Report

by the Dean of the Business School at KBTU JSC on the analysis of the results of institutional, programme and initial programme accreditation (2024–2025)

The analysis of the reports by external expert groups, presented by the Independent Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (IQAA), provides a comprehensive overview of the state and development trends of the external quality assurance system in Russian higher education. As Dean of the Business School at KBTU JSC, which trains management and economics professionals, I consider it necessary to put forward a number of substantive observations regarding the methodological foundations, key conclusions and practical implications of this document for educational programmes in the field of business and management.

The methodological framework of the analysis, based on a comparison of the results of institutional and programme accreditation across a single sample of higher education institutions, appears highly fruitful in terms of identifying the degree of alignment between the declared and actually implemented quality assurance mechanisms. The gap identified in the document between high institutional indicators of compliance with standards and localised problems at the level of specific educational programmes reflects a fundamental dilemma of modern university management: the formal existence of strategies, policies and regulations does not guarantee their effective translation into the operational practices of departments. For the Business School, this issue is particularly relevant, as training programmes in management and economics are characterised by a high degree of alignment with professional practice, require continuous adaptation to changes in the business environment, and involve close integration with the professional community.

An analysis of the structure of accredited educational programmes by level of study shows, as expected, a predominance of bachelor's programmes, accounting for 60.8 per cent of the total number of programmes. At the same time, for business education programmes, the ratio of training volumes at different levels is of fundamental importance. Master's programmes in management and business administration, accounting for 30.1 per cent, serve to build a management reserve and develop leadership potential, whilst doctoral programmes (9.2 per cent) provide the scientific basis for management decisions and train research staff. Against the backdrop of economic transformation and the need to develop managerial competencies at all levels of economic activity, it seems appropriate to discuss mechanisms for expanding Master's programmes aimed at experienced professionals, as well as doctoral programmes that integrate academic research and applied consultancy.

The distribution of accredited higher education institutions and study programmes across the regions of Kazakhstan, as presented in the analysis, reflects a significant concentration in the Southern region (58 per cent), which correlates with demographic and economic factors. Regional differentiation is of significant importance for business education, as the specific nature of the business environment, the structure of the economy and the needs of the labour market vary between regions. Management training programmes developed without taking the regional context into account risk becoming irrelevant and uncompetitive. In this regard, it is important to develop mechanisms for regional monitoring of employers' needs and for adapting programme content to the specific characteristics of local economic systems.

A comparative analysis of programme and institutional accreditation, presented in a compliance matrix, enables the identification of risk areas and areas of consistent quality. For business education programmes, the most significant finding is the finding that compliance with the ‘Public Information’ standard is least consistent at the institutional level. In the context of training managerial staff, this standard takes on an additional dimension linked to the need to ensure transparency of information about programmes for potential employers, professional associations and graduates. The reputational mechanisms of business education involve the active positioning of programmes within the professional community, public reporting on graduates’ employment outcomes, and the recognition of qualifications in the labour market. The lack of detailed information on business programmes in universities’ official resources reduces their appeal to the target audience and limits opportunities for international partnerships.

The issue of student-centred learning in the context of business education requires methodological clarification. A student-centred approach in management training programmes is not limited to formal procedures for differentiated assessment or an expanded range of elective modules. It is essential to foster in students the ability to engage in self-directed learning throughout their professional careers, to develop reflective decision-making skills in conditions of uncertainty and ambiguity, and to cultivate ethical responsibility in business activities. The analysis highlights the absence of clearly differentiated assessment criteria that take into account the specific content of courses, and of a regulated system for assessing final dissertations. For business programmes, this issue correlates with the need to move away from traditional forms of final assessment towards a comprehensive evaluation of professional competences, including case studies, the development of business plans, strategic projects and consultancy assignments for real organisations.

An analysis of undergraduate programmes reveals their relatively low share in the overall portfolio of higher education institutions (7.5 per cent), which indicates that the range of educational offerings has become well-established. At the same time, for business education, the dynamics of the market environment, the emergence of new sectors and professions, and the transformation of business models under the influence of digitalisation create a constant need to develop new programmes. The distribution of first-cycle Master’s programmes, where the ‘Business, Management and Law’ field accounts for 50 per cent of programmes, reflects high demand for management training; however, it also signals a risk of saturation in this segment of the education services market. It is important to ensure the diversification of Master’s programmes towards highly specialised programmes in sector-specific management, innovation management, digital transformation, sustainable development and corporate social responsibility.

The typology of comments following the initial programme accreditation demonstrates the specific challenges faced at different levels of education. For bachelor’s programmes, the predominance of comments relating to the standards ‘Student-centred learning’ (53.7 per cent) and ‘Academic Staff’ (51.2 per cent) reflects the typical challenges of launching new programmes, linked to the formation of a teaching team and the structuring of the educational process. For master’s programmes, the concentration of comments on the standards ‘Academic Staff’ (56.3 per cent) and ‘Student admissions, academic performance, recognition and certification’ (50 per cent) correlates with the need to ensure a research component in the programme and to attract a competitive student cohort. This differentiation of issues is of practical significance for planning the resource allocation for new programmes at various levels.

Engagement with stakeholders, as analysed in the document, appears to be one of the most critical aspects of the quality of business education. The management profession, by its very nature, involves integration into the professional community, an understanding of employers' expectations and the ability to continually adapt one's competencies. The analysis confirms that the challenges in this interaction are predominantly process-related, stemming from a lack of systematisation, regularity and documentation. For the Business School, this conclusion confirms the need to institutionalise mechanisms for ongoing dialogue with employers, including the establishment of programme advisory boards, the regular conduct of surveys and focus groups, the tracking of graduates' career trajectories, and the analysis of how graduates' skills align with labour market requirements. Of particular importance is the development of engagement with graduates as a key channel for feedback and a resource for providing mentoring support to students.

At the same time, the present analysis contains a number of methodological limitations that must be taken into account when interpreting the findings in the context of business education. The aggregated nature of the data does not allow for a differentiated analysis of the specific characteristics of individual fields of study within the broad group of 'Business, Management and Law'. Programmes training accountants, financiers, marketing specialists, human resources managers, logistics specialists and entrepreneurs have different requirements regarding content, teaching formats and mechanisms for engaging with employers. Reducing these differences to generalised indicators based on accreditation standards limits the diagnostic value of the analysis for specific educational programmes.

Overall, the IQAA's analysis provides an important information base for management decision-making at the level of educational programmes. For the Business School, the conclusions of the analysis confirm the priority of development areas related to staffing programmes with practice-oriented teaching staff, transforming teaching methods to foster managerial competencies, institutionalising engagement with the professional community, and ensuring transparency of information about programmes. Strengthening internal quality monitoring, systematising engagement with stakeholders, and implementing institutional decisions at programme level—identified in the concluding section of the analysis as key areas—must be supported by specific methodological and resource provisions, taking into account the specific nature of training for management and economics professionals.

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