

# SalamAlum

OSCE ACADEMY  
in Bishkek

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OSCE ACADEMY ALUMNI MAGAZINE



*“...if you studied at the OSCE Academy — congratulations!  
You are already part of an exceptional community,  
and that experience has already provided you with  
a strong foundation for whatever path you choose,  
whether in academia, policy research, government,  
or beyond.”*

— Nurlan Kabdylkhak, alumnus of 2009, pg. 17

OSCE Academy Alumni Gather  
for the **6th Reunion**,

pg. 7

**Alumnus of the Year 2025:**  
Nurlan Kabdylkhak

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**OSCE-DCAF Summer School:**  
Human Security and Climate Change

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# Welcome Note



Dear Reader,

Each year, SalamAlum brings together stories of growth, connection, and inspiration — and this year is no exception. We are proud to present the 15th edition of our annual magazine, celebrating the remarkable achievements of the OSCE Academy and its ever-expanding alumni family.

Today, our network counts 708 graduates, whose dedication and impact reach far beyond the borders of Central Asia. Their accomplishments remind us that the Academy is not only a place of learning, but a lifelong community united by shared values and a commitment to positive change.

A highlight of this year was the 6th Alumni Reunion held on 14-15 June, which gathered over a hundred graduates — some traveling from across Central Asia, Europe, and the United States. The opening ceremony featured an expert panel on “Artificial Intelligence: Threats and Opportunities,” addressing topics from AI in education and the job market to data protection and disinformation.

In the afternoon, participants joined various workshops and round tables on themes such as water security, academic publishing, PhD preparation, and security sector governance. Over two unforgettable days, alumni reconnected, shared experiences, and celebrated the spirit of the Academy. From the official opening and evening reception to outdoor team-building activities, the reunion became a true symbol of unity, friendship, and shared purpose.

In line with the Academy’s commitment to supporting the professional growth of its alumni, this year’s OSCE-DCAF Summer School on Security Sector Governance and Reform (SSG/R) was organized to provide graduates with an opportunity to deepen their expertise and strengthen their role as future leaders in the region. Held between 8 and 13 June, on the beautiful shores of Issyk-Kul, the School brought together OSCE Academy alumni, students, and young journalists from Central Asia, Afghanistan, and Mongolia. Focusing on the links between SSG/R, human security, and the safety of journalists, the programme offered valuable insights, interactive learning, and networking opportunities.

Each year, the range of academic and professional opportunities for our alumni continues to expand, thanks to the strong support of our long-term partners and donors. For instance, the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs offers its One-Year Stay-at-NUPI Fellowship, which allows gradu-

ates to further develop their projects, strengthen their analytical skills, and advance their professional careers. In 2025, two more alumni were able to start their fellowships at NUPI. Additionally, the Geneva Centre for Security Policy awarded a MAS Scholarship for Central Asia to one of our alumni, providing him with a valuable opportunity. Our 2014 alumnus, Daniyar Kussainov, began his fellowship at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy in the Fall of 2025. This year, two graduates took part in the Academy’s Junior Public Officers Programme, gaining hands-on experience in government agencies in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, while another two alumni received Alumni Travel Grants.

Dear readers, as you turn the pages of this magazine, we encourage you to discover the stories of accomplishment, innovation, and growth that define the OSCE Academy. Thanks to the generous support of our donors, the Academy continues to flourish, and we hope that our achievements inspire further trust and investment in our mission.

To our graduates, we extend our sincere gratitude for your dedication, active involvement, and continued support of the OSCE Academy’s initiatives.

*Our sincere gratitude goes to the OSCE, its participating States and especially to the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) that specifically fund the alumni activities.*

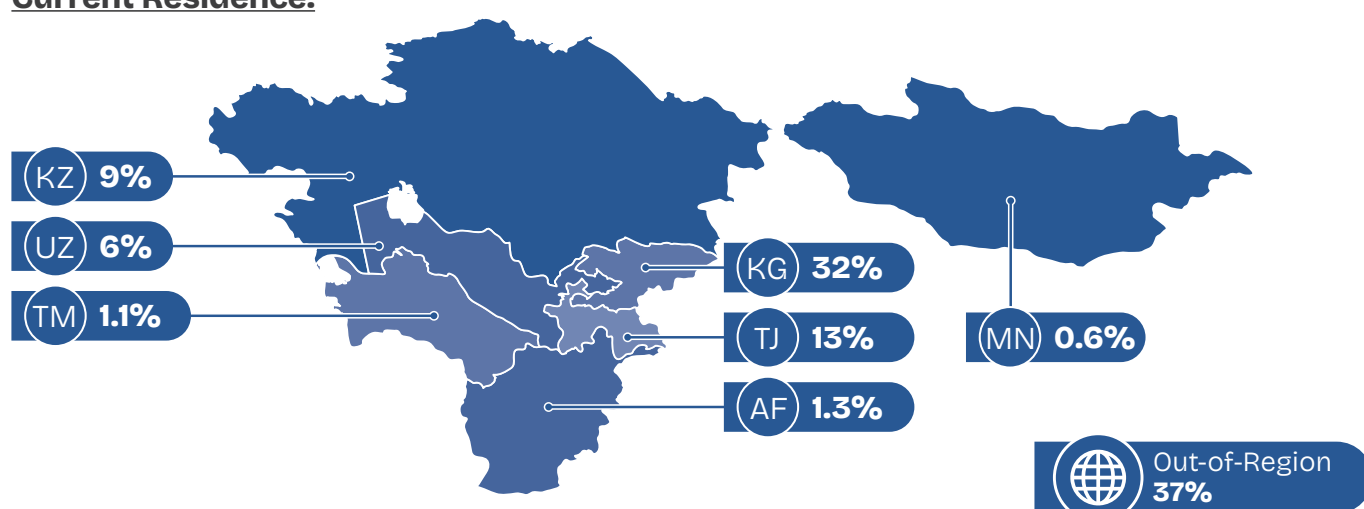
*International Department Team*



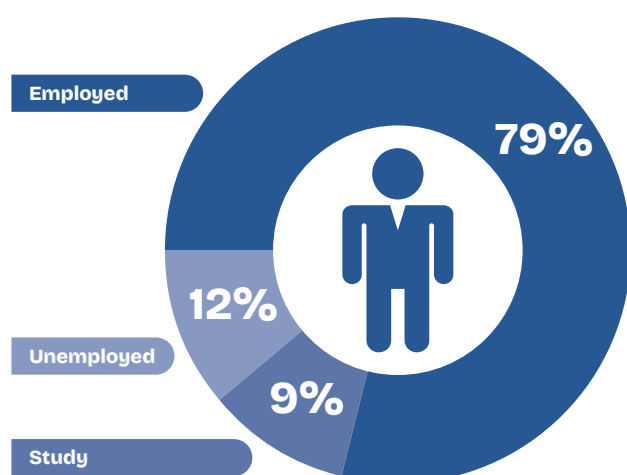
# Alumni Network in Numbers

The OSCE Academy conducted its annual **alumni survey** in the first half of this year to stay connected with its MA graduates and to collect updated information about their current employment and professional development. This year, for the first time, the survey also included graduates of the first cohort of the Master's Programme in Human Rights and Sustainability (MAHRS).

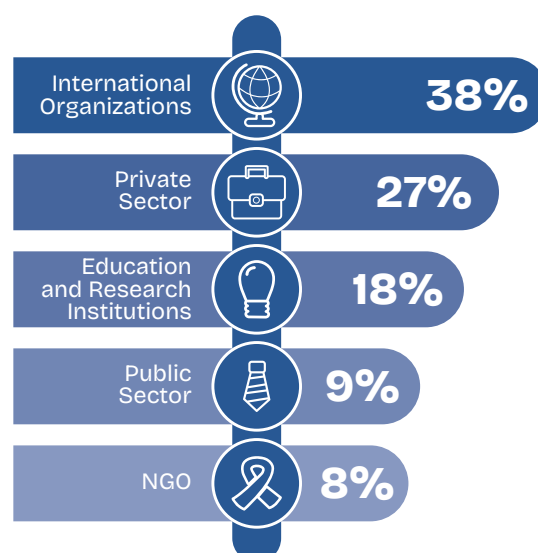
## Current Residence:



## Employment:



## Employment by Sectors:



By 2025, the total number of the OSCE Academy graduates reached **708 (375 females and 333 males)**. Currently, the Alumni Database contains information about **633 alumni (340 women, 293 men)**. According to the survey, nearly **73 per cent (53% women and 47% men)** of alumni who are citizens of one of the five Central Asian countries or Mongolia live and work within the wider Central Asian region. When taking into account all alumni, including those from outside the region and Afghanistan, **62 per cent** reside in the region. Among those currently living abroad, **16 per cent** are pursuing an academic career (including PhD studies). Overall, **79 per cent (60% women and 40% men)** of respondents are employed, while **9 per cent (32% women and 68% men)** continue their education. About **30 per cent (75% women and 25% men)** of alumni hold senior positions such as Directors, CEOs, Heads of Departments, Coordinators/Managers, and Officers in government institutions, international organizations, educational institutions, and NGOs across Central Asia. Additionally, **35 graduates (14% women and 86% men)** who have chosen an academic path are currently pursuing their PhD degrees.

# Academy's Updates

## Research Exchange of 2025

### Enéa Faugere

The OSCE Academy fosters partnerships with regional and international universities to collaborate in research and dialogue, as well as to implement exchange programmes and internships. This year, the Academy was delighted to welcome Enéa Faugere, a student from Sciences Po, the Institute of Political Studies Bordeaux, for a three-month research internship. Throughout her stay, Enéa contributed to ongoing research projects and supported various activities within the Research and Training Department. Enéa joined the Department at a time when one post was vacant, and the workload was quite heavy. She has greatly contributed to work on several publications of the OSCE Academy and the timely, high quality output speaks for itself.

*"During my time at the OSCE Academy in Bishkek, I had the opportunity to work in the Research and Training Department, where I was involved in a variety of tasks that greatly enriched my professional experience. My main responsibilities included supporting research activities on terrorism in Central Asia and assisting in the organization and preparation of academic events. I particularly enjoyed contributing*



*to the smooth running of conferences and seminars, which are at the heart of the Academy's intellectual life.*

*What made this experience truly remarkable, however, was the warm and welcoming environment created by my colleagues. I felt constantly supported by the OSCE Academy team, whose professionalism and kindness made my integration both easy and enjoyable.*

*Beyond the academic experience, my stay in Kyrgyzstan allowed me to discover Central Asia and to deeply appreciate the richness of Kyrgyz culture. I was especially impressed by its traditions, hospitality, and amazing landscapes—from the Issyk-Kul Lake to the Ala-Archa mountains. Exploring Bishkek and the surrounding regions gave me genuine insight into this very special country.*

*I feel truly grateful to have been part of such an inspiring environment, and I will always remember my experience there—whether through discussions with students and researchers or during the Alumni Reunion—as a period of both professional growth and personal discovery."*



## Postdoctoral Fellowship Programme

The OSCE Academy continuously strives to strengthen its research capacity. With support from the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), the Academy launched its Postdoctoral Fellowship Programme.

This long-term programme provides researchers with the opportunity to conduct research over a two-year period in disciplines aligned with the Academy's overall mission in academia and education.

This year, two researchers have been awarded this fellowship to help enhance the research capacity and output of the OSCE Academy. They stayed at the OSCE Academy between January and the end of October 2025.

### Dr. Ayat Ullah

*Research Topic: Integrating Mental Health into Climate Adaptation: A Comparative Policy Analysis of Central Asian Countries*

Dr. Ayat Ullah is a Postdoctoral Researcher at the OSCE Academy. His research focuses on climate change adaptation, mental health, natural resource management, and environmental sustainability in developing and transition economies. He has a strong background in the socio-economic dimensions of climate adaptation and energy poverty in mountain and forest-dependent communities.

Dr. Ullah has participated in several international research projects, including Horizon Europe initiatives such as BrightSpace and Horizon Europe 2020, where he contributed to work packages on sustainability transitions and adaptive farming systems. His work has also examined topics such as forest landscape restoration, food waste behavior, and climate-induced migration in Central Asia. He has authored over 50 peer-reviewed articles and serves as a peer reviewer for several leading international journals. He has supervised multiple master's theses on topics such as women's empowerment, agricultural entrepreneurship, and adaptation strategies in Africa and Central Asia.



Dr. Ullah's research has been supported by the European Union (Horizon Europe), the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), and the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan.



## Dr. Shah Zaman

*Research Topic: Sustainable Development, Climate Change, and Socio-economic Transformation*

Dr. Shah Zaman is a distinguished scholar and dedicated researcher whose work bridges the fields of socio-ecological economics, energy policy, and project management. His academic journey, marked by distinction and commitment, includes fully funded (China Government Scholarship) degrees from leading institutions in China, reflecting both his intellectual merit and perseverance. He has published extensively in leading peer-reviewed high impact factor journals such as *Energy Policy*, *Renewable Energy*, *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, *Sustainable Development*, *Journal of Environmental Management*, *Journal of Cleaner Production* and others. His scholarly contributions align closely with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), advancing evidence-based policy recommendations for sustainability and inclusive growth. He contributed a lot to the intellectual and scholarly life of the OSCE Academy and recently published an article “Policy Strategies for Sustainable Urban Development in the 21st Century: Fresh Empirical Evidence in Global Framework” in the journal “Sustainable Development”. Currently, he is working on the following research ideas: “Renewable Energy Impact on Public Health in Central Asia”, “Green Technological Innovation, Green Growth and Women Inclusion Impact Towards Decarbonized Society” and “Identification of Climate Leadership in the Asian Region”. He is deeply committed to mentorship, collaborative research, and advancing interdisciplinary dialogue. Dr. Zaman earned his PhD in Management from Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics, and MSc in Economics from Shandong University, China. You can learn more about him through: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/shah-zaman-13b40822a/> and <https://scholar.google.at/citations?user=VyP8-AEAAAAJ&hl=en>



<https://www.linkedin.com/in/shah-zaman-13b40822a/>



<https://scholar.google.at/citations?user=VyP8-AEAAAAJ&hl=en>

# Alumni and Academy

## 6th Alumni Reunion



On 14 and 15 June, the OSCE Academy welcomed back its graduates, partners, and friends for the 6th triannual Alumni Reunion — a warm, dynamic gathering that brought together around 150 people. More than a hundred alumni returned from across Central Asia, Europe, and beyond, eager to reconnect, exchange ideas, and celebrate how far the Academy and its community have come.

Opening the event, the Academy's Director, Dr. Pal Dunay, reflected on the remarkable transformation of the Academy, quoting Heraclitus: "You can't step into the same river twice." Today, the Academy stands as a vibrant regional hub offering three Master's programmes and one Bachelor's programme, supported by a growing team and a network of more than 700 alumni who play leading roles in academia, public policy, diplomacy, and civil society.

Dr. Dunay and later Ambassador Alexey Rogov, Head of the OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek and Chairperson

of the Board of Trustees of the Academy, emphasized how central alumni are to the Academy's mission. Ambassador Rogov highlighted that the Academy has evolved into "a vibrant centre for learning, policy dialogue, and regional co-operation," encouraging graduates to continue strengthening their network, collaboration, and shared values.

Throughout the opening ceremony, high-level speakers — including Ms. Kate Fearon from the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre and Ms. Maria Gjørwad Hagen from NORAD — underscored the Academy's growing regional significance. They praised the alumni community as the embodiment of OSCE's values, from cross-border cooperation to evidence-based dialogue and people-centred security. The ceremony transitioned into a vibrant session titled "Alumni Achievements: Inspiring and Motivating," showcasing graduates who exemplify how education at the Academy has empowered individuals from diverse backgrounds to thrive globally.





Alumni and Guests Listen to the Success Stories of their Fellows

Every Reunion reminds us how remarkably far our alumni have come — and how the Academy’s vision, community, and academic foundation continue to shape their journeys long after graduation. This year was no exception. As graduates reconnected, we once again found ourselves inspired by the breadth of their achievements, the courage behind their choices, and the impact they have created across continents. Their stories are far more numerous than those we can highlight in one gathering, but the examples shared during the programme illustrated just how transformative an OSCE Academy education can be.

One such story came from alumna Malika Toqmadi (PS’12), who spoke about the moment her path shifted in Bishkek. She recalled that “it wasn’t just my first international experience — it was the moment I realised I belonged in global conversations.” The Academy gave her the confidence and analytical foundation that later carried her to Geneva through the European Scholarship of the GCSP for Central Asia, then into international organisations such as the UN Migration Agency (IOM) and the World Bank, and eventually to co-founding PaperLab — today one of Kazakhstan’s most recognizable spaces for evidence-based policy dialogue. As she continued her academic journey toward a PhD at University College London and a research fellowship at Harvard University, Malika emphasised how deeply the Academy’s mentorship shaped her choices, opening opportunities that defined her career.



Malika Toqmadi (PS’12) delivers her Success Story



Her reflections naturally resonated with the experience of alumna Mingul Seitkazieva (PS'07), whose story added a profoundly human dimension to the Reunion. Growing up in the ethnically diverse Fergana Valley, she learned early what it means to navigate borders — both literal and personal. She shared that this upbringing made her realise one essential truth: “borders only limit you if you accept them.” Her greatest test came when raising a child with special needs, a challenge that strengthened rather than halted her ambitions. Mingul built a career that spans several regions, travelling widely, advocating for disability inclusion, and ultimately working at the World Bank’s Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia. She also contributes to the UN disability-inclusion network in Vienna, helping shape institutional change. Her journey demonstrated resilience rooted in community — a value she traces back to her time at the Academy.

The success stories concluded with the powerful testimony of alumna Zarlasht Sarmasht (PS'21), representing the newest generation of the Academy graduates. She spoke about the turbulent summer of 2021, when she joined an emergency team evacuating Afghan students. “You do not think about fear at that moment — only about responsibility,” she recalled. Supporting the evacuation of more than 370 students from several universities, including the OSCE Academy, shaped her understanding of trauma and resilience. Motivated to help others process what they

had endured, she pursued further studies on post-traumatic stress disorder, basing her thesis on interviews with more than a hundred evacuated Afghan students. Her work later brought her to Bard College in the United States, where she now supports displaced students professionally and academically. She also emerged as a compelling public speaker — sharing her message at the World Bank Spring Meetings and through a TED Talk — and documenting stories of migration in two photo books that capture the emotional reality behind forced displacement. Throughout her journey, Zarlasht emphasized how deeply the OSCE Academy shaped her path: giving her confidence, tools, and unwavering support to act in difficult situations and drive meaningful change.

Taken together, these stories — just a small part of the many that could be presented at the Reunion — reveal the extraordinary paths shaped by the Academy’s education and values. They show how alumni turn learning into leadership, adversity into purpose, and opportunity into global impact, reaffirming the mission that unites our entire community.

The Reunion continued with an expert panel on “Artificial Intelligence: Threats and Opportunities,” moderated by Mr. Talant Sultanov. For 95 minutes, speakers explored disinformation, the future of education, the job market, and digital safety — issues shaping not only Central Asia, but the global landscape. Following the panel, the Acade-



Alumni listen and discuss the presentations



my opened its doors for a rich programme of workshops, round table, and interviews — from water security and climate change to academic publishing, PhD proposal writing, and security sector governance.

The second part of the Reunion unfolded in a warm and celebratory atmosphere on the terrace of the Orion Hotel, offering a more formal and festive moment dedicated to honoring the Academy's most engaged graduates. During the Alumni Award Ceremony, the Academy expressed deep appreciation to its donors, partners, and alumni whose ongoing support strengthens its mission and long-term development. This time, the Alumni of the Year 2024 Award was presented to Mr. Abdulvakhobi Muminjoniyon (EGD'19) and Ms. Dilfuza Kurolova (PS'15), recognizing their aca-

demetic and professional achievements, their active involvement in the life of the Academy, and their contributions to their communities. Alongside them, the Academy also acknowledged alumni who help build new partnerships, initiate collaborative activities, and continuously support the institution's growth. Special appreciation was extended to the most dedicated members of the alumni community — including those who, remarkably, have not missed a single Alumni Conference, Reunion, or Chapter Meeting since the first cohort graduated in 2005. One such example is alumnus Akmaljon Abdullayev (PS'05), who, despite his demanding academic and professional commitments, has not missed a single alumni event, demonstrating an exceptional level of loyalty and dedication to his Alma Mater and to the OSCE Academy community.



Alumnus of the Year Award Ceremony





Alumni at the Reception





The second day of the Reunion offered a relaxed setting at Kara-Bulak Eco Resort, where graduates and staff strengthened friendships, shared memories, and built new connections.



Alumni during the teambuilding activities at eco-resort Kara-Bulak

The 2025 Alumni Reunion was generously funded by the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) — one of the Academy's most dedicated partners and longstanding supporters.



## Alumni Training

### OSCE-DCAF Summer School: Human Security and Climate Change



From 8 to 13 June, the OSCE Academy alumni and students participated in the summer school “OSCE-DCAF Summer School on Security Sector Governance and Reform (SSG/R) at the OSCE Academy - Linking SSG/R, Human Security and the Safety of Journalists,” co-organized by the OSCE Secretariat’s Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC) and the Office of the Secretary General (OSG), together with the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM), the OSCE Academy in Bishkek, the OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek and the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF). This year the School was held at the Issyk-Kul lake.

The event brought together twenty-two participants from Afghanistan, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan – OSCE Academy students and graduates as well as young journalists from the region.

The Summer School focused on the holistic nature of human security, including within the framework of the OSCE’s Youth and Security Agenda, with a specific focus on the freedom of the media and the protection of journalists. The courses explored good practices and tools for applying the principles of good security sector governance within the Central Asian context and in connection with promoting freedom of the media. The interactive sessions included group and brainstorming exercises aimed at enhancing strategic planning, analytical and critical-thinking skills.

This is the third edition of the OSCE-DCAF Summer School on SSG/R, following two successful courses in 2023 and 2024, which has now become a traditional event bringing together OSCE Academy students and alumni from Central Asia, Afghanistan and Mongolia. This year, the partnership between the OSCE and DCAF was further cemented by the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding between the OSCE Academy and DCAF, which will allow MA students from the OSCE Academy to benefit from dedicated internships at DCAF’s HQ in Geneva for the years to come.

One of the participants, Uulzhan Bekturova, emphasized the importance of capacity-building activities for young people: “Equipping youth with SSG/R skills means equipping tomorrow’s leaders to make security humane, accountable and inclusive. In regions where civic space can shrink overnight, informed youth become a safeguard for transparency and human rights.”

The event was co-funded by three OSCE extra-budgetary projects as well as through in-kind contribution from DCAF. The OSCE projects are the CPC’s “Support, capacity-building and awareness-raising for Security Sector Governance and Reform within the OSCE: Phase III”, the OSG’s “Accelerating the implementation of the Youth and Security Agenda in the OSCE Region” and the RFoM’s “Safety of Journalists Project”.

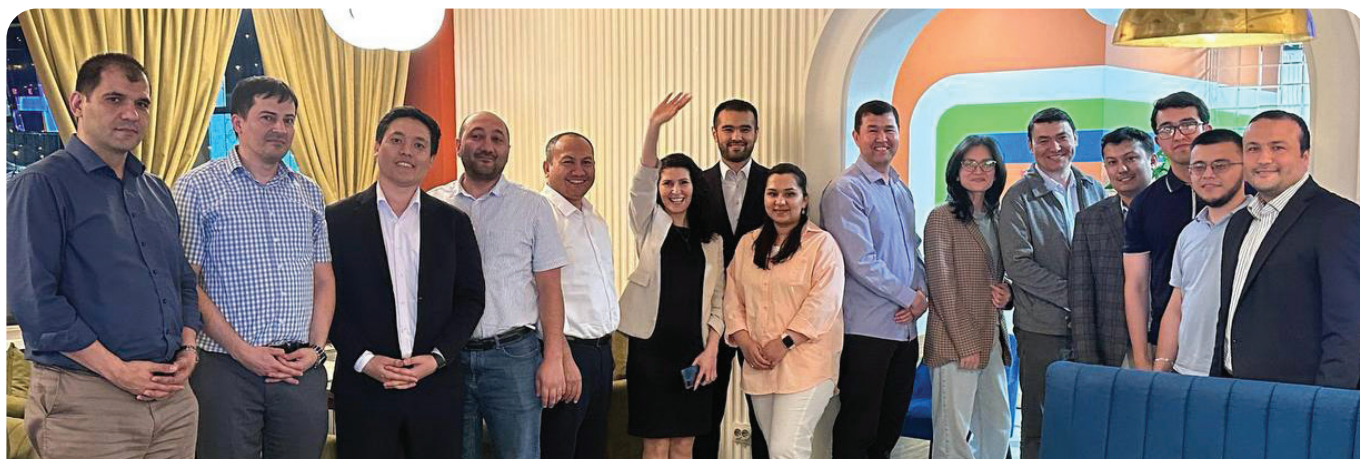


## Alumni Chapter Meetings

In mid-April, the OSCE Academy conducted Alumni Chapter meetings in Astana, Tashkent, and Dushanbe. Overall, 36 graduates residing in three Central Asian capitals gathered for meetings with the Academy's representatives. On 16 April, Dr. Sebastian Mayer, DAAD Associate Professor at the OSCE Academy, met alumni in Astana, and Ms. Victoria Orazova, Head of the International Department, together with Ms. Aiym Chotoeva, MAHRS Programme Assistant, met alumni in Tashkent, and on 18 April Dr. Mayer and Ms. Orazova met alumni in Dushanbe. During these meetings, graduates of different years shared their experiences after their studies at the OSCE Academy and discussed regional developments. The chapter meetings serve as a platform for networking among the Academy's graduates from different years and programmes, and help maintain ties with former students.



Alumni Chapter Meeting in Astana



Alumni Chapter Meeting in Tashkent



Alumni Chapter Meeting in Dushanbe



# Alumni Achievements



*Alumnus  
of the Year  
2025:*

**Nurlan**

**Kabdylkhak**

**Nurlan Kabdylkhak**, a graduate of the OSCE Academy's MA Programme in Politics and Security, represents the class of 2009 from Kazakhstan. This year Nurlan received the Alumnus of the Year 2025 Award in recognition of his outstanding academic achievements and professional contributions following his graduation from the Academy.

After completing his degree at the OSCE Academy and gaining early experience in policy research and government service in Kazakhstan, Nurlan chose to pursue an academic career. His research interests shifted to history, leading him to spend several years teaching and conducting research at Nazarbayev University before continuing his doctoral studies in the United States. Earlier this year, he successfully defended his doctoral dissertation at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Nurlan now serves as an Assistant Professor of History at Stony Brook University, New York. Drawing on both state-produced documents and sources written by Muslim communities, his research deepens our understanding of empire and colonialism in Central Asia. His forthcoming book examines the vibrant Muslim institutions in late tsarist Central Asia, offering fresh insights into the complex interplay between faith, state power, and local agency.

Nurlan's scholarship, global outlook, and dedication to advancing the study of Eurasian and Central Asian history exemplify the values of the OSCE Academy and make him a deserving recipient of the Alumnus of the Year 2025 Award.



**Nurlan, what drew you to focus on Central Asian history, and how did your experience at the OSCE Academy influence your academic journey?**

My fascination with history began in middle-school years, when I developed a passion for reading historical novels set in wider Central Asia. Whether exploring the world of the ancient Scythians, the rise of the medieval Mongols, or the struggles of modern Central Asians, I was captivated by the region's rich and diverse past. This interest, however, remained more of a romantic attachment than a deliberate academic pursuit. Although I enjoyed history classes, I never imagined studying the subject formally or building a career in academia. That changed at the OSCE Academy. There, I encountered a wide range of exciting and thought-provoking scholarly works that opened my eyes to the possibilities of academic research. Equally transformative were the conversations I had with my fellow Central Asian classmates. Through these exchanges, I became deeply interested in how official historical narratives, almost always framed through national perspectives, influence our understanding of a shared past. My experience at the OSCE Academy ultimately became one of the turning points that set me on the path toward academia.

**Your research combines state archives with sources from local Central Asian communities. What challenges or surprises have you encountered in working with these materials?**

My current project examines the history of Muslim religious institutions in Central Asia under tsarist imperial rule. It analyzes this process from both the perspective of the state and the voices of local communities. It was not particularly surprising to learn that local communities actively shaped state policy, skillfully working to maximize their chances of receiving favorable outcomes. What did surprise me was the remarkable sophistication with which they navigated the tsarist bureaucratic system. Local Central Asians demonstrated a keen understanding of when and how to escalate cases to higher administrative bodies, how to exploit colonial stereotypes about themselves to their advantage, and how to master the language of imperial patriotism, framing their petitions as contributions to the stability and prosperity of the empire. One of the challenges of this research is the painstaking task of locating and analyzing relevant materials dispersed across multiple archival institutions in different countries. Additionally, tsarist-era sources produced by Central Asian communities are written in pre-national local languages, using Arabic script and filled with archaic vocabulary and grammatical conventions, which adds a level of complexity for anyone attempting to work with them. Although these linguistic hurdles are demanding, they can be overcome through training in languages and paleography.



**Your upcoming book examines Muslim institutions in late tsarist Central Asia. How do you see this research contributing to contemporary discussions about faith, governance, and local agency in the region?**

My work places Central Asian communities at the very centre of my narrative, with the imperial state serving more as a backdrop. It demonstrates that local people were not merely passive objects of colonial policies but active subjects who engaged both with one another and with the imperial administration to pursue their own goals. When the state failed to meet their demands, these communities often disengaged from the bureaucracy and sought alternative ways to advance their interests independently. At its core, this is a social history that uses faith and religious institutions as a lens to explore the everyday lives, strategies, and autonomy of local communities, as well as their capacity to operate as historical actors in their own right. It stresses the enduring importance of local agency and speaks to contemporary debates about authority, governance, and grassroots participation in the region.



### **As a professor at Stony Brook, how do you inspire students to think critically about empire, colonialism, and nationalism, particularly in Central Asia?**

These themes can be approached and understood from multiple perspectives, and I encourage my students to embrace that complexity. I ask them to view empires as inherently multiethnic and multireligious political enterprises; to consider colonialism not only as a system of suppression and violence but also as a framework that created opportunities for certain local communities and individuals; and to recognize nationalism as a relatively late development that only recently emerged as a powerful tool of political mobilization. As a specialist in Central Asian history, and given my own Central Asian background, I naturally draw on historical cases from the region when discussing broader historical themes. Central Asia provides a wealth of examples that challenge conventional narratives and invite students to think critically about how these concepts operate in different contexts. I am currently developing a course on Central Asia, which I hope will allow students to engage more deeply with the region's rich and multifaceted history.

### **Throughout your path from Kazakhstan to the United States and now in academia, what personal or professional lessons have shaped the way you approach research and teaching?**

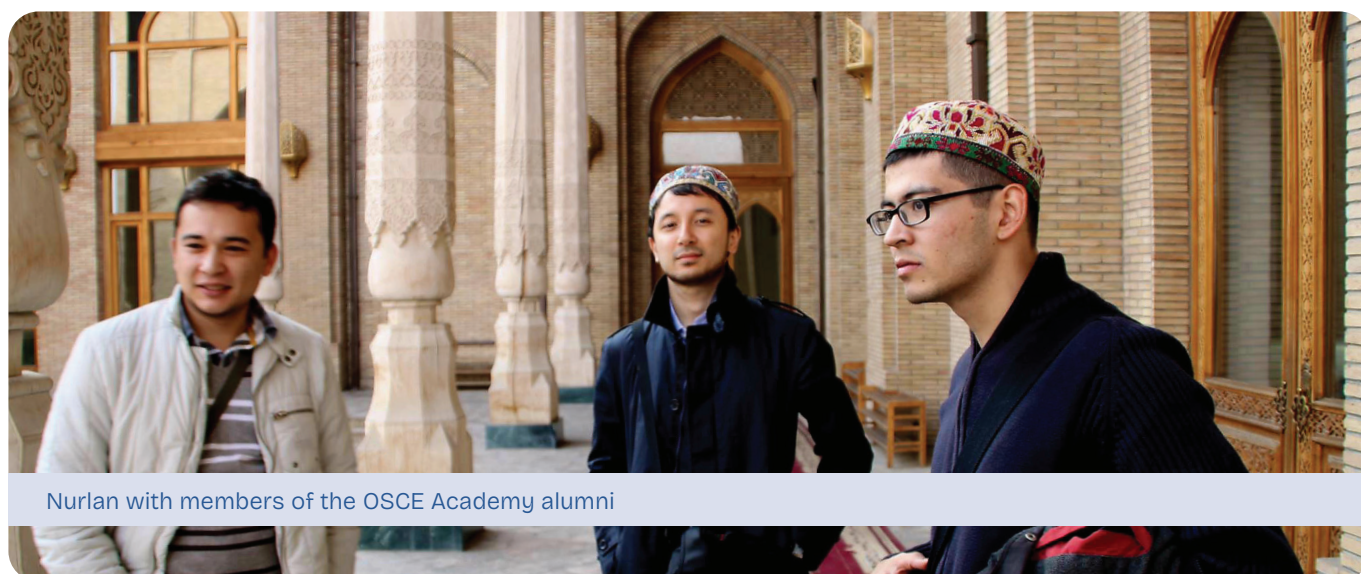
Both my research and teaching are guided by the belief that learning is, at its core, a dialogue. In research, this dialogue begins with engaging the work of scholars who have studied the topic before you, while simultaneously striving to develop your own original ideas and contributions. You can then refine these ideas in conversations with your academic network—former classmates, professors/mentors, colleagues, and other scholars in the

field—continuing the exchange in person and across borders. Perhaps the most important personal lesson I have learned is the value of community. Scholarship is not only about peer review or critique; it is also sustained by the support, encouragement, and intellectual generosity of those around you. I remain deeply grateful to the OSCE Academy for the remarkable community I encountered there, friends and colleagues who continue to enrich my academic journey as fellow alumni.

In teaching, I bring the same philosophy into the classroom. I approach teaching as a dialogue with students, where the goal is not simply to transmit knowledge but to create an environment in which students feel empowered to challenge ideas, ask difficult questions, and actively shape their own learning experience.

### **What advice would you give to current OSCE Academy students and alumni who aspire to make an impact through scholarship, public engagement, or regional research?**

First of all, if you studied at the OSCE Academy—congratulations! You are already part of an exceptional community, and that experience has already provided you with a strong foundation for whatever path you choose, whether in academia, policy research, government, or beyond. I won't be very original in saying that it's essential to follow work that genuinely excites you. Passion is what sustains long-term commitment, and when you truly enjoy the work you do, you are far more likely to leave a meaningful and positive mark on this world. The OSCE Academy equips its students not only with knowledge but also with perspectives and networks that can be drawn upon in countless ways. Build on that foundation to explore questions that inspire you and that you believe genuinely matter.



Nurlan with members of the OSCE Academy alumni

## Alumni Success Stories

### Driving Integrity, Security, and Cultural Dialogue in Central Asia

In this edition, we are proud to highlight the remarkable achievements of three OSCE Academy alumni whose diverse paths reflect the Academy's enduring commitment to fostering ethical leadership, academic excellence, and social impact across Central Asia.

From advancing anti-corruption reform and strengthening governance standards, to shaping regional security agendas and promoting inclusive approaches to preventing violent extremism, to exploring the role of cultural expression as a form of social critique—each of these graduates exemplifies the Academy's mission in action.

Their journeys showcase how OSCE Academy alumni continue to bridge research, policy, and practice, contributing to a more transparent, secure, and informed society. Whether through government advisory roles, academic leadership, or cultural scholarship.

#### **Almakan Orozobekova is an alumna of 2014, MA Programme in Politics and Security from Kyrgyzstan**

Dr. Almakan Orozobekova is one of those alumni whose professional path perfectly reflects the OSCE Academy's mission: combining rigorous research with practical contributions to regional security and cooperation. A graduate of the MA in Politics and Security, she has built an impressive academic and policy career – and, in 2024, she returned to the OSCE community in a leading role as Coordinator of the OSCE Network for Women Professionals on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism (P/CVERLT) in Central Asia.

After graduating from the Academy, Almakan continued her studies in Europe, earning MAS and PhD degrees in Switzerland and Germany. She completed the International Training Course (ITC) in Security Policy and obtained her MAS from the Geneva Centre for Security Policy and the University of Geneva, where she also received the Most Outstanding Research Paper Award.

Shortly thereafter, Almakan joined the renowned Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Germany while pursuing her PhD at the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg. Her research project, focusing on the terrorism-related issue of foreign fighters, represented a rare combination of fieldwork, comparative analysis, and policy-relevant insights that were shared with practitioner audiences. Since 2015, her publications have demonstrated





both theoretical depth and practical perspective, bridging academic study with policy discussions. Her most recent publication, “Terrorism,” appeared in the edited monograph “Central Asia in a Multipolar World” (Springer, 2024).

Professionally, Almadan has never confined herself to academia. She has collaborated with numerous international organizations, speaking at high-level events organized by the OSCE, United Nations, European Union, and other institutions. Her participation in the 2024 meeting of the Central Asia Regional Expert Council on Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Returnees, co-organized by the OSCE, UNOCT, and UNRCCA in Tashkent, highlights her active engagement in practitioner platforms that can translate research into policy advice.

From 2023 to 2025, Almadan also served as Project and Training Specialist at the OSCE Academy in Bishkek, contributing to the design and delivery of capacity-building

programmes and knowledge-sharing activities for practitioners in Central Asia and beyond.

A particularly important milestone came in late 2024, when she was appointed Coordinator of the OSCE Network for Women Professionals on P/CVERLT in Central Asia. In this capacity, Almadan supports a growing community of women experts from government institutions, civil society organizations, academia, the media, and the OSCE field operations. The Network contributes significantly to promoting gender-responsive and inclusive approaches to P/CVERLT, while advancing women’s professional development and encouraging regional dialogue across Central Asia. Her appointment carries significance not only for her personally but also for the OSCE Academy’s alumni community, as an Academy alumna now leads a regional platform that contributes directly to the OSCE Secretariat’s flagship gender equality initiative – “WIN for Women and Men” – in the P/CVERLT area.



Regional Expert Group Meeting of the OSCE Network for Women Professionals on P/CVERLT in Central Asia (Almadan Orozbekova – first from right)

### **Akylai Otkulbek kyzy is an alumna of 2023, MA Programme in Politics and Security from Kyrgyzstan**

*Shortly after graduating in 2023 from the MA Programme in Politics and Security, Akylai Otkulbek kyzy began a research journey that reflects the OSCE Academy's commitment to fostering critical inquiry and academic excellence. As a fellow at the Oxus Society for Central Asian Affairs, she co-authored a policy brief titled "Aitysh(h) as a Form of Civic Activism in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan" with Dr. Asem Kalkamanova, under the mentorship of Dr. Aijan Sharshenova and Dr. Edward Lemon.*

*Following the publication of the brief, their research drew attention from editors of several Central Asian academic journals, encouraging Akylai and her co-authors to develop a full-length article. This work, later expanded and peer-reviewed, was published as "Voices of Dissent: A Comparative Study of Aitysh(h) in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan" in Central Asian Affairs.*

*Her recent achievements culminated in an invitation to present this research at the annual Central Eurasian Studies Society (CESS) conference, hosted by the Central Asia Program at George Washington University in Washington, DC. Akylai attributes these milestones to the OSCE Academy's strong academic foundation—its rigorous curriculum, mentorship, and continuous support that empower graduates to carry forward the Academy's mission in research and policy.*

"The idea behind this research interest emerged gradually as I tried to make sense of my academic experience at the OSCE Academy. It was there, when I first started to think seriously about how local practices and local thinking can explain the political and social processes just as much as conventional academic theories that we read about from the well-known books and articles. My professors in the Politics and Security programme strongly emphasized the importance of looking at Central Asia through its own prism rather than through externally imposed frameworks. This made me explore ways of bringing together academic analysis with culturally grounded, lived practices. This is how I arrived at topics such as southern episte-



mology, indigenous practices, local knowledge forms and aitysh. The more I explored aitysh the more I realized that aitysh is not only an art or skill but also a space of political reflection, a lived example of peaceful conflict resolution, collective memory, and knowledge transfer rooted in national identity. This project is my attempt to honor those voices and contribute to a more grounded, region-centered understanding of Central Asia. I am still very much on this journey, I am still trying to capture these ideas, explain them, and understand them more deeply myself in my current research work as well."

### **Kodir Kuliev is an alumnus of 2014, MA Programme in Economic Governance and Development from Uzbekistan**

*Kodir Kuliev stands out as one of Central Asia's most dynamic emerging leaders in anti-corruption, compliance, and ethical governance. As a government advisor, educator, author, and regional reform advocate, he bridges policy, practice, and public engagement—driving measurable institutional change in Uzbekistan and beyond. His expanding portfolio spans national anti-corruption strategy, regional compliance development, international cooperation, teaching innovation, arbitration, and policy research. Importantly, Kodir has also made a lasting contribution to the Academy's development by initiating new*



*partnerships and strategic initiatives, including collaborations with the Institute of Chartered Compliance Professionals (ICCP) and Webster University in Tashkent. With a growing global presence and an unwavering commitment to public ethics, Kodir exemplifies the impact and leadership our alumni bring to their communities and the wider world.*



“Once an Alum—always part of the mission.

I am an international anti-corruption expert. Some careers follow one path. Mine had to follow four, because fighting corruption in today’s world demands a 360-degree vantage point. I mean, corruption today is not a single-lane problem. It moves across governments, markets, institutions, and communities. To keep up with that reality, I built something different: a four-tier integrity portfolio that fits squarely into the UN’s Whole-of-Government / Whole-of-Society playbook—a mix you don’t usually find in one person.

On the state side, I work at the Criminology Research Institute of the Republic of Uzbekistan, driving prevention reforms and building evidence-based tools that directly inform national policy and strengthen institutional resilience. In the professional arena, I represent ICCP Central Asia as the Country Representative in Uzbekistan and an Advisory Board Member, raising the region’s compliance maturity and advancing ethical business practices into the mainstream. On the think-tank front, as an Anti-Corruption Expert and Non-Resident Fellow at the Center for Progressive Reforms (CPR), I make transparency a real

practice. I bring fresh ideas to improve governance and support the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). And through my own company, which I launched last year — my consulting venture — I bring everything to market: designing integrity systems, advising organizations, and turning anti-corruption, compliance, and ESG principles into measurable outcomes and investor-friendly solutions.

What makes this mix genuinely unique is simple: these four spheres almost never overlap in one professional profile. Government institutions, compliance bodies, policy think tanks, and the private advisory market usually operate in separate lanes, each with its own logic and blind spots. By connecting these areas, I gain a full view of risks, spot connections that others may miss, and transform integrity efforts from isolated projects into a coordinated approach. In a region transforming at full speed and drawing investors, this kind of wide-angle view, I believe, is the best way to stay ahead of the curve.

Teaching has emerged as the fifth pillar in my career. Since 2019, I have been teaching Ethics, Global Studies, and Business courses at Webster University in Tashkent, where

corruption, compliance, ESG, and CSR are integral to the curriculum. In 2023, I became a Leif J. Sverdrup Global Teaching Fellow, instructing an interdisciplinary anti-corruption course for international students at Webster's Leiden Campus in the Netherlands. This year, I received the fellowship again—this time to teach at Webster University's Headquarters in St. Louis, Missouri, and to deliver research, cultural, and diplomatic projects. For me, teaching is where integrity becomes contagious. It is also where I live out my responsibility as a citizen to give something back.

What makes my job tough?

The moment you say "I fight corruption," the room freezes. Faces change. Smiles fade. Every word becomes a calculation. You stop being one of them. You become the mirror everyone fears to look into.

Anti-corruption sounds noble, but in reality, it's a confrontation with systems that have learned to camouflage their weaknesses. You don't just expose crimes; you disturb an ecosystem of privilege, silence, and fear.

And here's the truth: bravery alone is never enough:

A strong lawyer, engineer, politician, or economist who call themselves anti-corruption experts won't go far. Because corruption is never purely legal or financial — it's psychological, sociological, political, and cultural. To truly see it, you must wear at least five lenses: law, economics, politics, sociology, and psychology. Only then can you detect it, prevent it, and respond to it effectively.

To survive, you must master Diplomacy — the art of walking through fire without turning to ash. Here, being right can cost you everything.

And above all, there's something even rarer — Leadership. Leadership turns this risky mission into a human one. It's not about fighting against people — it's about reaching through them. A real leader can speak to anyone — even a corrupt official — not to shame, but to understand. Because you can't reform what you don't understand. Leadership helps you talk to the corrupt without becoming one of them, and still make the system less corrupt. It

turns resistance into cooperation, guilt into awareness, and fear into responsibility.

My professional journey has cut across almost every corner of the integrity landscape—government bodies, diplomatic missions, international organizations, NGOs, and academia—always anchored in one mission: accountability, prevention, and public trust. I've worked at the British Embassy and the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent, partnered with institutions such as the Council of Europe, UNESCO, OSCE/ODIHR, DAI Global, and the International Anti-Corruption Academy (IACA), and collaborated with national initiatives such as Search for Common Ground and the Yuksalish Movement. Over the years, I've led nationwide corruption-risk assessments, built integrity frameworks, authored public-awareness tools—including Uzbekistan's first audio anti-corruption guide for visually impaired citizens—and delivered an anti-corruption guidebook tailored specifically for Uzbekistan's youth. I've trained young people across multiple regions to recognize, resist, and report corruption. It has been a front-row seat to how integrity is built, defended, stress-tested, and rebuilt—and a reminder that real change happens only when you work on every frontline at once.

As an Arbitrator (Judge) specializing in Anti-Corruption, Compliance, and International Human Rights Law, I also handle economic and civil disputes—facilitating dialogue, evaluating evidence, and issuing binding decisions that uphold fairness. This role lets me promote ethical conduct and financial discipline through mediation principles, ensuring conflicts are resolved cleanly, efficiently, and with integrity at the center.

Beyond institutional work, I run Uzbekistan's first non-commercial and altruistic Anti-Corruption educational blog, dedicated to public understanding of ethics, fairness, and good governance.

The OSCE Academy had a major impact on my life. It helped me sharpen my analytical skills and taught me the value of responsible knowledge. I gained a valuable network and a perspective that influences my actions today. I stay involved with the Academy by mentoring and engaging in policy work."



# Alumni Initiatives

## Inspiring Innovation and Lifelong Learning

In this edition, we celebrate two distinguished alumnae whose initiatives exemplify the OSCE Academy's values of knowledge sharing, integrity, and social impact. Through their work, they continue to strengthen the Academy's legacy of empowering future leaders and advancing education across borders. Together, their journeys highlight how OSCE Academy graduates continue to bridge innovation and education—sharing their expertise, mentoring others, and shaping a more ethical and inclusive academic future.

**Assel Mussagaliyeva-Tang is an alumna of 2005,  
MA Programme in Politics and Security from Kazakhstan**



*Assel leads transformative change in the field of digital education through her startup EDUTech Future, recognized by the governments of Singapore, Kazakhstan, and the UAE. Her commitment to equitable access to technology and AI literacy has already empowered many of people, and her last year scholarship programme for the OSCE Academy alumna stands as a powerful example of giving back.*

“Thanks to the OSCE Academy for this wonderful opportunity to share my journey as a proud alumna and founder of EDUTech Future. Over the past 26 months, I have trained more than 2,000 people across Central Asia and the Asia-Pacific, including curious 5–14-year-old kids, se-

nior civil servants, medical doctors, schoolteachers, and university professors. This experience fuels my passion for Break into Tech programmes that leverage digital skills and generative AI, enabling non-linear career pathways that empower learners of all backgrounds.

My time at the OSCE Academy deeply influenced my mission-driven approach, equipping me with insights into policy and international cooperation. Aligning with the UAE, Singapore, and Kazakhstan governments and global partners like OpenAI and Manus has been rewarding, allowing us to co-create accessible, personalized AI education that meets real-world demands. I am committed to

equitable access, evidenced by my dedicated scholarship for OSCE students and alumni.

I'm honored to be a featured speaker at the UAE Government's BRIDGE Summit in Abu Dhabi in December 2025, where I will address a global audience of 60,000. My presentation focuses on the safe use of generative AI in education, targeting policy-makers, media, and the private sector to ensure responsible adoption that benefits learners and society alike.

Looking ahead, inclusive AI education and skills-first hiring will be key drivers of innovation and socio-economic growth in emerging economies. To OSCE students and graduates: embrace life-long learning, nurture your networks, and lead with purpose - the future of technology and policy-making depends on you.

Thank you for supporting this mission and for allowing me to represent the OSCE Academy as one of the first alumni. Follow my founder journey at <https://edutechfuture.com>."



### Aida Aidarova is an alumna of 2013, MA Programme in Politics and Security from Kyrgyzstan



*Aida Aidarova (PS'13), Assistant Professor at the American University of Central Asia, advances thoughtful and responsible teaching in the age of Artificial Intelligence. Through research, international workshops, and innovative pedagogical methods, she encourages students to strengthen critical thinking and creativity in an increasingly AI-driven world.*

"For a Student Who Used AI to Write a Paper  
By Joseph Fasano

*Now I let it fall back in the grasses.  
I hear you. I know this life is hard now.  
I know your days are precious on this earth.  
But what are you trying to be free of?  
The living? The miraculous task of it?  
Love is for the ones who love the work.*

Let me start with a poem by Joseph Fasano, as it succinctly depicts what teachers would like to communicate to their students. Certainly, the history of invention and development of Artificial Intelligence starts long before





the release of ChatGPT in November 2022. However, since then, academia and pedagogy have been facing a new challenge and had to seek new ways of dealing with it – student use of Gen AI to write assignment. As an Assistant Professor at the American University of Central Asia, I believe it to be my call and responsibility to encourage students to enhance their own intellectual capacities in view of the rapidly developing Generative AI. For the last three years, I had reflected on my pedagogical experience, learned new methods of approaching AI in teaching and presented my outlook at workshops and conferences.

In September 2024, I had presented a paper on “How to Teach Writing and Critical Thinking Skills in the Age of AI?” at the Central Eurasian Studies Society (CESS) Conference in the Maxwell School of Citizenship at Syracuse University, New York. The paper was based on my professional experience and latest review of literature on implications of AI for higher education. Specifically, it shared the results of a survey conducted among AUCA students on their attitudes towards AI, in-class examination essays, as well as student outlook on building writing and critical thinking skills with the help of AI. I had also shared some of the potential solutions and recommendations for improving student writing, including the revision of fixed structures, evaluation criteria and rubrics, introduction of low-stakes assignments and incorporation of alternative assessment tools.

In campuses and classrooms from across the ocean to the heart of Central Asia and beyond, teachers and professors struggled to persuade students to write without heavy reliance and even dependence on AI. What prompts the resistance of young minds is that true education requires challenging one’s beliefs, values and ideologies. This was the shared concern voiced by participants of workshop titled “The Academic Essay in the Age of AI” was led by Dr. Alfred E. Guy, Jr of Yale College. I had a pleasure of participating in this workshop in July 2025; it was organized by the Institute for Writing and Thinking at Bard College Annandale-on-Hudson, New York. I was glad to learn there that the President of Bard College, Leon Botstein was of the same opinion as I had always been on student writing – reintroduction of blue book examinations in classrooms. Looking back at my experience of teaching, I remember that I had always made students write essays in the classroom, be it an expository essay or political theory paper. To the resistance that students would voice about the purpose of such an assignment, I would respond with the same stoic consistency that “we, people of oral cultures should write to record, to be heard, to explore and eventually to share to the world the heritage of our region.” As Jules Henry had critically put it, “[a]nother learning problem inherent in the human condition is the fact that we must conserve culture while changing it.”

# Alumni Opportunities

## Junior Public Officers (JPO) Programme

*In support of the professional integration of alumni in the public service, starting from 2010 the OSCE Academy has run a Junior Public Officers Programme. This Programme provides an opportunity to the OSCE Academy's graduates from Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan to intern at the Ministry of Economy and Commerce of the Kyrgyz Republic, the National Investments Agency under the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan.*

*In 2025 overall two alumnae conducted their internships in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan:*

### **Aizat Sabyrbek kyzy, an alumna of 2025 from Kyrgyzstan at the National Investment Agency under the President of the Kyrgyz Republic**

During my internship, I gained a comprehensive understanding of how the National Investments Agency operates, including its mandate, internal structure, and key areas of responsibility. I became familiar with the daily workflow of a government body engaged in foreign investment promotion and regional development.

One of the most valuable skills I developed was the ability to draft formal documents and official correspondence in a professional and diplomatic tone. This included letters to ministries, foreign investors, and internal memos. Through hands-on experience, I improved my written communication skills and gained insight into the bureaucratic procedures involved in public administration. I also acquired practical office and organizational skills, such as managing documents and files, formatting and editing official papers, and supporting event logistics. These experiences helped me understand the importance of attention to detail and effective time management in a fast-paced work environment. Additionally, by participating in the preparation of events such as the Kyrgyz-Mongol Business Forum, I gained experience in stakeholder coordination and learned how such events are planned and executed at the national level.

This internship provided me with valuable experience working in a government institution and gave me a clearer understanding of how public agencies operate in practice. Gaining insight into the internal processes of the National Investments Agency strengthened my interest in public service and international cooperation, while also giving me a strong foundation to build on in my future career. The internship significantly contributed to my professional devel-



opment and enriched my CV by giving me direct experience in the government sector. I became familiar with how state bodies handle investment-related matters, interact with other government institutions, and follow official procedures.

In the near future, I plan to continue gaining professional experience, and I hope to contribute to projects that promote economic growth and international cooperation.



Gulzhan Begeyeva, an alumna of 2017 from Kazakhstan  
at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan



I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the OSCE Academy for providing this valuable opportunity. This JPO experience has allowed me to update my understanding of public service in Kazakhstan and to reassess my long-term professional interests in this field. It also helped me reflect on how academic research and public administration can complement one another in addressing complex societal and international challenges.

I maintain a strong professional and personal connection to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, having previously worked there before pursuing my doctoral studies. The experience reaffirmed my respect for the Ministry's role in representing Kazakhstan's interests and shaping its image abroad. I will potentially consider a return to the diplomatic service, where my expertise can contribute to Kazakhstan's evolving foreign policy and international cooperation agenda.

### One-Year-Stay at NUPI Fellowship

*In 2025, two alumnae of the MA Programme in Economic Governance and Development, Nomin Batsukh from Mongolia and Altynai Tolenova from Kyrgyzstan (Class of 2024), were selected to take part in the fellowship programme offered by the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI). This Fellowship is exclusively targeted at the alumni of the OSCE Academy. This stay is an add-on to the MA degree from the OSCE Academy, and the purpose is to further prepare the two successful applicants for work in international affairs or continued study/research by deepening their practical and academic experience. In the following section, Nomin and Altynai share their reflections on their time at NUPI and the insights gained through this unique opportunity:*



#### Nomin Batsukh

Even before joining the OSCE Academy, I knew I wanted to work in the field of climate and energy. That goal began to take shape during my studies, where I had the chance to learn from inspiring professors and experts. I was also fortunate to begin my internship at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) while writing my thesis on the effects of climate change in Mongolia. This connection later led to an even greater opportunity, a research fellowship at NUPI.

Established by the Norwegian Parliament in 1959, NUPI plays an important role in shaping Norway's policy discussions. Spending a year there surrounded by researchers, policymakers, and advisors has been an incredible learning experience. I had the opportunity to attend seminars, contribute to projects, and engage in discussions that deepened my understanding of energy transition and climate policy.

At NUPI, I worked with the Climate and Energy Group, mainly assisting with research, data analysis, and data mining. The fellowship







helped me strengthen both my technical and interpersonal skills while exploring areas like green finance. Every day was filled with opportunities, from attending high-level seminars and conferences to brainstorming ideas on clean energy technologies during our group meetings.

With NUPI's support, I enrolled in the CFA Level 1 exam and took additional courses to expand my professional toolkit. I felt fully supported in pursuing my long-term career path toward green finance. I am especially grateful to my mentors, Dr. Indra Overland and Dr. Roman Vakulchuk, for their guidance and encouragement.

Beyond work, living in Oslo has been a deeply rewarding experience that has widened my horizons. Exploring Norwegian culture, language, and nature has given me a greater appreciation for the country's balance between progress and sustainability.

Overall, this fellowship has been an enriching year of learning and growth. I am deeply thankful to the OSCE Academy, NUPI, and my wonderful mentors for making this opportunity possible, and to everyone at NUPI for welcoming me so warmly into their institute.





### Altynai Tolenova

In 2024, I was selected to participate in the 2025 fellowship offered by the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI). I was assigned to work within the Climate and Energy research group, which conducts academic research on the international climate regime, climate and energy policy, the transition to clean energy for international politics and economics, renewable energy and the increasing role of critical materials in energy transition. The fellowship programme has significantly contributed to my personal and professional development, allowed me to enhance my research skills, and enriched my knowledge and expertise in Climate Change and Energy Transition. During the fellowship programme, I participated in the seminar “Innovations in Research Methodologies: Exploring New Methods in Economics, Energy and Climate Change” held on 20-23 May in Oslo. This conference enriched my professional and academic experience, providing a unique opportunity to network with highly esteemed and experienced researchers from Central Asia, Russia, Ukraine and beyond. Moreover, the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs offers a unique opportunity to participate in conferences and seminars such as “Methods Seminar: A Machine Learning Approach to Text Mining and Content Classification” and the ASEAN Secretary General event at NUPI.

Furthermore, the Fellowship programme provided me with a unique opportunity to work with esteemed scholars and researchers from Indonesia as the group conducts international academic research on Climate Change and Energy Transition in ASEAN countries. Overall, during the fellowship programme I worked and supported in conducting research on critical materials governance, adaptation to hotter weather in Central Asia, ASEAN oil and gas production, arctic mineral resources and critical materials, energy transition technologies, Renewable Energy in Central Asia as well as the PULLP project. Furthermore, the cultural aspect of the fellowship programme was outstanding. I have met and befriended amazing people at NUPI whom I have invited as guests and introduced them to Central



Asian cuisine by treating Plov and Samsy. I have also been invited to the celebration of Constitution Day which is the National Day of Norway by a friend and colleague at NUPI to whom I am sincerely grateful for her hospitality. Furthermore, I have explored beautiful Oslo and breathtaking Norwegian nature which was a unique experience. I would like to genuinely thank the Climate and Energy team at NUPI, friends and colleagues I have met and worked with, as well as the OSCE Academy and NUPI for providing such a rewarding experience for the alumni of the OSCE Academy. I would like to genuinely recommend the Fellowship programme offered by the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) to all the OSCE Academy alumni as this programme can significantly contribute to their professional and academic development.





## MAS at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy

*Every year one of the graduates of the OSCE Academy receives a European Scholarship for Central Asia to study at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP) and the Global Studies Institute (GSI) of the University of Geneva. In 2025 Daniyar Kussainov, alumnus of 2014 of the MA Programme in Politics and Security was selected for this prestigious scholarship to further develop his expertise and deepen his knowledge in the field of security studies.*



Ask my former classmates from the OSCE Academy about me, and they'll probably laugh and tell you I'm the person who never met an opportunity he didn't seize — a reputation I gladly own, even if I still haven't claimed the alumni travel grant! That constant hunger for growth, rooted in my time at the Academy, ultimately led me back to school 11 years after graduation — for the most rewarding experience of my professional life.

For years, I was deeply immersed in critical fieldwork, culminating in a demanding role as Regional Director for a major USAID programme focused on preventing violent extremism. The work was substantial and fulfilling, but when the project closed for widely known political reasons, I found myself facing an unexpected void. I felt lost, questioning my path and even exploring entirely new career directions. The professional landscape felt turbulent — and I was adrift.

It was during this period of uncertainty that I truly experienced the power of my network. My friends, Sergey Marinin and Almadan Orozbekova, stepped in not only with support but with inspiration. They saw my potential and encouraged me to apply for the Master of Advanced Studies (MAS) in International Security, jointly run by the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP) and the University of Geneva.

This was not an overnight success story. I had applied for the programme once before — and failed. But armed with my friends' encouragement, I persisted, applied a second time, and got in. This is the crucial takeaway: don't stop after the first failure. The best opportunities often require persistent knocking.

Now, only two months into the programme, I feel completely re-energized. Being a student again after such a long professional break is

the feeling I didn't realize I was missing. The course is engaging, interactive, and genuinely thought-provoking — expanding my understanding far beyond my previous professional focus on security alone.

What truly elevates the experience is my cohort. I'm learning alongside 22 experienced professionals from 17 countries, spanning Bolivia to Bangladesh, representing the military, diplomatic services, and international organizations. This diverse, high-caliber environment offers perspectives that simply cannot be gained behind a desk.

To anyone feeling lost or uncertain in these turbulent times, remember this: it's okay not to know where to go next. But when opportunities appear on the horizon, seize them — and if you aren't successful immediately, keep trying. Applying for this programme after a long working period has been the best decision I've made; it has pushed me to think beyond the confines of my previous political and professional environments, providing new perspectives that are already reshaping my future.

I am profoundly grateful to the OSCE Academy, the GCSP, and the University of Geneva for this incredible new chapter.



## Alumni Grant

*The OSCE Academy Alumni Network, in collaboration with the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, provides travel grants to eligible alumni to advance their professional and academic growth. In 2025, Svetlana Dzardanova and Arzuu Sheranova were selected to receive the Alumni Travel Grant, honoring their outstanding academic accomplishments and professional contributions.*

### Svetlana Dzardanova is an alumna of 2009, MA Programme in Politics and Security from Turkmenistan

On 12–15 June 2025, I participated in the 20th European Society for Central Asian Studies (ESCAS) Conference, titled “Moving Central Asian Studies Ever Further: Orthodox vs Unorthodox Approaches”. This year’s conference was uniquely held across two cities, Tashkent and Samarkand. I presented a paper, “Framing Femicide: Analysing News Reporting in Uzbekistan (2014–2024)”, co-authored with Niginakhon Uralova, a 2018 alumna of the OSCE Academy’s MA in Politics and Security programme from Uzbekistan.

The ESCAS 2025 Regional Conference gathered more than 300 scholars from around the world to explore diverse topics ranging from historical research to music, politics, and gender policy in Central Asia. Thanks to the OSCE Academy Alumni Travel Grant, we were able to present the findings of our collaborative research, increase the visibility of our work, and ensure that it is recognized within the regional academic community. The conference also served as a valuable platform to promote our expertise as gender researchers and to expand our professional networks. We are hopeful that the connections made during this event will translate into further collaboration and joint research initiatives.

We have been working on this topic for nearly a year, beginning as country researchers for a joint project by UN Women ECA and the School of Data. Along with our team members, Gulnoza Ahmedova (also an OSCE Academy alumna) and Deniz Nazarov, we updated and expanded the femicide dataset for Uzbekistan. Based on this data, we co-authored an article for *The Diplomat* magazine analyzing patterns in how men in Uzbekistan kill women.

Our panel, SOC-08: “Framing Gender: Identity, Inequality, and Representation in Central Asia”, took place in Samarkand on the final day of the conference, June 15, 2025. The study I presented is a pioneering effort to analyze how femicide is portrayed in the Uzbek media. It examines 223 news articles from 14 online media outlets (2014–2024) using critical discourse and categorical content analysis. Our findings point to three key patterns: (1) reliance on official statements with minimal investigation, (2) depersonalization of victims and perpetrators, framing femicide as ordinary homicide, and (3) mitigation of perpetrators’ actions through apologetic narratives. We argue that Uzbek media largely fails to recognize femicide as a systemic issue, contributing instead to its normalization and limiting informed public discourse around gender-based violence. The lively discussion that followed our presentation generated several potential research directions. Cross country comparisons for the work that we do at the moment is only one of many. Our paper is also scheduled to appear as a chapter in the special issue *Legal and Media Responses to Violence Against Women in Central Asia* of the *Journal of*



*Central Asian Affairs*. In parallel, we are drafting a policy paper with practical recommendations aimed at strengthening femicide data collection and improving media reporting standards in Uzbekistan. Through these efforts, we aim to contribute both to academic knowledge and inform gradual policy and legislation shifts aimed at addressing and preventing femicide.



<https://thediplomat.com/2024/12/how-do-uzbek-men-kill-women-impulsively-brutally-and-often-at-home>





Svetlana with other members of the OSCE Academy alumni

**Arzuu Sheranova is an alumna of 2015,  
MA Programme in Politics and Security from Kyrgyzstan**

On 19 November 2025, I had the honor of presenting my joint research, “What explains legislators’ behavior: ‘Surviving’ in the Parliament in Central Eurasia with centralized control and limited political freedoms,” at the CESS Conference hosted by the George Washington University Elliott School of International Affairs. For me, this experience was an important academic milestone.

In my presentation, I explored how Members of Parliament (MP) in Russia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan navigate their political careers while balancing constituency representation with the pressures of regime loyalty. Drawing from everyday peace and security studies, I discussed several “survival strategies” that help explain MPs’ voting behavior: adaptation, performance, ritualized politeness, avoidance, mimicry, loyalty, coping, and mutual help.

Our panel, led by CESS acting President Artemy Kalinovsky, brought together researchers from different parts of the world. Among them was Professor Sebastien Peyrouse from the Central Asia Program (Institute for European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies at GWU), whose presence added even more depth to the discussion. More than ten participants attended the session. After the presentation, a lively and thoughtful discussion followed as participants shared insights, asked challenging questions, and even suggested expanding the study to include additional Central Asian countries. Their feedback was incredibly valuable and encouraging.



## 34 Alumni Opportunities

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This experience also shaped my next academic steps, as I am now preparing the paper for submission to a peer-reviewed journal, incorporating the thoughtful comments I received during the conference.

My participation in the CESS Conference became possible thanks to the generous support of the OSCE Academy through its Alumni Travel Grant. I am sincerely grateful for this opportunity. Presenting at such a respected international platform not only strengthened my research but also supported my broader academic aspirations.

For me, this journey was more than just a professional achievement, it was also a reminder of how far dedication and community support can take us. I hope my experience inspires other alumni to pursue similar opportunities and continue contributing to scholarship on our region.





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# From Idea to Identity: The OSCE Academy Mascot

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*In 2025, marking the 50th Anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, the OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek – with the kind support and initiative of Mr. Colin McCullough, Senior Planning and Co-Ordination Officer – launched a special call for the creation of an official mascot for the OSCE Academy. This initiative invited members of the Academy’s community to reflect on its identity, values, and spirit through creative expression.*

*The response was both inspiring and diverse. Following a careful review, three winning designs were selected – one created by an alumna, and two by current undergraduate students of the OSCE Academy. Together, these mascots embody the Academy’s energy, inclusivity, and forward-looking vision, offering fresh and meaningful representations of a community that continues to grow, connect, and inspire.*

**FIRST PLACE: Ms. Alina Salakhunova is an alumna of 2025,  
MA Programme in Human Rights and Sustainability (MAHRS)**



“Barsagut Helsinki is a young, friendly snow leopard who symbolizes the spirit of the OSCE Academy in Bishkek and the Helsinki Final Act. Barsagut is wise, curious, and globally-minded. Wearing a graduation cap and holding a globe, he represents academic excellence and international co-operation. Born in the mountains of Central Asia, Barsagut is a scholar and an adventurer who journeys across the region promoting education, dialogue, and peace. He reflects the Academy’s values of co-operation, diplomacy, and knowledge, making him the perfect mascot for a community rooted in learning and regional unity.”



**SECOND PLACE: Ms. Nazik Nurlanova is a current student of 2022-2026,  
BA Programme in Economics**



“Shyrak is a Eurasian Lynx — graceful, wise, and quietly powerful. She represents everything the OSCE Academy stands for: regional roots, intellectual strength, diplomacy, and a calm kind of leadership. You’ll see her illustrated in a clean, modern style with warm tawny fur and sharp, thoughtful eyes. Around her neck is a deep blue scarf — simple, elegant, and unmistakably OSCE. I named her Shyrak, which means “light” or “torch” in Kyrgyz and Kazakh — a name that symbolizes guidance, insight, and knowledge rooted in Central Asian culture.”



**THIRD PLACE: Mr. Almir Mirmanov is a current student (Academic leave),  
BA Programme in Economics**



“Librus is a rather contradictory character. His name hides several meanings of Latin words. First of all, “liber (book)”. Being an ancient bird guarding the “librarium (library)”, Librus learned the wisdom of a large number of tomes hidden in libraries. During his existence, on the one hand, he personified freedom of thought, and literal freedom “Libertas (freedom)”, thanks to his wings. On the other hand, he understands that knowledge must be shared in order to preserve peace and the rights of living beings. He is ready to share his wisdom with those in need, he will cover anyone from the wind with his wings, in general, he is liberalitas (generous).”





# OSCE Academy Alumni Fundraising Drive 2026

*Support Our Library,  
Support Our Students!*

#WeAreOSCEAcademy

#ForTheLibrary

#AlumniForFuture

Our alumni continue to inspire us with their achievements—working at leading universities, international organizations, governmental agencies, and building successful careers across the globe. The knowledge, skills, and opportunities they gained at the OSCE Academy have been a springboard for their success.

Now, it's time to give back. We are inviting our alumni community to participate in the OSCE Academy Alumni Fundraising Drive. After careful consideration, we chose to direct all contributions to our OSCE Academy Library, a shared space that benefits everyone—current students and alumni alike. Strengthening the library is a fair and meaningful way to ensure that all members of our community have access to valuable knowledge and resources.

Your contribution, no matter the size, will help enrich the library with new books, digital resources, and improved facilities—creating an even better space for learning, research, and growth for current and future students. Supporting the library means investing in the next generation of talented young people, future leaders who will carry forward the Academy's legacy, just as you once did.

Take a moment to reflect on how the Academy contributed to your own journey—and consider leaving a mark for those who are following in your footsteps. Every gift strengthens your Alma Mater and ensures that the opportunities you received continue to flourish for those who come after you.

Join the OSCE Academy Alumni Fundraising Drive 2026. Together, we can give back, build the future, and keep our community strong.



# Class of 2024-2026

## MA Programme in Politics and Security



**Abdurakhman  
Aripov**

Kyrgyzstan



**Ademi  
Mukanbetova**

Kyrgyzstan



**Anaita  
Ali**

Denmark



**Ariza  
Karaketova**

Kyrgyzstan



**Aruuke  
Chapyrashy**

Kyrgyzstan



**Aylar  
Tagiyeva**

Turkmenistan



**Bashim  
Durdyjev**

Turkmenistan



**Elizaveta  
Nikolaeva**

Russian Federation



**Hamza  
Marambekov**

Tajikistan



**Komronbek  
Isroilov**

Uzbekistan



**Leyli  
Yuldashova**

Turkmenistan



**Muhayo  
Azizshoeva**

Tajikistan



**Narimon  
Nurmamadov**

Tajikistan



**Noorullah Mustafa  
Bozurgmehr**

Afghanistan



**Pavel  
Chernikov**

Russian Federation



**Regina  
Surieva**

Tajikistan



**Samir  
Sultanov**

Azerbaijan



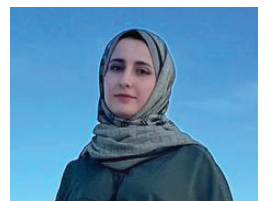
**Saule  
Bargyeva**

Kyrgyzstan



**Saule  
Zhumaeva**

Kyrgyzstan



**Wahida  
Ali Zada**

Afghanistan



## MA Programme in Economic Governance and Development



**Akhmed  
Nazarbekov**  
Tajikistan



**Anara  
Ikramova**  
Kyrgyzstan



**Aziret  
Zhanybekov**  
Kyrgyzstan



**Eldar  
Farkhadov**  
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**Farrukh  
Safarmamadov**  
Tajikistan



**Fatima  
Tora**  
Afghanistan



**Kamila  
Isakova**  
Kyrgyzstan



**Kasiet  
Toktogulova**  
Kyrgyzstan



**Kymbatai  
Medetbekova**  
Kyrgyzstan



**Mamoon  
Fawad**  
Afghanistan



**Samira  
Odinabekova**  
Tajikistan



**Shahlo  
Nazarmamadova**  
Tajikistan



**Shamsurrahman  
Hamdard**  
Afghanistan



**Tabrez  
Safarmamadov**  
Tajikistan

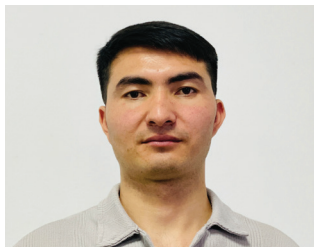


**Zharkynai  
Maratbek kyzy**  
Kyrgyzstan

## Master of Liberal Arts in Human Rights and Sustainability (MAHRS)



**Aibike  
Bekzat kyzy**  
Kyrgyzstan



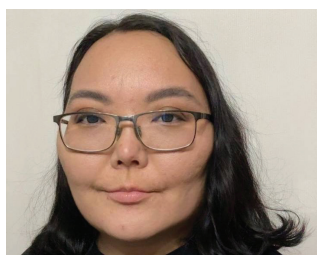
**Ali Jan  
Rasikh**  
Afghanistan



**Bakyt  
Dzhengshpekova**  
Kyrgyzstan



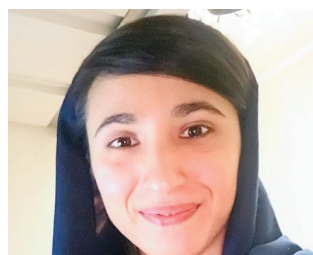
**Darya  
Vasilenko**  
Turkmenistan



**Kalzhan  
Rakish**  
Kazakhstan



**Kristina  
Ryabova**  
Kazakhstan



**Maryam  
Nesar**  
Afghanistan



**Meerim  
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Kyrgyzstan



**Nasiba  
Ermetova**  
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**Navruz  
Erkaev**  
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**Nilufar  
Kargasova**  
Tajikistan



**Obaidullah  
Tariq**  
Afghanistan



**Rachel  
Cantlow**  
United Kingdom



**Safina  
Saidibroimova**  
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