

feedback
on the IQAA thematic analysis

‘Analysis of the results of institutional, programme and first-cycle programme accreditation for 2024–2025’

The IQAA thematic analysis ‘Analysis of the Results of Institutional, Programme and Initial Programme Accreditation for 2024–2025’ is an important analytical document that enables the quality of higher education to be examined not only through individual external evaluation procedures, but also through the interrelationship between institutional governance, the delivery of educational programmes and the launch of new programmes.

The main value of this analysis lies in its comparative nature. The document shows that institutional accreditation generally reflects the existence of established policies, regulations and quality assurance mechanisms within higher education institutions, whilst programme accreditation provides a deeper insight into the extent to which these mechanisms actually function at the level of specific educational programmes. This approach is particularly important, as the mere existence of documents and strategic provisions does not in itself guarantee consistent quality in teaching, assessment, staffing, engagement with stakeholders and the monitoring of learning outcomes.

The concept of analysing the ‘implementation gap’ deserves special attention. It is precisely at the level of study programmes that discrepancies between declared quality policies and day-to-day academic practice most often become apparent. Comments from external expert groups on issues relating to academic staff, student-centred learning, student admissions, learning outcomes, recognition and certification indicate that the further development of the quality system must be linked not only to the improvement of institutional documents, but also to strengthening the accountability of heads of study programmes, departments and academic units for the effective implementation of standards.

A key strength of the analysis lies in the use of a matrix comparing institutional and programme accreditation. Such a tool makes it possible to identify which standards are being implemented consistently and which require further attention. For universities, this has practical significance: the results of the external evaluation can be used not only as a final assessment of the accreditation process, but also as a basis for internal audits, risk analysis, adjustments to educational programme development plans and management decision-making.

An interesting element of the analysis is the use of a heat map to illustrate the implementation of institutional quality mechanisms at the level of study programmes. The inclusion of such a visual and analytical tool makes the material more up-to-date and brings it closer to an evidence-based approach to quality management. Rather than providing a general description of a higher education institution’s strengths and weaknesses, the analysis shows the distribution of risks across standards and study programmes, which allows for a more precise identification of priorities for improvement.

Of particular significance is the section devoted to initial programme accreditation. New study programmes are at the most critical stage of their development, as it is precisely during their design and launch that the staffing, methodological, resource and organisational conditions for future sustainability are established. The analysis rightly demonstrates that initial accreditation should be viewed not as a formal procedure for authorising a programme’s implementation, but as a mechanism for the early identification of risks associated with the programme’s content, staffing, student intake, practical focus and the readiness of the infrastructure.

Of particular interest is the distribution of initial educational programmes across levels and fields of study. The introduction of new programmes in engineering, business and management, teacher training and other fields reflects both the demands of the labour market and the desire of higher education institutions

to update their portfolio of educational programmes. At the same time, this process requires more thorough justification: it is important for universities to assess in advance their staffing levels, academic potential, the availability of material and technical resources, the stability of student intake, graduates' employment prospects, and the actual needs of the region or sector.

Of practical importance is the section which systematises typical observations based on the results of initial accreditation. The most critical areas are student-centred learning, teaching and assessment, as well as the academic staff. This indicates that, when launching new study programmes, higher education institutions need to pay greater attention not only to the structure of the curriculum, but also to the quality of syllabuses, the transparency of assessment criteria, the practical relevance of subject choices, the involvement of practitioners, the publication and research activity of academic staff, and the readiness of lecturers to deliver the stated learning outcomes.

The analysis of engagement with stakeholders deserves special mention. The document shows that students, academic staff, graduates and employers are formally involved in the processes of developing and updating study programmes; however, in a number of cases, such participation requires greater consistency, regularity and an evidence base. This is an important conclusion, as a modern quality assurance system must verify not merely the fact that meetings, surveys or discussions have taken place, but the actual influence of stakeholders on the content of the educational programme, teaching methods, practical training and the employment of graduates.

The significance of this analysis extends beyond accreditation reporting. It can be used by higher education institutions as a practical tool for transitioning from formal compliance with standards to a more mature model of internal quality assurance. Three areas are particularly important for this: systematic monitoring of the implementation of the Higher Education Accreditation Commission's recommendations, regular assessment of the implementation of standards at the level of each educational programme, and the development of a culture of data-driven decision-making.

In future, such analytical materials could be enhanced by providing a clearer year-on-year trend, comparing results across levels of education, types of higher education institutions and fields of study, as well as including examples of successful rectification of observations following previous accreditation procedures. Brief case studies illustrating how the VEG's recommendations are translated into concrete changes in study programmes, staffing policies, assessment systems, digital infrastructure and engagement with employers would add further value.

Overall, the IQAA's thematic analysis, 'Analysis of the Results of Institutional, Programme and First-Level Programme Accreditation 2024–2025', can be regarded as a substantive, up-to-date and practice-oriented document. Its main significance lies in the fact that it helps to view the quality of higher education as a multi-level system: from institutional policy to a specific educational programme, and from the launch of a new educational programme to its sustainable development. Such an analysis contributes to increasing the transparency of external evaluation, strengthening the internal quality assurance system and developing more responsible academic practices in higher education institutions of the Republic of Kazakhstan.



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