

Developing and delivering university entrance tests

Nazarbayev University	Kazakhstan
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Cambridge Assessment English has devised and delivered four bespoke admissions tests for students hoping to gain a place at the prestigious Nazarbayev University.

Nazarbayev University is highly regarded in Kazakhstan, in the wider Eurasia region and increasingly beyond, and as a result, competition for places on the university's Foundation Year Programme is significant. The university therefore required an entrance test which could be used to identify the strongest candidates from a growing number of applicants, thereby enabling the university to select those candidates with the best chance of success on the programme.

As the University of Cambridge is a strategic partner of Nazarbayev University, Cambridge English (a Department of the University of Cambridge) was asked to propose possible solutions. As a result, Cambridge Assessment Admissions Testing – part of Cambridge English – was commissioned to deliver bespoke admissions or entrance tests in Mathematics, Thinking Skills, Physics, Biology and Chemistry. Cambridge Assessment Admissions Testing offers a range of tests and tailored assessment services to educational institutions, professional organisations and governments around the world, including thinking skills assessments, admissions tests for medicine, healthcare

and other subjects, and behavioural styles assessments designed to enable fair access to opportunities in education and employment.

Cambridge Assessment Admissions Testing began the test development process in mid-2015, starting with an extensive period of consultation and a full needs analysis. Pilot versions of the new tests were then developed and trialled with existing students, before the tests went live in February 2016, with a final administration in June 2016. Cambridge Assessment Admissions Testing provided all the test content, oversaw the delivery of the tests in 14 cities across Kazakhstan, and provided Nazarbayev University with statistical information and analyses of candidate performance alongside the test results. The team also developed support materials for test candidates preparing to take the new tests.

Nazarbayev University was delighted with the new admissions tests, and was particularly impressed by the collaborative approach used by Cambridge Assessment Admissions Testing. As a result, the original agreement – for one year with the option to extend by another two – has been extended by three years, with Cambridge Assessment Admissions Testing now providing admissions tests up to 2019.

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“The relationship has been very important. We have to admit students to the programme based on merit. Having an admissions test delivered by such a world-class provider is important for credibility. [...] I would really recommend any institution to work with Cambridge Assessment English. We found them to be a fantastic partner and very flexible.”

Lesley Price, General Director of the NUFYP