
SUMMARY

(12th Issue of "Abiturent" Journal)

The State Examination Centre (hereafter - SEC or Centre) presents a summarized report of its Action Plan implemented in the academic year of 2017-2018 in the Republic of Azerbaijan. The summary consists of the information on the administration of all examinations conducted by the SEC, overview of instructions provided for the applicants and content/item experts, set of procedures in the admissions - entrance requirements, detailed descriptions of the admission programs for undergraduate (including specialities requiring aptitude), graduate and residency levels. Separate paragraphs highlight school-leaving examinations, consecutive regional meetings with the public held within the country, development of new test items and their evaluation criteria and international partnerships maintained by the SEC.

Testing and Admissions Undergraduate Education (including specialities requiring aptitude assessment exam)

At the beginning of each year up to the end of admission campaign, the SEC publishes a set of consecutive issues of "Abiturent" journal which provide the public with:

1. a detailed description of admission programs¹ for admission to undergraduate degree programs of the higher education institutions of the Republic of Azerbaijan including programs for admission to selective state-led schools²;
2. calls for applications, instructions of online registration for examinations and admission in separate;
3. the list of undergraduate degree programs in public and private higher schools functioning in the country³;
4. procedures and requirements of the standardized examinations and unified admissions including: samples of test items (multiple-choice and open-ended) of all levels of difficulty, used at the admission examinations;
5. a list of responses to frequently asked questions about application, admission and examinations including:
 - correct answers, scoring tables and reports of all applicants' scores;
 - reports of cut scores and the names of all the admitted applicants for the current academic year;
6. advice for applicants, consultative articles on career planning, including:
 - a platform for high scorers to share their experience and success stories.

Registration for the exam as well as admission for the higher education institutions and specialized secondary education institutions was carried out online, which simplified not only application procedure, but also prevented the applicants from common mistakes. In practice, to make online registration system considerably more effective, the SEC joined the state "Entry-Exit and Registration" interagency automated

¹ Admission programs for undergraduate education are based on the core curricula of subjects, being assessed.

² The state-led schools are the state financed Academies of Security, Defence and other academic institutions of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

³ The list of specialities for admission, the number of enrolment openings and the names of education institutions taking part in the fulfilment of the state order are annually presented as a prognosis.

data-search system run by most state institutions. Thus, now the applicants can easily fulfil their “Online Application” account page with the identification requirements met through the state identification detector and submit it within the time frame set by the SEC.

The overall content of the Application was published and presented to the public in the second issue of “Abiturient” journal in 2017.

To support the applicants favouring specialities requiring aptitude, the SEC issued such publications as “Fine Arts”, “Music Art”, “Architecture and Design”, “Theatre, Cinema and Choreography”, “Physical Education and Sport”, which contain scientific-methodical assistance⁴. These applicants can find a set of characteristics of aptitudes, requirements for every speciality, admission programs of aptitude examinations, assessment standards for the juries as well as the guidance of behaviours of applicants and jury members. Additionally, samples of required tasks, visual reproductions, pictures, tables, norms, etc. are published in the journal for better guidance for this segment of applicants.

The applicants choosing specialities requiring creative abilities were assessed by the Commissions for Aptitude Examinations not only in the capital Baku, but also in other regions. Those who passed aptitude exams successfully gained the right to choose specialities requiring creative abilities.

Specialities meant for admission and the number of the enrolment openings were presented in the fourth issue of “Abiturient” journal.

Scientific-methodical Assistance (for applicants and content/item experts)

To support the applicants to prepare independently for the admission examinations, the SEC carries out series of instructional activities throughout the year. As a result of regularly held professional development seminars conducted at the SEC, scientifically grounded methodic instructions and feedback of councils of experts, a wide range of scientific and methodical materials are developed and presented for the use of applicants online, such as: a) admission programs of all subjects; b) instructions on how to prepare for the admission exam; c) notes on inaccurate textbook content and themes insufficiently covered in the school textbooks; d) content experts’ remarks on different themes reflected in the admission programs and other instructional materials. In addition, a number of test samples and updated versions of textbooks on all examination subjects were published. For example, within the project “Video Lecture”, lectures covering themes of admission programs, new models of test items and recommendations of experienced experts on different subjects were placed on the SEC’s Youtube channel. Furthermore, after the exams, challenging test items were explained and common mistakes made by applicants were investigated and presented to the public on live TV programs.

Regional branches of the SEC that are functioning in Nakhchivan, Ganja, Shaki, Lankaran, Khachmaz, Goychay, Shirvan and Barda, have considerably helped to decentralize the administration of exams as well as the enrichment of instructional seminars. Due to the intensive involvement of the SEC’s regional branches in the promotion of the SEC’s projects, community of teachers working in regions was engaged not only in the administration of exams, but also contributed to the course of scientific discussions and the development of methodical resources for item writers.

Live broadcast established at the SEC’s headquarters connects the regional branches of the SEC with the main building, which provides an opportunity for the SEC to encourage the participation of teachers and experts from regions in the instructional seminars on examination subjects, organized at the central office of the SEC and enables the provision of reflective feedback by the experts involved at grass-roots level.

⁴ A set of methodical procedures which are based on the data analysis produced every year.

Content of the examinations

The SEC continues the construction of open-ended test items in its test development practice and maximizes their application in the examination disciplines. The open-ended test questions do not have answer choices, and examinees have to generate their own answers. A number of such open-ended test samples and their coding on Answer Sheet were illustrated in the 1st issue of “Abiturient” journal. These new models of test items were first pre-tested in the trial examinations held not only in the capital Baku, but also in the regions and only after validation these models were included into the Item Pool. The presentation of samples in distributed journals and the organization of trial examinations help applicants prepare for new test models, carefully instruct and familiarize them with new coding procedures prior to the actual exam. Overall, 39858 applicants were registered to take part in trial examinations. Meanwhile, an online software program was generated and launched by the SEC to let applicants take trial examinations online whenever requested by individuals.

Types of test items

The Centre uses three types of test questions in its exams.

1. Multiple-choice items

Multiple-choice items have been widely used since 1992 on various examinations organized by the State Students Admission Commission (SSAC) and its successor - the SEC. These items consist of a stem and 5 answer options. The examinees are required to choose the correct one among other options.

2. Open-ended questions

The SEC (formerly the SSAC) started to apply open-ended questions in admission examinations starting from 2011. These types of questions are presented without any answer choices and the examinees have to find correct answers themselves. Such kind of questions include questions requiring calculation, choice and matching the halves.

Open-ended test items have been included in the test blocks of three subjects within each group. 4 out of 25 test items have been open-ended on these subjects:

- mathematics, physics and chemistry in group I;
- mathematics, geography and native language in group II;
- mathematics, history and native language in group III;
- mathematics, chemistry and biology in group IV.

Application of open-ended test items allows to distinguish applicants with high mathematical and analytical thinking ability and particularly, applicants with better preparation. It also helps to assess applicants' knowledge on four levels: knowledge, comprehension, application and skills.

The format and conduct of admission examinations

This year, applicants were given the opportunity to take admission examination two times. Applicants who participated in both examinations were able to participate in the speciality selection round with one of the results obtained in the admission examinations. The purpose of this change was to reduce the examination stress and to give the applicants the second chance in case of any emergency.

The SEC held admission examinations on the following dates:

- admission examinations for the graduates in groups II and III were held on April 30 and July 14;
- admission examinations for the graduates of previous years in groups I and IV were held on May 7 and July 22;
- admission examinations to the specialized secondary education institutions and admission examinations for the graduates of previous years in group V were held on July 5.
- Those, who graduated from the complete secondary education level in 2017 participated in the competition on the basis of the results of school-leaving examinations.

The SEC conducts the unified admission examinations in the capital city of Baku and in 11 more regions of the country (the examinations were conducted only in 3 regions several years ago), which ensures the convenience of applicants as well as their parents.

Every required action has been taken together with the Special State Security Service of the Presidential Administration prior to the final check-up of the buildings to prevent exam participants from any insecure circumstances. For instance, this year 12839 teachers from the general secondary schools and up to 846 specialists from different state agencies have taken part in examinations as invigilators and examination managers, respectively. Security forces of the Special State Security Service highly secured the overall examination process. Furthermore, support provided by the personnel of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, “Azerbaijan Airlines” Closed Joint Stock Company, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Communication and High Technologies and the Ministry of Emergency Situations has immensely contributed to the quality of organizing the examinations.

Sets of events were held not only in Baku, but also in different regions in order to enlighten examination managers and invigilators.

To increase the number of professional examination managers, representatives of Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences have also been engaged as examination managers. Newly involved examination managers go through required seminars, practise the examination regulations and standards in a number of trial examinations being monitored, who, if successful, take part in the actual examinations. During introductory trainings, management of examination process is fully explained to the teachers and educative film on examination technology is demonstrated.

Beginning from November 2015 more than 200 buildings considered for the potential testing centres were inspected, their compliance with the requirements was identified. To exclude any identified shortcomings, national, regional and local state authorities are kept in regular communication. Respectively, updated information on testing centres is entered in the “Database of testing centres”. The personnel of the Special State Security Service provide security of testing centres.

Undergraduate Admissions

The SSAC has always maintained its focus on introducing the admission rules and the technology of admission examinations to the applicants regularly. Guidelines reflecting information on admission strategies and recommendations about different aspects, approaches and stages of the student admission process have been published. The SSAC issued a special publication titled “What should be paid attention to during the speciality selection?” for the applicants of each group in order to help them in the selection of proper and correct speciality. Education forms (on the state order and on paid basis), admission quotas on the competition of Azerbaijani and Russian sectors both separately and together, as well as the information on the distribution of scores of the applicants who gained the right to participate in the competition were presented in these issues. The SSAC published manuals and made them available online for the applicants in order to ensure the applicants’ decisiveness while choosing a speciality. With the purpose of assisting the applicants in the selection of a proper speciality, pass scores formed in the admission examinations to higher and specialized secondary education institutions in the previous years were also published in other guidance-related aids.

Descriptive statistics

In 2017, 78545 applicants participated in the admission examinations to the higher education institutions in the country. 25.74% of those applicants scored 0-99 points, 22.99% scored 100-199 points, 18.37% scored 200-299 points, 22.88% scored 300-499 points, 10.02% scored 500-700 points. 2472 applicants scored higher than 600 points. The applicants with high scores represent almost all cities and regions including some rural schools of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The number of the applicants scoring higher than 600 points was as follows in each group:

- 686 applicants in group I;
- 489 applicants in group II;
- 741 applicants in group III;
- 556 applicants in group IV.

Additionally, 15 applicants scored the maximum score of 700 points. Of 15 applicants scoring 700 points, 7 were the applicants of group I, 2 were the applicants of group II, 3 were applicants of group III and 3 were applicants of group IV.

As in the previous years, a number of measures have been implemented to introduce and spread the experience of the young people who scored high points at the admission examinations. A separate section on the “Abiturient” journal's website was dedicated to them.

Here the SEC presented information on Presidential scholarship grantees, the list of schools they finished, their examination scores, specialities they were admitted to, the results of statistical surveys conducted among applicants, their feedback, suggestions and recommendations for future applicants.

Graduate Education (master degree)

Graduate education (master degree) is the second level of higher education after undergraduate studies and it carries an important role in the process of training of specialists. Graduate education in public and private universities in the Republic of Azerbaijan is financed either by state-provided scholarships or private funding, according to the respective decree of Azerbaijan President “On Application of the New Financing Mechanism within the Higher Education Institutions”.

The SEC has continued improvement of content of admission examinations to the graduate education in the current academic year. Graduate degree specializations are grouped into 70 programs. To guide perspective graduate students through the process of examination and admission, the SEC publishes admission programs, admission rules and calls for applications, recommendations and tables of specialization choice, test item samples, results of the admission, cut scores and other essential information in the issues of the “Magistr” journal.

Application for admission for graduate education was conducted via Internet. Admission examination was implemented in two stages later on:

- At the first stage of the examination, the logical thinking (quantitative, spatial and verbal reasoning), foreign language and computer science skills of the bachelor applicants were checked through the paper-based test examination conducted on April 9, 2017. Those who attained the terms of the admission competition, gained the right to participate at the second stage of the examination.
- At the second stage of the examination, the knowledge of the bachelors in the sphere of speciality was assessed by means of the paper-based test examination on June 4, 2017. Bachelors answered 45 multiple-choice and 5 constructed-response test items in this stage of the examination. The bachelors who selected certain programs answered in written form the questions presented to them. The bachelors who favoured specializations requiring aptitude took aptitude examinations instead of test examinations.

After the SEC announced the results of the second stage of unified admission examination to graduate programs of higher education institutions and Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences test takers were able to choose specializations. Specialization choice process was eligible only for those who met minimum requirements set by the SEC. Applicants were able to choose up to 20 specializations.

Residency Education

The unified admission to the residency has been implemented by the SEC by means of test examinations. The rules on admission to residency, admission programs, explanation of some test items found complicated by the candidates and samples of test items on the basic and major subjects were presented in the first and second issues of “Rezidentura” journal in January, 2017. Specialities meant for admission, the number of the enrolment openings, admission scores were published in the third issue of “Rezidentura” journal.

The electronic application to the residency was implemented from March 10 up to 28, 2017 and 1077 candidates filled in applications to participate in the examination. The admission took place in two stages:

- At the first stage, the basic knowledge of the candidates in the sphere of the higher medical education;
- At the second stage, their knowledge of speciality was assessed.

The first and the second stages of the examination were conducted on April 9 and July 5 respectively. 665 residency applicants gained the right to participate in the admission competition; however, 508 persons participated in the speciality choice. Consequently, 470 candidates were admitted to the residency. As soon as the major selection process finalized the results were reported to the public online and via the fourth issue of the “Rezidentura” journal.

Admission to Vocational Education and Training (VET) Institutions (on the Basis of Complete Secondary Education)

The student admission to VET institutions on the basis of complete secondary education for the academic year of 2017-2018 was implemented on the basis of the points scored in the school-leaving examinations, in accordance with the “Admission Rules”. Those who finished the secondary school in previous years took a separate examination.

In both school-leaving and admission examinations, applicants totally answered 90 questions on Native language, math and foreign language or chemistry. The correct answer to each question was evaluated with 1 point. Thus, the results of the admission examinations to the secondary vocational education institutions on the basis of complete secondary education were determined on a total of 90 points, with 30 points in each subject.

The speciality selection for VET institutions on the complete secondary education basis was held in the period of August 15-19, after the results of the admission examinations to the higher education institutions were reported, in the same period when applications to the vacant openings occurred. The applicants had an opportunity to apply for the specialities of both - the vacant openings in the higher education institutions and VET institutions. The applicants could choose the codes of 20 possible openings from the two education stages in their electronic applications. Applicants who scored minimum 20 points (minimum 8 points on both subjects - the native language and mathematics) participated in the choice of specialties of VET institutions.

Admission to Vocational Education and Training (VET) Institutions (on the Basis of General Secondary Education)

For the years 1995-1998 the admission of students to VET institutions on the basis of general secondary education was carried out by the SSAC in a centralized way, but for 1994-2004 this process was fulfilled by VET institutions themselves. Since 2005 the realization of this process has been entrusted to the SSAC again.

The electronic application to VET institutions on the basis of general education was implemented from March 14 till April 4, 2017. Admission rules, call for applicants, list of subbachelor degree programs were published in the 3rd issue of “Abiturient” journal.

Applicants who graduated from general secondary education institutions in previous years sat examinations on the subjects of native language and mathematics, while graduates of the current year didn't participate in admission examination and participated in the competition on the basis of the results they gained on relevant subjects in school-leaving examination (on the basis of general secondary education).

Applicants selecting specialities requiring aptitude, before confirming their application, registered for participating at the exams held by the Commissions for Checking Creative Abilities. Those who registered, participated in the aptitude examinations conducted by the SEC (both graduates of previous and current years).

During this aptitude assessment stage the examination results have been assessed as “pass” (eligible) and “fail” (non-eligible) and only the applicants getting “pass” have been able to choose the corresponding specialities requiring aptitude. According to the admission rules, the applicants were allowed to choose other specialities along with specialities requiring aptitude.

Applicants favouring physical training and sport specialities didn't participate in any aptitude requiring examination. Applicants favouring fine arts, music art, theatre, cinema and choreography were able to choose corresponding specialities after having been assessed as “pass” at the aptitude examination.

Speciality selection round was conducted when admission examinations finalized. Applicants with 16 and higher points were allowed to choose specialities. Each applicant could choose up to 12 specialities of different VET institutions both on state order and paid basis. Applicants determined the sequence of speciality codes themselves.

Admission to VET institutions on the basis of general secondary education consisted of 10467 openings. Totally, 8504 applicants were admitted to colleges and this number comprises 81.20% of the total quota.

School-leaving Examinations (for the 9th and 11th grade students)

The SEC conducted the final school-leaving examinations for the students finishing the general secondary (9-year) and the complete secondary (11-year) education in a centralized way.

Comprehensive measures have been taken in order to organize school-leaving examinations at a high level. More than 300 school buildings, including nearly 65 rural school buildings were reviewed promptly and their conformity to examinations was checked out. To ensure convenience of students, examinations were held not only in regional centres, but also in remote village schools. In regions examinations were held in different days.

Invigilators were chosen among regional school teachers for managing examinations. Before examinations the SEC staff held seminars for teachers in regions. More than 8757 teachers from general secondary schools and up to 750 specialists from different state agencies have become part of school-leaving examinations as invigilators and examination managers, respectively.

With the purpose of helping graduates before school-leaving examinations, test item samples on native language (on the Azerbaijani language for the graduates of Azerbaijani sector and on the Russian language for the graduates of Russian sector), math and foreign language or chemistry (only for the 11th grade students), the topics of the written work for the final examinations and assessment criteria have been presented on the website of the Centre.

The 9th and 11th grade students sat the examinations in the first and the second half of the examination day respectively.

The format and content of the school-leaving examinations

School-leaving examination for the 9th grade students was held in accordance with the requirements of the new educational program (curriculum). The content of the examinations and the models of the examination tasks were identified in the scientific-methodological seminars with the participation of teachers of the educational institutions of the Republic of Azerbaijan and specialists of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences (ANAS). The final examinations for the 9th grades were held in two stages.

In the first stage, 10 open-ended test items and 10 multiple-choice questions were presented to the 9th grade students in order to assess their reading and understanding abilities in native language and 10 open-ended test items in order to examine mathematical skills. In addition, the students wrote an essay on a voluntary basis, choosing one of the presented topics. It was compulsory to write an essay in order to get a distinctive certificate of general secondary education.

At the second stage of the school-leaving examination the 9th and 11th grade students were presented 30 and 90 questions respectively. In addition, 11th grade students performed essay writing on the given subject. The total duration of the exam was 1 hour 30 minutes for the 9th grades and 2 hours 45 minutes for the 11th grades (2 hours 15 minutes for test items, and the remaining 30 minutes for writing). According to the "Rules of conducting of attestation of those who are studying in educational institutions", the students studying in secondary English or Georgian language schools are required to pass the final exams only in maths for 9th grades and maths and foreign languages for the 11th grades (If foreign languages are not taught in general education institutions, the students take a test in chemistry).

At the first stage of the 9th grade final exams, each of the 10 open-ended questions on the Native language was evaluated with 2 points, each of the 10 multiple-choice questions was evaluated with 1 point, and 10 open ended questions in the math were evaluated with 3 points. Thus, it was possible to collect maximum 30 points on each test block. At the second stage, each of the 30 test questions included in each of the test blocks on the Native language and math was evaluated with 7/3 points. At the second stage, the maximum score for each test block was 70. Thus, total results for each subject in the 9th graders' final examination (total sum of both stages) were calculated on a 100-point scale. In addition, maximum score for essay was 10 points.

Each test item at the 11th graders' final examination was assessed with 1 point and incorrect test items did not impact the overall results.

Transparency in Testing and Admission Procedure

The SEC paid reasonable importance to informing the public completely and to providing transparency at all stages of the admission process. A short description of the measures carried out in this direction may be abstracted as follows:

- Availability of the examination content: admission programs on subjects, explanation of difficult test items, samples of test models, test booklets used in the trial examinations, collections of test items, their electronic versions and other necessary methodical materials have been prepared and presented for the use of applicants;
- Regular coverage of all processes and difficult stages of the admission campaign online and by means of mass media;
- Press conferences and briefings held every week for the representatives of mass media in the Centre;
- Regular coverage of issues interesting for the public in the press and on TV programs by the SEC leadership and representatives during the admission campaign;

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- Observation and coverage of each conducted examination by up to 50 mass media representatives;
 - Coverage of the examination process in the SEC’s website;
 - Placement of special maps with indicators showing the addresses of examination buildings in the special issue of the “Abiturient” journal as well as in the Commission’s website in order to help applicants to find examination buildings easily;
 - Enabling the applicants to take the test booklets out of the examination building at the end of the admission examination with themselves in order to review their notes, to check their answers and to calculate their approximate scores till the announcement of examination results;
 - Placement of up-to-date information on all urgent issues of admission campaign regularly in the issues of the “Abiturient” journal and in the SEC’s website in Azerbaijani and English;
 - Providing the information exchange service in the Centre’s website and on Facebook social networking site for the purpose of answering instantly citizens’ questions concerning admission examination;
 - Delivery of results of the admission and trial examinations to the applicants through the Centre’s website and SMS service;
 - Placement of graphic images of the answer sheets on the personal accounts of applicants;
 - Regular expansion of the application of Internet as the most optimal variant of the interaction for information exchange with the public.

Consecutive Regional Meetings

Under the instructions of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, in accordance with the schedule offered by the heads of the central executive bodies receptions of citizens by the Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the SEC were held in Astara, Gobustan, Siyazan, Fuzuli, Dashkasan, Zagatala, Aghdash, Aghsu, Shamkir, Neftchala and other regional centres in 2017. People residing in the surrounding regions participated in these meetings. Information about receptions was given via Internet beforehand.

During these meetings such issues were discussed:

- Difficulties encountered during the educational process in higher and secondary specialized education institutions, including problems of paying tuition fees;
- Application to higher and specialized secondary education institutions;
- Content, organization and technology of admission and aptitude examinations;
- Admission examinations conducted separately for the graduates of previous and current years;
- Admission quota, the terms of the competition, speciality choice;
- Procedure of preparation of examination materials, importance of involving teachers from regions in this process;
- Duration of admission examinations;
- Intended innovations in the admission and school-leaving examinations;
- School-leaving examinations;
- Final assessment rules of students’ knowledge (Grade IX) in general secondary education level according to new education programs (curricula)

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- Opportunities for the youth to get education in foreign countries;
 - Secondary higher education;
 - Student transfers;
 - Methodological materials for students and applicants in order to prepare for admission examinations independently (without tutors);
 - Requests and appeals on recruitment and other issues.

During these meetings requests of citizens were listened to carefully, many problems were resolved on the spot, while others were taken into consideration for further investigation. Applications that were not within the competence of the SEC were registered in order to be forwarded to the relevant organizations in order to take necessary measures.

Preparation of new items and their evaluation criteria according to the new educational program (curriculum)

For the last 10 years, new educational programs (curricula) have been applied at the general education institutions of the Republic of Azerbaijan and textbooks compiled in accordance with content standards are used.

Therefore, in the 2016-2017 academic year, in order to evaluate the knowledge of students finishing the general secondary educational institutions (the 9th graders) new items and assessment criteria on the relevant subjects were developed.

Samples of new items on the Azerbaijani language, Russian language and math, programs of school-leaving examinations, content standards to be tested during examination and examples of response sheets were published in the special issue of "Abiturient" journal.

Seminars were held in Ganja, Shirvan, Shaki, Nakhchivan, Lankaran, Agjabadi, Goychay, Khachmaz and Baku in order to present the new model to pedagogical community, students and their parents. These seminars were broadcasted live on the internet.

Preparation of examination materials

Preparation of the materials related to the content of the examinations is governed by the "Statute of the State Examination Centre of the Republic of Azerbaijan", with regard to the content of final exams, military lyceums and bachelor's degree admission examinations (programs for exams, exam models, new type of assignments). Materials were developed and scientific-methodical monitoring (assessment) of manuals and textbooks for all educational institutions providing general education was carried out.

Scientific-methodological seminars on relevant subjects were organized for the preparation, discussion and improvement of the materials related to the content of the examinations. Teachers of the secondary and higher education institutions of Baku and Sumgayit, specialists of ANAS took part in the seminars. As a result of the discussions, programs and models were developed for graduation and admission exams. These materials were published in the first issue of "Abiturient" journal. Thus, graduates had a preconceived idea of what types of items would be used in the graduation and admission examinations. Each of the test items used in the admission examinations has been analyzed in terms of content, relevance and difficulty levels based on statistical indications of examination results. The methodical recommendations for the explanation of those assignments have been prepared and published in the second issue of the "Abiturient" journal.

112 booklets prepared by the SEC ("Chemistry", "Mathematics", "Physics", "Geography", "History", "Literature", "Azerbaijani language", "Russian language", "English language", "English-Azerbaijani dictionary", "Spelling dictionary of the Azerbaijani language") were comparatively analyzed with the textbooks used in the general educational institutions of the Republic of Azerbaijan. While improving the

content of these booklets all renewals and changes in school textbooks, notes and suggestions made during scientific and methodological seminars were taken into account.

In January and February 2017, in accordance with the order of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan, scientific-methodological monitoring and evaluation of 19 textbooks (textbooks and methodological aids for teachers) for X grades of general education institutions prepared on the basis of new educational program (curriculum) were analyzed and assessed. Each textbook has been analyzed on 5 parameters (content of the textbook; language and writing style; design of the textbook; scientific-methodological compatibility of exercises; content of methodological aids for teachers (Teacher's Book). The final commentaries prepared as a result of the evaluation were sent to the Ministry of Education.

International Partnerships

In November, 2016 the SEC joined the project "Support to the continuation of reforms in the civil service system of Azerbaijan", implemented jointly by the Lithuanian partners (Lithuanian State Secretariat, State Service of Lithuanian Affairs and the European Social Fund Agency) within the framework of the EU Twinning instrument. The presentation of the project took place on February 14, 2017 in Baku. During the implementation of the project, Lithuanian experts jointly worked with the SEC representatives on Project components, and regular seminars were organized for state authorities with the participation of Lithuanian experts. In total, 250 civil servants were involved in 6 seminars and 3 trainings.

The project consists of 4 components:

1. Classification of civil service positions in accordance with the content of functions;
2. Improvement of civil service recruitment system;
3. Improvement of civil servants' performance evaluation system;
4. Preparation of proposals on improvement of system of payment of civil servants' compensation.

At the same time, training visits to Lithuania, Belgium and the Netherlands were organized for the SEC representatives to study foreign experience within the Project. The project is expected to continue until November 2018.

The SEC continued its work on the Public Administration Reform Panel within the framework of the First Platform of the European Union Eastern Partnership (EU) program of "Democracy, Good Governance and Stability". Within this context:

- On March 16-17, the SEC representative took part in the 12th meeting of the Panel on Public Administration Reform, which was co-organized by the National Agency for State Service of Ukraine and the European External Action Service (AFCE) in Kiev, the capital of Ukraine.
- On April 21, a workshop on "Creating and managing databases in the civil service system" was held in Baku by the joint organization of IFAC and SEC. Along with the Eastern Partnership countries (Belarus, Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova), representatives of Azerbaijani government agencies, diplomatic missions accredited in Azerbaijan, non-governmental organizations, EU Delegation to the Republic of Azerbaijan, SEC and Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan representatives joined the event. The event participants were informed about recent innovations in the civil service system of the Republic of Azerbaijan, implemented reforms, changes in the civil service legislation, as well as the experience of Azerbaijan and other Eastern Partnership countries in the establishment and management of civil service databases. In total, 35 people participated in the event.
- On June 1-2, the SEC employees participated in a training on "Professional, Sustainable and Political Civil Service: Role of Leadership and Organizational Culture" in Kiev, Ukraine.

- On September 7-8, the SEC employees participated in a seminar on "Improving professionalism in local self-governance bodies: reform in public administration and in the context of counter-centralization of government", organized jointly by the National Agency for State Service of the Republic of Ukraine and the OSCE Office in Kiev, Ukraine.
- On September 21-22, the delegation led by the Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the SEC took part in a conference on "Improving the professionalism of civil servants and local government officials - Challenges, Goals and Prospects" in Odessa, Ukraine.
- On October 3, the SEC representative took part in the 13th meeting of the Panel on Public Administration Reforms held in Tallinn, Estonia's capital.
- From October 2 to 13, the SEC representative took part in an internship course for Civil Servants in Eastern Partnership in Warsaw, Poland.

The SEC continues to organize paper-based SAT exams in partnership with the College Board - Higher Education Admissions Council with the support of the US ETS (Educational Testing Service). Thus, SAT exams in 2017 were held five times: in January, May, June, October and December. The TOEFL IBT exams were also held in 2017 by the SEC, which was launched in December 2016 with the support of ETS and "Prometric" and continued in 2017.

The statistics for SAT and TOEFL IBT examinations in 2017 was as follows:

<i>Name of Examination</i>	<i>Number of examinations</i>	<i>Number of participants</i>
SAT (SAT including the subject)	5	167
TOEFL IBT	5	22

One of the main directions of existing cooperation between the SEC and Cambridge English Language Assessment is the evaluation of the English component used in the first stage of the admission examination to the graduate level held by the SEC. In this regard, the English language testing and monitoring materials were monitored and the organization provided recommendations based on international experience. Negotiations on the next phase of the project are under way and it is planned to carry out activities in the next phase of the cooperation in 2018.

Conclusion

Finally, this summary is not enough to express the large-scale activities of the SEC. There is more information in the 12th issue of "Abiturient" journal, which contains the descriptive statistics and a set of comparative analyses based on the results of admission and school-leaving examinations. A particular emphasis is given to the recommendations of each chapter, which describes the current state and quality of education in the country per high school and university. Additionally, there are charts on various regional performance indicators of high schools, diagrams of admission rates of all universities on each level of education. At the end, an overview is provided on the monitoring of textbooks, a presentation of "Student Tracking System", a list of available print matter, published by the "Abiturient" publishing house, and series of national and international events the SEC participated in.

Translator: K.T.Hasanova;

Editor: M.A.Akbarli.