

ALIGN
ACHIEVING AND CHECKING THE ALIGNMENT BETWEEN ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES AND QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORKS



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NATIONAL REPORT

ON TEMPUS PROJECT
«ALIGNING ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES AND
QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEMS WITH
EUROPEAN AND NATIONAL QUALITY
FRAMEWORKS»



Russia, 2017

National Report

Russia, 2017

PART 1

ALIGNING ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES AND QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEMS WITH EUROPEAN AND NATIONAL QUALITY FRAMEWORKS

Preface

A summary statement on the EU context of the project,

The Align Project funded by the European Union, was implemented as a concerted action of 25 participating institutions in 8 countries. The parties involved represented educational institutions, student bodies, quality assurance agencies and employers, thus ensuring a multifaceted approach to programme alignment and enhancing the aftereffect of the project implementation. The cooperative actions and fair contribution of every participating party were beneficial for all the stakeholders involved and enacted qualitative and quantitative changes in the work of the educational institutions.

The Russian participants of the ALIGN project would like to express sincere gratitude to the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) for giving an excellent opportunity to participate in the ALIGN project and for funding important events, travelling, visiting HEIs and other organizations, and performing different activities. We are greatly acknowledged to the European partners for training our staff members, sharing knowledge and experience, making external evaluation of the alignment of the 'pilot' academic programmes learning outcomes and quality assurance processes, giving comments on the programmes' strengths and weaknesses, and specifying areas for improvement.

The Report consists of two main parts and annexes. The first part discloses the aims of Alignment, its benefits and key challenges. It also describes the evidence of excellence and good practices in achieving Alignment, gives recommendations for strategic development, and provides references to key resources and primary contacts. The second part of the Report presents a summary account of the work and activities in the framework of ALIGN project carried out by project participants in Russia. It summarizes the Peer Review Process, including the review of documentation, site visit, report and action plan, includes the indicators for checking of Alignment. The findings of the Peer Review and impact statements are also presented.

1.1 Introduction

The ALIGN project 'Achieving and Checking the Alignment between academic programmes and Qualification Frameworks' is a three-year multi-country project, under the Governance Reform, EACEA N 35/2012, 6th call National Priorities for Joint Projects action. The project number is 543901-TEMPUS-1-2013-1AM-TEMPUS-JPGR 2013-5500. The project runs from December, 2013 to October, 2017 and is funded by the European Commission.

The project is managed by Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences (Armenia) with partners: CEENQA, Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology (Ireland), Koblenz-Landau University (Germany), Adam Mickiewicz University (Poland), Bath Spa University (Great Britain), KU Leuven University in Gent (Belgium), as well as a number of Higher Education Institutions, Quality Assurance agencies, employers' organizations, student associations and Ministries of education and science in Armenia, Russia and Ukraine. The list of project partners include:

Higher education institutions

- Adam Mickiewicz University, Poland
- Armenian National Students' Association, Armenia
- Bath Spa University, United Kingdom
- Institute of Art, Design and Technology, Ireland

- Katholieke Hogeschool Sint-Lieven, Germany
- Khmelnytsky National University, Ukraine
- Koblenz-Landau University, Germany
- Moscow State Humanitarian University, Russia
- Northern (Arctic) Federal University, Russia
- Sumy State University, Ukraine
- T. Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Ukraine
- Volga State University of Technology, Russia
- Yerevan State Academy of Fine Arts, Armenia
- Yerevan State Medical University, Armenia

Students' bodies

- Russian Students Union, Russia
- Ukrainian Association of Students' Self-government, Ukraine

Quality assurance agencies and networks

- Central and Eastern European Network of QA Agencies
- National Center for Public Professional Accreditation, Russia
- The National Centre for Public Accreditation, Russia

Employers and Ministries

- Ministry of Education and Science in Russia, Russia
- Ministry of Education and Science of RA, Armenia
- Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, Ukraine
- Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs (regional), Russia
- The Republican Union of Employers of Armenia, Armenia
- Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs of the Khmelnytsky region, Ukraine

The ALIGN project seeks to enhance the intelligibility, consistency and transferability of qualifications through the development and implementation of mechanisms for Higher Education Institutions (HEI) to achieve alignment with Qualifications Frameworks (QF) and for European Quality Assurance (EQA) to check such alignment.

It aims at:

- promoting a better understanding of HEIs and EQAs of the role of QFs, their structure, the differences between the different kinds and levels of student achievement;
- building on the capacity of HEIs to write and assess Learning Outcomes (LO) that define the various types of student achievement;
- building on the capacity of the HEIs to use the QF alignment to facilitate student transfer, joint qualifications and benchmarking;
- enabling the EQAs to check whether proposed LOs and their assessment mechanisms match the QF descriptors at each level by establishing mechanisms for ensuring consistency of judgments across institutions.

Over the ALIGN project implementation (December 2013-October 2017) the Russian participants were involved in the following activities: training of HEIs and QA agencies representatives in order to achieve alignment with NQF, development of mechanisms for checking and ensuring alignment between the academic programmes and NQF, EQF, on-site checking of the alignment between the learning outcomes of the programmes submitted for alignment and NQF, approval and implementation of the alignment tools at HEIs and QAAs, dissemination of project outcomes, achievements and good practices.

The main outputs of the Align project are:

- Capacity building of HEIs and EQA Agencies to ensure achievement and checking alignment with NQFs;
- Development of mechanisms ensuring achievement of alignment with national qualifications frameworks (for HEIs);
- Development of mechanisms for checking alignment (for EQA);

- Revision of 2 academic programmes at each HEI and pilot evaluation of the developed mechanisms;
- Adoption of the alignment tools at HEIs, QAA agency and governmental levels.

1.2 Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this Report is to provide a summary account of the work and findings of the ALIGN project in Russia in order to support the development of its higher education sector. The Report is written to inform and advise a variety of stakeholders. These include senior managers, academic leaders, professional services (notably quality assurance staff) and student unions, and the relevant ministries, quality assurance agencies, student and employer organizations and other public bodies that have national responsibilities within the sector.

1.3 The Aims of Alignment

Within the ALIGN project, the aim of 'Alignment' has been to support the selected universities of Russia in the development of their academic programmes and quality assurance procedures so that these can be seen to meet European and national standards (European and National Qualifications Frameworks: EQF and NQF). This means that academic programmes are designed, delivered and developed within a university in ways that conform to the European and national frameworks, and that each university has clear and effective quality assurance systems to ensure that the design, approval, monitoring, support and development of its academic programmes complies with national and European requirements.

The key elements of Alignment (based upon the use of appropriate qualifications for awards at various levels, student-centred education, learning outcomes, credit accumulation and mobility, institutional responsibilities for quality assurance, etc.) are relatively straightforward. However, the processes of Alignment are often challenging for any university; involving both technical changes (as the use of common nomenclature for awards), conceptual changes (as in understanding student-centred learning) and cultural changes (as in the developing a university community in which everyone has a role and responsibility for maintaining and improving the quality of courses). Even so, as Alignment is achieved it brings many benefits.

1.4 The Benefits of Alignment

There are many benefits for university stakeholders. These benefits are as follows:

For students:

Implementation of the ALIGN project resulted in the numerous benefits for all the stakeholders:

- the courses delivered and qualifications obtained are complied with the international standards in terms of design, delivery and quality assurance. Students are apt to participate in international academic mobility, which results in a more compatible credit transfer at their home universities;
- students become involved in the programme self-evaluation procedure and provide feedback on how to improve and refine the course and curriculum design and create student-friendly learning environment.
- the Programme handbook gives students a clear understanding of the programme objectives and learning outcomes, curriculum structure, teaching methods and assessment criteria. This increases students' awareness, enriches learning experiences, and adds value to the understanding of learning outcomes.
- students receive international recognition of their achievements and get more opportunities to take part in national and international academic mobility programmes.
- thanks to alignment there is a greater understanding of qualifications and job entry requirements between an international employer and a national student.

Even though the concept of student-centered learning (SCL) was documented in 2015 (the European Standards and Guidelines, the Yerevan Communiqué, the ECTS Users' Guide), there is still no implementation guide, giving institutions freedom in making their own policy adjustments and implementation design. In fact, the ALIGN project emphasized SCL principles in the study process of Russian HEIs.

Orientation at achieving LO enhanced the involvement of the representatives from the industry, and student unions to the teaching and curriculum design process. Students are included in expert review panels evaluating academic programmes.

For staff:

Over the three-year period of ALIGN project delivery the teaching and administration staff of Russian HEIs have gained valuable experience in terms of further implementation of the principles of Bologna Process into the Russian educational environment. As a result, Russian Universities have made a serious progress in aligning the academic programmes, learning outcomes and qualification frameworks and embedding those into the university daily agenda.

The ALIGN project provided the university teaching staff with a unique opportunity to learn and test current European approaches, principles of curriculum and course design, student-centered learning, new teaching methods and e-learning.

Due to Alignment the staff from Russian HEIs have built capacity for:

- aligning EQF and NQF in higher education;
- aligning European requirements for programme design with the RF educational standards;
- aligning international and national educational standards with occupational standards;
- writing and assessing programme and module learning outcomes;
- aligning learning outcomes with teaching and assessment strategies;
- developing module descriptors;
- developing programme handbooks (Annex 1, Annex 2, Annex 3, Annex 4);
- better understanding of quality assurance policy due to in-service training programmes;
- using different instruments of quality assurance for self-evaluation (SWOT analysis, benchmarking, etc.).

The staff participated in international mobility and continuous professional development.

For universities:

Participation in ALIGN project gave an opportunity to test and then implement the principles of alignment on the programme and university levels. The 'pilot' Master's degree programmes selected for the project at each University were thoroughly reviewed by the international team of experts. As a result, the alignment of 2 Master's degree programmes from NArFU ("Applied Linguistics: Teaching English as a Foreign Language" and "Ecology and Environmental Management, Environmental Risk Management in the Arctic (ERMA)") and 1 Master's degree programme from Volga Tech ("Quality Management in Agriculture and Food Industry"), as well as their Quality Assurance Processes, were accredited for a period of 6 years.

The experience of self-evaluation undertaken in ALIGN project was also of great value for the current and future policies of quality assurance, especially for public accreditation. Self-evaluation procedure of the pilot programmes, SWOT analysis and benchmarking have revealed strengths and weaknesses in quality assurance system of HEIs. The Universities' policy of quality assurance has been revised and improved. This helped increase efficiency and effectiveness in the management and delivery of the core business of the university.

Participation in ALIGN project also facilitated rethinking of many academic policies. A number of regulatory documents have been developed and adopted at each HEI.

NArFU

A few regulations have been developed by NArFU Academic Council, and by Rector's orders, e.g.:

- Regulations on Launching (developing) New Degree Programmes in NArFU;
- Regulations on Developing Course/Module Syllabi for Higher Education Degree Programmes in NArFU;
- Regulations on Students' Assessment and Progression Control for Higher Education Degree Programmes;

- Regulations on teaching and learning on the basis of the individual study plan for bachelor, specialist and master degree programmes;
- Regulations on Credit Transfer for Higher Education Degree Programme.

MSPU

Align project facilitated the academic mobility of MSPU staff and students. The University set up a number of local documents, which contributed to the design of a Handbook for Master's degree programme 'Management of Research, Development, Innovation in the University'. The University staff strengthened their research activities by publishing the results in the journals of the Web of Science and Scopus databases.

Volga Tech

In 2016-2017, after implementing the activities of ALIGN Working Package 4, the Volga Tech Academic Department has developed a set of new regulations on integration of the programme LO aligning with the new requirements by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation (which, in turn, followed the logic of the European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area).

Volga Tech developed "First Order Document" (Annex 5) representing a matrix used to align ESG, NQF, national legislation and policies in higher education and adopted a new draft Regulation on Management of academic programmes at Volga State University of Technology, first practical use at the Institute of Mechanics and Machine Building from September 2016.

The University regulating documents are used as a working tool, updated on a regular basis by the Academic Department, and are available on demand.

Followed by ALIGN and with regard to its principles and guidelines the following activities were launched:

- Master's degree programme 'International Cooperation on the Field of Protection of Environment and Nature Management', closed in 2015-2016, has been revised by ALIGN working group at the Institute of Forestry and Nature Management, and relaunched in September 2017 with 15 full-time students (including 7 internationals);
- "Side project" rooted in ALIGN: creation of Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence at Volga Tech (EU Erasmus+ grant for 2016-2019, August 2016);
- forming an open, student-centered educational environment by introduction of e-learning and 'double-degree' courses at the Faculty of Economics, and the Faculty of Management and Law;
- development of new mass open online courses in collaboration with the Ural Federal University in Yekaterinburg, Russia;
- voluntary participation in the experimental Internet-based test for Bachelor graduates;
- voluntary participation in the public evaluation of competences of graduates (by the Federal Service for Supervision in Education and Science of the Russian Federation);
- continuation of the transfer to the new generation of the Federal Learning Standards, with a special attention to planned LO aligned with sectorial occupational standards and ESG;
- training of teaching and administrative staff in course design and SCL (59 certified trainees in 2016), in cooperation with Pastukhov State Academy of Industrial Management (Yaroslavl, Russia), Central European University (Budapest, Hungary);
- in response to the critical comments of ALIGN project, Volga Tech has developed new English proficiency courses, as well as new subject specific courses/modules (with English as a language of instruction): Master's degree programmes: 'Biotechnical Systems and Technologies', the Faculty of Radio Engineering, and 'International Cooperation in Forestry and Nature Management', the Institute of Forestry and Nature Management, to be launched in 2018-2019 academic year.

One of the benefits of alignment is that ALIGN partners continue international cooperation with Russian HEIs in the new projects supported by ERASMUS + programme, NARFU being a good example. Due to Alignment the Universities became able to "internationalise" the university community; through staff and student recruitment, internationalisation of the curriculum, double-degree programmes, joint research projects, etc.

For the sector:

Employers have benefits as a result of Alignment too in terms of dissemination of the good practices compatible with the European experience.

The development of modern practice-oriented higher education has always been one of the Russian HEIs priorities, the ALIGN project has strengthened this focus. The universities develop collaboration with the industry and the public sector, which is particularly important at a Master's level.

Thus, at Volga Tech the employers are involved in the programme design in the framework of the joint academic programmes (in science and engineering). The specialized departments and labs are established at the premises of industrial and business enterprises. In 2016-2017 academic year there were 37 joint programmes (including 3 Specialist, 18 Bachelor, 12 Master, and 4 Postgraduate's programmes). The academic programme 'Finance and credit' (supported by the Regional branch of Sberbank), and 'Information and Communication Systems and Technologies' (supported by MMZ machine building factory in Yoshkar-Ola) are among the successful examples of such cooperation.

The 'pilot' Master's degree programmes within ALIGN project are also good cases of collaboration with the 'real economy' sector, such as agriculture, food industry, restaurant businesses, public certification services and customer NGOs (for the programme 'Quality Management in Agriculture and Food Industry'), timber production, forestry expertise, national parks and reserved territories, tourism, and environmental NGOs (for the programme 'International Cooperation in Forestry and Nature Management'). Both 'pilot' programmes were designed in cooperation with employers, and there is a regular feedback obtained from employers, graduates and the teaching staff using various information channels.

1.4. The key challenges of Alignment

Throughout its work, the ALIGN project has identified and addressed many of the opportunities for Alignment, both within the academic programmes and faculties, and at institutional level, particularly with regard to the development of sound institutional policies and practices in quality assurance. From this work, it is possible to identify a number of key challenges that need to be tackled at institutional and national levels if Alignment and its benefits are to be fully realized. These are:

- the National Qualifications Framework for the Russian Federation is currently underway. The draft National qualification framework was developed by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation in cooperation with the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs in 2007. Since then the draft National qualification framework has been a subject for a vivid public discussion between the government, academic community, and business. Therefore the Alignment process was implemented with reference to the draft NQF, new Federal Law on Higher Education in the Russian Federation which was adopted in 2012 (Federal No 273-FL, dd. 29.12.2012), the Order issued by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security of the Russian Federation on the approval of qualification levels in the framework of designing the projects of the occupational standards (No 148H, dd. 12.04.2013).
- the Russian national legislation on higher education is not directly bound to the Bologna process and European Higher Education Area. Even though the acting Federal Law 'On Education' (December 2012) is well written, understandable and clear as to educational cycles, types of educational institutions. The correlation between ESG and EQF with the Russian new generation Federal State Educational Standards (FSSES), and, especially, the occupational standards (set by the Ministry of Labor) is much more complicated.
- occupational standards are still being developed by the corresponding professional associations and don't cover all the professional fields yet. For example the occupational standards "Educator", "Continuing Education Teacher" have been adopted already, but there are still no standards "Linguist" and "Ecologist". Therefore, NArFU Masters programme in Applied Linguistics: TEFL has been aligned to the occupational standard "Educator", as it aims to train specialists in teaching English.
- the new educational paradigm (brought to Russian HEIs with ALIGN as well) with its focus on the outcome-based approach and transfer from teacher-centered to student-centered learning still represents a challenge for the Russian academic community. New generation FSSES describe the requirements for LOs (This is an absolutely new concept for most of Russian teachers and students). The standard characterizes the generic cultural competences (e.g.

ability to think in an abstract way, to analyze, to synthesize, to act in an unfamiliar situation, etc.); general professional competences (describe wider and more common competences for the chosen professional field) and specific professional competences (depend much on the chosen type of the professional activity that the academic programme pursues). The most difficult part is to understand how those LOs can be achieved; what teaching methods and assessment tools should be used to help students attain LOs at either basic or advanced level. The peer review at Volga Tech (June 2016) found that LOs can be made much more specific by including also descriptors such as those included in the Dublin Descriptors. Currently, the LOs do not include knowledge in a sufficient measure. However, good work was done on the domain-specific competencies. The peer review at MPSU (September 2017) noted that the LOs for the programme 'Management of Research, Development, Innovation in Universities' need critical rethinking, redesign and rewriting. The programme team should look at reducing the number of programme LOs and should carefully consider the introduction of separate and discreet module LOs. Learning outcomes should better describe generic professional competencies and should be more specific. LOs should be closely aligned with the Dublin Descriptors.

- the credit system currently used in Russia differs from ECTS, and still lacks transparency and clear explanation of the student workload. There is no working transfer of credits (e.g., in case of international academic mobility, or use of e-learning).
- in curriculum, most courses even in the 'pilot' Master's programmes seem to be quite generic at Volga Tech, while few are really specific. The titles of courses and programmes need to be better specified, having in mind that their content must be clear for international students. The student handbooks thus need to be improved as well.
- despite efforts made within ALIGN project, students' involvement in the programme design (especially at Volga Tech and MPSU) is still quite formal due to prevailing of a linear learning model. Students are not always actively involved in the programme design. As the peer review panel recommended, students should not have to ask for this, but be encouraged by the institution.
- there is not enough benchmarking with other universities in programme design as well as benchmarking against similar programmes from around the world. The pilot programmes of Volga Tech and MPSU would benefit from more international perspectives, a clearer use of ECTS, European Diploma Supplement, etc.
- the quality system at Russian HEIs needs to be improved. It is too much 'top-down' at Volga Tech, and there is too much focus on quality control and management, rather than quality improvement. At MPSU there does seem to be a sound understanding of roles and responsibilities for the programme development, approval and monitoring at the institutional and faculty level. Teachers, staff members, alumni, students and employers should be involved in all aspects of the programme development and monitoring, with a special emphasis on Quality Assurance.
- internationalization of the universities is limited by a poor of command of foreign languages, especially English, both among students and faculty.
- teachers still lack competences and skills in alignment to Qualification Frameworks, in using an outcome-based approach in curricula development, in mapping of learning outcomes, teaching and assessment methods. NARFU tried to overcome this obstacle by initiating in-company training events to raise the awareness and competences of staff in alignment to Qualification Frameworks and the requirements of outcome-based approach to teaching and learning.
- the Universities do not yet have formal regulatory documents for alignment, although a number of regulatory documents have been developed and adopted at each University.
- the student enrolment for one of the 'pilot' programmes from Volgatech ("International Cooperation on the Field of Protection of Environment and Nature Management") was closed in 2015-2016; however, the programme ALIGN working group at the Institute of Forestry and Nature Management has won the EU Erasmus+ grant and established the Jean Monnet Centre for Excellence¹, which made it possible to re-launch the Master's degree programme (revised) in the academic year 2017/2018.

¹ Jean Monnet Centre for Excellence 'European Expertise and Technology for Environmental Protection and Sustainable Forestry – SUFEX', Volga Tech website: <https://en.volgatech.net/international-cooperation/jean-monnet-centre-of-excellence/>

- the National Centre for Public Accreditation was to develop mechanisms ensuring achievement of alignment with National qualification framework and mechanisms for checking this alignment. In the absence of NQF the major challenge for NCPA was to be able to give a methodological support to Russian HEIs in aligning academic programmes with three different standards: European standards (i.e. Dublin descriptors), National Educational Standards (i.e. the Federal State Educational Standards of Russia), and National Occupational Standards in the way they wouldn't conflict, would be valid, and could find practical application. Since the Russian National Educational Standards and Occupational Standards are still in the process of devising, this made the development of mechanisms ensuring achievement of alignment with NQF quite difficult.
- NCPA had to change its idea of academic programme design and review in the process of methodological provision of alignment. A new concept was introduced, according to which academic programmes should be designed, reviewed and evaluated with the account of an outcome-based approach and student-centred learning. Thus, the Agency faced a challenge to assess academic programmes from the perspective of these two approaches which are rather new for Russia. Another challenge was that NCPA had to use a Western European model of external review during the site visits which had not been typical for evaluation procedures in Russia.

1.5 Evidence of Excellence and Good Practices in achieving Alignment

From the rigorous peer review of five academic programmes at three selected Russian universities, it is evident that there are many commendable elements of Alignment that have been achieved. These may be used to support even greater Alignment within the selected universities, and to help guide and inspire other universities to work toward Alignment.

According to the final report of the Peer Review Panel there is some evidence of Excellence and Good Practices in achieving Alignment.

Thus, NArFU achieved very good results in quality management system and development of academic programmes in accordance with European and national standards and requirements. The panel found very clear study programme handbooks which were not oversized and were up to the point, and could serve as an example of good practice for other Align programmes. NArFU developed a good and clear list of learning outcomes which were up-to-date. They were aligned with EQF and FSES, with the draft NQF which specifies 3 types of competence, and they were in fact specific for the two programmes. LOs were at the level of Masters education and fitting domain-specific demands. The curriculum was very well designed and transparent. Learning and teaching methods, assessment, and curriculum were adapted to the intended learning outcomes.

Participation in ALIGN project gave a significant impetus to Moscow State Education University in terms of reviewing the programmes and the educational process and preparing the programme handbook, thus, making a further step towards consideration of students' diverse needs, providing compliance of the LOs and qualifications with the NQF and EQF, internationalizing the educational process, focus on the competencies necessary for students' prospective employment and articulated in the programme handbook and relevant programme supporting documents.

Volga Tech clearly identified and described the mechanisms and procedures for aligning academic programmes with NQF, using two piloted Master's degree programmes for checking the alignment. It used the experience gained in ALIGN project to update its quality assurance system, to make it more flexible and more 'European', bearing in mind not only Russian criteria, but also Dublin descriptors for LOs, and ESG for quality assurance (Annex 5). During the ALIGN project Volga Tech has been strongly oriented towards internationalization by developing curriculum in English, enhancing academic mobility to and from partner universities located in EU countries, the USA, China, etc. The establishment of the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence is also an ALIGN 'side-project'. One of the activities in which the University excelled due to ALIGN was the launch of the originally virtual programme International Cooperation in the Field of Protection of Environment and Nature Management, preparing courses in both English and Russian, thus enhancing the international nature of the programme and making it more accessible for foreign students.

Align has also effected the external evaluation procedure conducted by the Accreditation Agency. As a result NCPA's vision of quality assurance processes has substantially changed. Thus, NCPA used the Eastern European model of external review before participating in ALIGN

project. The evaluation procedures focused mainly on checking the conditions and outcomes of the learning process. Therefore standard practice for NCPA at site visits was holding meetings with HEI staff, students, alumni, and employers. Implementation of Standard 2 "Alignment of Quality Assurance Processes" required revision of NCPA's practice. The necessity arose to use the Western European model of audit in which Internal quality assurance is also reviewed. Meetings with the representatives of Internal Quality Assurance System and Academic Department were included into site visits. The meetings were aimed at obtaining general information about the mechanisms of internal quality assurance policy from the persons who are in charge of initiating, designing, implementing and monitoring Internal quality assurance. Hence, NCPA implemented a new model of external evaluation of academic programmes which is typical for Western European countries but has never been used in Russia before.

From the rigorous peer review of six academic programmes at three selected Russian universities, it is evident that there are many commendable elements of Alignment that have been achieved. These may be used to support even greater Alignment within the selected universities, and to help guide and inspire other universities to work toward Alignment.

1.6 Recommendations for strategic development

From the work and findings of the ALIGN project, the main recommendations for the strategic development of Alignment at national and institutional levels are:

- To intensify practice of external evaluation and self-evaluation of academic programmes, their public accreditation, including one by international agencies;
- To use experience of ALIGN working group for training and consultation of faculty and staff involved in external and self-evaluation of academic programmes, national and international public accreditation.
- To continue modernization of curricula on principles of alignment of intended LO with ESG, EQF, Russian National QF (if approved), and occupational standards.
- To focus on student-centered learning at the university, programme and classroom level by placing student's needs and motivation in the core of educational paradigm.
- To train faculty and administrative staff ability to use new teaching techniques, course design and pedagogical approaches, and quality assurance.
- To provide more active student involvement in academic programme development, study process and quality assurance.
- To develop practice-oriented education in tight collaboration with stakeholders, employers (through joint programmes and departments), and in a constant search for new innovative niche in the labor market.
- To internationalize the Universities by strengthening the role of academic mobility for students and faculty, providing better services on credit transfer and recognition of qualifications and educational documents issued abroad.
- To introduce new innovative academic programmes in English, taking the 'pilot' ALIGN Master's degree programmes as a model.
- To use a new model of external evaluation of academic programmes with the account of outcome-based approach and SCL, as well as with regard of two Standards for measuring Alignment. Both academic programmes and Internal quality assurance should be reviewed.

Taking the abovementioned measures will help Russian HEIs and the Accreditation Agency to provide sustainability of ALIGN achievements.

1.7 Key Resources

To support the strategic development of Alignment, the following resources can be recommended:

1. NCPA ALIGN TEMPUS Project webpage:
http://ncpa.ru/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=401&Itemid=383&lang=ru
2. International evaluation of programmes 45.04.02 "Linguistics Master's Programme "Applied Linguistics: Teaching English as a Foreign Language", 05.04.06 "Ecology and Environmental Management / Master's Degree Programme "Environmental Risk Management in the Arctic" delivered by Northern (Arctic) Federal University named after M.V. Lomonosov was held on June 27-28, 2016:

http://ncpa.ru/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=485%3A27-28-2016-450402-050406-&catid=29%3Asections&Itemid=332&lang=en

3. International evaluation of the programme 27.04.02 "Quality Assurance Management in Agriculture and Food Industry" delivered by Volga State University of Technology was held on June 23-24, 2016:

http://ncpa.ru/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=484%3A23-24-2016-270402-l-r-&catid=29%3Asections&Itemid=332&lang=en

4. The meeting of the National Accreditation Board, chaired by Viktor Bolotov, academician of the Russian Academy of Education, was held on September 21, 2016 in the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration, Moscow:

http://ncpa.ru/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=488%3A21-2016-&catid=29%3Asections&Itemid=332&lang=en

5. Бугаенко О.Д., Воробьева Е.И., Иванова Е.Е., Стрелкова С.Ю. Модернизация системы управления качеством образовательной деятельности // Аккредитация в образовании, 2016, №6

6. Galina Motova, Elena Savinykh. How to link Students' Learning Outcomes and Occupational Standards / Proceedings of 2017 APQN conference "New horizons: Dissolving boundaries of a quality region"

7. Tatiana Akhmetzianova, Galina Motova. Academic Programme Design and Quality Assurance Processes: Transformation of NCPA's Vision as a result of ALIGN Tempus Project / Proceedings of 2017 APQN conference "New horizons: Dissolving boundaries of a quality region"

8. ALIGN "First Order Document" for aligning Volga Tech educational policies with the ESG, EQF, and Russian Federal legislation on higher education, last updated June 2017

9. Certificate of International Accreditation, academic programme "Quality Management" (27.02.04), Master's Degree Programme 'Quality Management in Agriculture and Food Industry', by National Accreditation Board / National Centre for Public Accreditation, 21 September 2016. https://www.volgatech.net/upload/documents/161012_UK_ENG.jpg

10. Promotion video on the Master's programme 'Quality Management in Agriculture and Food Industry', 16 February 2016 (contains interview with practitioner/teacher, and description of LO and future careers). Available online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=95dYVJTmxZw>

11. Presentation of the Master's programme 'Quality Management in Agriculture and Food Industry' Faculty of Management and Law), 2017. Available online at: https://old.volgatech.net/upload/documents/Abiturient/Prezentatsia_UKm_2016_0.ppt

12. Promotion materials: Leaflet of the Master's programme 'Quality Management' (Faculty of Management and Law), 2017. Available online at: https://old.volgatech.net/upload/documents/Abiturient/broshure_fup.pdf

13. Promotion materials: Description of the Master's programme 'International Cooperation in Forestry and Nature Management' (Institute of Forestry and Nature management, Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence – SUFEX), 2017. Available online at: https://abiturient.volgatech.net/urovni_obrazovaniya/magistratura/institut_lesa_i_prirodopolzovaniya/monne/

14. Promotion video on the Volga Tech Centre for Intensive Forestry Technologies, 26 August 2016. Available online at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sZWDIwIEy2s&index=8&list=PLp8quTHK7keT_h4jF6IuoCAzO6YoZj0r0

15. MSPU TEMPUS Project webpage: <http://mpgu.su/proekt-align-tempus/>

16. Visit program: <http://mpgu.su/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/1ALIGN-Tempus-Programme-MPSU.doc>

17. Educational programme summary: <http://mpgu.su/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/4-Summary-of-the-Programdocx.docx>

18. Self-evaluation document: <http://mpgu.su/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Otchet-MPGU-15.08.17.pdf>

1.8. Key Contacts

The following individuals can be contacted for further information and guidance about particular aspects of Alignment in Russia:

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| 7 | Alexey Korshunov | Vice-Rector for Education | a.korshunov@narfu.ru |
| 8 | Elena Vorobeva | Deputy Director of School of Social and Humanity Studies and International Cooperation, Coordinator of the programme "Applied Linguistics: Teaching English as a Foreign Language", TEMPUS ALIGN Project Researcher | e.vorobeva@narfu.ru |
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| 13 | Victor Shebashev | Rector Area of expertise: general university management, university development, quality assurance in higher education (national level) | rector@volgatech.net |
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| | | | |
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| | Smolennikova | Department Area of expertise: quality assurance in higher education (institutional level), accreditation of educational programmes, teaching methodology, aligning planned learning outcomes with the ESG and national educational standards | .net |
| 15 | Eldar Kurbanov | Head of Department of International Relations Area of expertise: international project management (including Tempus, Erasmus+), curricula development, aligning planned learning outcomes with European and National Qualification Frameworks, development of sectorial QF in Forestry education | kurbanovea@volgatech.net |
| 16 | Alexey Fominykh | Head of International Project Office, Research Fellow, Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence – SUFEX Area of expertise: curricula development (programme level), student centered learning, academic integrity | alexfom@volgatech.net |
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PART 2

NATIONAL REPORT ON THE WORK AND FINDINGS OF THE ALIGN PROJECT

2.1 Introduction

In the ALIGN project the following activities were performed by the Russian partners (December 2013 - October 2017):

- Training of HEIs and QA agencies representatives in order to ensure achievement and checking alignment with NQFs,
- Development of mechanisms ensuring alignment between the study programmes and NQF and EQF (by NCPA, NArFU, Volga Tech, and MPSU);
- Development of mechanisms for checking alignment (by NCPA);
- Checking the alignment between 'pilot' programme learning outcomes and NQF by peer-review panel which included CEENQA representative, European HEI experts and NCPA representative;
- Adoption of the alignment tools at HEIs, QAA, national level;

- Dissemination of information on the ALIGN project results.
- The participants of ALIGN project in Russia were as follows:
1. The National Centre for Public Accreditation, Yoshkar-Ola
 2. Northern (Arctic) Federal University after M.V. Lomonosov, Arkhangelsk
 3. Volga State University of Technology, Yoshkar-Ola
 4. Moscow State University of Education, Moscow
 5. The Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs, Moscow
 6. The Russian Student Union, Moscow
 7. Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, Moscow

The National Centre for Public Accreditation (NCPA) has been a coordinator of ALIGN project in Russia and developed the mechanisms for achieving and checking the level of the programme alignment.

Two documents were produced with the support of the European partners and in close cooperation with the Russian partners:

“National Guidelines to assist HEIs in aligning and checking the alignment of programme learning outcomes with National qualification frameworks”

“External Quality assurance policies/procedures and Evaluation criteria of checking the alignment between academic programmes and qualification frameworks”

These documents laid out mechanisms and tools ensuring the alignment, set recommendations for developing programme learning outcomes which map the academic programme to the relevant occupational standards, described standards and criteria to be used in self-evaluation and during the external review.

The documents helped HEIs to set requirements and procedures for the development of new or revising the existing academic programmes / modules, and allowed QA agencies to check to what extent the alignment has been achieved between programme learning outcomes, on the one hand, and the Dublin descriptors, Federal State Educational Standards and relevant Occupational standards, on the other.

Three Russian HEIs participated in Alignment, two of them (NARFU, Volga Tech) selected two Master’s degree programmes to align their learning outcomes with European and national standards. MSPU selected one Master’s degree programme (Table 1).

Table 1 Academic programmes undertaking Alignment

| HEI | Academic Programmes |
|--|---|
| 1. Northern (Arctic) Federal University after M.V. Lomonosov | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Applied Linguistics: Teaching English as a Foreign Language - Ecology and Environmental Management, Environmental Risk Management in the Arctic (ERMA) |
| 2. Moscow State University of Education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Management of Research, Development, Innovation in the University |
| 3. Volga State University of Technology | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quality Management in Agriculture and Food Industry - International Cooperation in the Field of Protection of Environment and Nature Management |

2.2 The Peer Review Process

In June 2016 and September 2017 the external evaluation of Alignment between Academic Programmes and Qualification Frameworks was conducted.

The aim of the Peer Review process was to review the ‘pilot’ academic programmes at each Russian HEI, and the quality assurance principles and processes that relate to the approval/validation, review and enhancement of academic programmes at the university. The panel sought to advise the university (through discussion and a written report) on the nature and extent to which

- (a) the selected academic programmes have been aligned with European Higher Education Area (EHEA) standards and national qualification frameworks;
- (b) the HEI’s quality assurance processes are aligned with European and national requirements and expectations;

(c) and provide any recommendations that may help the university to further the alignment of its academic programmes and quality assurance processes with European and national standards.

The panel members examined self-evaluation reports of the reviewed academic programmes and other related documents provided by each university. During the site visits the peer review panel had meetings with persons in charge of Align project at HEIs, university administration, programme staff members (persons responsible for programme design), representatives of internal quality system, and students/graduates/alumni.

The peer-review panel consisted of:

- two EU members from partner-universities,
- one EU member from CEENQA,
- one member from NCPA,
- two host university staff members,
- one employer / external stakeholder,
- one student / recent graduate / alumni from one of the aligned academic programmes (Annex 6).

After the site visit a peer review report was prepared by the panel for each programme, which contained an Evaluation of the Alignment of the Academic Programme and Quality Assurance processes at the University.

Action plans for further alignment in Russian HEIs include the following activities:

- Development of the Universities' QA monitoring system;
- Focus on deeper employer and student involvement in the process of a degree program lifecycle;
- Dissemination of the project results at the institutional and national level;
- Increasing international mobility and the number of international programmes in HEIs (joint-degree, double-degree programmes);
- Improving the external evaluation procedure and quality assurance processes conducted by the Accreditation Agency.

2.3 The Documentation for Peer Review of Alignment

Russian HEIs provided a number of documents for Peer Review of Alignment.

NArFu provided the following documentation:

- Self-Evaluation Document (SED) (NArFU, 2016);
- Programme Handbook "Master's degree programme. Applied Linguistics: Teaching English as a Foreign Language" (NArFU, 2016);
- Programme Handbook "Master's degree programme. Ecology and Environmental Management, Environmental Risk Management in the Arctic (ERMA)" (NArFU, 2016);
- Information about Quality Assurance at NArFU (NArFU, 2016).

On site, NArFu also provided a sample of master theses from both programmes under review.

MSPU provided the following documentation:

- Programme Handbook for Masters Degree Programme 'Management of Research, Development, Innovation in the University'
- Description of the curriculum for Masters Degree Programme 'Management of Research, Development, Innovation in the University' in academic area 'Pedagogical education'.

Volga Tech submitted the following documents to the Peer Review Panel:

- The Self-Evaluation Document, with detailed descriptions of the University, its quality assurance system and the programmes reviewed, comments on all the indicators of the review process;
- Programme Handbook of the Master's Degree Programme «Quality Management in Agriculture and Food Industry», International Cooperation in the Field of Protection of Environment and Nature Management;
- An example of a Diploma Supplement used at Volga Tech;

– Detailed matrices with courses and attached timetables and credits for both the programmes reviewed.

On site, Volga Tech also provided lists of students and Masters theses, samples of Masters theses and exams, and other documents as requested by the Panel.

2.4 The Measurement of Alignment

The alignment was checked with regard to two standards:

Standard 1. Alignment of academic programmes which means that in designing, delivering and monitoring of an academic programme, the programme team (including teachers, programme coordinators, student supervisors and tutors) meet the appropriate European and national standards and requirements.

Standard 2. Alignment of quality assurance processes which means that in setting and maintaining standards and assuring quality, the university operates clear and effective processes for the design, approval, delivery, monitoring, support and development of its academic programmes in accordance with the European and national standards and requirements.

Each standard comprised 10 indicators - criteria of "good practice" (Table 2).

Table 2. Indicators of checking the alignment

| Indicators with regard to Standard 1 | Indicators with regard to Standard 2 |
|--|---|
| 1. The academic programmes are properly titled and lead to awards at the appropriate level, consistent with European standards and NQF. | 1. There are clear criteria against which academic programmes are assessed in the programme approval, monitoring and review processes. |
| 2. The academic programmes are informed by and consistent with occupational/industry standards/requirements, where appropriate. | 2. The roles and responsibilities for programme design, development, approval and monitoring are clearly articulated. |
| 3. The aims of the programmes are appropriate for the student intake, and can be realized through students' attainment of the programme/module learning outcomes. | 3. Students are involved in programme design and in the processes of programme development, approval, monitoring and review. |
| 4. All learning outcomes at module level are at the appropriate level, and are assessed through fair, valid and reliable student assignments/tests. | 4. There are effective policies which ensure that the academic standards for credits and awards are rigorously maintained at the appropriate level, and that student performance is judged against these standards. |
| 5. Throughout their course of study, students are able to monitor their academic progress and development, and receive advice on how they can improve and enhance their work. | 5. There are clear and effective policies and processes for assessing the recognition of prior learning and supporting student mobility between courses of study and institutions. |
| 6. The teaching and learning activities employed within the modules are informed by reflection on professional practices, and designed to enable students to develop the knowledge, skills, abilities and professional competencies that will enable them to achieve the modules' learning outcomes. | 6. Knowledge of professional standards/requirements and external expertise (e.g., from subject experts, employers and professional associations) is used to inform the design, development, approval and monitoring of academic programmes. |
| 7. The structure of the programme ensures the progression of students' learning, and provides appropriate opportunities for student choice. | 7. There are appropriate arrangements to train and support academic and professional/administrative staff who are involved in the design, delivery, approval and monitoring of academic programmes. |
| 8. The credits ratings (national and ECTS) for modules are properly aligned with the designated student workloads for the modules. | 8. There are clear policies and processes in place to ensure the integrity of student assessment (e.g., through marking schemes, moderation processes, examination board regulations), and the effectiveness of these policies is regularly reviewed. |

| | |
|---|--|
| 9. Students are provided with clear and current information about the learning opportunities and support available to them. | 9. The policies and processes of programme design, development, approval and monitoring are regularly reviewed in order to ensure the effectiveness and continuous enhancement of current practices. |
| 10. The design, delivery and monitoring of the academic programmes are 'student centred', engaging students collectively and individually as partners in the development, assurance and enhancement of their educational experiences (e.g., through effective representation of the student voice, discussions about opportunities for course enhancement, involvement in quality assurance processes, and the monitoring and evaluation of student experiences). | 10. There are effective policies in place to ensure that staff appointed to teach and support student learning on academic programmes are appropriately qualified, and that delivery of the programmes is supported by the appropriate learning resources. |

The scale of assessment parameters used a five grading evaluation of the academic programme:

- fully achieved;
- largely achieved;
- partly achieved;
- not achieved;
- not applicable in this stage of the alignment.

2.5 The Findings of Peer Review

The results of assessment of Academic Programmes and Quality Assurance Alignment in Russian HEIs are given in Table 3, 4 and 5.

Table 3. Results of the Assessment of alignment of Academic Programmes and Quality Assurance at Northern (Arctic) Federal University after M.V. Lomonosov

| Indicators | Assessment of the Alignment of Academic Programmes | | Assessment of the Alignment of Quality Assurance |
|--------------|---|--|--|
| | Applied Linguistics: Teaching English as a Foreign Language | Ecology and Environmental Management, Environmental Risk Management in the Arctic (ERMA) | |
| Indicator 1 | fully achieved | fully achieved | fully achieved |
| Indicator 2 | fully achieved | largely achieved | fully achieved |
| Indicator 3 | largely achieved | largely achieved | largely achieved |
| Indicator 4 | fully achieved | fully achieved | fully achieved |
| Indicator 5 | fully achieved | fully achieved | fully achieved |
| Indicator 6 | fully achieved | fully achieved | fully achieved |
| Indicator 7 | fully achieved | fully achieved | fully achieved |
| Indicator 8 | largely achieved | largely achieved | fully achieved |
| Indicator 9 | fully achieved | fully achieved | fully achieved |
| Indicator 10 | largely achieved | largely achieved | fully achieved |
| Total | fully achieved | fully achieved | fully achieved |

As a result of the Peer Review process the following recommendations have been made in order to ensure better alignment of the study programmes:

- It is recommended to do deeper research into module options to equalise the level of students, and support them in acquiring lacking competences;
- It would be beneficial for the students to attend a bridging programme/adaptive course before enrollment in a core programme and enhance tutoring (in English for Russians, and English and Russian for foreigners, especially for ERMA students);

- It is advisable to let students choose the electives, also including foreign languages other than English into the list;
- LOs and study programmes should be benchmarked with other universities;
- It is recommended to improve coordination between the curricular and the work field;
- E-learning should be improved - the online system, the blending methods etc.
- The library system should be more student-friendly, it should be better equipped, contain more books in English, provide access to international journals and have longer working hours;
- It is recommended to maintain the EFL programme website;
- It is desirable to organize better cooperation with stakeholders of ERMA programme;
- The academic mobility of the staff should be used for the benefit of the programme and planned in advance;
- Students and other stakeholders should be more extensively involved in the program design and approval;
- Peer reviews, quality assessments and discussions with stakeholders should be employed as a means of feedback;
- It is recommended to define the exit qualification for the ERMA programme.

Table 4. Results of the Assessment of alignment of Academic Programmes and Quality Assurance at Moscow State University of Education

| Indicators | Assessment of the Alignment of Academic Programmes | Assessment of the Alignment of Quality Assurance |
|--------------|---|--|
| | Management of research, development, innovation in the University | |
| Indicator 1 | partly achieved | fully achieved |
| Indicator 2 | largely achieved | partly achieved |
| Indicator 3 | partly achieved | partly achieved |
| Indicator 4 | partly achieved | largely achieved |
| Indicator 5 | fully achieved | partly achieved |
| Indicator 6 | largely achieved | largely achieved |
| Indicator 7 | fully achieved | fully achieved |
| Indicator 8 | not applicable in this stage of the alignment | fully achieved |
| Indicator 9 | fully achieved | largely achieved |
| Indicator 10 | partly achieved | fully achieved |
| Total | largely achieved | largely achieved |

- The learning outcomes of the programme should be more specific, and should define the generic professional competencies and comply with Dublin Descriptors;
- It is recommended to review the Programme title;
- It is recommended to benchmark the Programme against similar programmes from around the world, thus clearer use of ECTS, European Diploma Supplement, etc;
- Ingoing and outgoing academic mobility should be a mandatory part of the programme;
- Students should be involved in the programme development and monitoring.

Table 5. Results of the Assessment of alignment of Academic Programmes and Quality Assurance at Volga State University of Technology

| Indicators | Assessment of the Alignment of Academic Programmes | | Assessment of the Alignment of Quality Assurance |
|--------------|---|---|--|
| | International Cooperation in the Field of Protection of Environment and Nature Management | Quality Management in Agriculture and Food Industry | |
| Indicator 1 | partly achieved | partly achieved | fully achieved |
| Indicator 2 | largely achieved | largely achieved | fully achieved |
| Indicator 3 | largely achieved | largely achieved | partly achieved |
| Indicator 4 | not applicable in this stage of the alignment | largely achieved | largely achieved |
| Indicator 5 | fully achieved | fully achieved | largely achieved |
| Indicator 6 | not applicable in this stage of the alignment | largely achieved | largely achieved |
| Indicator 7 | largely achieved | largely achieved | fully achieved |
| Indicator 8 | not applicable in this stage of the alignment | largely achieved | fully achieved |
| Indicator 9 | fully achieved | fully achieved | fully achieved |
| Indicator 10 | partly achieved | partly achieved | largely achieved |
| Total | not applicable in this stage of the alignment | largely achieved | largely achieved |

As a result of the Peer Review process the following recommendations have been made in order to ensure better alignment of the study programmes:

- It is recommended to specify LO by referring to Dublin Descriptors;
- More focus should be made on generic and generic professional competencies;
- The content and the mission of the programmes should be better interconnected;
- Clearer distinction between the Bachelor and Master’s programme entry requirements should be made;
- It is recommended to test the level of English proficiency upon admission and offer more courses in English;
- The contents of the programmes should be regularly updated in order to ensure the achievement of the set learning outcomes and the titles of the courses need to be better specified to be properly understood by international students;
- It is recommended to make the courses more student-centered, e.g. include entrepreneurial assignments, and make a real choice of electives;
- It is advisable to benchmark the programme with the similar programmes at other Universities;
- In addition to Food and Agriculture laboratory facilities located at industrial enterprises, the University should offer;
- It is recommended to reconsider student workload in extramural, intramural and distance forms of education and align it with the credits used in the Bologna countries;
- It is appropriate to include some contact hours in the distance learning programme;
- It is recommended to involve more representatives from the relevant industries (food and agriculture) to the programme implementation. They may contribute not only as teachers which is expensive, but also as members of advisory boards, mentors of final papers, etc in order to be cost effective for the programme;
- It is advisable to adapt the testing and assessment systems to the assessment of LO;
- Students should be much more involved in the design of the programme;
- It is recommended to increase students mobility;

- The information on the programme and opportunities it offers should be disseminated via websites, social networks;
- Quality improvement should be a priority rather than quality management and control;
- Feedback forms should contain open questions and be addressed to all the stakeholders including students, employers, etc;
- The Programmes could be modified to be offered as vocational training in order to improve cooperation with alumni and employers.

2.6 Impact Statements

The ALIGN experience and achievements have a sound potential for further dissemination at Russian HEIs, and can be used for developing new and revising existing academic programmes, incorporate principles and ideas of student-centered learning, and external quality assurance.

Federal State Educational Standards still remain the core reference for aligning academic programmes and Qualifications Framework. However, the internationalization of the Russian universities, and their participation in EHEA make it necessary to follow the European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance. In this respect, ALIGN project was challenging but very useful endeavor to check Russian Universities' commitment and capacity to follow the Bologna path.

The peer-review panel and self-evaluation procedure held within the Project action plan facilitated a lot the improvement of the Universities' quality assurance system and resulted in the newly elaborated and revised quality assurance procedures and regulations that ensure the project sustainability and further steps that the University management is committed to support. Generally, the measures taken jointly with the international experts and the results obtained added competitive advantages to Russian HEIs on the market and contributed to their national and international recognition.

The role of Align Project is valuable in building capacity and staff professional development. The knowledge obtained by the Russian project team and the involved teachers, administrators and students through study trips, workshops, evaluation processes, etc. will enable to continue the team work on the programme improvement and internationalization. Networking with partners and stakeholders that was started and developed thanks to ALIGN project is a prerequisite of successful work and shall be continued.

Align Project contributed a lot to developing international cooperation and establishing new contacts with partners from Armenia, Ireland, Great Britain, Germany, Belgium and other countries. This is another added-value of the Project that already resulted in new bilateral agreements and new Erasmus+ projects. The project was very useful in developing international networking, multicultural communication and project management skills.

Align Project is surely a great asset for all participating Russian HEIs. Dissemination of the project results contributed significantly to the achievement of their strategic goals in enhancing the quality of education and the positioning on the national and international markets.

The two NArFU Masters' programmes ("Applied Linguistics: Teaching English as a Foreign Language" and "Environmental Risk Management in the Arctic") piloted in the Align Project were immensely improved and successfully accredited. This new qualitative status helped a lot in marketing the educational products globally and attracting new students from Russia and abroad. Volga Tech Master's degree programme 'International Cooperation on the Field of Protection of Environment and Nature Management', closed in 2015-2016, has been revised by ALIGN working group at the Institute of Forestry and Nature Management, and relaunched in September 2017 with 15 full-time students (including 7 internationals). Participation in the Align Project significantly propelled the programme of Moscow State University towards faster implementation. This is a real success story to be further disseminated and multiplied.

2.7 Annexes

1. Handbook for Master's degree programme "Teaching English as a Foreign Language" in the field of study "Applied Linguistics" by NArFU.
Available at: http://ncpa.ru/images/pdf/align/align_annex1.pdf
2. Handbook for Master's degree programme "Environmental Risk Management in the Arctic" in the field of study "Ecology and Environmental Management" by NArFU.
Available at: http://ncpa.ru/images/pdf/align/align_annex2.pdf
3. Handbook for Master's degree programme «International Cooperation in the Field of Protection of Environment and Nature Management» by Volga Tech.
Available at: http://ncpa.ru/images/pdf/align/align_annex3.pdf
4. Handbook for Master's degree programme «Management of Research, Development, Innovation in the University» by MSPU.
Available at: http://ncpa.ru/images/pdf/align/align_annex4.pdf
5. Volga Tech First Order Document.
Available at: http://ncpa.ru/images/pdf/align/align_annex5.pdf
6. Composition of the peer review panel.
Available at: http://ncpa.ru/images/pdf/align/align_annex6.pdf
7. Peer Review Report of Study Programs delivered by NArFU.
Available at: ncpa.ru/images/pdf/otcheti/2016/safu_2016.pdf
8. Peer Review Report of Study Programs delivered by Volga Tech.
Available at: http://ncpa.ru/images/pdf/otcheti/2016/pgtu_2016.pdf
9. Peer Review Report of Study Programs delivered by MSPU.
Available at: http://ncpa.ru/images/pdf/sovet2017/mspu2017_align.pdf
10. National Guidelines to assist a HEI in aligning and checking the alignment of programme learning outcomes with National Qualification Framework.
Available at: http://ncpa.ru/images/pdf/align/national_guidelines_2017.pdf