

# HERB



Higher Education in Russia and Beyond

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Quality of Teaching: Reflections, Perceptions and Evaluation



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*Cover: Mental Arithmetic.  
In Rachinsky's Village School  
by Nikolay Bogdanov-Belsky*



## Dear colleagues,

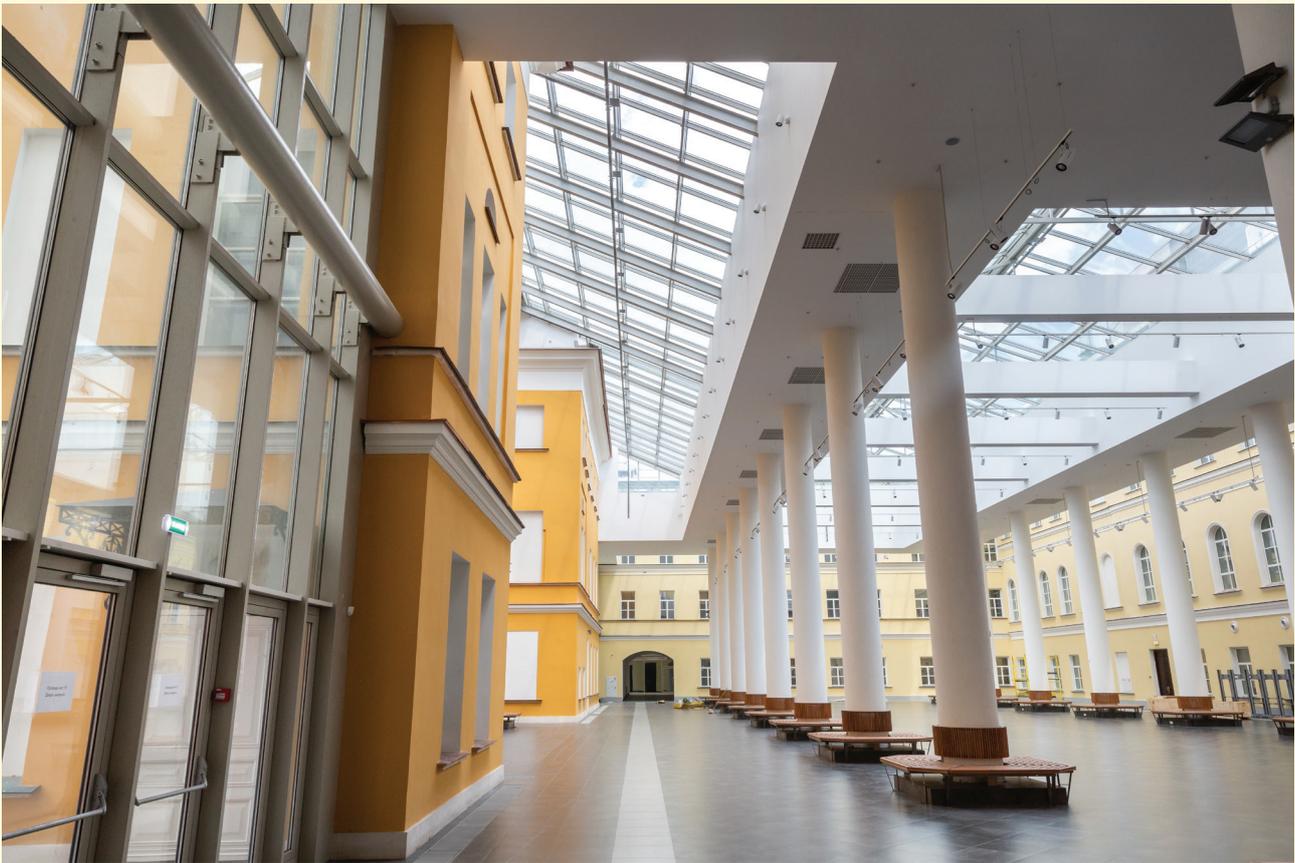
This issue of Higher Education in Russia and Beyond focuses on university teaching quality, its measurement and perceptions of it. The quality of university teaching has always been in the spotlight, but challenges that higher education institutions have been facing during the Covid-19 pandemic have made researchers and policymakers pay special attention to changes in teaching. The articles included in this issue are divided into three sections according to the issues they address: 1) what quality of university teaching is, and how we can approach it, 2) how different university stakeholders perceive teaching quality, and 3) how student evaluations of teaching (SET) can be used to measure quality.

The purpose of this issue is to promote a reflexive debate about quality in university teaching. The first section highlights that there is, perhaps, no more contradictory notion than teaching quality. Authors from three universities shed the light on how different approaches and understandings of quality are represented in the current discussion about university education. The second section provides some fresh (pandemic era) national survey data on perceptions towards teaching quality from students, their parents and faculty. The final section focuses on SET, as implemented at HSE University, for measuring different aspects of teacher-student interactions in the classroom and beyond.

Wishing you insightful reading,

**Guest editor  
Ivan Gruzdev**

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## National Research University Higher School of Economics

National Research University Higher School of Economics is the largest center of socio-economic studies and one of the top-ranked higher education institutions in Eastern Europe. The University efficiently carries out fundamental and applied research projects in such fields as computer science, management, sociology, political science, philosophy, international relations, mathematics, Oriental studies, and journalism, which all come together on grounds of basic principles of modern economics.

HSE professors and researchers contribute to the elaboration of social and economic reforms in Russia as experts. The University transmits up-to-date economic knowledge to the government, business community and civil society through system analysis and complex interdisciplinary research.

Higher School of Economics incorporates 97 research centers and 32 international laboratories, which are involved in fundamental and applied research. Higher education studies are one of the University's key priorities. According to recent QS World University Ranking, HSE is now among the top 150 universities in the subject of "Education". This research field consolidates intellectual efforts of several research groups, whose work fully complies highest world standards. Experts in economics, sociology, psychology and management from Russia and other countries work together on comparative projects. The main research spheres include: analysis of global and Russian higher education system development, transformation of the academic profession, effective contract in higher education, developing educational standards and HEI evaluation models, etc.

## Center for Institutional Studies

The Center for Institutional Studies is one of HSE's research centers. CInSt focuses on fundamental and applied interdisciplinary researches in the field of institutional analysis, economics and sociology of science and higher education. Researchers are working in the center strictly adhere to the world's top academic standards.

The Center for Institutional Studies is integrated into international higher education research networks. The center cooperates with foreign experts through joint comparative projects that cover the problems of higher education development and education policy. As part of our long-term cooperation with the Boston College Center for International Higher Education, CInSt has taken up the publication of the Russian version of the "International Higher Education" newsletter.

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# Teaching Quality: New Contexts for Analysis and Management

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The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the education system to many challenges and has brought two themes to the fore: the digital transformation and quality. In 2020, research groups and the expert community analyzed the forced transition to online learning and the development of comprehensive measures for university management: how the digital reality affects financing, the development of a technical base, staff management, the creation of new forms of interaction, the provision of teaching and research activities, etc. In 2021, the quality of education and the development of measures to maintain and improve the quality of education during and after the pandemic were studied. In the transition to blended learning, it is necessary to have enough data on the state of the quality of higher education to identify and systematize the best educational practices and tools, to help universities that have not found their own solutions, and to master new tools for assessing and managing quality. The quality of teaching is one of the most important factors in ensuring the quality of education, but, as studies of the last two years have shown, it is a difficult aspect for analysis and management. This is because the conditions for high-quality teaching are the teacher's possession of modern educational technologies and their involvement in research, a favorable socio-psychological environment and support for their activities—from methodological advice to providing access to technology.

## The quality of teaching as an aspect of the quality of education

The variety of approaches to determining the quality of education is because the concept of quality is relative, dynamic, multidimensional and situational. Theoretical analysis distinguishes between several methodological approaches used to substantiate the category of "quality" and instrumentalizing "the quality of education". In the typology given by Harvey and Green [1], the distinction of approaches is conditioned by the subject of analysis—the results or the process—and by the characteristics of the "standard of comparison"—superiority or sufficiency.

Quality can be seen as uniqueness. This approach is used when the level of superiority cannot be achieved by the majority. Here, the subject of analysis is the results of changes, and the standard is set by superiority. Quality can be understood as the correspondence of the results

obtained to the invested costs or as the acceptability of the costs for the fulfillment of a goal. In the quality analysis of transformability, changes and improvements to the basic and auxiliary processes are considered.

The issues of teaching quality are as follows. The quality of teaching is considered good if we have obtained unique educational results. From the point of view of management, it is necessary to understand how these results were obtained, the unique characteristics of teachers, and the features of teaching and research activities and infrastructure. In the second concept, the quality of teaching is recorded as the absence of gaps between the level of educational results obtained by students and administrative expectations or investments. To analyze the quality of teaching in the third approach, it is necessary to carry out a component-wise analysis of the individual elements of the teacher's activity in order to compare the content with the goals of the course, program, and educational model of the university. Changes in the teaching process are analyzed in the fourth approach, for example, the design of an educational and methodological kit, the introduction of digital technologies, the use of the principles of pedagogical design, etc.

Whatever approach to measuring the quality of teaching is used, subjective factors play a special role. These are the teacher's own ideas about the importance of particular results, the teacher's involvement in innovative professional communities, their readiness for open educational communication, and their ability to quickly restructure activities, psycho-physiological state, and social well-being [2]. These subjective factors should be decomposed into criteria and indicators to expand the range of data collected for assessing quality. It should be borne in mind that the subjective nature of teaching shifts the conversation from quality assurance to a culture of quality.

A culture of quality was first raised in public and professional discussions as part of the discussion of the results of the project "Development of an internal culture of quality in European universities". This culture of quality was viewed as the shared values and collective responsibilities of all participants in the educational process at a university—from students to administration [3]. In this context, such factors as the involvement of different stakeholders in the analysis, assessment and co-design of the teaching process, the formation of a database of "open data" and the culture of decision-making based on them, creates an environment for the self-realization of teachers and students at the university and are of particular importance.

## Quality of teaching during the pandemic

In the spring of 2020, taking into account the new online experience, an initiative group of rectors and experts came up with a proposal to conduct sociological research into scientific and methodological developments to justify the operational and strategic measures to stabilize the crisis situation, and to take steps toward the development of the higher education system. Based on operational sociological data on the transition to online education, including

the problems of teachers and teaching, comprehensive measures were proposed to transform the educational process. Tomsk State University acted as the operator of a network research project in which, with the participation of 12 universities, it identified the starting point for analyzing problems and positive changes in teaching.

Higher education in Russia entered the pandemic with 245,000 teachers of which 19% were over 65. At the beginning of mass online learning in March 2020, 60% of teachers rarely or never gave lectures or classes online and most teachers rated their level of proficiency in cloud technologies at 3.2 out of 5. In this context, 96% of teachers were forced to go online and 88% of them expressed skepticism about the possibilities and productivity of online learning [4].

In 2021, work continued on the project "Scientific and methodological support for the development of a quality management system for higher education during and after the COVID-19 pandemic", implemented on behalf of the Russian Ministry of Science and Higher Education. Teaching quality was one of the parts of a survey of 36,000 students and 24,000 university professors. The survey was carried out by specialists from the RANEPa, NRU HSE, NI TSU.

### **The results of the study of the quality of teaching and the factors affecting it**

An important conclusion of the research is that teachers were able to mobilize in the new conditions, but such a radical change in conditions required new content and conditions for high-quality teaching.

During the pandemic, university teachers had to significantly restructure their material and to use and design new tools for their lessons. Solving these problems was hampered not only by technological and methodological shortages, but also by the prevalence of stereotypes of online pedagogy, the new digital reality not complying with didactic principles, and the lack of readiness of organizational systems for mass individualization [5]. Moreover, the rupture of natural communications increased the dependence on the self-organization and the motivation of the students, their educational experience and living conditions. This meant that the teacher's willingness and ability to work with these types of educational outcomes became critical to the quality of teaching. Blended learning requires an expansion of the range of pedagogical and technical roles to ensure a smooth transition. These are "navigators" in the educational environment; tutors who help design the educational route; subject experts and consultants for the preparation of independent educational products; moderators of group communications, project work, etc. In this context, the quality of teaching becomes depends on the quality of the whole team [6].

Studies of the last two years have shown that the productivity of teachers has become clearly dependent on the psychophysiological characteristics of students and teachers, on their cognitive characteristics, readiness to adjust and self-organization [7].

The results of teacher surveys allowed us to conclude that the normalization and routinization of online and blended learning did not lead to the transformation of the existing approaches to the design and implementation of the educational process [2]. Only about a third of teachers reported that they upgraded their curriculum after returning partially or completely to face-to-face teaching. Passive forms of education continue to dominate, which do not involve the active involvement of students. The researchers noted that one of the most important barriers to a more active diffusion of technology and teaching practices is the attitudes of teachers regarding the digital transformation of education in general. The data also show that there has been no qualitative transformation of approaches to the organization and design of educational activities of students for solving the problems of individualization. This problem has not been solved either in the organizational systems of universities or at the level of teaching.

### **How to ensure the quality of teaching in the transition to blended learning**

The data tell us that operational and strategic measures should be implemented in the teaching quality management system at the federal and university levels. For example, operational measures for managing the quality of teaching at the university level should include the introduction of monitoring and a system of incentives for teachers, ensuring their effective use of digital technologies (including the introduction of appropriate indicators in contracts) or using a system of payments to teachers to upgrade their personal devices. Among the strategic measures at the university level are the formation of network modular programs to increase the digital literacy of teachers; the formation of a system of Internet services for the methodological support of teachers; and the organization of pedagogical design services at universities.

The inclusion of the regulator in teaching quality management can be carried out by having a list of recommended resources and digital tools for the design of online courses and their independent examination; the formation of a network of experimental sites on the basis of consortia of universities, scientific organizations and business, primarily in the field of EdTech; and through the development of standards for blended learning models, including recommendations for taking into account the teacher's workload of activities to support the independent work of students in an electronic environment.

### **Conclusions**

A significant restructuring of teaching during the pandemic raised the question of the content and characteristics of these changes for universities, determined new parameters for analysis and management actions to ensure quality assurance and the development of a quality culture of teaching work. Universities are raising the issues of teaching in a new way, and making its development a priority, which will lead to the development of the higher education system as a whole.

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## The Quality of Teaching in Different Higher Educations

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In the USSR, there were at least two qualitatively different higher educations: at universities for an academic career in research organizations, and at institutes for work in different sectors of the economy. In many ways, this was remi-

niscent of the then role model - the German higher education system with its Humboldtian universities (teaching and research) and Fachhochschule (universities of applied sciences).

In the first case, teaching was secondary to research in the transmitting side and in relation to learning on the receiving side. Therefore, the question of the quality of teaching did not arise for decision makers as significant for achieving the main goal of the university: ensuring a sufficient quality of the results of the educational process as a whole in the form of graduates with certain competencies—general and applied.

The specificity of these general competences of graduates in the first case (universities) was the search "facing uncertainty" at the forefront of a particular science (and / or at the intersection of sciences) in order to discover (NB not create) "new certainty" (phenomena, patterns etc.) and disseminating it, starting with colleagues. Hence, the distrust of authorities, criticality and independence in setting goals for their own activities and the willingness to take risks.

The specificity of the general competences of a graduate in the second case (institutes) is completely different, in many respects the opposite: the free possession of the knowledge and skills to use the available tools in a specific area of collective activity; strict adherence to technical discipline and following orders; and the ability to work in a team.

For these different outcomes, educational processes were designed differently and, accordingly, here was a different understanding of quality, including in teaching. In particular, in universities the number of classroom hours per week decreased from year to year, and the number of days for independent ("library") work increased.

A student-centered approach has been, since the time of Humboldt, the basic paradigm of a classical university education. The quality of its immediate result in the competence of the graduate cannot be objectively measured, however, we can observe and measure the final result in the form of the proportion of those who defended their dissertations and received academic degrees a few years after completing their education at the corresponding level.

Other university graduates usually began their careers outside of science with positions in production, but over time they bypassed the graduates of institutes precisely due to the more developed competence of independent decision-making or found themselves in project activities in relevant organizations or departments.

In institutes, on the other hand, graduates were relatively well fitted for certain positions in teams working on well-established technologies. It is enough to measure the quality of the educational result of each graduate on a dichotomous scale: "yes / no"; can be admitted to a specific job or not. Some of them grew bored over time, and they found themselves in project activities next to university graduates. This is usually not related to the quality of teaching.

The situation began to change radically with the publication of the report of the Commission under the leadership of Delors (UNESCO-1996) "Learning: The Treasure Within" (in Russian it is mistakenly translated as "Education: a hidden treasure"). Changes took place not only in higher education, but in education in general. However, the natural conservatism of the teaching community even now often leads to the fact that lifelong learning is understood as lifelong teaching.

From then, the transition to student-centered pedagogy began. Subject teachers began to move from the center of the educational process to the periphery in various ways. However, this was not accompanied by an expansion of the traditional university design of higher education; rather, decision makers often preferred the traditional management approach of TQM (Total Quality Management).

There are several reasons for this, both objective and subjective. Objectively, there was a radical change in the place of science in society and the organization of scientific research. Almost all science ceased to be the work of individuals, although there has never really been such a thing—scientists have always communicated with each other. It was thanks to this that Latin did not disappear altogether, but became the source of scientific terms, first in Europe and then all over the world. But since the second half of the 20th century, research itself has ceased to be the work of individuals. Articles are now published more often in co-authorship. The number of authors can be measured in tens or even hundreds, if very sophisticated equipment or complexes located in different organizations in different countries were used in the study.

Therefore, the organization of scientific activity is undergoing tremendous changes, and the approach borrowed from ordinary business (performance-oriented budgeting) in the form of grants has a negative side effect in precisely the most important thing—meeting uncertainty without guaranteeing success.

The second objective reason, closely related to the first, is the incomparably larger volume of resources per mega-study, which includes many semi-independent meso- and mini-studies.

The main subjective reason logically follows from the second objective one: the experience of working with large projects is accumulated in business, from where it is borrowed, and above all in the form of hiring successful managers. They have a lot of experience of "meeting with uncertainty", but also measure success in monetary terms: cost-benefit, profit-loss.

From science, which has largely become big business, "business design" is moving to universities (whatever they may be called—schools, institutes, academies etc.), transforming them into multidisciplinary institutes with the development of the former university design in some places. Referring to the experience of the Faculty of Economic Sciences at HSE University, the design of the educational process in bachelor's programs is represented by at least two alternative options—"university" and "institute". The

first includes the educational programs of the HSE and The Russian Economic School—a joint Bachelor's degree and the "Research Stream"; the second includes the educational program (EP) for all other students. At the Faculty of Economics of Lomonosov Moscow State University, there is a "group of increased academic load", with enhanced mathematics.

It would be a managerial mistake to approach the assessment of teaching quality within the framework of both the university and its subdivisions without taking into account the specifics of different research or applied EPs, regardless of who carries out the assessment. First of all, we are talking about the assessment carried out by the students.

If the evaluators (not necessarily all students) position themselves as rational actors, it is logical to assume two alternative segments: (1) solving the problem for maximum results during the educational process (mainly formal education), and only partially reflected in the form of assessments for educational activities (mastering disciplines, participating in projects, passing internships etc.) and (2) at a minimum cost to obtain a certain result (minimally to obtain a degree). Perhaps the "maximizers" would prefer EP with a variety of opportunities for communication within the university, including formal and non-formal. The "minimizers" value more the opportunity to develop and / or earn extra money on the side.

It is easy to see that the assessment of teaching quality in these two groups could be fundamentally different in terms of the EP as a whole and its individual components. Therefore, it is desirable to use the available tools for analyzing educational (and other) behavior by administrative and managerial staff, starting with the assessment of the already mastered parts and the dynamics of debt elimination, to determine whose assessments of teaching quality deserve more attention in the further improvement of the educational process.

Returning to the content of the report "Learning: The Treasure Within", it is useful to assess the quality of teaching by more fully focusing on all four aspects of learning, which neatly fit into a 2x2 matrix:

quality \ quantity	mono	poly
S – people	learning to be	learning to live together
O – things	learning to know	learning to do

The traditional breakdown by age and social institution:

- learning to be (in families from 0 to 5-6 years old);
- learning to live together (preschool and elementary school from 6 to 10-11 years old);
- learning to know (secondary school from 11 to 17-18 years old);
- learning to do (specialized secondary and higher education).

Until relatively recently, higher education in Russia was called higher professional education. Then the name was brought into line with the constitution and the word “professional” was removed, without changing anything in essence and, therefore, the assessment of the quality of teaching remained focused on learning to do. Standard tests abroad, for example SAT in the US, are focused on assessing the ability to study at a university, which is not yet part of the Russian university entrance exam.

In any case, teaching and learning are an inseparable pair. However, until recently, pre-tertiary-level teachers were supposed to have only two components—learning to live together and learning to know. In universities, according to Humboldt, a professional researcher should teach.

Now the situation is changing in several respects, connected with the “digital” and affecting the structure of teaching in universities. First, changes in technology are not only accelerating, but are often radical in nature, which leads to the obsolescence of professional knowledge and competencies of teachers of specialized disciplines faster than long-term (3–5 years) educational programs can adapt. Secondly, the need for teachers as carriers of content is sharply reduced. In the old way, living labor is replaced by materialized labor (texts + tests, images + sound etc.). Thirdly, the uncertainty of life in general, on a global scale, is growing.

The transition to the “2 + 2 + 2 years” university system already taking place in different countries means that the first two years at the university represent a continuation of general education, which no longer fits into the 11, 12 or even 13 years (counting preschool training) or formal schooling. Hence the need for professional teaching, at least in junior courses. Most likely, such teaching cannot be assessed competently by students.

Considering that the university is the last purely educational stage in the life of many young people, its mission is to round off each of the four aspects of learning.

Learning to be: bringing the competence of governing (more precisely, self-governing) to the level of an adult—making decisions about the implementation of expedient activities based on a developed ability to navigate in the space of partially conflicting interests (self-preservation and self-change) as themselves in with other actors. For this, it would be useful to use SWOT-analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) in the management of not only the university as a whole, but also its departments. This management toolkit is also applicable at the level of individuals, and teaching is carried out by the administrative and management staff of the university.

Learning to live together: bringing the circle together in time (humanity as all contemporaries) and space (humanity as a whole). Here, too, the teaching function lies mainly with the administrative and management staff, which must do everything in its power to ensure multicultural communication in the internal environment, and the development of various horizontal connections between universities—the cooperation of students, teachers, researchers, and managers.

Learning to know: the main teacher for each of us is life itself, its lessons are often painful, but it is from mistakes and experience that we learn best and fastest. Strictly speaking, the ability to learn from one's own mistakes—self-teaching—is an innate feature not only among humans. Games exist among many animals, but probably only people can use educational technologies of the learning by explicit teaching: by explaining the material to others, students themselves begin to understand it better. Previously, this happened spontaneously during the exam sessions, when students prepared together, but teachers rarely create such conditions at other educational stages. For example, instruction in mini-groups, to prepare and conduct seminars.

Learning to do: taking into account the sharply increased demand for creativity, teaching should help to distinguish clearly three types of independent activity: (1) choice, (2) creativity (thinking) and (3) creation (making). In the first case, the actor deals with already existing alternatives, in the second, they externalize something from themselves, from their inner world, in the third, they purposefully apply the available external resources.

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## Ways of Approaching Teaching Quality

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### The concept of quality

The concept of quality in education is difficult to define as quality is multifaceted and complex in meaning. There is no consensus on its definition: quality is different for products and services, and in different industries there are different types of quality, which also refer to inputs, processes and outputs. In education quality covers teaching, learning, research, performance, innovation, retention, employability, the curriculum and links to societal practices [1]. The concept of quality is also associated with an excellence or outstanding performance, leading to new interpretations due to the expansion of activities external to higher education institutions (HEIs) [2]. These activities include audit, assessment, accreditation, quality improvement, and international comparability. Different educational systems use one or more of the following approaches to quality:

- audit (direct, validation, meta-audit) and assessment (institution, department, agency) with the process (achievement of objectives) and output (description),

- assessment (the process - how good you are?); and output (grade),
- accreditation (the process - are you good enough?) and output (yes/no),
- quality improvement (does not need auditing, assessment of accreditation), this may refer to peer review, performance indicators or KPIs, review reports, and/or funding.

Table 1. Approaches to quality for different educational systems

Concepts and differentiation	Objectives appropriate	Plans suitable	Action conform	Actions Effective	Outcomes measured
Steps	step 1	step 2	step 3	step 4	step 5
1. Audit		2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	
2. Assessment	interrelated	possible	possible	possible	5 <sup>th</sup>
3. Self-assessment	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>
4. Accreditation	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	

compiled by the author based on (Woodhouse (1999), EU (HEInnovate), Williams (2018))

The lessons learnt in terms of quality demonstrate a monolithic approach to quality assurance (QA) (*audit, assessment, accreditation, and external examination/evaluation*); the failure to explore the impact of QA; the dissonance between student learning and bureaucratic assurance processes; and that QA fails to be a part of academic activity because academics do not perceive the link between the quality of teaching and research, and the performance in QA [3]. QA is a top-down process, characterized by inflexibility and quantitative measurements, whereas quality enhancement (QE) is a bottom up and negotiated process with qualitative judgement and engagement with academics [4].

The coronavirus pandemic has affected universities in how they judge the quality of their performance and in their measurement of the effectiveness of their activities. This again raises questions about their mission during this time of uncertainty, digital transformation, challenges to health and wellbeing, and digital poverty with an increasingly tense geopolitical situation and a changing world order. Research, innovation and education are becoming more increasingly important factor in geopolitics, and therefore, to the related judgments about quality.

### Approaches to teaching quality

Programs recognizing teaching excellence are important to motivate faculty in their teaching. These programs are practiced successfully in many countries. Although, the practices of *how exactly to assess and award “quality teaching” continues to be debated in higher education. “Quality teaching” and “excellence” are used interchangeably and in different contexts, but the main difference is that quality is the uncountable level of excellence.*

#### UK

The UK launched “The Teaching Excellence Framework” (TEF) in 2016 (renamed in 2017), which is an example of

using performance indicators and big data in measuring performance, where the student serves as the consumer. TEF encourages high-quality teaching and student outcomes with Gold, Silver, Bronze and Provisional awards, and measures excellence in three areas: teaching quality, the learning environment, and the educational and professional outcomes of students. However, it does not measure teaching quality itself—only a range of measures that the government views as related to teaching quality. The following metric is applied: Course teaching, Assessment and feedback, Academic support (all 3 measured by National Student Survey (NSS)), student non-continuation, employment or future study, and high-skilled employment or further study (measured by Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)/Individualized Learner Record (ILR); Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey). However, since its implementation, the focus on excellent teaching has shifted to TEF’s impact on the QA processes with a focus on teaching and learning, but also include the outcomes measured (Table 1, step 5): the widening participation and employability of graduates. The findings published in 2021 (154 HEIs) showed fundamental concerns that TEF lacks credibility as an instrument to measure teaching excellence and its failure to consider the views and experiences of higher education staff [5]. Teaching portfolios and institutional business models are expected to be re-shaped with a change in quality and standards to provide greater flexibility in learning opportunities.

#### Canada

Canada does not have such a framework as TEF, but it promotes teaching excellence mainly at the institutional level. A 2020 empirical study in Canada analysed the criteria for institutional teaching awards from 89 institutions and 204 award programs [6]. There are (a) criteria, (b) evidence, and (c) standards for teaching awards for different types

of Universities (Undergraduate University, Community College, Polytechnic, Master's University, Comprehensive University and Research Intensive). Below is the list of the "quality teaching" criteria (a) in order of decreasing frequency:

- Global statements about teaching excellence
- Specific characteristics of teaching performance (from communication skills and preparation for classes to assessment methods)
- Impact on student learning
- Student-centred approach
- Content knowledge, mastery of subject
- Campus Leadership
- Leadership in promoting teaching on campus
- Range of teaching activities undertaken
- Innovations in classroom practice
- Scholarship related to teaching activities
- Professional development
- Innovation in curriculum and programs
- Integrating research into the classroom

The criterion "global statements about teaching excellence" is unclear and not specified.

The evidence (b) for quality teaching ranges from letters of colleagues to student ratings of instruction, curriculum vitae, philosophy of teaching statement; teaching responsibilities, syllabi, peer review, observation summary, teaching portfolio, professional contributions in teaching, professional development activities; contributions to the promotion of teaching; a description of growth in teaching, innovations in teaching, etc. Standards (c) were used by only 4 of the 89 institutions for teaching awards in the form of rubrics. Undergraduate universities required less evidence compared to graduate universities with multiple pieces of evidence. The recognition of "excellent teaching" includes performance in experiential learning, innovative teaching, teaching for deep learning, and research-inspired teaching.

### **The European Education Area**

Universities across Europe are undergoing constant transformation. The sudden move to emergency remote teaching was made by almost all surveyed HEIs. Prior to the pandemic, the discourse in European universities was about fostering high quality and excellence in education and research. The crisis sharpened the challenges with digitalisation and innovative pedagogies. By 2025, the European Education Area is projected to have HEIs as the central actors of the "knowledge square": education, research, innovation, and service to society. Lessons from the pandemic are still to be analysed, but the "quality" part is missing in the suggestions for the development of new teaching and learning models (face-to-face vs online and/or hybrid, rethinking physical teaching spaces), a transition towards a team teaching model (teaching staff supported by multidisciplinary teams). Quality is "redistrib-

uted" from teaching to "teaching and quality learning", and the feature "contributing to sustainability" is becoming a quality criterion for universities. The quality of higher education is promoted through STEM subjects, information and communications technology (ICT), where women are underrepresented, and using the STEAM approach. By 2030, high quality will be more associated with research, innovation and interdisciplinary teaching.

### **The European Higher Education Area (EHEA)**

The Bologna process established the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in 49 countries, including Russia. The relevance of the quality of teaching and learning is enhanced in its core mission. This includes the implementation of a quality assurance system, the effectiveness of teaching and learning, and an inclusive and innovative approach.

### **Other approaches to teaching quality**

Considering the lack of a clear definition for 'quality teaching' and the difficulties in finding appropriate indicators to measure teaching, higher education systems use other approaches to evaluate and foster quality teaching. Sources such as rankings and quality assurance agencies reflect teaching quality implicitly through student satisfaction, higher achievements of academic staff, "quality" and "excellence" mainly through the number of staff at different academic ranks, the number of publications by staff and research competence (the integrative property of a person, expressed in the psychological, scientific-pedagogical and practical readiness for analytical activities, the implementation of research activities and the introduction of research results in their practices). In the case of the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), known as the Shanghai Ranking, ARWU considers every university that has Nobel Laureates, Fields Medalists, and Highly Cited Researchers. U-Multirank and the THE Europe Teaching Rankings are sources which make the most use of indicators linked to education. U-Multirank has recently created new 'Higher Education Cooperation Index', and shows that European universities cooperate more intensively in the performance areas of teaching & learning, research, knowledge exchange and internationalization in comparison to other regions. Many quality assurance agencies report "student satisfaction" as an indicator of teaching quality.

### **Innovative education technologies**

Teaching and learning include innovative education technologies, and these innovations change the ways how teaching is conducted. The examples of top technology innovations that are causing major changes in education are virtual reality (VR), artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning. VR technology is fashionable in the tech world. Companies like Google, Oculus (backed by Facebook), Sony, and Samsung have introduced VR, where students can learn things in a virtual 3D world. AI is being applied to all levels of technology from grading of

students work and providing feedback on areas that need improvement to personalized learning for students, especially those with special needs. Adaptive programs for the individual needs of students are being developed through machine learning.

The growth of technological capabilities means that a variety of media and learning-support tools now exist to help students receive a high-quality education through the internet. The pandemic has revealed challenges for education related to the digital capacities of education, teacher training and overall levels of digital skills and competences. The European commission supports teaching and provides online platforms for teachers and educators. An example is the new online tool to support teacher digital skills SELFIEforTEACHERS [7], one of the 13 actions of the Digital Education Action Plan (2021–2027). It is a renewed EU policy initiative to support education systems in Europe in adapting to digital change [8].

## Conclusions

The concept of quality in education has a complex meaning. In the present environment, approaches to it are transforming at an accelerating pace. The concept of “quality” has been expanded towards “excellence”. Education was massively disrupted in 2020 and, with more uncertainties and fundamental concerns, approaches to teaching quality have changed. Measuring teaching excellence can be re-shaped through teaching portfolios and institutional business models. The standards in teaching performance will be changing towards innovative digital teaching, the best teachers will be researcher-innovator-facilitators of student-centered learning in interdisciplinary teams using innovative education technologies. Teaching quality will also be associated with the STEAM approach and with gender equality and sustainability.

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# Teaching and Research: Nexus or Strain?

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## Introduction

The idea of the research university means that teaching complements research and vice versa [1]. By engaging in research, faculty members keep themselves up to date on the latest developments and findings in their field, which helps maintain students’ interest in teaching [2]. On the other hand, discussions with students, and their fresh perspective on scientific inquiry may contribute to research. Therefore, both sides of the educational process benefit from the interrelation between teaching and research. However, teaching at a research university could be particularly challenging, since faculty should not only teach to a high standard, but also produce international quality research. These two activities may not complement each other; research is often in the spotlight and the reward system is biased towards publishing. This poses the question of whether quality teaching is possible in contemporary universities. This paper contributes to answering this question based on the analysis of previous studies, and speculates on how the interrelation between teaching and research could impact teaching quality in research universities.

## Teaching-research nexus or discrepancy: a brief history of research

Since the early works of Guthrie [3], and Riley, Ryan, & Lifshitz [4], a large number of studies have been devoted to the analysis of the research-teaching relationship in higher education. The overall findings are mixed. While there is some evidence for a positive relationship between teaching and research, most studies showed no statistically significant, or even negative, correlations. Hattie and Marsh [5], in their comprehensive meta-analysis, distinguished the main arguments explaining the negative, positive, and zero relationships between teaching and research. A positive relationship between research

and teaching is usually explained by two main arguments, which Hattie and Marsh named the conventional wisdom model, and the “G” model. The conventional wisdom model is rooted in the belief that research is essential for high-quality teaching and their interrelation forms the so-called teaching-research nexus. Neumann [2] distinguished three types of teaching-research nexus: (1) a tangible nexus relating to the transmission of advanced knowledge and recent discoveries to students; (2) an intangible nexus relating to developing an attitude towards knowledge in students and providing a stimulating and rejuvenating milieu for academics; (3) a global nexus relating to the interaction between teaching and research at the departmental and not just individual level. The “G” model is based on the claim that there are common underlying attributes and factors for successful research and teaching, such as commitment, creativity and critical analysis, which bind them together.

Three main arguments for the negative relationship between teaching and research are (1) the scarcity model, where there is conflict between teaching and research due to limited time, energy and commitment, (2) the differential personality model, where there are different individual orientations to teaching and research, and (3) the divergent rewards model, where the reward systems in modern universities usually emphasize research output rather than teaching excellence. Regarding the latter, it was shown that the higher the dependence of the salary on research output, the more effort the faculty makes in research with a negative effect on teaching.

Hattie and Marsh’s three main arguments for there being no relationship between teaching and research are the different enterprise model, unrelated personality, and bureaucratic funding [5]. The different enterprise model contrasts the “G” model and claims that research and teaching are intrinsically different activities. The unrelated personality argument is close to the different enterprise model; the difference is that there are different types of people and their individual characteristics are at the center, not different activities. The bureaucratic funding argument explains the zero correlation between teaching and research throughout the core principles of academic funding. While the funding for teaching and research are not independent of each other in most universities, it can hinder a potential positive correlation between them.

While the overall conclusion drawn by Hattie and Marsh states that the teaching-research nexus is a myth, a number of scholars have argued that a more nuanced analysis should be made to understand the teaching-research relationship [6,7,8]. Factors such as the level of teaching, the area of study, the type of university, and the external policy environment should be taken into account for a better understanding of the nature and character of the relationship between teaching and research. For instance, there is some evidence for a stronger relationship between teaching and research at the postgraduate level, which could be explained by the stronger integration of research in the curricula in postgraduate education, and that postgrad-

uate students are in a better position to make informed judgements about the impact of research upon the quality of teaching [9]. A positive relationship could depend on the area of study and be stronger in social sciences and humanities than natural sciences due to the specifics of the curricula. While hard sciences, especially at the undergraduate level, are more focused on the transmission of fundamental ‘technical’ knowledge, which is less creative, the humanities require a more engagement from students, because of the flexible and creative nature of humanitarian knowledge and scholarship [7].

## Conclusion

Despite five decades of empirical investigation, the relationship between teaching and research is still unclear and requires further studies. However, since there is more evidence for a zero or negative correlation between these two core university activities, we should think about the transformation of current approaches to teaching and research, and their administration, which could help to overcome the existing gaps. First, the transformation of institutional priorities towards a better balance between teaching and research with the introduction of a symmetric system of rewards could help overcome the distortions related to the current dominant focus on research with significantly less attention to teaching excellence [10]. Second, steps should be taken to better bind the two activities in the curricula of higher education institutions. That means the redesign of course content to better integrate the results of research, and the redesign of learning with more active involvement of students in research projects, and focusing the learning experience on the contemporary research agenda [11].

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## Students' Perceptions of Education in Russian Universities during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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More than a year has passed since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The forced transition to distance learning, which occurred in the spring of 2020, led to a crisis in education. Universities had to react to the sudden change in conditions and take a whole range of measures. The online format became the only possible format. Previously, online had been used only as an additional teaching tool, and by no means at all universities. Russian universities demonstrated different levels of preparedness for the situation, but they all had to take decisions and measures quickly.

The first expectations that the pandemic was temporary were soon replaced by the awareness that the situation would continue for some time. Research carried out in the months following the start of distance learning, showed that the educational processes of Russian universities in most cases had not been interrupted and that, by the end of the academic year, teachers began to actively use video communication for lectures and seminars, and the number of students who were not involved in distance learning was less than a fifth (17%), and even fewer at the leading universities [1].

The entire 2020–21 academic year was held under the new conditions. Russian universities were able to independently take decisions regarding the format of their classes, taking into account the epidemiological situation in their region. In the same university, different educational programs and even different student groups could use different formats for classes, and teachers used to different tools. This study shows how students in Russian universities assessed the teaching and their educational experience during this period.

### Data collection

The study was based on data obtained from an all-Russian survey of students, which was carried out as part of the project "Research and teaching support for the development of a quality management system for higher education during and following the COVID-19 pandemic" by the working group from 13 universities. Data collection was carried out from June 1 to July 16, 2021, using online surveys. Information about the study was sent to the universities, then the link was disseminated by each university to students' personal university accounts, email or as news on the university website and social networks. The final dataset contained responses from 36,519 students from 473 Russian universities.

### Student evaluations of online teaching

According to the survey, without considering those whose classes which had been completed, at the end of the academic year, 43% of students took classes only face-to-face, 40% in a blended format, and 17% only online.

The measurement of student satisfaction with the educational process in 2020 suggests that the level of trust in the educational system has not decreased. The absolute majority are satisfied with the quality of education at their university; only 13% were not satisfied. Two-thirds of students rate their studies in the past year as productive, which implies that they productively interacted with their teachers, and with other students during and outside classes.

However, online education was not effective precisely for the quality of education. There are supporters of blended and face-to-face formats (33% and 38%, respectively), but those who associate distance learning with quality are few (only 7%). Thus, students for the most part do not appreciate the quality of the distance format.

One gets the impression that distance learning, from the students' point of view, is not about the quality of education, but about the convenience. Assessing the advantages of the distance format, students noticeably focus not on the content, but on the logistics: they were able to study from any place (69% chose this as an advantage of distance learning), had more free time (52%) could get part-time jobs (58%), spend less on travel and housing (60%). Few students believe that distance learning is more interesting (11%) or that communication with teachers has become closer (15%).

In other words, the fact that students have adapted to distance or blended learning does not mean that distance education has become a quality alternative. Rather, it means that students have learned to make the best of it: spending less time on assignments, using the freed-up time for part-time work or relaxing, including simulating attendance at class. Most of them do not, however, perceive distance learning as a tool for obtaining a quality education.

### **The quality of communication between students and teachers**

What contributes to the feeling of the quality of education? Although it may often be difficult for students to reflect on the quality and content of the courses or the usefulness of what they learned, intuitively they feel that the closer and more meaningful the communication among student and between students and teachers, the higher the quality of education [2]. If we analyze how students believe that their expectations of the university have been met, it is noticeable that the highest correlations are with student confidence that teachers care about their academic achievements ( $r = .587, p = .000$ ), feeling like a part of the university community ( $r = .433, p = .000$ ) and the conviction that the administrative staff are interested in solving the student's problems ( $r = .558, p = .000$ ).

It is not always possible to implement high-quality communication in face-to-face format, but remotely, it is even more difficult. Students consider the main problems of the distance format to be the lack of communication with teachers (36%) and classmates (41%), technical difficulties (40% chose constant interruption of classes due to poor quality of communication) and the inability of the remote format to study certain subjects (47% consider it a problem that some courses cannot distance learning).

The data show that most of those students who believe that they did not receive the necessary assistance from teachers for successful distance learning agree that it is less effective. Likewise, those who feel that they have not been able to productively interact with teachers outside of the classroom are also less likely to see it as effective.

### **The potential of online teaching**

The possibilities of online technologies are not fully utilized in most Russian universities, probably because not all teachers are proficient in this regard. Distance learning is already helping to reduce passive forms of learning: those who are online, although they continue to copy material from slides (33% in all or most classes) or take notes from about what the teacher says (27%), still do it much less often students in the classroom (47% and 48%). Distance learning also leads to a decrease in the use of active forms of assignments by teachers: students in the online format are less likely to work on group projects or make presentations.

The analysis shows a heterogeneous assessment of distance learning in different types of universities: students from leading universities are the only group who prefer blended learning to all others and whose prevailing opin-

ion (41%) is that blended learning provides a better quality of education than fully face-to-face or distance learning. In all types of universities, an approximately equal number of students (16–18%) believe that the quality of education does not depend on the format.

The low level of trust in the quality of communications in the online format means most students, given the opportunity to choose, would use blended learning (52%) or only online (19%), it is possible, assuming that some part of the workload (for example, general courses) is perceived as optional ballast and is easier to perform formally and with less time online [3].

### **Conclusions**

There is a clear move towards new models of education in which online forms are integrated with more traditional ones. The advantages of online education are primarily cost-effectiveness and convenience. However, this does not mean that high-quality online education is impossible, especially if we consider the experience of leading universities. It is fundamentally important to foster communication between students and teachers, and here teachers need to be more active. The introduction of online forms reduces the need for separate passive forms of learning, for example, copying from a whiteboard, but discourages others forms, such as group or project work. In combination with traditional classroom teaching, it provides additional opportunities for improving the quality of teaching: new resources, new tools, new opportunities for building academic connections and individual educational trajectories. In our opinion, the quality gaps in the educational practices that were observed in the last academic year are largely due to teachers needing time and additional resources to master new tools and technologies.

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# The Perception of University Professors of the Quality of Distance Learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and the abrupt transition to distance learning, the Russian Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (RANEPA) has monitored how university teachers perceive the results of the transformation. Three waves of the survey were conducted. In the first, in the spring of 2020, 30 839 teachers were surveyed, in the second, in the summer of 2020, 25 386, and in the third, in the spring of 2021, 24 337. The survey used a non-random administrative sample, in which an invitation to participate was sent to all Russian universities and brought to the attention of teachers through the administration, deans' offices and departments.

The main research question asked what teachers' attitudes to the distance learning were. Here we review the main results from the past year and a half of pandemic teaching.

The peak of resentment among university employees toward distance learning has passed and the attitudes towards online learning have become calmer and more accepting. The share of negative responses about the results for the year decreased from 47% in the summer of 2020 to 37.3% in the spring of 2021. More than a quarter of the respondents now have a positive attitude towards online teaching, and about 33% are neutral. Note that a similar question from the first wave of monitoring (April 10–15, 2020) found 70% of the respondents believed that online learning had a negative effect on learning, 15% said it made no difference and only 2% claimed that distance learning was advantageous.

The change in attitudes to the teaching environment confirms the hypothesis that we put forward after the first wave of the survey. We noted then that the "denial" of the IT transformation was primarily associated with the shock of the pandemic, the general uncertainty in the spring of 2020, and the dramatically increased workload at the end of the academic year. Given the short-term effect of these factors, a more considered attitude towards the introduction of online and blended learning developed. The "neopessimists" of spring 2020 changed their assessments and articulated their anxiety and defensive pessimism as a way to confront

the current and perceived future threats. Now the threat has passed (or appears to be passing), this group of respondents is moving towards a neutral or even positive assessment.

Turning to student-centered questions, in particular, to what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Distance learning is convenient and comfortable for me personally", the overall positive trend in changing teaching attitudes is even more noticeable. About 44% fully or partially agree that online learning is convenient and about 52% did not agree. Teachers assess the convenience of the transition to online learning for students in a similar way: 41% agree that students are more comfortable this way and about 53% disagree.

In the summer of 2020, during or immediately after the end of year examinations, the opposite opinions were recorded. Teachers were 1.7 percentage points less likely to agree with the convenience of the distance format for students, and they disagreed more often by 1.3 percentage points and did not completely agree more often by 8.3 percentage points. These changes about the convenience of online learning for students was compensated for by a decrease in the share of respondents who found it difficult to say by 8.1 percentage points. This coincides with the assessments of the convenience for teachers. The inconsistency in the assessments of the two groups recorded in the third wave has leveled off.

With the opportunity to choose, the share of those who do not prefer the exclusivity of face-to-face learning is also decreasing. In the spring of 2020, more than half of the teachers surveyed categorically stated there was a need for face-to-face attendance; a year later the share of this answer decreased to 38.7 percent, or by 13.7 percentage points.

There is still significant potential for the improvement of teachers' attitudes to the digital transformation and blended learning. As before, most teachers prefer the traditional, face-to-face format. Only a quarter of the respondents fully or partly disagree that the face-to-face format is better than the online format.

Most often, teachers from art and culture, natural sciences, medical sciences, and agricultural sciences prefer face-to-face teaching. More often, teachers of economics and management, computer and social sciences, and law have positive attitudes to online learning. There is a quite utilitarian approach in respondents' assessment of the benefits of online learning—where it is technically easier to implement and does not involve practical exercises or work in creative studios or laboratories, teachers are more inclined to support online learning.

The data is robust for answers to the question: "What proportion of the total study time can a student spend in a distance format for high-quality and effective teaching in your courses?". Only the share of those who found it difficult to say noticeably decreased (by 5.2 percentage points) and the share of those preferring blended learning for a quarter of the total academic load increased. In other words, the percentage of uncritical attitudes to online learning is decreasing, and the share those supporting blended learning is increasing (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Preferred percentage of distance learning according to university teachers

What proportion of the total study time should be in a distance format for high-quality and effective teaching in your courses?	Wave 2, summer 2020 (N = 25 386) %	Wave 3, spring 2021 (N = 24 337) %	Difference between Waves 3 and 2, p.p.
0%	7.8	10.3	2.5
no more than 25%	50.9	55.0	4.1
50%	22.0	23.4	1.4
more than 75%	6.9	5.5	-1.4
100%	3.3	1.9	-1.4
Difficult to say	9.1	3.9	-5.2

Only 10.3% of teachers (although the percentage has grown slightly compared to last year) say that online learning is ineffective. The vast majority say that from a quarter to half of the study load can be online and this will not affect the effectiveness of learning. Note that these data indicate the emergence of a significant proportion of university professors (almost 90%) who are ready to adopt a blended learning model. The latter, even before the pandemic, was considered promising in view of the planned digital transformation. Such data shed light on the reason for the moderately critical attitude to online learning, which is characteristic of more than half of the respondents: teachers oppose a total transition to an online learning while accepting its relevance in some cases.

#### Conclusions

The study showed that teachers have become more supportive of online learning in recognizing the advantages of the format and have become interested in ways to develop their skills and abilities in this area. Fears of layoffs, increased workloads and administrative oversight have not completely disappeared, but they are being compensated for by positive perceptions and expectations. Teachers have also become more supportive of administrative measures to combat the coronavirus.



## What is “Quality” in Teaching and Learning: the Views of the Teachers

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Modern universities provide their employees with internal and external professional development opportunities. The focus of this article is the course “Teach for HSE: 7 Key Principles of Teaching Excellence”, which is being implemented at HSE University and which introduces participants to modern technology and methods for effective teaching. The course is based on the principles of reflective learning [1]. At the very beginning, teachers fill out a start-of-course statement, in which they answer in detail a number of fundamental questions including, “What is the purpose of your teaching?”, “What examples of good and bad teaching can you give?”, “Do you consider your teaching successful and why?”, “What are the visible signs that your teaching is successful?”. The questions are open-end-

ed, their purpose is to stimulate the participants' reflection on a number of essential aspects of their own professional activities. Such reflection is not easy; it requires serious concentration and introspection. The answers show how the teachers themselves see quality in teaching and how it is measured. At the end of the course, participants prepare another reflective questionnaire — an end-of-course statement — in which, based on the knowledge gained and experiences in group discussions, they describe how they have fundamentally rethought their teaching and formed strategies to increase its effectiveness.

### **What is good teaching and what is bad teaching?**

One of the opening sections of the start-of-course statement requires examples of good and bad teaching/learning [2]. When filling it out, participants often refer to their own experience at the university or in continuing education courses, and only then to their own work. The value of the information collected in this section is twofold: first, by selecting certain examples, the participants in one way or another verbalize their own pedagogical priorities, clearly defining what they consider to be good or bad teaching. Secondly, the collected data are not abstract, but represent information that is relevant to the teachers at a particular university. This allows them to form a clearer understanding of the teaching culture of HSE University and design the trajectories of professional development of the teaching team.

In the 2020–21 academic year, Teach for HSE has been run twice and has received over 100 applications. The analysis of the start-of-course statements singled out the three most common examples of what is good and bad teaching in the opinion of HSE teachers. The most popular example of bad teaching was teaching without interaction with the students, and the passivity of students. This is the opinion of almost a third of the teachers surveyed (32 out of 111). Second was a poorly built assessment system, including the teacher's use of non-transparent criteria, inadequate assessment methods, and non-constructive criticism (16 out of 111). Third was a formalist approach to teaching (“a pipeline approach”) and the presence of signs of professional burnout (10 out of 111).

The most common example of good teaching was teaching based on communicative principles with constant interaction between teacher and students, and the use of audience engagement techniques (22 out of 111). The second most popular example was teaching in which, in addition to theoretical knowledge, the teacher makes a significant emphasis on developing students' practical skills, including the analysis of cases from real life (17 out of 111). Third was individualized teaching, in which the teacher works within the curriculum but adapts it to the needs of the students (13 out of 111). In the hierarchies of good and bad, only the first points, which deal with the interaction of the teacher and students, are mirrored. In other positions, no direct correspondence is observed. This changes the pic-

ture of how teachers perceive the quality of teaching: ineffective assessment and professional burnout are certainly bad, but their opposites do not make for good teaching, and the teacher's practical orientation and flexibility are more important.

### **Am I successful in my teaching?**

The next question that teachers answer is whether they consider themselves successful in their teaching and what observable criteria their opinion is based on. This section of the start-of-course statement shows the indicators teachers themselves use to measure their professional success. The most frequently mentioned indicator is the number of questions asked by students in the class or after it. 43 people out of 118 drew attention to this [3]. The next sign is an improvement in the quality of the student's work (38 out of 118). The third most popular indicator is the feedback received from students through surveys organized by the teacher (32 out of 118). About 99% of participants indicated that they take into account the student's evaluation of teaching (SET) in their activities, but only a few consider this a true indicator of success (19 out of 118).

The indicators given by the teachers for measuring their success can be divided into quantitative (the number of questions, final grades, attendance, etc.) and qualitative (student reviews and the standard of their work). These indicators are subjective, so the question arises—how can the instruments for measuring the quality of teaching be made more objective?

### **What can I improve in my teaching?**

The program of “Teach for HSE” includes a number of basic topics: course design based on “constructive coherence”; assessment and feedback; group work; conflict management; digital technologies and tools in teaching; blended learning, etc. Despite knowing the course material, the start-of-course statement includes a section that requires participants to formulate an individual request—“What skills or knowledge would you like to develop during the course?” From the answers, it is possible to single out areas which can be viewed as lacunae in teaching. In terms of the frequency of references, assessment (32 references) came out on top by a large margin, including the following queries: assessment using digital resources, the need to organize the assessment system and learn about new forms of feedback; the application of methods of objective assessment; evaluating creative assignments; how to assess in a manner that does not reduce motivation; and how to formulate clearer assessment criteria. Almost all the participants answered the question “Does the assessment system adopted in your course correspond to the learning objectives?” positively. The second and third places were topics related to the organization of group work (especially in the context of online learning), and issues of building a course program that would take into account not only the formal requirements, but which would also motivate students.

It is possible to calculate the efficiency of the training course by answering a separate research question [4]. At this stage, we turn to the analysis of one of the sections of the end-of-course statements [5], in which teachers are asked to describe whether their attitude towards the goal of their own teaching and their principles and approaches to teaching have changed after completing the course. The most common topic here again was assessment, only this time it was represented by a systematic description of how the assessment system for their course could change and modernize (remember that when answering the opening-year-statement question about whether the assessment system used in their course corresponds learning objectives, all participants responded positively). Teachers intend to pay special attention to the coordination of the planned learning outcomes with the assessment system, the development or adjustment of criteria for formative and summative assessment, and the introduction of peer-review and self-assessment. Thus, the assessment “issue” was broken down into separate assessment “issues”. The ability to systematize theoretical knowledge and work out strategies with colleagues for the classroom was made possible through addressing the assessment issues of simultaneously motivating students, involving them in group work, and reducing the teacher's workload by introducing online tools when conducting tests, etc.

The format of this publication does not allow a detailed analysis of all the sections of the end-of-the-course statement or show how the originally formulated queries were transformed into pedagogical problems and solved (or plans were made to solve them), or how teachers knew that they were working in the right direction. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning the role of peer-learning and peer-review. Teachers agreed that horizontal interaction is one of the most attractive aspects of this format of training—first when course participants are colleagues at the university, representing different faculties and departments, secondly, when they become students on the course, and thirdly, as interaction allows them to feel included in the teaching community, separate in disciplines taught, but united by common problems. This brings us to the need to spread the practice of horizontal interaction as a tool for assessing the quality of teaching. Teachers come to see their course and their interaction with students through the eyes of their colleagues, whose task is not to evaluate, but to provide feedback. This allows teachers to see, first of all, areas for development. The teacher, giving a peer review of their colleague's course, “tries on” the teaching techniques of that colleague. Thus, peer review through horizontal interaction helps all participants to see ways to improve their own teaching.

## References and notes

[1] Reflexive learning strategies to improve teaching efficiency are not new in themselves and have already been tested by researchers. See Shulman, L. (1987). Knowledge and teaching: foundations of the new reform. *Harvard Educational Review* 57 (1). pp 1–22; Shulman, L. (1992).

Ways of seeing, ways of knowing, ways of teaching, ways of learning about teaching. *Journal of Curriculum Studies* (September-October), 28. pp. 393–396.

[2] Here we are faced with translation difficulties. In Russian, the word “learning” does not only mean the students themselves as a subject and is perceived, rather, as a synonym for the word “teaching”, where a more active role and responsibility for the process is assigned to the teacher. Here we use “teaching” throughout, suggesting that good teaching results in good learning.

[3] Since all sections of the start-of-course statement include open-ended questions and the answer to each of them is optional, there is some discrepancy in the number of answers collected in the section on good and bad examples in training, and in the following section on their own success in teaching (111 and 118 people, respectively).

[4] Looking ahead, the task of objectively measuring the effectiveness or success of a teacher's efforts to improve teaching is already under development.

[5] For the 2020-2021 academic year, 56 teachers submitted their end-of-course statements.

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## Parents of Russian University Students on the Quality of Higher Education: Assessments, Expectations and Decisions

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Parents of students are one of the most important stakeholders in improving the quality of education. The pandemic, the isolation it caused, and the transition to online education created a fundamentally new situation for parental involvement in education. There were at least two

reasons. First, parents voluntarily or involuntarily became participants in the learning process, which, to a large extent, took place at home. This allowed parents to get first-hand information about the educational form and content, observe the behavior of their children in this educational environment, discuss problems and learning difficulties with their children, and provide them with help and support. Secondly, during this period, parents themselves experienced a significant transformation in the labor market, which could affect the potential problem of helping their children find employment or increasing their future competitiveness in the labor market.

In the summer of 2021, as part of a project commissioned by the Russian Ministry of Science and Higher Education, a sociological survey of parents of university students was conducted for the first time in Russia. It involved 1,513 parents of students from 419 universities and their branches located in 77 regions. Among the respondents were parents of students at the bachelor's (57.5%), specialty (34.5%), master's (8.0%) level. 63% of the parents surveyed have children with state-funded education, and 36% on a fee-paying basis. Parents pay the fees for 83% of fee-paying students.

## The main results

The proportion of lessons that, according to parents, can be done online is quite large: the modal answer was 50% (it was chosen by 18% of the respondents), the median was almost a third. Almost 60% of parents surveyed consider 30% or more to be an acceptable proportion of online work in higher education. Therefore, the parental community understands the prospects and/or inevitability of online education and assigns it a significant share in blended learning in higher education. The survey data show new interactions between households and the education system and raise new questions on their finding solutions together for the development of online education. They also show the importance of identifying formats for organizing educational activities, maintaining health and safety, and agreeing on the costs of education.

During the pandemic, families of students bore additional costs for online learning. Most often, families needed to purchase an additional computer (18.0%), invest in faster home Internet (17.6%), and equip a study area (17.6%). Every sixth family noted that the volume of household chores increased. Most likely, the financial problems associated with remote work affected low-income families who had not previously invested in the equipment for online learning, and which requires targeted support for these families.

More than half of the parents surveyed (56.2%) rated the quality of online education as above average (from 6 to 10 on a 10-point scale). However, according to most parents, their assessments of the quality of education during the pandemic changed, and more often negatively (41.2% versus 11.6%, whose opinions about the quality of education improved). For the parents whose opinions changed for

the worse, the most frequent complaints were about the balance of theory and practice, the optimal teaching load, the formats of online classes and the interaction between teachers and students. In general, the most important parameters of the quality of education are the qualifications of teachers, the content of studies, and the teaching methods; less important were the teaching load, the balance of theory and practice, and the content of independent work. The results indicate the relative stability of the figures for the most important parameters and the relative blurring of opinions on the less important parameters. The data allow us to draw conclusions about the pressure of social clichés and myths on the assessments of parents and the need to improve communications with the parental community on the issues of technology and forms of education.

Parents are also dissatisfied with the attitudes of their children to education, highlighting the problems that hinder learning — laziness (31.4%), disorganization (28%), and irresponsibility (19%). When asked what could improve the educational results of their children, the most common answers directly related to the personal characteristics of children: 72% of parents said students developing the motivation to learn and 57% said increasing their level of independence and organization.

The factors that impede students' results are, of course, not limited to intrapersonal aspects. From the point of view of parents, the influence of the higher education system itself is also great: a high workload of online learning (38.1%), uninteresting formats of online classes (34.0%), low quality content (25.4%), and inconvenient scheduling (25.1%).

## Conclusions

The study demonstrated the importance of including parents in assessing the quality of education and the need for the further monitoring and analysis of their opinions. The deterioration of the parental assessment of the quality of education is, in our opinion, a serious problem facing universities because parents are key stakeholders in higher education. It is likely that the social tensions created by the pandemic, lower family incomes and additional spending contributed to the lower score. The reputational losses of higher education are, in the eyes of parents, significant, and an in-depth analysis of the causes and long-term consequences of this phenomenon is required. The orientation of parents towards blended learning requires the clarification of the strategy of universities in terms of the scale online learning and how digitalization will be developed. Priorities for universities are the organization of an audit of educational resources, the removal of low-quality courses, and training on motivation and organization for students. The Russian Ministry of Science and Higher Education could generalize the requirements for digital resources for universities and support their development. This process should take into account the pandemic experience of digital learning, including the need for physical and emotional support of students.



# Contemporary Student Evaluations of Teaching: Key International Practices

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## Introduction

Student evaluations of teaching (SET) are one of the most common and important practices of education quality assessment. Their origins are in paper-based surveys conducted at the end of each study module in many American universities from the middle of 20th century. Students wrote key positive and negative characteristics of a particular teacher and course and gave them a numerical rating. The forms were then used for university management decisions. Nowadays SET has transformed with its spread to universities all over the world and a shift online.

## Main characteristics of SET in modern universities

We present here selected results of a research project [1] at HSE University (Moscow) in 2020. The QS and THE university ratings were used to make a sample of universities which were included in at least one rating list. It includes approximately 1,500 universities from different countries. Research data included university websites and documents, as well as research articles that mention the rules and criteria for SET in these universities.

The standard frequency of SET is once a semester. However, there are variations, for example, some universities

conduct surveys once every 2 or 3 years. There are also cases of using randomization or prioritization to determine the courses to be assessed (e.g., selecting only 1/3 of courses per semester). Approximately half the universities use different types of mandatory participation (most frequently granting grades only after SET completion). More rarely student participation is stimulated by lotteries.

Today, most universities with SET (approximately 90%) collect feedback using anonymous online forms, usually using special university web platforms. A minority of universities use external survey engines (e.g., Google Forms, SurveyMonkey) or so-called experience management platforms (e.g., Blue). In general, the questions are the same for every faculty. Nonetheless, some universities allow faculties or teachers to choose their own questions from a bank, and there are some common questions for each student to answer. In some countries the structure of questionnaires appears to be the same in almost all universities.

There are three key types of scales in SET questionnaires. In most cases, a Likert scale is used, but the BOS (Behavior Observation Scale) and DRS (Dimensional Rating Scale) are also found. The number of questions typically varies from 3 to 18 and in some cases up to 70, sometimes depending on the number of classes that the student has attended. There are also short questionnaires consisting exclusively of open-ended questions.

The survey results can be attributed to specific teachers and courses, that is, both teachers and the content of their courses are assessed for further administrative action. Giving awards to “the best” teachers is a rare practice. Common ways of utilizing the results include separate reports for the teachers themselves, the dean, the department head and the program director, the publication of general information on the university website, and the publication of more detailed information on the university intranet. Sometimes student committees are created to ensure that the feedback will be reviewed.

We note several interesting patterns about the relationship between the university ratings and the use of SET. First, the lower the quartile of university in ratings, the fewer the universities using SET in any form, and there is a notable difference between the universities of first and second quartile, on the one hand, and third and fourth quartile, on the other (68%, 54%, 43%, and 41%, for Q1–4 respectively). The higher the university is in the ranking, the higher the openness of its SET policy; higher ranked universities are more willing to publish descriptions of the system, criteria, and the impact of the SET on university practices.

## Regional-specific SET features

Geographically, SET is more widespread in North America (87% of universities in sample have some SET practices); approximately half of the sample in Europe (56%) and the Asia-Pacific region (47%) use SET; in Africa (26%), the Middle East (21%) and Latin America (17%) the use

of SET is less common. The specificity of SET usage depends on factors ranging from the historical background, such as a country's educational development, to political and economic determinants.

US and UK universities are among the leaders of adapting SET. For instance, in the UK, 74 out of 104 universities publish information on SET in the public domain. Most universities elaborated their questionnaires based on the National Student Survey. In most European countries, universities drew upon national (e.g., Denmark) or European (e.g., Portugal) SET guidelines. In Scandinavian universities, the courses subjected to SET are selected annually. French universities have two instruments: SET and the assessment of learning conditions. In Canada, Germany, Austria and Switzerland, there is a trend towards SET personalization: teachers can specify the questions about their courses.

In the Asia-Pacific region, Japan, South Korea, and China account for the biggest share of universities using SET—predominantly with Likert scales. The vast majority of Japanese universities conduct similar Course Experience Questionnaires of 20–50 questions. In China, there is no unified SET system. In general, student evaluation of teaching in Chinese universities coexist with an audit by the Ministry of Education and other teachers' feedback. In New Zealand and Australian universities, SET is incorporated into the client-based model. South Korean universities can deprive a student of the right to appeal the final grade for the course if the SET survey is not completed. In other Asian countries, no common SET practices can be identified due to a lack of information or the absence of country-specific SET traditions.

In contrast to Western and some Asian universities, Latin American, African and Middle Eastern ones are yet to employ SET as an integrative part of the education process. The Middle East, with its cultural and political diversity, can be characterized by the heterogeneity of approaches to SET. Universities in Oman, Syria, Jordan and Iran do not have a developed SET system. Turkey, Lebanon, Kuwait, Israel, the UAE and Saudi Arabia have only a limited number of universities which use SET questionnaires. In Africa and Latin America, the countries which develop and adopt SET practices are exceptions: for instance, more than half of Mexican and Ecuadorian universities conduct SET; in Africa, SET has been widely adopted only in South Africa.

There are mixed traditions in the countries of former Soviet-led bloc in Eastern and Central Europe and Asia. There are only limited number of cases of universities in CIS countries which implement SET. They mostly use Google forms (or similar platforms) and surveys about teaching and the university in general ("Teachers through the eyes of students"), without proper communication with the university community about this mechanism and without detailed information about its principles for external observers.

## Conclusion

SET, in the form of online surveys, are very popular in modern higher education. There are some standards identified in this short paper which are common for most universities who evaluate teachers from the students' perspective. Although, there is significant inequality in SET use: it is more common in higher-ranked universities and in the universities of North America, Europe and Asia-Pacific than in universities of Africa, Latin America, Middle East and in low-ranked universities in general.

Despite its prevalence in key universities, SET is sometimes criticized by researchers for validity issues (most often, problems with the personal characteristics in the evaluation: according to some studies, non-scientific and non-pedagogical features of teachers are also linked with evaluation results) [2]. But these issues are reasons for developing a complex (not automatic) strategy of using SET results, not for terminating its use. SET, as a rich source of information about teaching and the educational environment, is one of the standards for management of higher education. Although almost all SET-adopting universities have their own specific combination of SET practices (most are standardized in terms of survey principles, e.g., online-based anonymous questionnaire with closed and open questions), the universities are much more diversified in survey content and how they use the survey results. Geographically and institutionally, SET is more common in countries and universities with a greater account of students' role in education, and, commonly, with more attention paid to shared governance in higher education institutions. Therefore, SET distribution and usage are interlinked with significance of students as stakeholders in higher education, and perceived importance of their opinions.

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# Using Qualitative Data from SET for the Betterment of Education

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## Introduction

Along with numerical indicators, student evaluations of teaching (SET) can be expressed in the form of comments. Open questions provide deeper, value-based, and reflective descriptions of teaching with a free response about the positive and negative sides of students' experience of study [1]. This feedback can be collected using paper-based or web-based questionnaires. In-class, paper-based evaluations usually demonstrate higher response rates, but online tools create an environment allows wider, more reflective, and more emotional comments [2]. Raw qualitative data such as comments need additional coding and interpretation to provide useful data for decision making as students consider good and bad teaching in different ways [3].

In this short paper we discuss anonymously collected online comments written by students at HSE University

(Moscow) and their practical meaning for university governance in teaching.

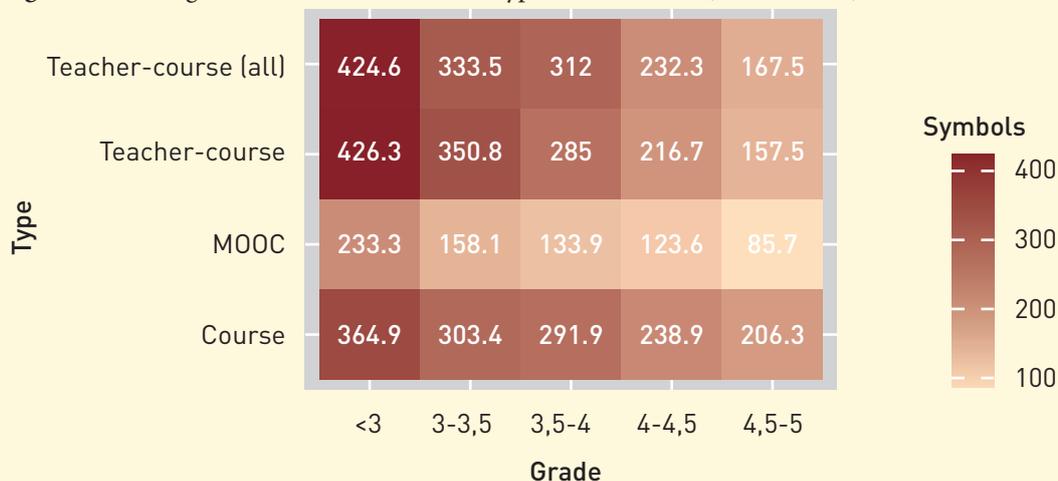
## Common features of comments in SET

During regular SET (4 times in year), HSE University generally requests three types of responses from students—about courses, teachers, and the educational process in general [4]. Since 2016, the number of comments has almost tripled. In the 2016–17 academic year students wrote about 45,000 comments; in the (current) 2020–21 academic year there have already been over 123,000 comments. The possible reasons for this include the growing interest in feedback mechanisms, the expansion of the university and therefore in the number of students, and the reaction of students to the coronavirus and the transition to a distance and blended learning. Regardless of the year, students write most comments about teachers (about 60%). Approximately 30% of comments are about courses, and 10% are about the educational process in general.

For the 2020–21 academic year, approximately 70% of the evaluated elements (offline and online courses, course-specific teachers, project activities) have got at least one comment from students. Almost 90% of teachers receive at least one comment during the year. Students tend to write longer comments about the educational process in general (about 43 words on average) and content of offline courses (38 words). Comments about teachers and online courses are usually shorter (32 words and 21 words, respectively). On average a course or teacher gets around 5 comments from students.

The number and the length of comments vary according to the average score of that element. The courses and teachers with lower scores get more comments, and these comments are longer (mostly explaining the specific failures of the course or the teacher in detail). This correlation holds for teachers and different types of courses. For instance, a teacher with low score (below 3 on a 5-point scale) will receive double the feedback of an average teacher (more than 12 comments, each consisting of 60 words vs. 5 comments and 30 words, respectively). The distribution of the length of comments (in characters) can be seen in Figure 1.

**Figure 1.** The length of comments in different types of comments (in characters)



The content of comments relates to the type of element which is being commented on and the overall satisfaction of students. This pattern allows university administrators to use comments as a resource for improving the content of courses, staff policy, and the educational process in general.

### **Work with SET comments about the educational process in general**

Comments about specific teachers and courses are not the only possible type of useful comments. The most detailed type of feedback was comments about the education process in general. They allow universities to identify broader issues than those relating to an individual teacher or course.

We present here part of the results of research projects completed at HSE University (Moscow) in 2019 and 2020 [5] at the Centre for Institutional Research. The aim of the projects was to describe the most popular topics in comments on the educational process in general. Project participants (15–20 people) were instructed about the principles of qualitative research — open and axial coding, and establishing connections between codes [6]. There were no preliminary hypotheses before coding. During the coding process, volunteers regularly discussed results offline and online.

The manual analysis of comments was divided into stages: participants read the comments twice — the first time to get acquainted with the material, and the second time to identify topics and subtopics for each comment. Each comment was read and categorized by two people independently. Then the results were collectively discussed and corrected.

We identified 5 key topics in student comments for the 2018–19 and 2019–20 academic years: “curriculum”, “timetable”, “workload”, “teacher’s work in general” and “general administrative organizational troubles”. As noted, these comments are some of the most detailed (averaging 43 of words in comment). Although these topics are key and consistently present in student comments every year, other short-term topics may arise, depending on the year. For example, “mental health” in 2018–19, and “distance learning” with the beginning of COVID-19 in 2019–20. Thus, the analysis of comments is important not only for the evaluation of the dynamics of regular topics, but also for relevant short-term issues.

In addition, the number and size of general comments in SET have some inverse correlations with the quantitative evaluation of educational programs in other HSE surveys (for example, “Student Evaluation of the Quality of Educational Program Management”, “Student Life Survey” and others). As for teachers and courses (as described in the previous section), this phenomenon helps to understand key weaknesses and areas for improvement.

General comments in SET are an extremely powerful tool in the hands of academic program directors and deans. Directors and deans can work not only with specific teachers and courses, but also with the general situation in a

program or department: combinations of courses, the curriculum, the organizational difficulties, etc. Students often also thank the university or praise certain aspects of the educational process.

The number and length of comments, resource limitations and other factors raise the issue of constructing automatic procedures for textual feedback analysis in SET. For instance, using the semantic tool Leximancer without formulating an a priori coding scheme allowed the identification of subtle differences between groups of students that were not found during manual analysis [7]. A study, using various dictionaries and tools, including QSR Nvivo 10, WordStat, IBM SPSS Text Analytics for Surveys and Leximancer, showed the need to set rules for contextualization and the correct understanding of student comments [8]. However, automation remains a difficult task, since it requires updating dictionaries and verifying the results. Optimistically, there are also deeper and more successful topic considerations. Finnish researchers used semantic coherence values and R package for identifying the optimal number of topics, generated these topics using Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) topic-modelling and then examined the relationships between LDA topics and Likert scales. They revealed which qualitative conclusions are confirmed by closed questions, and which open questions reveal new constructions. The automatic analysis took only 4 days for this project [9].

### **Conclusion**

SET itself is sometimes a bone of contention between teachers: while some of them celebrate high scores and positive comments, others feel frustration and dissatisfaction due to low ratings and critical reviews. But progress is impossible without reflection. Comments are a good instrument to clarify the origins of low SET scores and provide constructive feedback for teachers and managers in higher education. A way to increase the share of useful and constructive reviews is implementing the “Stop, Start and Continue” (or similar) technique — dividing a single open question about a course or a teacher into three: things that should be stopped, things that should be added and things that are successful and should be developed further. This method also can help with the classification of comments by topic and reducing the resources for data processing [10].

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## Analyzing Teaching Quality Assessment metadata

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The study of questionnaire metadata can provide information about the quality of the data received and about the behavior of the group studied. In the case of Teaching Quality Assessment (TQA), the study of the response patterns allows us to draw some cautious conclusions about student life at university.

TQA has been carried out at HSE University for more than 10 years, evaluating teachers and courses. The assessment criteria for courses are the practical value for the future careers and the personal development of students, the nov-

elty of knowledge gained, and the difficulty of successfully completing the course. The assessment criteria for teachers are the clarity of requirements for students, the clarity and consistency of study materials, communication between teachers and students, and teachers' availability for discussion of any academic issues. TQA occurs in each module before the examination session and participation is mandatory. The data are used by the program administration, teachers, and members of the student council. The results are considered when addressing staff issues and adjusting curricula.

In this article, we present the results of the analysis of TQA metadata for the 2020–2021 academic year for all HSE University bachelor's and master's degree programs. The dataset contains 167,956 cases of partial or complete questionnaires, indicating the start date and the end date of the assessment, the size of the questionnaire, and some student characteristics.

To analyze the TQA questionnaire response patterns we use several indicators. First, two indicators were considered to determine when students leave their feedback: the time of day and the date when the form was completed. Second, how long was spent on the questionnaire: (1) the total time taken to complete the whole questionnaire in minutes/seconds calculated as the difference between the first entry in the form and the last entry and (2) the average time (in seconds) to complete a table (i.e., the assessment of one teacher or one course) and the corresponding comment field.

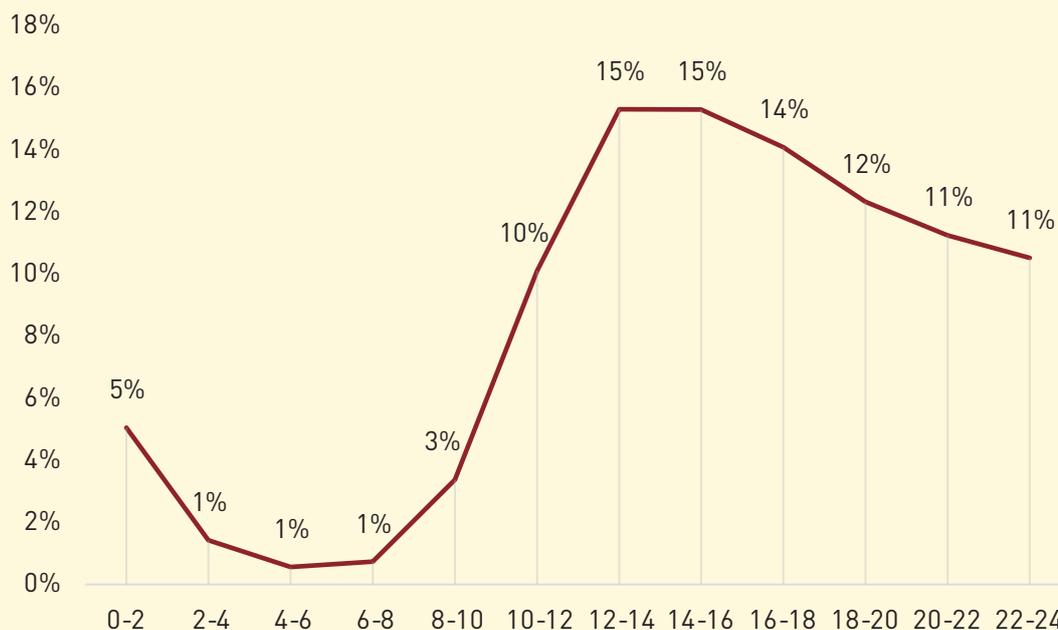
The time of day is not related to any of the student characteristics considered (sex, course, state- or student-funding, academic performance). The peak occurred during the day: half of the students completed the questionnaire during study hours (from 10 to 18). Only about 7% completed it at night.

The date patterns for questionnaire completion during the TQA campaign are ambiguous. There may be several reasons that affect the date when a student fills out the questionnaire. First, the effect of the obligatory participation in the TQA for students means some of them complete the form at the very beginning of the campaign and some at the very end. Secondly, some of the students deliberately postpone the TQA until the very end, since impressions of final seminars can significantly affect the attitude towards the teacher and the course as a whole.

The data show that a third of students leave feedback in the first week of the campaign, another quarter of students in the second week, and about 40% in the last, third week.

The ratio changes if we look at the data in the context of the module: in the most difficult in terms of workload and the number of exams modules (2nd and 4th). There is a greater bias towards filling out the questionnaire in the last week (46% for module 2 and 43% for module 4), while in the 1st and 3rd modules students are more likely to evaluate teachers in the first 1–2 weeks of the TQA campaign (63% for both module 1 and module 3).

**Figure 1.** Distribution by completion time, N=155 073



**Table 1.** Distribution by weeks of the TQA campaign, depending on the year of study

	Bachelor										Master's	
	1 year				Total	2 year	3 year	4 year	5 year	1 year	2 year	
	Module 1	Module 2	Module 3	Module 4								
1 <sup>st</sup> week	52%	44%	34%	34%	41%	29%	28%	27%	27%	31%	29%	
2 <sup>nd</sup> week	23%	22%	36%	26%	27%	29%	28%	26%	13%	29%	28%	
3 <sup>rd</sup> week	26%	34%	30%	40%	32%	42%	44%	47%	60%	40%	42%	
N	9242	9155	8904	8650	35951	34640	28131	23009	124	19225	13876	

Students with different levels of academic performance choose the time of completion differently. The worse a student does, the more often they postpone the assessment until the last moment: more than half of the students from the last decile in academic performance assess teachers in the last week (of which 24% do so in the last three days), whereas only 34% of students from the first decile complete the questionnaire in the last week.

The metadata also show the adaptation to university life among first year students. If we trace the dynamics of the distribution of answers by week in all four modules of the 1st year, we see that over time the share of first year students participating in the TQA at the very beginning of the campaign decreases (from 51% to 34%). By the end of the year, the patterns do not differ from the patterns of 2nd and 3rd years.

No relationship was found between completion patterns and whether the course was state or student funded, or whether the student resided in a dormitory.

The second indicator—the average time taken to complete the questionnaire—reflects how carefully the student assess the teachers and courses. A very short time negatively affects the quality of the data. As participation in the TQA is obligatory, it can be assumed that the proportion of those completing with speed clicking will be significant. In reality, only 1% of tables were completed in less than 10 seconds, and 6% in less than 15 seconds. Students pay less attention to the assessment in long questionnaires: there is a weak negative relationship (Pearson coefficient -0.10) between the size of the questionnaire and the time taken to complete each part.

On average, a questionnaire contains 10 tables and takes about 7:23 minutes to give feedback, or 49 seconds per table. The size of the TQA questionnaire differs depending on the module, which is explained by the structure of the curriculum: completing the questionnaire for modules 1 and 3 takes from 3:48 to 5:24 minutes, questionnaires for modules 2 and 4 from 9:31 to 10:45 minutes.

It can be assumed that master's students, being older, give more thorough feedback, leaving more detailed comments, however, this hypothesis is not confirmed. Comparing the completion times by year of study, we find two cases when the average completion time per table is the longest. First is for new students (1st year bachelor's degree and foreign students in short-term exchange programs). First year students are not yet familiar with the assessment process, so they take longer. Second is at the time of graduation (4th year bachelor's degree, 2nd year master's degree). These students probably give more complete feedback, realizing that this is the last opportunity as students to express their opinion.

The higher the student's academic performance, the more time they spend on TQA completion. The time spent per table for the first decile of students in the ranking is 1.6 times longer than for the last decile. It can be argued, therefore that the university receives the highest quality feedback from students with the best academic performance.

### **Closing remarks**

TQA became mandatory for HSE University students in 2015. At that time, the introduction of sanctions for non-participation caused serious concerns. It seemed that the practice of inattentive, excessively fast form completion would be widespread, the quality of data would suffer and the results of such large-scale surveys would be discredited. However, the analysis of metadata after the pilot of the TQA showed that these fears were in vain. In the 6 years that HSE University has used the TQA, the metadata show most of students perceive it not as an annoying obligation, but as an opportunity to influence university processes.



## About HERB

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Our audience represents a wide international community of scholars and professionals in the field of higher education worldwide. The project is implemented as part of cooperation agreement between the Higher School of Economics and the Boston College Center of International Higher Education.

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