

Future Competencies as an Element of Shaping the Graduate Profile in Higher Education

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Abstract

The contemporary labor market is undergoing a profound transformation, driven by automation, digitalization, and globalization. Higher education institutions must redefine their curricula so that graduates are equipped not only with specialist knowledge, but also with soft competencies, which increasingly determine their professional effectiveness. Soft competencies — encompassing communication skills, teamwork, critical thinking, creativity, time management, and emotional intelligence — constitute a key element of human capital. Research by the World Economic Forum and the McKinsey Global Institute indicates that employers value employees capable of adaptation, effective collaboration, and independent problem-solving, regardless of industry or position. Incorporating soft competencies into academic curricula requires a systemic approach. Their superficial presence in syllabi is insufficient — integration with teaching methods based on team projects, simulations, case studies, and real professional challenges is necessary. Universities implementing such solutions report higher graduate employability rates and more favorable evaluations from business partners. The significance of these competencies is particularly evident in interdisciplinary and intercultural environments. The ability to build relationships, conduct negotiations, and manage conflict is indispensable in professionally complex settings. Institutions that neglect this dimension risk producing graduates who are technically prepared yet ill-adapted to contemporary organizations. Incorporating future competencies also benefits academic institutions — strengthening prestige, attracting students aware of labor market demands, and fostering partnerships with business. It represents a strategic investment in educational quality and institutional competitiveness. The research employs a diagnostic survey using a structured questionnaire, analyzing three areas: emerging specializations and professions, interpersonal soft competencies, and motivational factors alongside teamwork effectiveness. Soft competencies should be regarded as a legitimate, measurable, and systematically developed component of the graduate profile — equivalent to substantive knowledge and technical skills. Their embedding within higher education is essential for preparing graduates capable of meeting future labor market challenges.

Keywords: future competencies, graduate profile, soft skills, higher education

Doi: <https://doi.org/10.66414/mlabs.9688>

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