachelor of International Relations. She has experience working in the NGO sector as a student intern with The Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia, in government via the E.embassy of Canada in Kazakhstan, and now in business as a Senior KYC (Know Your Customer) AML (Anti-Money Laundering) Analyst with Citi Bank.



1. How did your KIMEP education in International Relations prepare you to be successful in the various industries you have worked in (NGOs, government, and business)?

I am just at the beginning of my career so I would not yet say that I am a very successful person, but I can certainly say that a KIMEP education in International Relations provides a solid academic background needed to become a good political scientist or diplomat while also fostering essential soft skills. My classes helped develop my critical thinking skills and advance my research and writing skills, which were crucial during my work within NGOs, government, and the business sectors. In addition, during our classes, we focused on enhancing our presentation, public speaking, teamwork, and leadership skills, which also played a vital role in being selected to work in these industries. Academic internship classes, guest lectures, and workshops by alumni and prospective employers enhanced the overall learning experience and contributed to my adaptability and success in multifaceted professional scenarios.

2. Having graduated from KIMEP, what advice would you have for a prospective student who wants to join the Department of Political Science and International Relations?

For a prospective student aiming to join the Department of Political Science and International Relations at KIMEP, I would suggest maintaining curiosity for global affairs, actively engaging in discussions, and seeking opportunities for internships or extracurricular activities—not limited to international relations alone. Building a strong foundation in both theoretical knowledge and practical skills will enhance your learning experience and future career prospects. I strongly recommend working on quantitative skills because, in real life, you cannot entirely bypass being proficient in math, data analysis, and Excel. It would also be beneficial to establish connections with professors and peers, as networking can offer valuable insights, mentorship, and potential collaborations. Finally, staying open to diverse perspectives and continuously refining analytical and critical thinking skills can contribute to a well-rounded education.



Islam Ishmukhametov is an adjunct lecturer in the International Relations department. Islam has a Bachelor's Degree from KIMEP University in International Relations and an International Master's in Global Development and Local Creativities from the University of Glasgow. Before teaching, he worked at the American Chamber of Commerce, a foreign NGO dealing with various business issues that international global companies face in Kazakhstan. He also was a consultant for a Spanish start-up in Barcelona, advising them on how to become more global and expand into the European markets. Islam's research interests focus on global development and international relations, creative economies, and start-up ecosystems in developing countries.



1. How did your time at KIMEP prepare you to be successful in the field of international relations?

KIMEP University played a tremendous role in my professional development in the field of international relations. First of all, I received a well-structured, basic education on the essence of relations between nation-states, a very broad theoretical framework, and extensive information about regional political issues in Central Asia. One thing that I adore about KIMEP is the student-centric educational approach and the constant availability to discuss and sometimes even challenge the opinion of the instructors and professors. KIMEP significantly contributed to developing my critical thinking, my passion for seeking more information, and my tolerance and respect for opposing opinions. These soft and hard skills eventually allowed me to work in foreign companies and study in the best European universities. I have never experienced my KIMEP bachelor education being outmatched or challenged by my international colleagues or peers.

2. You have been teaching international relations at KIMEP University since 2022. How does KIMEP's educational model differ from other universities?

As I already mentioned, KIMEP University constantly underlines the importance of students' opinions and appreciates extra-curricular activities. The relationship between course instructors and students is not based on paternalistic, patron-client relations as, unfortunately, it is at many state universities in Kazakhstan. Students are not afraid to express their opinions and always are motivated to create a unique and well-supported argument. Such an approach is very crucial in the social sciences, especially in International Relations. Now as an instructor at KIMEP, I am proud to see my students create new ideas, always critically analyze the given information, and ask questions.

Another element of KIMEP's student-centric approach is student responsibility. Starting from day one, Kimepians are learning to be responsible, self-sustainable, and free-thinking. They are not restricted by the will of the group on which classes to take, what studies to focus on, and how to act within the academic environment. The ability to be independent in thought and action is very hard to learn and I believe the KIMEP environment is a very good training field in this regard.

A WORD FROM KIMEP'S VICE PRESIDENT OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Dr. Damian Riviez has been KIMEP University's Vice President of Academic Affairs since 2022. He has a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership and Administration from the State University of New York - Buffalo (USA) and extensive higher education leadership experience. As Vice President of Academic Affairs, he oversees the development and implementation of academic programs, including the restructuring of the Department of Political Science and International Relations. He shares his thoughts on KIMEP's latest initiative:



1. Why did KIMEP University decide to restructure this department?

KIMEP has always been the leader in academic programming in Kazakhstan. As nation-states struggle to address the economic and political challenges of peace, KIMEP wants to produce graduates who can demonstrate moral and ethical leadership in influencing positive, peaceful change. In order to do so, we believe an emphasis needs to be placed on global scenario learning and modeling best practices in diplomatic applications. Our graduates will be able to demonstrate sharp acumen in navigating future political turbulence.

2. What distinguishes KIMEP's new Department of Political Science and International Relations from other similar academic departments in Kazakhstan and Central Asia?

KIMEP believes in open discourse among stakeholders when difficult economic and political challenges arise. Presently, the geopolitical climate in the region is tenuous at best and we can expect to see further turbulence as regional nation-states grapple with identity in forging their way into the future. We believe our values of integrity and openness to change position our graduates to be major influencers of peaceful change in the future.



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