

**INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS ASSESSMENT CENTER AT RUSSIAN  
UNIVERSITIES**

***CENTRO DE AVALIAÇÃO DA COMPETITIVIDADE INTERNACIONAL EM  
UNIVERSIDADES RUSSAS***

***CENTRO DE EVALUACIÓN DE COMPETITIVIDAD INTERNACIONAL EN LAS  
UNIVERSIDADES DE RUSIA***

Elena Valeryevna FAKHRUTDINOVA<sup>1</sup>  
Rail Rimovich KHUSSAMOV<sup>2</sup>  
Marina Anatolevna MEFODEVA<sup>3</sup>  
Anastasia Viktorovna FAKHRUTDINOVA<sup>4</sup>

**ABSTRACT:** At present, Russian universities have become full participants in the global market of higher education services. Universities train young professionals who are in demand by society, while their activities create the foundations of Russian society. If the assessment center (AC) technique is widely used in the companies' activities, then it is rarely used in the work of universities. In this regard, in order to develop the international competitiveness of Russian universities, it is proposed to use the AC technique which allows to assess the level of professional competencies development of both students, undergraduates, postgraduates, and University teachers. 10 promising projects for the use of AC technology aimed at improving the competitiveness of Russian universities are proposed.

**KEYWORDS:** Assessment center. Professional competencies. Higher education. Management of the talented. Competitiveness of universities.

**RESUMO:** Atualmente, as universidades russas se tornaram participantes plenas no mercado global de serviços de ensino superior. As universidades treinam jovens profissionais que são solicitados pela sociedade, enquanto suas atividades criam os alicerces da sociedade russa. Se a técnica do centro de avaliação (CA) é amplamente utilizada nas atividades das empresas, raramente é utilizada no trabalho das universidades. Neste sentido, a fim de desenvolver a competitividade internacional das universidades russas, propõe-se a utilização da técnica de CA, que permite avaliar o nível de desenvolvimento das competências profissionais de alunos, graduandos, pós-graduados e professores universitários. São propostos 10 projetos promissores para o uso de tecnologia CA com o objetivo de melhorar a competitividade das universidades russas.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Centro de avaliação. Competências profissionais. Ensino superior. Gestão de talentos. Competitividade das universidades.

<sup>1</sup> Kazan Federal University, Kazan – Russia.

<sup>2</sup> Kazan Federal University, Kazan – Russia. Associate Professor at the Department of International Economic Relations, Institute of International Relations. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0372-3522>. E-mail: [rrhussamov@kpfu.ru](mailto:rrhussamov@kpfu.ru)

<sup>3</sup> Kazan Federal University, Kazan – Russia. Associate professor at the Department of Foreign Languages, Institute of International Relations. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9119-9470>. E-mail: [anjali@inbox.ru](mailto:anjali@inbox.ru)

<sup>4</sup> Kazan Federal University, Kazan – Russia. Professor at the Department of foreign languages, Institute of International Relations. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7872-7507>. E-mail: [avfach@mail.ru](mailto:avfach@mail.ru)

**RESUMEN:** En la actualidad, las universidades rusas se han convertido en participantes de pleno derecho en el mercado global de servicios de educación superior. Las universidades forman a jóvenes profesionales que son demandados por la sociedad, mientras que sus actividades crean las bases de la sociedad rusa. Si la técnica del centro de evaluación (CA) se usa ampliamente en las actividades de las empresas, rara vez se usa en el trabajo de las universidades. En este sentido, para desarrollar la competitividad internacional de las universidades rusas, se propone utilizar la técnica CA que permite evaluar el nivel de desarrollo de competencias profesionales tanto de estudiantes, pregrado, posgrado y docentes universitarios. Se proponen 10 proyectos prometedores para el uso de tecnología de CA destinados a mejorar la competitividad de las universidades rusas.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Centro de evaluación. Competencias profesionales. Educación más alta. Gestión del talento. Competitividad de las universidades.

## Introduction

Recently, the Assessment center (AC) has become widely known not only among Russian HR professionals, but also among experts in other related fields. This technique is actively used to evaluate the professional competence of personnel. Russian and foreign companies have developed various versions of assessment procedures based on AC, including online format designed to solve the tasks of assessing the competence of personnel.

The great interest in assessment procedures based on AC technique is determined by its features: 1) a high level of validity of the received assessments; 2) the principle of equal opportunities for all participants in the assessment; 3) the emphasis on individual assessment of the participants' competencies; 4) the use of the competence matrix as the core of the AC technique.

This technology is used for comprehensive diagnostics of potential success of candidates in professional activities. However, it can include a set of different private methods, which is based on evaluating the behavior of participants in modeling exercises by a group of experts (VUTETICH *et al.*, 2013; KHAIRUTDINOV, 2019).

AC is a universal set of evaluation procedures designed to assess key professional and personal competencies of personnel according to pre-selected criteria (KHUSSAMOV, 2018).

In the period from 2013 to 2020, Russia implemented a state project 5-100, which aimed to increase the competitive position of leading Russian universities in the world market of educational services. The Federal project "Young professionals (Improving the competitiveness of vocational education)" will be implemented until 2024<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> More info at: <http://майскийуказ.рф>. Access: 10 Jan. 2021.

If the AC is often used in the activities of Russian business, this technology has not found a wide application in the work of Russian universities yet.

The purpose of our study is to fill this gap and identify ways to use AC technique in the activities of Russian universities in order to develop their international competitiveness.

## **Methods**

In modern conditions of globalization, the problem of international competitiveness of countries is relevant. The solution depends on the level of development of national universities as the main sources of human capital reproduction in any country.

In this regard, there may be the following questions: What should a modern University be like? What should a world-class University be like? Many researchers are interested in the answers to such questions. At the same time, it is appropriate to recall the aphorism of the American Professor Philip Albach, who said that: "everyone wants to create such a University, but no one knows what it is, and no one knows how to get it" (SALMI, 2009). According to Jamil Salmi, a well-known Moroccan education economist, the world class University model should consist of three important elements: 1) community ("concentration") of talented students, teachers and researchers; 2) an effective management system that includes the University's autonomy, a professional management team, and 3) a large amount of various financial resources (SALMI, 2009).

While agreeing with J. Salmi's world-class University model, this study looks at the University's ability to attract, retain, and generate talent only.

In our opinion, the potential of using AC in the higher education system is determined by the fact that modern educational tasks that universities face led to their need to focus on the development of competencies that are in demand by society and the labor market (LEDOVSKAYA; SOLYNIN, 2019; FAKHRUTDINOVA; FAKHRUTDINOVA; SEVERYANOV, 2013).

The AC technique is based on the formation of an assessed competencies model, which is used as an ideal reference point for evaluating professional competencies. In this ideal model the levels of competence development that ensure competent performance of professional activities should be given (TEREKHOVA; MIKHAILOVA, 2011). Thus, the developed competency model reflects the specifics of the company or organization's activity and value priorities (ZHDANOVA; KHMARA, 2018).

Research findings confirm the high potential of the AC technique in comparison with other, more traditional methods. The works of foreign authors reflect the positive experience of using the AC technique. For example, the work of E. M. heard, M. Alagaraj, and D. M. Cumberland reviewed the use of the AC technique in effective management of the talented. The review provides the most frequently used survey tools for evaluating global leadership competencies. Based on the results of a literature review, the authors recommend the AC technique as the best one for measuring global leadership competencies (ANN *et al.*, 2016; FAKHRUTDINOVA; SHAMSUTDINOVA; RAMSIYA, 2019).

P. Volante *et al.* (2019) described a project for evaluating and selecting school leaders, focusing on identifying competencies that affect teaching and learning outcomes. The paper presented a model consisting of four assessment tools (interview for competency assessment, HR exercise, class observation exercise, and school strategic analysis exercise) (VOLANTE *et al.*, 2019).

Reflecting on the foreign and Russian experience, we can say that the AC technique has a great potential in University management of the talented. In this regard, the following projects are proposed (Table 1).

**Table 1** – Promising projects for the use of the AC technique aimed at improving the competitiveness of Russian universities

Task of the Federal project "Young professionals»	Projects	Expected result
By 2024, each University provides students with professional competencies that meet the current requirements of the labor market, including in the field of digital economy, entrepreneurship, team and project work and health saving in relation to their future professional fields	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Introduction of a diagnostic module designed to assess students' professional competencies in the field of entrepreneurship in the educational process of the University</li> <li>2. Introduction of a diagnostic module in the educational process of the University, designed to assess students' professional competencies in the field of teamwork</li> <li>3. Introduction of a diagnostic module in the educational process of the University, designed to assess students' professional competencies in the field of project work</li> <li>4. Introduction of a diagnostic module in the educational process of the University, designed to assess students' professional competencies in the field of health care</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Adaptation of educational programs of the University to the modern market, leading to the mobility of graduates in the international labor market</li> <li>2. Getting students' feedback on the development of professional competencies</li> </ol>
By 2024, each University must ensure that at least 70% of its academic teaching staff participate in research and development on issues related to	5. Imbedding a module (s) into the continuing professional education (CPE) program which includes assessment of professional competencies of academic teaching staff in the field of teamwork with students	Development of professional competencies of academic teaching staff

the subject of teaching, and involve students in this research	6. Imbedding a module (s) into the CPE program which includes assessment of professional competencies of academic teaching staff in the field of project work with students 7. Imbedding a module (s) into the CPE program which includes assessment of professional competencies of academic teaching staff in the field of teamwork and project work with master's students	
System-wide mechanisms for improving the global competitiveness of Russian higher education have been implemented	8. Assessment of professional competencies of master's students based on the AC technique depending on the program track 9. Assessment of professional competencies of postgraduate students based on the AC technique depending on the program track	Development of personal educational trajectories of masters and postgraduates of Russian universities
By 2024, at least 15% of academic teaching staff of universities in the top 500 international rankings participate in the implementation of educational programs of other universities	10. Assessment of professional competencies of academic teaching staff based on the AC technique, depending on the program track	Further development of professional competencies of academic teaching staff of Russian universities

Source: Devised by the authors

The presented projects do not to cover all possible tasks of development of Russian universities. The purpose is to find ways to use AC in order to increase the competitive position of Russian universities. Special attention is paid to those projects that are aimed at developing the professional competencies of masters, since currently in the educational practice of foreign universities the share of undergraduates reaches at least half of the total number of students (SALMI, 2009).

Next, as an example, we will consider the approximate model of the master's competencies in the program track of 38.04.01 "Economics", the specialization "World economy". The standard set of master's competences in Economics includes 3 general cultural, 3 general professional and 14 professional competences<sup>6</sup>. If our goal is to evaluate and identify potential leaders among undergraduates, then we can form the following model of competencies (Table 2).

**Table 2** – Sample model of competencies of a master's student – leader

Competence	Competence description
1. Result-orienting	Working efficiency and stress tolerance

<sup>6</sup> More info at: <http://fgosvo.ru>. Access: 10 Jan. 2021.

	Performance in the implementation of tasks Ability to overcome barriers to achieve goals
2. Communication	Clarity in presenting your own position Ability to resolve conflict situations
3. Team management	Creating a team of fellow thinkers Ability to lead in a difficult situation Ability to delegate the authority Ability to plan joint activities
4. Management decisions	Ability to model typical situations Ability to make immediate decisions
5. Critical thinking	Focus on a systematic approach to problem solving Independent thinking
6. Analytical abilities	Ability to analyze a large amount of information Ability to rank and classify information
7. Motivation of subordinates	Involving staff in the workflow Ability to apply different methods of motivation

Source: Devised by the authors

According to this model, it is possible to develop modeling exercises of AC.

The guidelines for conducting assessment centers, which American specialists follow, there is an important rule of how to use modeling exercises, namely AC, as a technique for evaluating professional competencies, should include enough modeling exercises related to the work of the subjects and the observation of staff behavior. For simple situations, one can use one or two work-related modeling exercises (GUIDELINES..., 2009).

At the same time, the methodological approaches to the development of modeling and evaluating exercises in the AC may be different, and their application directly depends on the purpose of evaluating professional competencies of personnel. According to Duncan Jackson, Lance and Hoffman (2012), the design of AC exercises should be flexible, and include both the development of AC with an emphasis on exercises, and the use of the so-called hybrid campaign “measurement-exercise” (JACKSON; LANCE; HOFFMAN, 2012).

In modern conditions of digital society, the AC technique has been transformed and can be used in online format. In this aspect of the application of the AC technique, we can mention the interesting experience of the American company Hogan Assessment Systems Inc., which was the first to offer to use personal tests of personnel to improve the company's performance. From the point of view of evaluating professional competencies in the field of leadership, experts of this company distinguish the following types of leadership: 1) results leader; 2) people leader; 3) process leader; 4) thinking leader; 5) social leader; 6) data leader (HOGAN ASSESSMENT SYSTEM INC, 2017; MAKLAKOVA; KHOVANSKAYA; FAVICTOROVNA, 2019).

Implementation of assessment procedures based on AC requires universities to make effective organizational decisions about how and who will implement the assessment procedures. As standard solutions we can offer Russian universities the following options for implementing the proposed projects:

- 1) An internal option which means that the University trains certified experts in the assessment of competencies and forms an appropriate division.
- 2) An external option where the assessment of competencies is carried out by external experts.
- 3) The third option can be called mixed, in which different combinations of the two previous options are possible.

Obviously, the final decision is made by the University based on its development strategy, financial and human resources.

## **Results and Discussion**

A significant disadvantage of the AC technique is that using such evaluation procedures can be expensive and time-consuming. To overcome this disadvantage, it is possible to implement the proposed projects in the format of training diagnostics.

This possibility of implementation of the AC technique can be considered as a methodological approach that combines elements of both traditional assessment and developing assessment.

The use of the AC technique in improving University teachers' skills can give the following positive effects:

First, based on the assessment results of the teachers' professional competencies, it is possible to conclude about the real contribution of a specific CPE program into personal self-development of a university teacher.

Secondly, the use of the AC technique in the CPE programs provides a unique opportunity for teachers to get a boost to further development.

Third, the AC technique in the CPE programs can be implemented in a distant format.

## **Summary**

Summing up the above arguments, we can make some conclusions.

In modern conditions, the AC technique opens up new opportunities for Russian universities to solve problems of identifying talented teachers and students. AC is a universal method that allows you to assess the level of development of professional competencies in a reasonable time, with moderate costs and with the required level of quality.

The AC allows:

- to identify the professional potential of each AC participant;
- to identify promising employees based on the results of the AC and form a talent pool;
- to systematize the professional competence of the staff.

In general, the effectiveness of the use of the AC by Russian universities is determined by the final goal of its implementation, the complex of professional competencies assessed, the level of professionalism of assessors, and other factors.

## Conclusions

The AC technique has a great potential in solving current problems of development of Russian universities in order to increase their international competitiveness. 10 projects described above for the use of the AC technique are aimed at solving an important strategic task of Russian universities in attracting talented students and teachers. When implementing the proposed projects, it is recommended to make extensive use of the potential of public-private partnership, including cooperation with various participants in the educational services market, including foreign partners as well. Possible participants can also be company employers.

The authors hope that the material presented in this article will be useful to the reader and invite to a working dialogue on this topic with any interested persons.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:** The work is performed according to the Russian Government Program of Competitive Growth of Kazan Federal University.

## REFERENCES

FAKHRUTDINOVA, A. V.; SHAMSUTDINOVA, D. V.; RAMSIYA, N. G. Paradigmatic methodology of civic culture formation process in young generation. **Journal of Sociology and Social Anthropology**, v. 10, n. 4, p. 198-202, 2019.

FAKHRUTDINOVA, E.; FAKHRUTDINOVA, A.; SEVERYANOV, O. The transformation of educational approaches at the time of social and economical changes. **World Applied Sciences Journal**, v. 27, n. 13, p. 15-19, 2013.



GUIDELINES and Ethical Considerations for Assessment Center Operations1. **International Journal of Selection and Assessment**, v. 17, p. 243-253, 2009. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-2389.2009.00467.x

HOGAN ASSESSMENT SYSTEM INC. **Leader Focus Viewing Leadership Through the Right Lens**. 2017. Available: [https://www.hoganassessments.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Leader-Focus\\_en.pdf](https://www.hoganassessments.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Leader-Focus_en.pdf). Access: 10 Jan. 2021.

JACKSON, D. J.; LANCE, C. E.; HOFFMAN, B. J. **The psychology of assessment centers**. New York: Routledge. 2012.

KHAIRUTDINOV, R. R. The content of educational programs in technical universities: Quality of applying the modern professional standards. **International Journal of Instruction**, v. 12, n. 1, p. 357-360, 2019.

KHUSSAMOV, R. R. Potential of using technology the assessment center in the system DPO. *In: CPE as a strategic resource for regional cultural development*. Kazan, 2018. p. 276-282.

LEDOVSKAYA, T. V.; SOLYNIN, N. E. Main approaches for assessing results of development of the main educational programs by higher educational institution students. **Yaroslavl Pedagogical Bulletin**, v.1, n. 106, p. 49-55, 2019.

MAKLAKOVA, N. V.; KHOVANSKAYA, E. S.; FAVICTOROVNA, A. V. Critical thinking as a fundamental ability of a personality. **Journal of Sociology and Social Anthropology**, v. 10, n. 4, p. 142-147, 2019.

RUSSIA. **Order No. 321 of 30 March 2015 of the Ministry of education and science of the Russian Federation**. On approval of the Federal State Educational Standard of Higher Education in the program track of 38.04.01 Economics (master's level). Available: <http://fgosvo.ru/uploadfiles/fgosvom/380401.pdf>. Access: 10 Jan. 2021.

SALMI, J. **The Challenge of Establishing World-Class Universities**. 2009. Available: [http://lst-iiiep.iiiep-unesco.org/cgi-bin/wwwi32.exe/\[in=epidoc1.in\]/?t2000=027226/\(100\).10.1596/978-0-8213-7865-6](http://lst-iiiep.iiiep-unesco.org/cgi-bin/wwwi32.exe/[in=epidoc1.in]/?t2000=027226/(100).10.1596/978-0-8213-7865-6). Access: 10 Jan. 2021.

TEREKHOVA, T. A; MIKHAILOVA, L. L. **Assessment center as a method for evaluating the competence of a manager**. Irkutsk: BSUER, 2011.

VOLANTE, P. *et al.* Validation of an assessment centre process for the selection of school leaders in Chile. **School Leadership & Management**, v. 39, n. 1, p. 26-47, 2019. DOI: 10.1080/13632434.2018.1442325

VUTETICH, E. *et al.* Russian standard of the assessment center. **Organizational Psychology**, v. 3, n. 2, p. 8-32, 2013. Available: <http://orgpsyjournal.hse.ru/2013-3-2/114628164.html>. Access: 10 Jan. 2021.

ZHDANOVA, O. O.; KHMARA, A. P. Building an in-house candidates pool for Moscow's "My Documents" of public services: project by Moscow Metropolitan Governance University. **Moscow Government University Bulletin**, n. 1, n. 39, p. 39-46, 2018.

### How to reference this article

FAKHRUTDINOVA, E. V.; KHUSSAMOV, R. R.; MEFODEVA, M. A.; FAKHRUTDINOVA, A. V. International competitiveness assessment center at Russian universities. **Revista on line de Política e Gestão Educacional**, Araraquara, v. 25, n. esp. 6, p. 3483-3492, Dec. 2021. e-ISSN:1519-9029. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22633/rpge.v25iesp.6.16103>

**Submitted:** 12/04/2021

**Required revisions:** 27/08/2021

**Approved:** 29/11/2021

**Published:** 30/12/2021

**Processing and publication by the Editora Ibero-Americana de Educação.**  
Correction, formatting, standardization and translation.

