

FEEDBACK
on the IQAA thematic analysis
**‘Best practices in higher education institutions and areas for improvement identified
from BÉF reports (2022–2025)’**

The thematic analysis covers the results of 33 institutional external evaluations over four years, which defines the document’s main value: it brings together, in a summarised and comparable format, what external experts consistently highlight as strengths and what they recommend improving year on year.

The report’s structure is designed for practical use. It begins with best practices, illustrated with specific examples, followed by areas for improvement, with recommendations grouped by theme.

The section on best practices stands out for its specificity: industry committees, departmental branches at enterprises, annual employer forums, discipline-specific assignments carried out in collaboration with industry professionals, QR-code-based attendance monitoring, and the awarding of the ‘Student Researcher’ qualification. Each such example is a ready-made idea that can be considered in the context of one’s own programme and, if necessary, adapted to existing conditions.

It is important that the authors did not limit themselves to a list of criticisms, but endeavoured to present both sides of the picture. The ratio of 170 examples of good practice to 388 recommendations for improvement fairly accurately reflects the actual state of affairs within the system: there is a solid foundation to build upon, and there is room for improvement.

Research activity is the area with the highest number of recommendations: 55, more than any other. For the educational programme, these are quite specific objectives: to ensure that the academic staff delivering the programme have recent publications in indexed journals, participate in grant-funded projects, and involve undergraduate and postgraduate students in research work. This is not merely a matter of formal compliance with accreditation requirements, but also concerns the substantive quality of the programme.

The academic staff’s potential is the second most important area. The recommendations here are similar across many higher education institutions: a shortage of qualified lecturers in the relevant specialisms, low academic mobility, insufficient command of English, and limited involvement of practising professionals. For the head of the study programme, this is a signal to analyse the programme’s teaching staff in depth – to what extent the teaching staff genuinely match the programme’s profile and are up to date in their field, rather than merely formally filling posts.

The system for assessing learning outcomes is another area that the External Evaluation Group identifies time and again: vague criteria, a predominance of formal test-based assessment methods, and a lack of transparency in the assessment of coursework. Here, the programme director can take independent action without waiting for institutional decisions – revising the assessment rubrics and criteria in the syllabuses falls squarely within their remit at programme level.

Engagement with employers. The report shows that, whilst most higher education institutions do engage with employers, such engagement is sporadic and poorly documented. In practice, this creates difficulties during the accreditation process: work is being carried out, but there is insufficient evidence to support it. It is important for the head of the study programme not only to organise meetings with employers and guest lectures, but also to record the outcomes – minutes, suggestions received, and how these are reflected in the programme content. ””

Tables setting out areas of good practice and areas for improvement are useful as a working checklist when preparing for accreditation or an audit

It is possible to go through each area and assess where the programme currently stands – this is more productive than waiting for comments from external experts.

Specific examples from the section on best practices are useful when updating the programme – particularly regarding the organisation of practical training, working with students and engaging with employers. Some of these can be implemented without significant resources at department or programme level.

The report's materials are also useful when discussing the programme's development within the department or at the academic council – they reflect system-wide trends identified by independent experts, which lends additional weight to the arguments put forward.

The IQAA's thematic analysis for 2022–2025 is, therefore, a substantive and practice-oriented document. Its value lies in the fact that it highlights not only the challenges but also how other higher education institutions are finding effective solutions. For an educational programme director, this is precisely the format needed in day-to-day work: specific, illustrated with examples, and practical.

As a suggestion, it would be useful to include year-on-year trends: which issues have been reduced over the four cycles, and which have become more prevalent. This would help to understand the extent to which the recommendations from previous cycles have actually been implemented, and to adjust the programme's priorities accordingly.

Head of the Educational Programme
Senior Lecturer, Department of Management



L. Khuanish