RESEARCH NEWSLETTER

OFFICE OF RESEARCH POLICY AND ANALYSIS
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IN THIS ISSUE

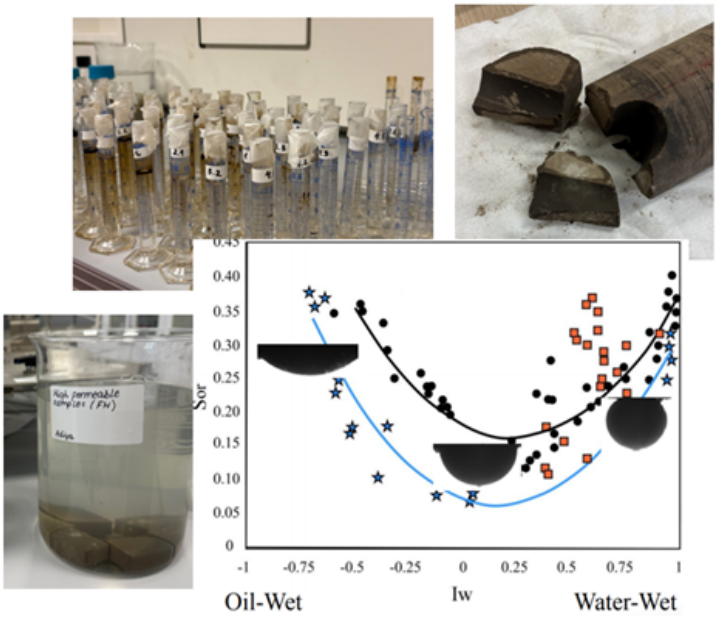
School of Mining and Geosciences News

EVALUATING LOW-SALINITY WATERFLOODING IN AN OIL FIELD IN KAZAKHSTAN

BY PROF. PEYMAN POURAFSHARY

This project was a collaborative effort between the School of Mining and Geosciences at Nazarbayev University and the Kazgermunai company, aimed at evaluating the performance of waterflooding in an oil field in Kazakhstan, with a particular focus on the injection of low-salinity water (LSW). The primary goal was to understand how the ionic composition of the injected brine affects oil recovery and to explore the potential of LSW as an effective enhanced oil recovery (EOR) method for Kazakhstani oil fields. Oil recovery in this field should be enhanced, and the project was conducted by the principal investigator and a group of MSc students in the Petroleum Engineering program.
The work is currently ongoing.

The research included a comprehensive laboratory program involving the collection and preparation of core samples, contact angle measurements to track wettability changes, ion composition and pH analysis of injected brines, core flooding experiments under reservoir pressure and temperature, and recovery factor and pressure drop monitoring. These tests were designed to simulate field conditions and investigate the performance of both formation water and engineered low-salinity water.



The project demonstrated that engineered water can effectively alter the rock wettability from oil-wet to water-wet in a short time, which significantly affects oil recovery. The pressure drop and wettability analyses showed that the LSW mechanism was active and impactful. Ion exchange processes involving H^+, Na^+, and Ca^{2+} were identified as the key drivers of wettability alteration, which is a critical mechanism for the success of low-salinity waterflooding.

The research successfully analyzed and confirmed the active mechanisms of low-salinity waterflooding in the studied field. It revealed that tailoring the ionic composition of the injected brine can significantly influence oil recovery. This approach holds promise as a cost-effective and environmentally friendly solution to enhance oil recovery in various fields across Kazakhstan.

SMG PHD STUDENT WINS 3RD PLACE AT INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON FUTURE ENERGY

Maral Khanjani

Prof. Masoud Riazi

Congratulations to Maral Khanjani, PhD student in Petroleum Engineering, for winning 3rd place at the International Youth Scientific and Practical Conference "**Future Energy: The Role of Youth in the Transformation of the Petroleum Industry**", held on April 9–10 in Almaty.

Competing in the "*Digital Technologies, Industry 4.0, and Artificial Intelligence*" section, Maral presented her research on **machine learning-based predictive modeling of interfacial tension for enhanced oil recovery and CO_2 storage**. Her work, co-authored with Aisha Labak and Dr. Shams Kalam under the supervision of Dr. Masoud Riazi, achieved an impressive 99.7% prediction accuracy using three ML models.

The conference, hosted by the School of Energy and Petroleum Industry (SEPI) of JSC KBTU, brought together young scientists and senior experts from the USA, Spain, Scotland, Poland, and Uzbekistan, offering valuable opportunities for collaboration and exchange.

School of Engineering and Digital Sciences News

NU SEDS RESEARCHERS LEAD GLOBAL REVIEW OF 40 YEARS OF ENERGY-SAVING MATERIALS IN BUILDINGS

Dr. Shazim Memon and Abrar Ahmad

A groundbreaking critical review authored by NU researchers at Civil and Environmental Engineering Department has been published in *Applied Energy*, the top-ranked journal in Building & Construction (Impact Factor: 11, Scopus 98th percentile).

The study — the first-ever meta-review of all review articles on Phase Change Materials (PCMs) for thermal energy storage in buildings — consolidates four decades of global research to offer a practical, data-rich resource for engineers, designers, and policymakers.

Initiated by former MSc student Abrar Ahmad (now a PhD researcher at Washington State University) and supervised by Dr. Shazim Memon, Associate Professor and Acting Vice Dean for Research at NU SEDS, the article evaluates 271 review papers from 1983 to 2024. Key outcomes include:

- **Global PCM Database** – The most complete catalogue of commercially available PCMs with technical specs and manufacturer links
- **Research Mapping** – A heat map of 50 PCM-related topics, highlighting knowledge gaps and future directions
- **Sustainable Design Analysis** – Reviews of PCM integration with ventilation, free cooling, life-cycle assessments, and economic modeling
- **Emerging Frontiers** – Insights into machine learning, real-world performance metrics, and circular economy implications

"*The review brings immediate practical value to countries with extreme climates like Kazakhstan*," says Abrar Ahmad. "*It allows engineers and code writers to match PCM products to local heating and cooling needs, optimize for cost and emissions, and align with national standards.*"

With implications for building codes, incentive schemes, and climate-resilient construction, the review sets a new benchmark for PCM research and practical application in Central Asia and beyond.

Read the full review here.

STATIC MECHANICAL DESIGN OF THE DINOSAUR CARCASS FOR DISPLAY

SHARED BY ANAR NURGALIYEVA, MECHANICAL AND AEROSPACE ENGINEERING

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ICHTHYOSAUR

Ichthyosaurs were marine reptiles that lived during the Mesozoic era, 200-145 million years ago. These streamlined, dolphin-like creatures were highly specialized for aquatic life, with features such as a torpedo-shaped body, large eyes adapted for deep-sea vision, and limbs modified into flippers.

Figure 1: Restored picture of the ichthyosaur

In 2018, a school organization called “Zhas Geolog” found the bones of the previously unknown ichthyosaur. The excavations were done in West Kazakhstan, Bayterek region, near the Talovaya River valley, 1.5 km from the former village of Shchuchkino. Hence, the dinosaur was given the name of **Kazakhstanosaurus Shchukinensis**. The large-scale reconstruction project was started in 2021 by the late Dr. Laurent Richard, Associate Professor of Geology at SMG.

SCANNING, RESTORATION, AND PRINTING

This year, in the scope of the Capstone Project, a 3D model of the full Ichthyosaurus was created for display. The bones were scanned by using ZEISS T-SCAN surface laser scanning technology. The digital versions of the bones went through a structural analysis for considerations of the appropriate assembling mechanisms using Solidworks. The damaged bones with holes and cracks were restored and post-processed in Colin3D software. The raw bone and the fixed one were shown in the following photos:

Figure 2: Unprocessed bone

Figure 3: Fixed bone

The skeleton was 3D printed using PLA+ filament in color “bone white” on the Bambu Lab X1E printer. The bones were assembled into a full skeleton through metal wire and reinforcement. The metal framework was used to hang the skeleton, and nylon steel-based metal alloy cables and construction lines were used as supports that hold the structure together. The final carcass can be seen in figures 4-5. The skeleton model is turning out to be a good representation of the anatomy of the ichthyosaur and should be a good educational material. Additionally, the methods used in this work could be applied to future projects to create a 3D model of fossils.

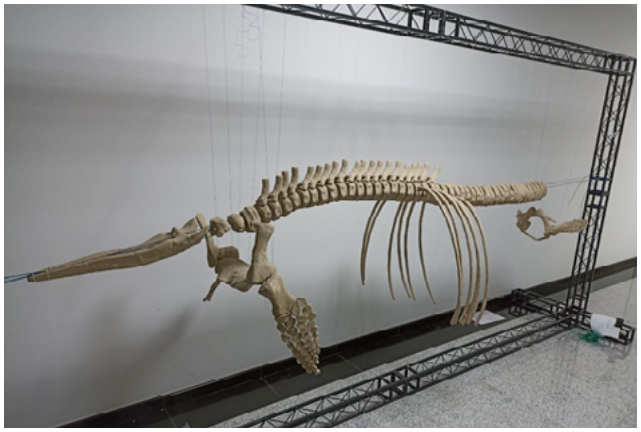


Figure 4: Assembled model

Figure 5: Close-up of the vertebral column

This project stands as a continuation of Prof. Laurent Richard’s work bridging field discovery, engineering design, and paleontological research. In 2021, Prof. Richard, a beloved and highly respected member of the School of Mining and Geosciences at Nazarbayev University, shared with us his newsletter piece «*Old Whales of Karagiye*» reporting on an expedition in which he and his students uncovered whale fossils in the Karagiye Depression.

Though he passed away in 2022, Prof. Laurent’s influence continues to shape the aspirations and achievements of NU students and reminds us of the lasting impact a dedicated educator can make.

School of Sciences and Humanities News

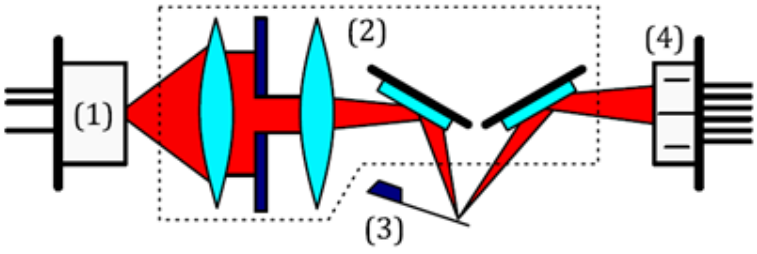
NU MASTER'S STUDENT ALKHAM TURGANOV PROVED THAT MATHEMATICS IS ESSENTIAL FOR ATOMIC FORCE MICROSCOPY

NU Master's student Alkham Turganov from Department of Mathematics co-authored a paper recently published in the prestigious *Journal of Sound and Vibration* (Q1, Top 5%, Impact Factor: 4.9):

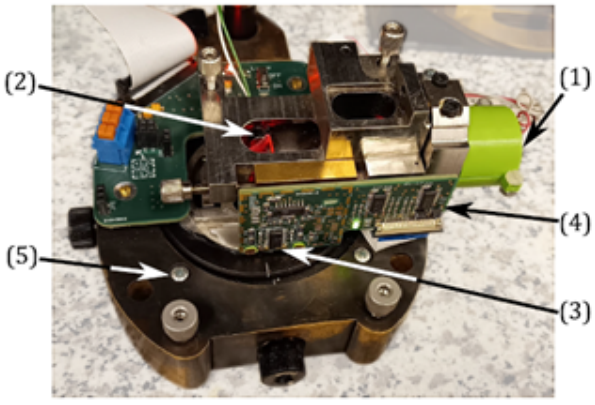
Piotr S. Skrzypacz, Piotr A. Putek, Bartosz Cz. Pruchnik, Alkham Turganov, Grant A. Ellis, Teodor P. Gotszalk, Analysis of dynamic pull-in for lumped MEMS model of atomic force microscope with constant magnetic excitation, Journal of Sound and Vibration, Volume 617 (2025), Article 119215.

Turganov's contribution stemmed from his Master's thesis under the supervision of Dr. Piotr Skrzypacz, Associate Professor at the Department of Mathematics: *Pull-in solutions to MEMS model of parallel plate capacitor*, available at NUR repository.

In this work, a key objective was determining the pull-in time for a U-shaped sensor in an Atomic Force Microscope, see Fig. 1 and Fig 2.

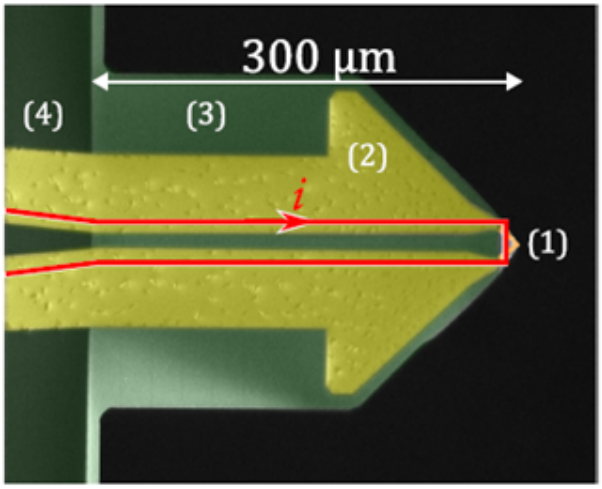


(a) laser beam path within the OBD system

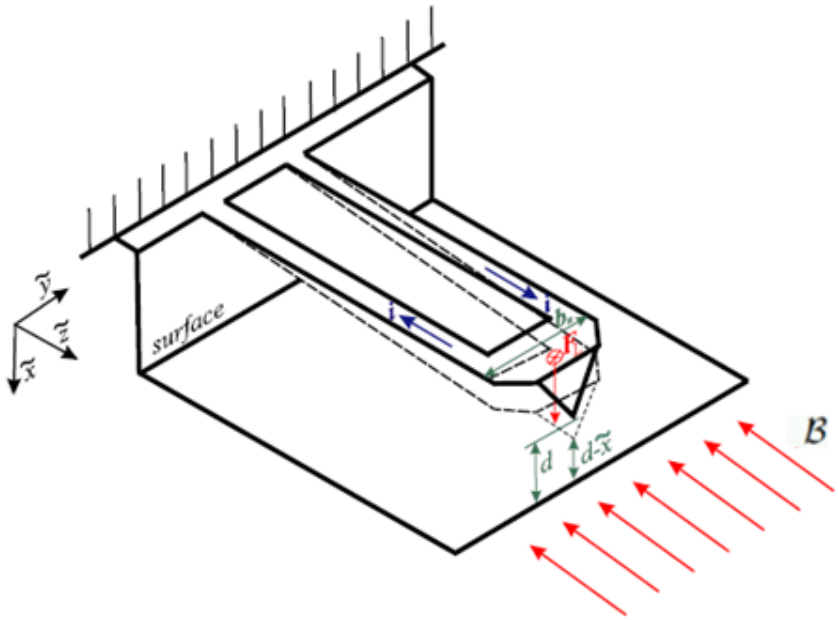


(b) Drobnowidz OBD head

Fig. 1. Optical beam deflection (OBD) detector with setup elements shown:
(1) — stabilized laser diode,
(2) — laser beam optics,
(3) — cantilever with reflective coating,
(4) — four-section photodiode with signal conditioning circuit,
(5) — stage and case of the head.



(a) electromagnetically actuated cantilever model KNT-SThM-3an by Kelvin Nanotechnology imaged with SEM presented in false-coloring with thermoresistive tip (1) connected electrically with Pt leads (2) suspended on silicon nitride membrane (3) attached to the bulk silicon (4) i-line depicts approximate current path in the Pt leads forming an U-loop.



(b) schematic view of one-degree-of-freedom lumped parameter model

Fig. 2. U-shaped sensor.

The operation of Micro-Electro-Mechanical Structures (MEMS) is affected by a pull-in effect that occurs at certain thresholds. Detection and a priori knowledge of exact pull-in threshold in the actuation is necessary for the design and operation of MEMS devices. Dynamic pull-in phenomena in actuators are effects of combinations of kinetic and potential energies resulting in the collapse of the moving structure.

The research was conducted in cooperation with Wrocław University of Science and Technology, Poland (Faculty of Electronics, Photonics and Microsystems) and carried out at the **LEMMA Laboratory (Laboratory for Electro-Mechanics and Mathematics with Applications, Room C4 303)**, under the guidance of Dr. Piotr Skrzypacz and Dr. Grant Ellis.

This work was supported by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan through grant AP19676969: *Modeling, Analysis and Optimization of MEMS and magMEMS* awarded to Prof. Skrzypacz.

The results demonstrated excellent correspondence between the predicted pull-in time of the lumped sensor model and experimental data (see Fig. 3). Further research will focus on refining the adhesion coefficient through model optimization. The current activities at LEMMA promise further advances in MEMS research and will continue to foster NU's international collaborations in MEMS and Applied Mathematics fields.

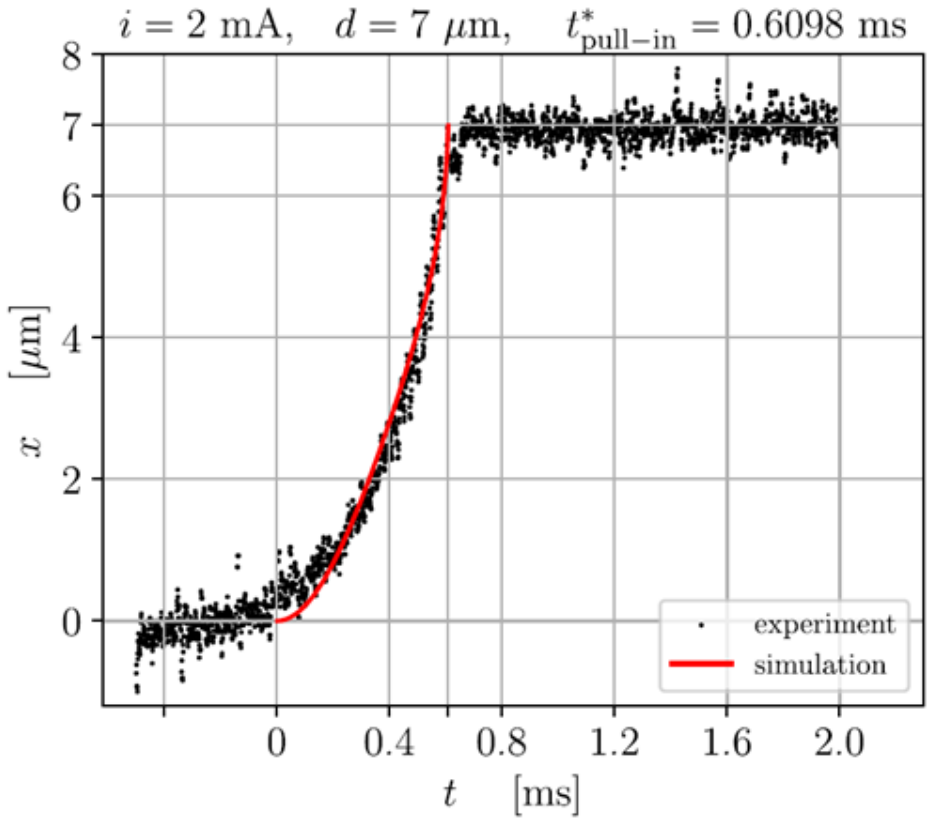


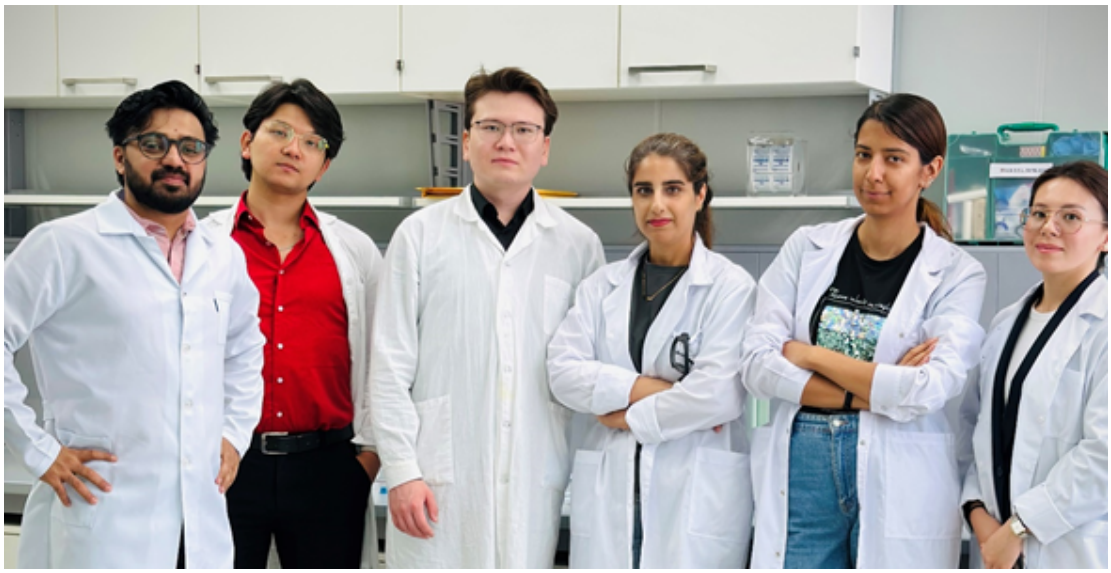
Fig. 3. Pull-in effect

PROFESSOR DR. IRSHAD KAMMAKAKAM AWARDED AS THE WORLD'S TOP 0.5% SCHOLAR BY 2024 SCHOLARGPS RANKING

We are proud to share that Dr. Irshad Kammakakam, Assistant Professor and BSc Program Director of Chemistry at NU School of Sciences and Humanities, has been recognized as a Top Scholar in the field of Chemical Synthesis, placing him in the top 0.5% of scholars worldwide in the 2024 ScholarGPS global rankings.

This recognition reflects his outstanding publication record, scholarly impact, and contributions to the field of Chemical Synthesis, Polymer Material Design, and Separation Technology. With over 30 million scholars evaluated, this achievement places Prof. Kammakakam among the most influential voices in Chemical Synthesis for Membrane-based Separation research.

Prof. Kammakakam's MEET Lab has primarily focused on developing advanced organic porous materials and functional polymeric membranes for energy-saving separation technology and environmentally friendly green energy applications. Newly developed ionic-mediated materials are being extensively investigated for various modern applications, including gas separation, ion/ion separation, CO2 capture and sequestration, oil/water separation, wastewater treatment, and energy conversion and storage.

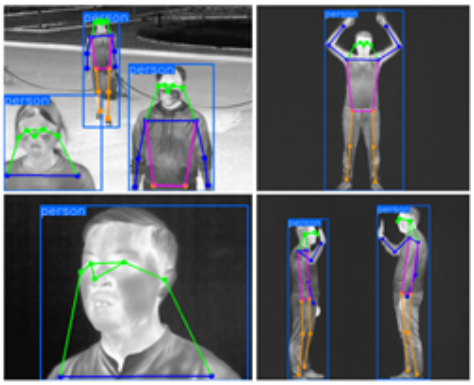


ISSAI
NAZARBAYEV UNIVERSITY | Institute of Smart Systems and Artificial Intelligence

ISSAI CONTINUES TO SHARE ITS MILESTONES: RECENT RESEARCH ACHIEVEMENTS

The Institute of Smart Systems and Artificial Intelligence (ISSAI) at Nazarbayev University continues to build momentum in cutting-edge research and impactful educational initiatives. While we are excited to soon unveil our proprietary generative AI models this July, we are pleased to already share two major accomplishments that reflect the Institute's ongoing commitment to innovation and excellence.

1. ISSAI RESEARCH ADVANCES THERMAL HUMAN POSE ESTIMATION



The ISSAI team is proud to share their impactful work on thermal human pose estimation with the global research community. The paper, titled "**OpenThermalPose2: Extending the Open-Source Annotated Thermal Human Pose Dataset With More Data, Subjects, and Poses**" by Askat Kuzdeuov, Miras Zakaryanov, Alim Tleuliyev, and Prof. Huseyin Atakan Varol, stands as a testament to the years of dedicated research and deep expertise of the ISSAI team in the field of human-centered AI and thermal imaging.

Human pose estimation plays a crucial role in various domains including action recognition, human-robot interaction, healthcare, and augmented reality. Although significant advances have been made in visible-light imaging, challenges related to low lighting and privacy remain. Our team tackled this by extending the thermal dataset OpenThermalPose, adding over 11,000 thermal images and more than 21,000 human instances, annotated with anatomical keypoints.

To validate the dataset, we trained and optimized YOLOv8-pose and YOLO11-pose models and deployed them on NVIDIA Jetson AGX Orin 64GB for real-world applications. Both the dataset and pre-trained models are publicly available to support global research efforts.

Highlighting its significance, the work has been accepted for publication in the IEEE Transactions on Biometrics, Behavior, and Identity Science (T-BIOM), a leading Q1 journal in the field.

Access dataset and models on GitHub.

2. SUMMER RESEARCH PROGRAM 2025 NOW IN FULL SWING

This summer, ISSAI launched the 2025 edition of its flagship Summer Research Program (SRP) — a unique initiative designed to introduce university students and high-school to advanced topics in Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, and Data Science.

UNIVERSITY STUDENT TRACK

The University SRP 2025 kicked off on June 2 and will run until August 1. This immersive research experience brings together talented undergraduate and graduate students from leading universities in Kazakhstan and abroad.

This year, we received over 270 applications from aspiring researchers. After a competitive selection process, 22 finalists were chosen to participate. These outstanding students represent top institutions such as KAIST, Yonsei University, New York University Abu Dhabi, MZUAI, New Uzbekistan University, Higher School of Economics, Al Akhawayn University, KBTU, SDU, Korkyt Ata University, Astana IT University, Nazarbayev University, and other leading universities in Kazakhstan and beyond.

This initiative provides a unique opportunity for students to deepen their expertise in cutting-edge technologies while working closely with ISSAI's distinguished team of data scientists and researchers. Each student is paired with an ISSAI mentor — experienced professionals and top-tier graduates from Nazarbayev University and renowned international universities — to gain hands-on experience, apply theory in practice, and grow as future leaders in AI.

UNIVERSITY STUDENT TRACK

On June 9, ISSAI also launched the high school edition of SRP, which will continue until July 12. Structured around two key pillars — Theory and Practice — the program features intensive lectures on topics like language models, image generation, MLOps, and robotics. After the initial lecture series, students select one of several research directions, including: Augmented Reality & Avatars, Robotics, Python & DevOps, Advanced AI.

This year, we received a record-breaking 325 applications from high school students across Kazakhstan. After a rigorous selection process, 41 exceptional students joined the program, representing schools like BIL, NIS, NSPM, Haileybury, Quantum. and other schools. Their impressive academic records include international awards in mathematics, informatics, and AI-related projects.

We wish all participants a productive and inspiring summer filled with discovery and collaboration.

NAZARBAYEV UNIVERSITY
NATIONAL LABORATORY ASTANA

SPECIAL ISSUE OF INESS-2024 PUBLISHED IN RSC ADVANCES - A 2025 HIGHLIGHT

We are pleased to share a 2025 research milestone: the special issue of the **12th International Conference on Nanomaterials and Advanced Energy Storage Systems (INESS-2024)** has been published in the prestigious journal *RSC Advances*. Although the conference took place in August 2024, the publication of this peer-reviewed collection in 2025 marks a significant achievement for National Laboratory Astana and NU.

The special issue, organized in collaboration with Nazarbayev University, NLA, and Institute of Batteries LLC, showcases cutting-edge contributions in energy storage science. *RSC Advances*, a gold open access journal of the Royal Society of Chemistry, is recognized globally for its high impact and dedication to excellence in the chemical sciences.

Curated under the expert editorial leadership of Dr. Aliya Mukanova, Leading Researcher at NLA and Guest Editor of the issue, this collection reflects her commitment to advancing frontier research and fostering international collaboration.

The featured articles stem from INESS-2024, held from August 7-9, 2024, at Nazarbayev University, Astana, Kazakhstan. The event brought together world-class researchers under the leadership of Prof. Zhumabay Bakenov (Founder of the Institute of Batteries, SEDS), along with

Dr. Baktiyar Soltabayev and Dr. Arailym Nupeissova from NLA. Thanks to their efforts, the conference drew outstanding participation and created an impactful scientific exchange.

Topics covered in the special issue include:

- Separator-free lithium–sulfur thin-film batteries
- Magnetic field-enhanced Li-ion cathodes
- Bio-waste-derived carbon anodes
- Advanced hydrogel and polymer-based electrolytes
- Nanoreactor-enhanced polyaniline supercapacitors

Founded in 2013, INESS has evolved into Central Asia's leading scientific platform for nanomaterials and sustainable energy storage research. We now look ahead to the next chapter: **the 13th INESS Conference**, to be held on August 6-8, 2025, again at Nazarbayev University.

Visit iness.kz for more information, and don't miss the opportunity to meet global experts and present your research at this event.

3RD SDSN KAZAKHSTAN CONFERENCE: PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

3rd SDSN Conference, May 15, 2025, SDU, Almaty

On May 16, 2025, the 3rd SDSN Kazakhstan Conference was held at SDU University, under the theme "*Partnership and Cooperation in Building Sustainability and Sustainable Development*."

The primary goal of the conference was to strengthen cross-sectoral collaboration between academia, government agencies, international organizations, and civil society in advancing the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The event provided a platform to discuss critical global and regional challenges in education, healthcare, economic development, environmental protection, and social justice.

The SDGs represent a global agenda of 17 goals and 169 targets, aimed at eradicating poverty, promoting environmental sustainability, ensuring quality education and gender equality, and fostering a just society—all to be achieved by 2030. This annual conference serves as a regional platform to explore practical pathways for SDG implementation in Kazakhstan and Central Asia.

The program included two main sessions and several parallel sessions, featuring experts and researchers from Germany, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan.

Key topics discussed included:

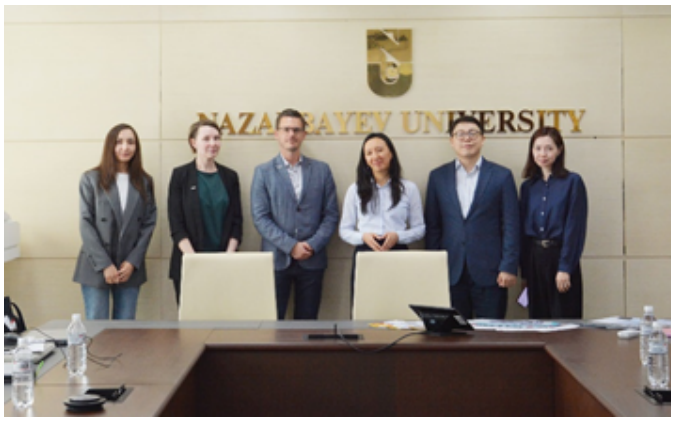
- SDG implementation strategies and global partnerships
- Education and technology for sustainable development
- Digital finance, inclusive economic growth, and sustainable communities
- Policy, governance, and long-term development strategies

Participants emphasized the importance of effective coordination among state institutions, academia, and NGOs, and highlighted the need for high-quality data to monitor SDG progress and evaluate reform effectiveness. The conference also underlined the critical role of universities in raising awareness among youth on sustainable development.

As part of the event, attendees toured the SDU University campus, gaining insight into its facilities and infrastructure.

SDSN Kazakhstan extends sincere thanks to all participants for their active engagement and to SDU University, the key partner, for the excellent organization and warm hospitality. The SDSN Kazakhstan Conference has firmly established itself as an annual forum for meaningful dialogue and knowledge exchange on advancing sustainable development in Kazakhstan and the broader Central Asian region.

KICKOFF MEETING FOR THE SDG NEXUS NETWORK PROJECT



From March 31 to April 1, the Graduate School of Public Policy at Nazarbayev University (NU) and Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Kazakhstan hosted a delegation from Justus Liebig University Giessen (JLU), Germany. This visit marked the official launch of the DAAD-funded SDG^{nexus} Network project, where Nazarbayev University is one of the core partners for the project implementation in Central Asia.

During the meeting, NU and JLU teams discussed the project's work plan, research collaboration, and next steps. The delegation also met with NU's International Office to discuss student and faculty exchange opportunities, the Erasmus+ program, and possibilities for broader engagement between NU and JLU.

On April 1, the JLU delegation participated in the Roundtable on Water and Climate Research-Policy-Society Interface, presenting the role of citizen science. The event brought together experts to discuss governance, policy challenges, and solutions for water security challenges.

This visit further strengthened the partnership between JLU, NU, and SDSN Kazakhstan, underscoring institutions' commitment to fostering interdisciplinary research and enhancing academic collaboration between Kazakhstan and Germany.

For reference: The SDG^{nexus} Network is a global community of universities, research centers, and stakeholders committed to promoting the Agenda 2030 for sustainable development. The SDG^{nexus} Network is a part of the DAAD "Higher Education Excellence in Development Cooperation – exceed" program and, as such, it aims to strengthen higher education for enabling effective and innovative contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations. The SDG^{nexus} Network has three main objectives:

- *Establish common research framework through joint research projects between our network partners.*
- *Qualify the next generation of scientists as agents of change.*
- *Promote exchange and collaboration between our network of higher education institutions and extramural actors.*

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN RESEARCH, POLICY, AND SOCIETY IN WATER AND CLIMATE

On April 1, the SDSN Kazakhstan hosted a Roundtable to explore the interlinkages between research, policy, and society in addressing water and climate challenges in Kazakhstan and Central Asia. The event brought together researchers from the Graduate School of Public Policy at Nazarbayev University (NU GSPP), Justus Liebig University (JLU), Karaganda State University alongside representatives from the World Bank, UN FAO, GIZ, and EC IFAS, to discuss solutions to the region's pressing socio-environmental challenges.

The roundtable highlighted the ongoing difficulty in finding effective solutions due to the persistence of traditional linear models of science-policy interaction, often coupled with limited

societal engagement. While researchers continue to highlight critical climate risks and water security concerns, policymakers often focus on technocentric, infrastructure-based solutions. The central issue, as identified during the discussions, is not just bridging the research-policy gap but also integrating societal perspectives into this largely unexplored interface.

The event featured expert presentations, including Dr. Aliya Assubayeva, Assistant Professor at NU GSPP, shared insights on water policy and governance research; Dr. Vadim Yapiyev from the National Laboratory Astana discussed water and climate research in Kazakhstan and Central Asia; and Dr. Björn Weeser, SDG^{nexus} Network project manager at JLU explored the role of citizen science in these interfaces.

One of the key questions raised was: Who could take on the role of knowledge brokers or synthesizers, responsible for translating research findings into practical, actionable solutions for policymakers and local communities? This question drove much of the dialogue, with participants suggesting that think tanks at universities could play such a role. These institutions could serve as intermediaries, translating research into practical applications in water and climate governance, ensuring that scientific findings are effectively integrated into real-world policy decisions.

The event successfully achieved its objectives, fostering idea exchange, identifying research gaps, and exploring synergies among participants. Key recommendations included promoting participatory research, incorporating local knowledge, capacity building, and creating platforms for ongoing dialogue between researchers, policymakers, and communities for sustainable solutions.

REGIONAL INFO DAY FOR CLUSTER 5 UNDER HORIZON EUROPE

The event brought together leading researchers and universities from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The Info Day provided participants

with in-depth, practical insights into navigating Horizon Europe. Through a mix of expert-led presentations, networking sessions, and targeted discussions, attendees learned how to effectively search project partners and leverage the expanding network of National Contact Points (NCPs). Malika Tazhmuratova, SDSN Manager and National Contact Point for Cluster 5 “Climate, Energy, Mobility”, presented the new Work Programme opportunities, key research priorities, and the main steps undertaken to promote Horizon Europe in Kazakhstan.

SDSN MEMBER KARAGANDA BUKETOV UNIVERSITY HOSTS SEMINAR ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

On April 15–16, 2025, the Faculty of Philosophy and Psychology at Karaganda Buketov University, in collaboration with the Faculty of Continuing Education, hosted a two-day seminar titled “*Sustainable Development: From Global Goals to Local Actions*.” The event brought together vice-deans, department heads, and leaders of structural divisions to engage in meaningful discussions on the integration of sustainable development in higher education.

The seminar’s agenda included a mix of online sessions and in-person discussions, focusing on key themes such as:

- The interconnection of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): a comprehensive and systemic approach
- Gender equality as an essential element of sustainable development
- International and national strategies for achieving the SDGs
- The philosophical underpinnings of sustainable development and their relevance to university growth

A highlight of the event was a guest lecture by Aliya Assubayeva, Assistant Professor at the Graduate School of Public Policy, Nazarbayev University, who shared valuable insights on policy approaches to sustainability.

This initiative reflects Karaganda Buketov University's commitment to global sustainability efforts. Since joining the SDSN Kazakhstan network in 2023, the university has actively promoted cross-institutional collaboration. The recent seminar stands as a successful example of inter-university dialogue and shared action in advancing the SDGs at both national and local levels.

NAZARBAYEV UNIVERSITY

CENTRAL ASIAN RESEARCH CENTRE FOR EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION AND TRANSFORMATION (CARCEIT)

The Central Asian Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Transformation (CARCEIT) is dedicated to advancing education research and innovation in Central Asia. As part of the Graduate School of Education at Nazarbayev University, CARCEIT aims to shape global knowledge, influence education policy and leadership, and build a robust regional research community. CARCEIT is dedicated to driving innovation and transformation of educational practices across the region.

Dear Readers,

As we reach the halfway point of 2025, I'm excited to share what has been happening at our research center over the past few months.

It's been a busy and energizing quarter, full of new ideas, collaborations, and milestones that continue to move us toward our goal of becoming a regional hub for cutting-edge educational research in Central Asia. From knowledge sharing that speaks directly to both scholars and policymakers, to deepening partnerships through knowledge-exchange events, our momentum is growing.

A recent highlight was my keynote at Zhanibekov University, where I had the opportunity to reflect on how we can reimagine inclusion in higher education, especially through a gender-responsive lens and by centering the experiences of international students. Moments like these remind me how powerful it is when research meets real-world dialogue and impact.

I'm also proud of the Center's ongoing work that continues to bridge theory and practice. Our core researchers were in the spotlight during NU Research Week (April 14–18), showcasing the breadth and depth of our research across multiple high-impact areas. Whether we are building teacher capacity for positive peace education, supporting policymaking in early childhood education and care (ECEC), or examining the evolving roles of regional universities as they navigate new autonomy, our work reflects a strong commitment to context-responsive, evidence-based change.

As always, thank you for being part of this journey with us. Your engagement, whether through reading, sharing, collaborating, or simply staying connected, means a great deal. Follow us on social media to catch the latest updates, and please do not hesitate to reach out if you'd like to collaborate.

Here's to another quarter of learning, growing, and working together toward a more equitable future in education.

With gratitude and shared purpose,

Professor Naureen Durrani

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CONFERENCES

Keynote Spotlight: Reimagining Inclusion in Higher Education

Prof. Naureen Durrani delivers a keynote at Zhanibekov University

CARCEIT Director Prof. Naureen Durrani was invited to deliver a fully funded keynote at Zhanibekov University on April 28, 2025. Her presentation, titled *"Reimagining Inclusion in Higher Education: Centering Gender and International Students,"* explored how equity in higher education must move beyond access to address the systemic and cultural barriers that shape student experiences.

Prof. Durrani examined gender disparities in academic participation and leadership, the persistence of unconscious bias in teaching practices, and the challenges faced by international students in navigating academic, linguistic, and sociocultural landscapes. Drawing on recent research, including her collaborative work with CARCEIT colleagues, the keynote called for intersectional, data-informed, and context-sensitive approaches to inclusive policy and practice.

Her insights reaffirm CARCEIT's commitment to transforming higher education through gender-responsive and equity-focused research and advocacy. Read more here

Keynote on Personalised Pathways to Well-being

Prof. Daniel Hernández-Torrano delivers keynote at the 9th World Congress on Positive Psychology

We are proud to share that **Professor Daniel Hernández-Torrano** (NUGSE), Principal Investigator of the ICEP *"Nurturing Young Minds: Exploring the Role of Early Childhood Education in Promoting the Health and Well-being of Young Children in Kazakhstan,"* has been invited as **a keynote speaker** at the **9th World Congress on Positive Psychology**.

Organised by the **International Positive Psychology Association** (IPPA), the congress will take place from 2-5 July 2025 in Brisbane, Australia. As the world's leading organisation promoting the science and practice of positive psychology, IPPA brings together scholars, practitioners, and educators committed to advancing the well-being of individuals and communities globally.

Professor Hernández-Torrano will present a keynote speech titled ***"Personalised Pathways to Well-Being: Insights from Psychological Networks,"*** exploring how network-based approaches can provide a more personalised understanding of well-being, particularly in educational and developmental settings.

To view the full program of the IPPA 2025 World Congress, please scan the **QR** code provided.

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

Dialogue and Collaboration on Values and Positive Peace Education

On Tuesday, April 9th, the research team from the Central Asian Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Transformation (CARCEIT), under the International Collaborative Education Project (ICEP) on Positive Peace Education in Kazakhstan, held a working meeting with the *Tarbiye* department at the Y. Altynsarin National Academy of Education. The session, initiated with the support of Madina Tynybayeva, brought together researchers and institutional leaders to explore synergies between the Unified Moral Education Program (*Birtutas Tarbiye*) and the Positive Peace Education (PPE) framework.

The meeting was attended by project team members Professor Lynne Parmenter, Aizat Arystanbek, Gulbagira Toleu, Assemgul Bukutova, and Nuraiym Seitova from the Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education. The session was graciously hosted by representatives of the Academy: Toleu Abishev (Director, Center for Theory and Methodology of Moral Education), Anar Tanirbergenova (Vice President of Science), Merey Mussabayeva (Leading Expert, Pedagogical Qualimetry and International Studies), and Assem Askarova. Guests from the Bilim-Innovation Foundation, including Arafat Nurlakov (Vice President) and Zhiger Teleukhanov (CEO, Qundylyq.kz), also participated in the discussion.

The Academy presented an overview of the *Birtutas Tarbiye* program, a national initiative officially launched in 2024 following a pilot in 2023. Grounded in six core values - independence, unity, justice, law, professionalism, and innovation - the program is guided by Ministry Order No. 194 and encourages schools to adapt the framework according to their contextual needs.

The project team shared preliminary findings from their fieldwork in schools across Kazakhstan, focusing on values education and its connection to peacebuilding. Key insights included:

- The emotional labor and dedication demonstrated by teachers
- Expressions of respect, care, and love within school communities
- The significance of national and civic identity in the educational process
- The role of ecological peace and collective responsibility
- Questions regarding implementation fidelity and the effectiveness of assessment tools

Discussion centered on how the *Birtutas Tarbiye* framework supports teacher agency, the application of national values in diverse classroom contexts, and the perceived flexibility of the program at the school level. Participants also reflected on challenges such as the interpretation of performance indicators and the pressure for uniform implementation across schools.

The meeting concluded with a shared interest in future collaboration, including opportunities for co-authored publications and dissemination of real-world case studies through the Academy and broader platforms. Bridging frameworks such as *Birtutas Tarbiye* and Positive Peace Education hold significant promise for advancing values-based and peace-oriented educational change across Kazakhstan.

Collaborating for Educational Transformation in Kazakhstan

On June 5, the Positive Peace Education research team from the Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education (NU CARCEIT) had the honor of visiting the Altynsarin National Academy of Education. The meeting was attended by Professor Lynne Parmenter (Principal Investigator), Assemgul Bukutova, Nuraiym Seitova, Gulbagira Toleu, and Aizat Arystanbek, along with the project's Co-Principal Investigator, Professor Hilary Cremin, Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Cambridge.

The team was warmly welcomed by the Academy's leadership, including President Dr. Nazipa Ayubayeva, Vice Presidents, Center Directors, and Academy colleagues Anar Tanirbergenova, Toleu Abishev, Assem Askarova, and Azamat Zhumakhmet.

During the meeting, the team presented the Positive Peace Education (PPE) project, outlining its theoretical foundations and practical implementation in schools across Kazakhstan. The discussion emphasized the project's potential to shape future educational strategies aligned with the principles of positive education and peaceful learning environments.

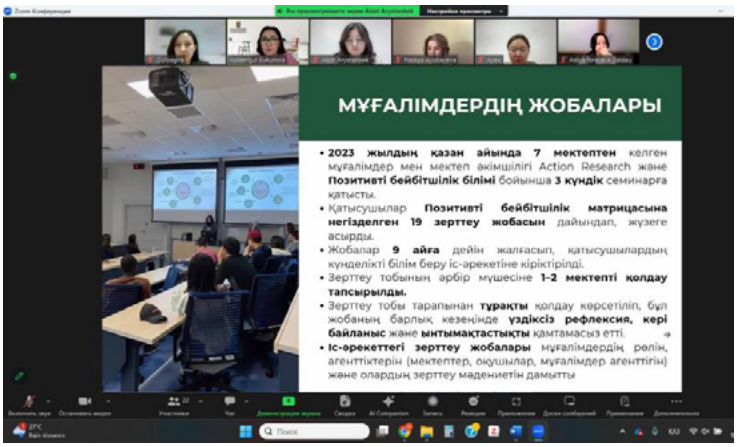
Key areas for collaboration included:

- Sharing school-level case studies to inform policy and address real-world challenges
- Developing practical, subject-specific innovations for educators
- Providing action research materials and resources for school use
- Exploring opportunities in teacher education and school development

It was agreed that selected project resources would be published on the Academy's official website to expand access to tools supporting peaceful and inclusive education. As a next step, an online stakeholder meeting is planned to broaden the dialogue and share insights with key educational institutions and partners across the country.

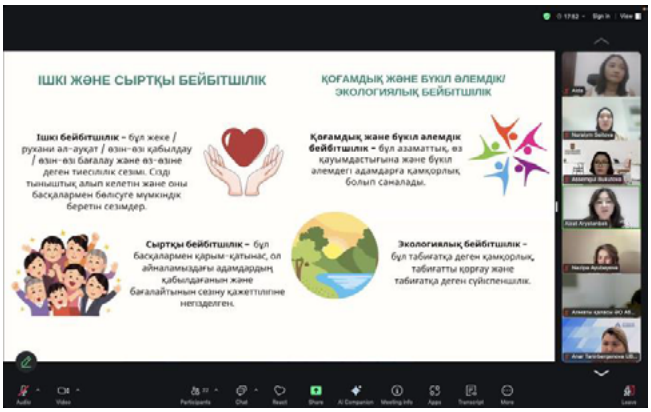
Webinar on Positive Peace Education Initiates National Dialogue on Teacher Development

On June 19, the ICEP 1 research team, Assemgul Bukutova, Gulbagira Toleu, Aizat Arystanbek, and Nuraiym Seitova, hosted a national webinar titled *Positive Peace Education: Dialogue for Future Teacher Development*. The event was co-led by Professor Hilary Cremin, Co-Principal Investigator and Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Cambridge, in collaboration with the



Altynsarin National Academy of Education, represented by Nazipa Ayubayeva, Anar Tanirbergenova, and Assem Askarova.

The webinar convened a wide range of stakeholders from regional departments of education, methodological centers, pedagogical universities, the JSC "A. Baitursynuly National Centre for Research and Evaluation of Education 'Taldau,'" the National Center for Professional Development "Orleu," and education departments from Astana and various other regions.



The team presented the theoretical foundations, research methodology, and school-level findings of the Positive Peace Education (PPE) project. They also shared curriculum recommendations and explored strategies for long-term sustainability, including collaboration through the Cambridge Peace Education Hub.

A dynamic Q&A session followed, with Professor Cremin addressing thought-provoking questions from the audience. The discussion highlighted key issues such as:

- The appropriateness of the term "negative peace" in local contexts;
- Discrepancies between inclusive education policies and classroom realities, with some framing these gaps as a form of structural or cultural violence;
- The challenge of translating peace education into culturally resonant language, with suggestions like оңтайлы қарым-қатынастар (positive relationships);
- The urgent demand for practical resources and sustained professional development for educators.

Several important questions emerged:

- How can PPE be integrated into everyday teaching practice?
- What forms of support do educators need to make this transition?
- Can researchers provide more than theoretical guidance, such as context-sensitive tools and training?

Opportunities for future collaboration were also identified, including participation in the national August teacher conference, engaging early-career researchers in toolkit development, and exploring avenues for scaling the initiative nationally. In her closing remarks, Anar Tanirbergenova emphasized the importance

of aligning PPE with core national education values such as Tarbiye, Qundylyqtar, Dos Bólike, and anti-bullying efforts, while remaining committed to the deeper emotional and relational dimensions of peace education.

Promoting Children's Well-being: ICEP 2 Presented at National Academic Committee Plenary

As part of the ICEP 2 project *"Nurturing Young Minds: Exploring the Role of Early Childhood Education in Promoting the Health and Well-being of Young Children in Kazakhstan,"* project researchers shared their findings at the plenary session of the National Academic Committee on Pre-School and Primary School Education. Held on April 18, 2025, at Gumilyov Eurasian National University in Astana, this national event brought together policymakers, teacher educators, and practitioners to discuss reforms in early childhood and primary education. Representing the project, Prof. Daniel Hernández-Torrano (NUGSE) and Dr. Laura Ibrayeva (CARCEIT) presented on *"Promoting Well-being in Kindergarten Settings."* Their talk highlighted insights from children's own voices and emphasized the importance of fostering positive emotions, play, and meaningful relationships in early learning environments. They also shared practical, research-informed recommendations aimed at strengthening early education policy, practice, and teacher preparation in Kazakhstan.

These recommendations, grounded in the PERMAH framework, highlight five areas crucial for fostering young children's emotional and psychological development in early learning environments:

- **Positive Emotions: Creating Supportive Environments**
  Educators should be trained to create emotionally supportive learning environments that blend natural elements with well-designed indoor and outdoor spaces. Emphasis should be on nature-based play to foster emotional well-being, creativity, and autonomy.

- **Engagement: Integrating Play and Creativity into Pedagogy**
  Teacher training should support diverse play forms, social, imaginative, exploratory, and integrate creative arts. Educators should be equipped to design environments that nurture curiosity, motivation, and active engagement.
- **Relationships: Strengthening Positive Relationships**
  Training should promote positive peer interactions through cooperative play and mutual support. Educators should foster responsive teacher-child relationships, act as emotional anchors, and meaningfully engage families to build secure, nurturing connections.
- **Meaning and Accomplishment: Encouraging Meaningful Experiences and Celebrating Success**
  Educators should be trained in culturally responsive practices that support meaning-making through lived experiences, relationships, and aspirations. Training should also promote mastery-based learning to build perseverance and achievement.
- **Health: Embedding Holistic Health Education**
  To build resilience and healthy habits, teacher training should cover daily physical activity, nutrition, sleep, and well-being. Educators need tools to embed holistic health education in early childhood settings.

Implementation of educational interventions to enhance environmental sustainability capacity in healthcare workers and students

In April, the Qaz Green Health team, led by Professors Jonas Cruz and Paolo Colet from the School of Medicine, launched an online educational course on environmental sustainability in healthcare, marking a significant milestone for our project. The course aimed to foster a culture of sustainability within the healthcare sector and promote environmentally responsible practices among healthcare professionals and students. Integrating this course into the continuous professional development of these individuals is essential for preparing a workforce that can effectively address climate-related health risks and reduce the environmental footprint of healthcare.

A total of 102 healthcare professionals and students participated actively in the course. Its interdisciplinary design provided participants with practical skills and strategic insights necessary for driving sustainable transformation in healthcare. By implementing such educational initiatives, we ensure that individuals in the healthcare sector are not only educated and aware but also empowered to enact meaningful, systemic change.

The course for healthcare students was delivered at our partner institutions, Karaganda Medical University and South Kazakhstan Medical Academy, while the course for healthcare workers was conducted at the University Medical Center. The course included self-directed modules covering various essential topics to provide foundational knowledge and skills in environmentally sustainable healthcare. It also featured interactive presentations, video presentations, online quizzes, article readings and reflections, as well as open forums for discussions. All courses were delivered through the Moodle learning management system, with direct supervision by researchers.

The development and implementation of this course represented the core of the Qaz Green Health Project, aiming to enhance the capacity of healthcare workers in environmental sustainability across Kazakhstan. The project concluded in the first week of June.

NU Research Week Presentation: Advancing Educational Transformation in Central Asia

As part of Nazarbayev University's 2025 Research Week, Prof. Naureen Durrani, Director of CARCEIT, delivered a presentation highlighting the center's mission, research impact, and strategic direction. Addressing a diverse audience of academics, policymakers, and practitioners, Prof. Durrani emphasized CARCEIT's growing role in advancing educational innovation and cultivating a regional research culture grounded in evidence and equity. The presentation, delivered on 17 April, spotlighted several of CARCEIT's flagship initiatives, including the *Education Impact Projects*, led by NU alumni and designed to tackle pressing challenges in education policy and practice. Prof. Durrani reaffirmed the center's commitment to bridging research, policy, and practice through strategic partnerships, capacity building, and knowledge exchange. Her talk underscored the importance of context-responsive and inclusive education in shaping a more equitable future for learners across Central Asia.

The session also featured presentations from CARCEIT-funded research teams. Prof. Lynne Parmenter and her team presented *Positive Peace Education in Kazakhstan*, a collaborative, action research initiative that

empowers school leaders and teachers to embed culturally relevant peace education into everyday practice, Dr. Saule Yeszhanova introduced the project *Strengthening Regional Universities in Kazakhstan*, led by Prof. Ahmet Aypay. The event concluded with an interactive discussion between CARCEIT research teams and the audience, exploring how to embed sustainability into project design, strategies for maintaining stakeholder engagement, and approaches to ensuring long-term impact beyond the project lifecycle.

CAPACITY-BUILDING EVENTS

CARCEIT Introduces Positive Peace Education at IQanat High School

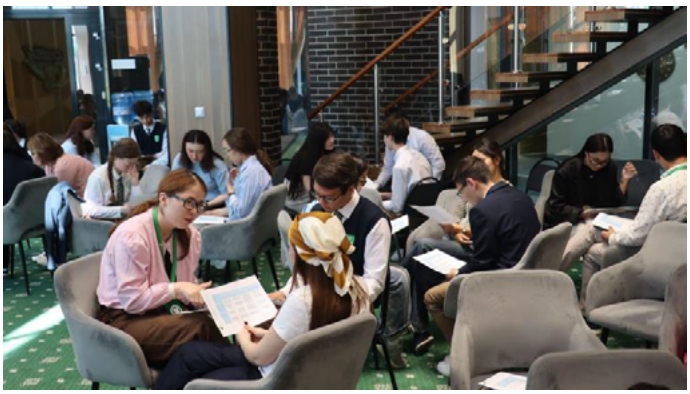
On June 6, 2025, the research team from the Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education (CARCEIT) visited IQanat High School of Burabay to present the Positive Peace Education (PPE) project, which aims to promote peaceful and positive learning environments in schools across Kazakhstan.

The event was attended by Professor Lynne Parmenter (Principal Investigator), Asemgul Bukutova, Nuraiym Seitova, Gulbagira Toleu, Aida Akhmetzhanova (Co-Principal Investigator), and Aizat Arystanbek, along with the project's Co-Principal Investigator, Professor Hilary Cremin, Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Cambridge.

The IQanat community warmly welcomed the team and provided an overview of the school's philosophy, learning environment, and infrastructure. A tour of the school and its picturesque surroundings left a strong impression on the visiting team. The seminar was structured in several stages:

- Circle pedagogy activities, led by Nuraiym Seitova, fostered a collaborative and open atmosphere among participants.
- Project introduction, in which Professor Lynne Parmenter emphasized the significance of the PPE initiative and set the stage for group engagement.

- Concepts of positive and negative peace, forms of violence, and the Positive Peace Matrix, presented by Professor Hilary Cremin, connected theoretical insights to practical school contexts.
- Action research methodology, explained by Asemgul Bukutova, introduced the research framework, the role of teachers, and preliminary findings.
- Real-life case examples, shared by Aizat Arystanbek, illustrated teacher-led projects on parental engagement, mentoring early-career teachers, value-based education, and classroom relationship-building.
- Video presentation from the pilot phase, shown by Nuraiym Seitova, highlighted teacher growth and the project's influence at BINOM School.
- Interview excerpts and project impact, presented by Gulbagira Toleu, showcased strengthened trust, emotional openness, and a sense of community between teachers and students.



Throughout the seminar, participants engaged in active listening, group discussions, and practical exercises to apply the Positive Peace Matrix to their school setting. Students expressed that they felt "seen and heard." Teachers reflected that the seminar transformed their perspectives and deepened their connections with students. The session concluded with a Q&A and a group photo, followed by informal conversations with students, alumni, teachers, the school's Principal, and CEO. These discussions helped draw meaningful connections between the PPE project and the core values and practices of IQanat High School. The research team expressed sincere gratitude to the IQanat community for their warm hospitality, openness, and active participation. The visit reaffirmed a shared dedication to building peaceful, inclusive, and trust-based educational environments across Kazakhstan.

Advancing Research Rigour: Seminar on Systematic Literature Reviews

During the Research Week of Nazarbayev University, Professor Daniel Hernández-Torrano (NUGSE), Principal Investigator of the CARCEIT ICEP 2 project "Nurturing Young Minds: Exploring the Role of Early Childhood Education in Promoting the Health and Well-being of Young Children in Kazakhstan," and postdoctoral researcher Dr. Laura Ibrayeva (CARCEIT) delivered a seminar titled "Mastering Systematic Literature Review: Methods and Tools" on April 15. The interactive workshop guided participants, including faculty, doctoral, and master's students, through best practices for conducting systematic literature reviews (SLRs).

Key topics included distinguishing SLRs from other research synthesis methods, the importance of developing a clear protocol, and the use of frameworks like PICOS and SPIDER to refine inclusion/exclusion criteria. The seminar also introduced the PRISMA guidelines to ensure transparency and rigour in reporting. Participants explored strategies for effective literature searching, data extraction and synthesis, risk of bias assessment, and tools to support systematic analysis. The session offered valuable insights for those aiming to strengthen the quality and impact of their academic reviews.

Qaz Green Health Project Seminar Highlights Evidence Synthesis in Environmentally Sustainable Healthcare

Dr. Cruz's research team, in collaboration with the NU School of Medicine, the NU Library and the University Medical Center, is pleased to share the successful completion of the hybrid seminar organized under the Qaz Green Health Project, funded by CARCEIT, held on June 5, 2025, at the University Medical Center in Astana. The seminar titled "**From Fragments to Findings: Synthesizing Evidence for Robust Literature Reviews on Environmentally Sustainable Healthcare"** was led by April Manabat, Senior Expert Librarian at NU Library and member of the Qaz Green Health Project. It focused on key methods of evidence synthesis, an increasingly essential approach for conducting literature reviews in environmentally sustainable healthcare.

Seminar Highlights:

- Introduction to the principles and steps of evidence synthesis
- Practical guidance on preparation, retrieval, appraisal, synthesis, and reporting
- Overview of major protocols and reporting standards

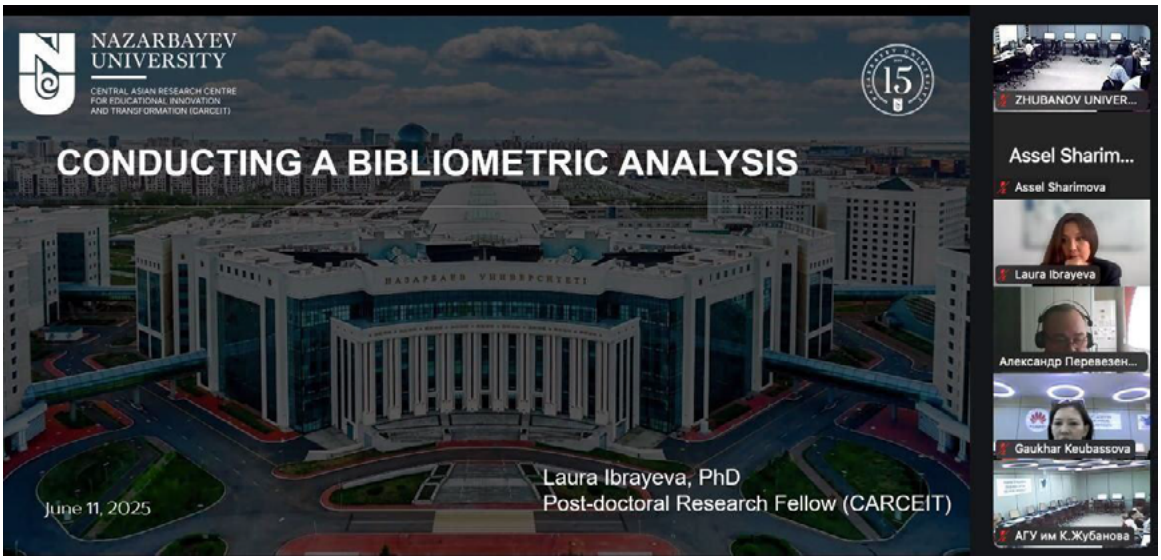
- Emphasis on the critical role of librarians in guiding rigorous evidence-based reviews

The hybrid format successfully engaged around 50 online participants via Zoom and 40 in-person attendees, including healthcare professionals, researchers, and students.

Seminar Moderation:

The smooth delivery of the seminar was made possible by the research team and research assistants Meruyert Smagulova and Zulyar Kavashev. Meruyert Smagulova managed consecutive translation, ensuring accessibility for all attendees. Zulyar Kavashev coordinated questions and comments from online Zoom participants, enabling remote engagement. The event showcased how health sciences and medical researchers and library professionals can collaborate to enhance methodological skills in literature review, supporting evidence-based practices in sustainable healthcare.

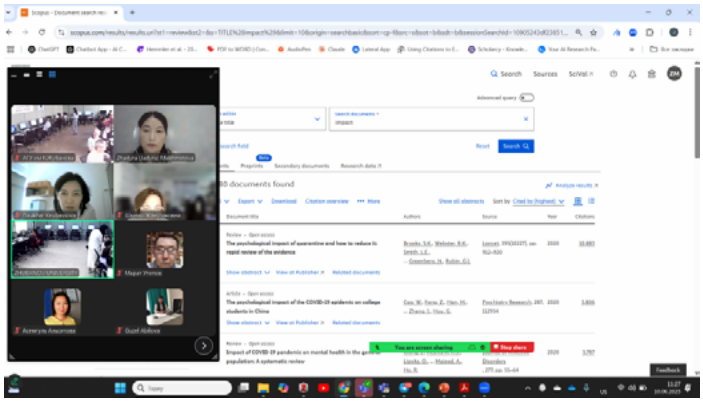
CARCEIT Hosts Bibliometric Analysis Training for Zhubanov University



On June 11, as part of CARCEIT's ongoing knowledge-sharing initiatives, Dr. Laura Ibrayeva facilitated an online training session titled *"Conducting a Bibliometric Analysis"* for faculty members and researchers at Zhubanov Regional University in Aktobe. The interactive workshop provided hands-on guidance on how to use bibliometric techniques to analyze research trends, identify collaboration patterns, and uncover emerging topics within academic literature.

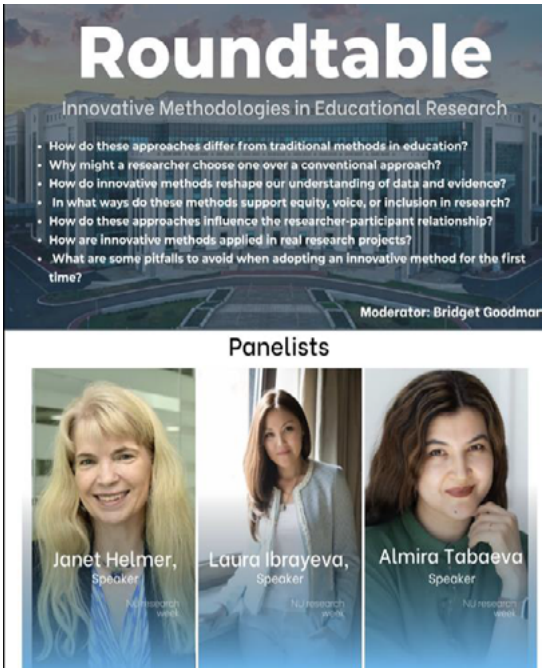
Dr. Ibrayeva also presented key insights from a bibliometric study on early childhood education and care (ECEC), conducted as part of the ICEP 2 project *"Nurturing Young Minds: Exploring the Role of Positive Early Childhood Education and Care in the Health and Well-being of Young Children in Kazakhstan,"* led by Prof. Daniel Hernández-Torrano (NUGSE). Additionally, she showcased a second case study using bibliometric data related to creativity in education. The session not only deepened participants' understanding of bibliometric tools but also encouraged conversations around enhancing institutional research capacity and setting strategic research priorities.

Systematic Review of Literature: ICEP 3 Presented at Summer Research School



On June 10, 2025, Dr. Zhadyra Makhmetova conducted a seminar and workshop on Systematic Literature Review (SLR) as part of CARCEIT's ongoing commitment to research capacity building. Her session served as a platform for knowledge sharing, introducing participants to the value of SLR as a robust method for identifying research gaps and shaping high-quality academic inquiry. Dr. Makhmetova discussed the evolution of SLR across disciplines and contextualized its growing relevance within the Kazakhstani research environment. Participants were guided through the key steps of conducting an SLR, distinctions from scoping reviews, and practical insights drawn from her recent publication. The session contributed to strengthening participants' methodological skills and promoting evidence-informed research practices in regional universities.

CARCEIT Showcases Collaborative Autoethnography at NU Research Week



A roundtable on *Innovative Methodologies in Educational Research* took place on April 16 as part of NU's 2025 Research Week, bringing together professors and doctoral students from NUGSE. Among the speakers was Laura Ibrayeva, Postdoctoral Researcher at CARCEIT, who introduced collaborative autoethnography as a qualitative methodology that emphasizes researcher reflexivity, shared meaning-making, and the inclusion of underrepresented voices. Drawing on a collaborative study conducted within the project *"Nurturing Young Minds: Exploring the Role of Early Childhood Education in Promoting the Health and Well-being of Young Children in Kazakhstan,"* Laura Ibrayeva illustrated how this approach was used to explore ethical dilemmas and researcher positionality in early childhood research. The session highlighted how such innovative methodologies differ from traditional approaches by offering deeper insights into data, promoting equity, and reshaping the researcher-participant relationship. Attendees engaged in a dynamic discussion on the opportunities and challenges of adopting these emerging methods in educational research.

EMERGING RESEARCH FINDINGS

ICEP 1: Positive Peace Education in Kazakhstan

1. **Key Findings from the Study:**

- Addressing Direct Violence

  Schools tackled direct violence by promoting *negative peace*, managing *bullying*, and applying *conflict resolution* strategies. Efforts often included *monitoring, control*, and *surveillance*, but solutions were highly *context-dependent* and sometimes risked *normalizing violence* rather than transforming it.

- Addressing Structural Violence

  Participants highlighted the importance of *equal treatment*, rethinking *power dynamics*, and creating *inclusive environments*. Some educators sought to *reimagine relationships with nature* as part of structural peace.

- Addressing Cultural Violence

  A shift was noted in challenging *mistrust*, engaging with *tarbie* (values education), and promoting *respect* for *diversity*. Emphasis was placed on *knowing the past* to inform the future and fostering *cultural and linguistic pluralism*.

2. **Project Sustainability**

Virtual Conference with Participating Schools: Sharing Impact and Insights

On June 5, the Positive Peace Education (PPE) project team held a virtual wrap-up meeting with participating schools. Teachers from participating schools attended this meeting and shared reflections on their individual and collective projects, focusing on impact, key findings, challenges, successes, and plans for future continuation.

Teachers from Central Kazakhstan presented their individual projects, outlining key objectives, focus areas, and the progress achieved. As all participating educators were from primary school levels, they emphasized the importance of expanding such initiatives to include secondary education. They reflected on the benefits of working with the same cohorts of students over several years, which strengthened their relationships not only with the students but also with their parents. A central insight from these schools was the importance of inclusive collaboration among all educational stakeholders - teachers, students, and parents, when addressing school-related challenges. In response to questions from Professors Hilary Cremin and Lynne

Parmenter, the teachers stressed the value of a holistic approach to educational reform. They also noted that involving parents in the process had led to improved student relationships and academic performance.

Educators from South Kazakhstan shared the impact of their projects with a focus on inclusive teaching strategies and the specific contextual challenges within their school environment. They highlighted the importance of emotional connection and open communication in fostering student learning and engagement. In particular, improvements in literacy outcomes in certain grades were attributed to collaborative, inclusive teaching approaches.

They also discussed plans to sustain their initiatives with upcoming 5th and 8th grade students, focusing on the critical transitions between primary, middle, and high school. Professor Hilary suggested peer mentoring as a sustainable and empowering strategy to support students during these transitions. Teachers from other schools reflected on the transformative impact of Positive Peace Education within their school. Students who had previously felt overlooked began to show greater confidence and participation. A significant shift in teacher perception was noted from viewing students through a fixed subject-object lens to a more relational subject-subject perspective, where students are acknowledged as individuals and partners in the learning process.

Final Reflections and Updates

Following these presentations, the project team expressed deep appreciation for the teachers' sincerity and commitment. A summary of the project's main findings was shared, specifically addressing how the work helps to mitigate direct, structural, and cultural forms of violence in educational settings. The findings were designed to be directly applicable to school contexts and resonated strongly with the teachers' lived experiences and understanding of PPE.

The session concluded with an update on the recent meeting with the Altynsarin National Academy of Education. The team emphasized that the work of participating schools is gaining recognition at both national and policy levels.

ICEP 2: Nurturing Young Minds: Exploring the Role of Early Childhood Education in Promoting the Health and Well-being of Young Children in Kazakhstan

As part of the ICEP 2 project, a collaborative autoethnographic study was conducted to explore the ethical and methodological complexities of researching with young children in Kazakhstani kindergartens. The research team members reflected on their experiences collecting data in early childhood settings where cultural norms and practical constraints required ongoing adaptation. Drawing from individual reflections, team journaling, in-person discussions, and informal WhatsApp conversations, the study captured the emotional and ethical dimensions of fieldwork in a context where research with young children is still developing. The findings emphasize the importance of reflexivity and cultural sensitivity in ensuring ethical practice, offering valuable guidance for researchers working in similar emerging contexts.

ICEP 3: Strengthening Regional Universities in Kazakhstan

The Regional Universities in Kazakhstan project team is working on developing several manuscripts exploring the data using different theoretical perspectives.

The submitted manuscript on "Isomorphic Strategies and Complex Realities: Navigating Organisational Transformation in Regional Universities" explores the organisational transformation of regional universities. Undertaking a blended approach employing rationalist and alternative, emergent perspectives, the study examines strategic plans and interviews with regional administration and faculty, and provides its unique contribution to the field of study, organisational transformation in non-dominant and resource-constrained contexts. The manuscript is currently under review.

Emerging findings on regional engagement indicate that regional universities have strong ties with both local Akimats and industries and are striving to enhance their relationships. Regional universities' relationships with local Akimats and regional industries can be described through various activities and initiatives that take place, which make regional universities active contributors to the societal and cultural development of the region.

Undertaking agency perspective, our findings exploring focus group and individual interviews with faculty highlight the multifaceted nature of faculty agency within autonomy reform contexts. The professional agency view reveals different factors influencing faculty agency in enacting autonomy. Organisational transformation of regional universities can be both an enabler and also hindrance to their agency. For example, enabling conditions such as transparency, open dialogue, clear communication,

close faculty and administration relationships, and trust were viewed by faculty as supportive mechanisms to navigate and mediate policy demands, strategic actions and their development. Conversely, bureaucratic control, normative constrained autonomy, research constraints, and performativity pressures can limit meaningful engagement. These insights underscore the importance of designing reforms that recognise the contingent, negotiated, and temporally embedded nature of faculty agency.

NAZARBAYEV UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY

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We are pleased to announce that NU Library has signed and renewed Open Access publishing agreements with the following publishers:

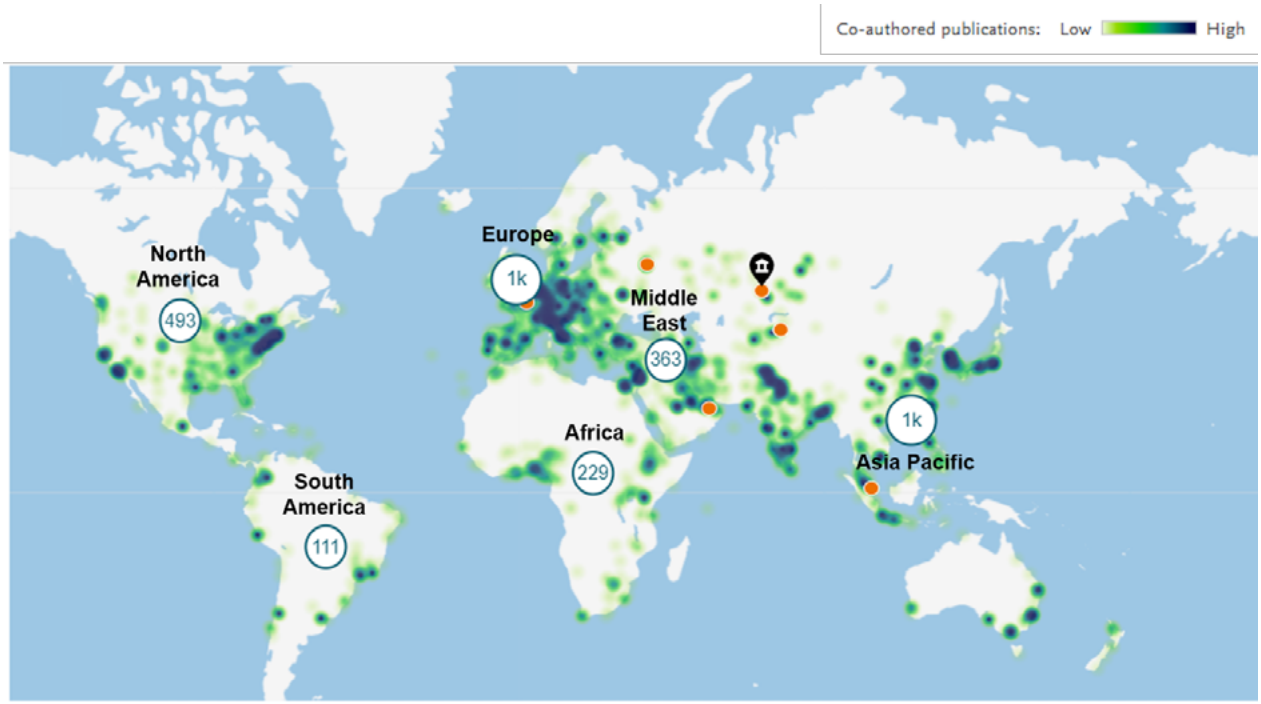
- Wiley
- Oxford University Press (OUP)
- Cambridge University Press (CUP)
- Association for Computing Machinery (ACM)

These agreements allow full coverage of Article Processing Charges (APCs) for NU-affiliated eligible authors, subject to budget availability.

To learn more about eligibility criteria, lists of journals, and how to apply, please visit the Library's Open Access LibGuides (provided above).

For assistance, contact the research support team at lrso@nu.edu.kz or Lazzat Arystanova at lazzat.arystanova@nu.edu.kz.

RESEARCH PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW



In this issue, we are delighted to present you an overview of research activities conducted under the auspices of Nazarbayev University.

Since its inception in 2011, Nazarbayev University faculty members and researchers have released 10,369 peer-reviewed publications indexed by Scopus, and have been cited 170,821 times for 2011-2025 period. The approximate number of citations per peer-reviewed publication is 16.5. The overall H-index of NU is 128, whereas H5-index is 88 (Source: SciVal, June 2025).

The Field-Weighted Citation Impact of NU over 2022-2025 years is 2.53, meaning that our publications have been cited more than twice as often as would be expected based on the global average for similar publications.

International collaboration is widely recognized as a key factor that positively influences citation metrics. By expanding professional networks and fostering global partnerships, collaboration often leads to the production of highly cited publications.

During the period from 2022 to 2025, NU exhibited a significant commitment to international collaboration, as evidenced by the production of 2,849 research papers in partnership with 3,233 organizations from 142 different countries. These collaborative efforts accounted for 61.7% of the total number of publications indexed by Scopus. The map above illustrates how these collaborations are spread throughout the world. The overall Field-Weighted Citation Impact of these co-authored papers is 3.36, reflecting the tendency of international collaborations to produce higher-impact, more widely recognized research.

For getting more comprehensive information on the research performance at NU, please have a look at the following report generated by SciVal research evaluation platform.

If you have any questions regarding the provided information, please contact Saule Sadykova (ssadykova@nu.edu.kz)

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

NEW				
#	Title	Funder	Deadline	Link
1	Prevention RFP	Alzheimer's Drug Discovery Foundation	15/09/2025	↗
2	Neuroimaging and CSF Biomarker Program	Alzheimer's Drug Discovery Foundation	15/09/2025	↗
3	Research Scholars Programs in Virology	Gilead Sciences	04/08/2025	↗
4	Mental Health Award: Leveraging longitudinal data to transform early intervention in mental health	Wellcome	22/07/2025	↗
5	EACVI Research Grants	European Association of Cardiovascular Imaging (EACVI) European Society of Cardiology (ESC)	30/09/2025	↗
6	Non-Diabetic Endocrinology – Collaborative Project Grants	Novo Nordisk Foundation	05/07/2025	↗
7	Volvo environment prize	Volvo	20/01/2026	↗
8	Call for applications for funding	Property Research Trust & Aubrey Barker Fund	04/07/2025	↗
9	Kavli prizes	Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters	01/07/2025	↗
10	Wellcome Discovery Awards	Energy Foundation	29/07/2025	↗
11	Wellcome Career Development Awards	Wellcome	24/07/2025	↗
12	L'ORÉAL-UNESCO FOR WOMEN IN SCIENCE INTERNATIONAL AWARDS 2026 EDITION	L'ORÉAL-UNESCO	04/07/2025	↗
13	CSP Functional Genomics	Joint Genome Institute (JGI)	29/01/2026	↗
14	CSP New Investigator Call	Joint Genome Institute (JGI)	09/09/2025	↗
15	Solar, Heliospheric, and INterplanetary Environment	National Science Foundation	07/10/2025	↗
16	Paleo Perspectives on Present and Projected Climate	National Science Foundation	20/10/2025	↗
17	Stimulating innovative research	Merck KGaA	31/08/2025	↗
18	Continuation of Solicitation for the Office of Science Financial Assistance Program	Department of Energy (DOE), Office of Science (SC)	30/09/2025	↗
19	IDEA Programs (Innovations Deserving Exploratory Analysis): Highway IDEA	Transportation Research Board (TRB), National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM)	01/09/2025	↗
20	IDEA Programs (Innovations Deserving Exploratory Analysis): Transit IDEA	Transportation Research Board (TRB), National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM)	01/07/2025	↗

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

21	IDEA Programs (Innovations Deserving Exploratory Analysis): Rail Safety IDEA	Transportation Research Board (TRB), National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM)	15/12/2025	↗
Accepts applications on a rolling basis				
22	Comcast Innovation Fund	Comcast	Rolling basis	↗
23	Catalyst grants	The Catalyst Fund	Rolling basis	↗
24	Internet Freedom Fund	Open Technology Fund (OTF)	Rolling basis	↗
25	Environmental Sustainability	National Science Foundation	Rolling basis	↗
26	Targeted Grants in MPS	Simons Foundation	Rolling basis	↗
27	FID - Call for Proposals	Fund for Innovation in Development	Rolling basis	↗
28	Pro-active grants	Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland (ICAS)	Rolling basis	↗
29	Focused Ultrasound Foundation Research Awards	Focused Ultrasound Foundation	Rolling basis	↗
30	Research and education grants	MedEvac Foundation International	Rolling basis	↗
31	Research and development enabling fund	Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE)	Rolling basis	↗
32	Research Ireland Discover Programme – Opportunistic Funding Mechanism	The Science Foundation Ireland	Rolling basis	↗
33	Project Funding	Li Ka Shing Foundation	Rolling basis	↗

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