

‘You don’t win races by wishing,
you win them by running faster than everyone else does.’

— Philip Pullman, *Clockwork*

No doubt, the world is currently changing; yet, it is not the alternations, per se, which matter, but their overwhelming speed and the unpredictability of their outcomes. This challenge can be met only by being ready to develop quicker, while also leaving space for uncertainty when engaged in the planning process. This concerns both personal decisions and those at the institutional level. With that in mind, in this issue, we are focusing on the solutions chosen by HSE University to respond to the challenges of both outside and inner forces. One of the approaches chosen by Vyshka to ride this wave is our new educational standard for Master’s programmes - Vice Rector Sergey Roshchin discusses with The HSE Look how more opportunities for students to design their individual educational trajectories can help them to have an easier immersion into their future professional life. Moreover, this perspective cannot be complete without the opinion of the academic community: we asked the Dean of the Faculty of Economics and the Academic Supervisors of various programmes included in the pilot project to share their views and concerns. Of course, we could not but mention the XXII April Conference, our most influential academic event, which was not only held under a blended format this year, but also had several important features added. And last but not least, we are happy to tell our readers that we have restarted our column about life in Russia – Dr Jamie Costley kindly shares his experience of making a fresh start at HSE University.

Yulia Grinkevich
Director for Internationalisation



HSE University's new Master's standard

*At the end of 2020, the Academic Council of HSE University approved a new educational standard for Master’s programmes, whereby the options for learners have been significantly expanded, while project work is now even more of a core factor. The standard sets forth the general framework for how Master’s programmes function, as well as provides more opportunities for learners to design their individual educational trajectories. The standard shall come into effect in the 2021/2022 academic year for 33 participating programmes at the pilot stage. The HSE Look met with **Sergey Roshchin**, Vice Rector for the University’s degree programmes, and discussed the new measures.*

Background Information

Russia's system of education, owing to its significant state regulation, had been in many ways quite rigid compared to what one might see at academic institutions in North America or Western Europe, especially in terms of the extent a university can develop its own educational programmes. In 2020, the Russian President presented new objectives for the Russian system and the Ministry of Science and Higher Education was charged with creating options for boosting flexibility with respect to educational programmes. As such, Russian universities are now trying to identify models, which would help them to realize these goals.

As a national research university, HSE University has the right to develop its own educational standards. HSE University has exercised this right and our first independent standards appeared in 2009. At the end of 2019, the Academic Council approved a new (third by my count) version of the educational standard for Bachelor's programmes. And now, it's time to update the Master's standard.

Before the introduction of a new standard at HSE University, there were various educational standards in effect for 40 fields of study. So, from out of 40 different HSE University's standards, we have moved to a single document. This unified standard creates a general framework for Master's programmes, by delegating to respective programmes the determination of professional skills, types of professional activities, and key learning outcomes, as well as the specification of recommended courses to students.

For instance, the standard sets forth six universal competencies, which should be attained by all Master's graduates: critical analysis of problems; project management; leadership and teamwork; the application of contemporary communications technologies; understanding cultural diversity; determining and carrying out priority areas of one's own activities with an emphasis on improving them.

Master's programmes now feature variability in their Major component, that is, the selection of courses, which form the core of one's professional skills development. This differs from Bachelor's where the Major remains uniform for several programmes taught under a specific field of study.

The new Master's standard comes into effect in two stages: during the 2021/2022 academic year - for students admitted in 2021 to those 33 programmes that take part in the pilot stage; all remaining programmes shall be subject to the standard effective from the 2022/2023 academic year.

Variability

Practically all of HSE University's 50,000 students already have their own individual curricula. Many elective components existed prior to the new standard: students could select electives under their Major, choose their Minor, while pursuing various specialized courses. This has become a fairly routine approach. However, individualization isn't the goal in itself. Rather, our purpose here is to enhance the quality of education and, with

this in mind, individualization is one of the instruments we can use to achieve this.

The new standard foresees more opportunities for Master's students to personalize their educational trajectories. Although instruction will be held within the framework of a single programme, each learner may play a major role in designing their educational trajectories according to their own interests, career plans and demand for certain skills. With this in mind, learners can pursue one or several Master's programmes, or one programme with elements from another, or construct their very own unique trajectory.

A Project-based Approach

The new standard should also facilitate the turn to a project-based approach, i.e., enhancing the project component under HSE University Master's programmes and bringing in researchers, experts and analysts to work directly with learners. In practical terms, half of the Master's instruction should be focused on project work.

We face two key challenges here. The first is how the academic community may view a given project. There's a particular position whereby Master's studies should aim to lay the groundwork for a graduate's academic activities and research. But this really isn't the case. Firstly, the academic market is not limitless. Secondly, there are many various interesting professional spheres where graduates can use their skills. As such, when considering project activities, we have in mind projects that include in-depth analytical work, however, they don't necessarily need to be concluded with what we call a scientific result.

And the second challenge: projects are best when they are not so much for learning purposes but rather "real-life" works, that is, when they come from employers as real tasks or from within the University. However, real projects demand actual results, not just study. One of the core challenges is combining the efforts of project clients and academic peers, who can build projects in such a way so that students may participate.

Laboratories of all stripes (project-based, research-based, and international) and simply expert teams that conduct analytical activities as requested by various clients are involved in the organization of project work. Another example, when the entire educational process hinges around project work, would be design. The scope whereby students may be involved shall be expanded, as well as diversity in terms of organization.

Three Educational Tracks

One of the key innovations in the new standard is the inclusion of several tracks under the same Master's programme – general, applied and research-based.

The general track is for students who wish to expand their knowledge in a particular field studied by them at a previous degree level, as well as for those learners with an interest in adding new skills from another area or pursuing a new field of study.

The applied track is intended for students, who are interested in acquiring a narrow spectrum of professional competencies, which are usually connected with the demand from particular segments of the job market. Applied studies have particular emphasis on practical skills development with students completing internships at external partner companies or subdivisions of HSE University itself.

The availability of general and applied tracks is related to how Master's programmes are positioned. There are those that were initially customized and are therefore intended for niche segments, thus requiring a very specific range of professional skills. On the other hand, there are those that are integrated and feature various tracks thereunder. Tracks are selected upon admission to the University, but there is some flexibility in terms of molding one's curriculum while studying.

The research track is for students, who have previous in-depth research experience and have already developed a particular research topic prior to being admitted to Master's studies. As such, learners work on individual research projects under the guidance of an academic supervisor, while holding affiliation with one of HSE University's doctoral schools. The research track is directly related to the combined Master's-PhD track, which is for students who are finishing Bachelor's studies and applying for graduate studies, and who have already developed research projects and published articles. This year, HSE University is holding its second admission to this track. Last year, 45 learners were accepted and this figure should go up to 75 this year.

Key Persons and New Skills

Will students be stressed when facing the requirement to choose a track? There is the problem of selecting a trajectory and respective modules. However, this shouldn't be considered so much a stressful situation but a 'complex task', which must be carried out without all of the necessary information available, whereby students need to make a choice right away, but what the result of this could be is not known. Therefore, it is very important to develop various services, which can assist learners in the selection process. For seven years already, the University has been operating its Minor selection and we already have considerable experience devising information resources for choosing one out of 70 possible Minors (which is not directly related to one's Major).

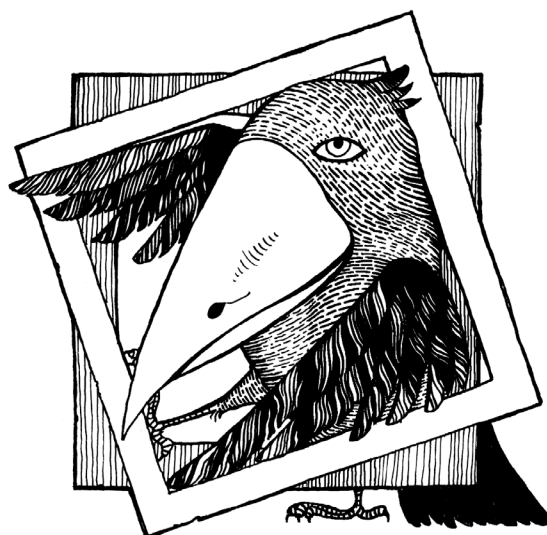
In addition to academic supervisors and project/thesis supervisors, Master's students across tracks all get to work now with track supervisors. Track supervisors help learners to design their individual educational trajectory, set out their learning tasks and objectives, monitor their progress, and, if necessary, adjust their development so that core and individual learning outcomes are attained; they also help in the selection of courses, topics for projects and term papers, internship options and find the most suitable thesis supervisors.

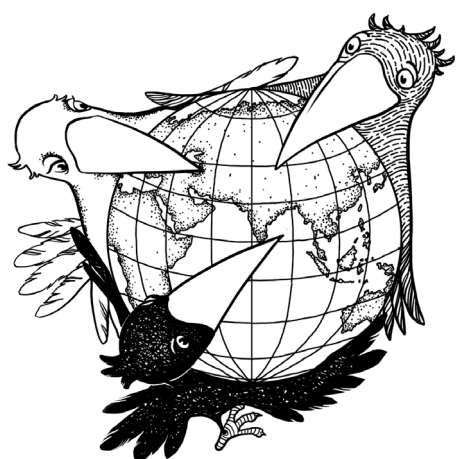
In addition to track supervisors, the entire HSE University community is being instilled with new skills, so that the new standard can be properly implemented. Firstly, there is a

focus on skills for administering more complex educational processes. The new standards effectively ensure the University's shift towards its new role as a platform, thereby introducing a wide pool of various elements, used to form different clusters and tracks. With respect to the process of individualization, this doesn't necessarily mean that it will be developed strictly on an "on-demand" basis. Individualization is implemented at the intersection of two vectors: on one hand, there's the proposal of the academic community at large based on their knowledge about respective professional spheres; on the other hand – demand and interest on the part of students, especially in light of their motivation and future vision of themselves. Our task is to combine these two vectors properly.

Furthermore, skills, whereby project activities become a core part of the educational process, are required. Projects take on a life of their own throughout their own cycles and sometimes don't fit into a strict academic timetable. At the same time, students are a type of "ebb and flow", and this presents the issues, such as how to take account of their project efforts effectively, especially if a project is long-term.

Overall, it is paramount to note that the key objective here is not the implementation of the new standard in itself, but our progress towards high-quality improvements in education, which, in turn, means the success of HSE University's graduates. And this success may be measured in their working and social life, their pay rates, and career achievements: some people write articles, while others are creative designers of new projects and IT systems. With that in mind, HSE University is continuing to develop its educational model, which can ensure the career and personal success of its graduates.





The new Master's standard: opinion of the academic community

The new unified standard provides a general framework for developing Master's programmes and delegates the determination of specific professional skills, types of career activities and key learning outcomes to programmes themselves, as well as recommending particular courses to students. Which tracks did programmes select? What are the opportunities and risks under the new standard? How much do students demand individualization and a project component in their education? The HSE Look posed these and other questions to the Dean of the Faculty of Economic Sciences and Academic Supervisors of three programmes offered at HSE University.

Dr Sergey Pekarski, Dean of the HSE Faculty of Economic Sciences

The new Master's standard is intuitively close to the Faculty of Economic Sciences since an understanding of the base in economics is still universal and not restricted in this sense by the standard. At the same time, the application of more variability in studies makes things a lot more flexible for us.

Three of our programmes have been included in the pilot project for the new standard. These include the Master of Business Analytics and Economic Analytics, which are new programmes, so it would be logical to start them in the new format; also, the Master's in Economics and Economic Policy, which was drawn from two earlier programmes: Applied Economics and Economics: Research Programme. These programmes were quite interrelated, with the difference being that the Applied Economics programme was meant to prepare students for working in business and government agencies, while the Economics: Research Programme was viewed as a preparatory programme for further doctoral studies. Bearing in mind that the new standard foresees several tracks, we made the conscious decision to unify these two programmes into one and implement it within the framework of the new standard.

We can clearly see the major advantage in having several vectors of development within a single programme. Having three tracks ensures synergy between them, as in when students of a certain track may take courses from another. This is quite important for such a diverse, in terms of teachers' and students' interests, faculty such as ours.

In addition, particularly owing to the number of international applicants, the Economics: Research Programme was offered for several years in English, while with Applied Economics, we attempted to build a line of courses, which could be pursued entirely in English. Under the new standard, we can do this with more flexibility, while offering tracks in Russian, English or both languages.

Paradoxically, the more options we offer students to develop their own trajectories, the more limitations begin to appear. On the one hand, we are ready to offer them a very wide range of courses, but the development of their own track is limited by the options in the timetable. Therefore, with the core seminars and the seminars with track supervisors, we hope to offer students several topic specializations.

It is important to note that the selection of courses within one particular track is directly linked to projects, which are selected by students themselves. Overall, the selection of a core seminar means that a learner accesses a "packet" of three to four courses. Furthermore, project heads advise on the courses, which are necessary for carrying out a project. For instance, if a student selects a project that requires time series econometrics, they automatically will need to take a course in this subject, since they will be taught the necessary methods and instruments. With this in mind, thanks to this project-focused approach, we will help students build their own educational trajectories not erratically, but with a view to their future career development.

At our faculty, we offer around 150 projects, 30% of which are implemented jointly with potential employers. So, we are moving from the "just-in-case-learning" principle to students making informed choices for their professional development through the project-based-learning approach. Students understand this approach, as we see significant competition with respect to certain projects. For instance, joint projects with the MICEX and the Bank of Russia are quite popular, since the majority of our Master's students are interested in finance.

Students can also make proposals to take part in outside projects, which are not organized by our faculty. In such cases, if a project is in line with the objectives of the selected track under the programme, the initiative may get our support.

As such, our faculty offers an entire palette from three tracks, and, although, for 90% of our students, the biggest interest is in the general and applied tracks, some strong students are interested in the research pathway. Usually, they are Bachelor's graduates, who are strong in mathematics and economics, who also might be considering a PhD overseas. It should be mentioned that the number of such students is increasing with every year.

Dr Maria Lytaeva, Academic Supervisor of Master's Programme in Pedagogy

There are many Master's programmes in Pedagogy offered in Russia, but the majority of them are tied to the same subject that students studied at the Bachelor's level. Hence, the first key aspect of our programme is that it is meta-, supra-, and interdisciplinary. We get applicants who can become teachers of various subjects.

The second key feature is that we accept applicants without a pedagogical background: 60% of students in the Bachelor's programme did not study pedagogy, psychology and methodology, but, for instance, journalism or physics.

All of this is accompanied by the third key feature, that is, ongoing teaching practice. Over a two-period year, Master's learners get to work in a school (we have over 30 school partners), with a real job, for a real wage, often full-time. Therefore, everything they learn theoretically gets to be tried out in an actual school environment. I do not know any programmes in Russia where 100% of its students are hired like this.

All of this has brought about our total support for this "turn" towards projects. So, we are cultivating academic/methodological developments as part of students' thesis works. Our programme is put together in such a way that practice can also be a project, just one that is spread out over time. We have four key tasks, which we deal with through the teaching practice process. The first is helping young teachers to adapt in school; secondly – support them in methodological development; third – teach them how to organize children's lives outside of studies; fourth – teaching them to foster universal skills through a specific subject. Every semester is focused on one of these tasks. One particular course is dominant for each objective, e.g., psychology, pedagogical design, etc. Every student teacher should make four video clips of their lessons, a form lesson or other academic event, edit it and then defend show how their professionalism has advanced at the final examination in teaching practice.

The programme currently features two tracks – applied and general, though, through the general competition, everybody will be admitted to the applied track. The general track has a lower number of credits for its obligatory components, but more – for their electives under the Major. For the general track, we expect people with experience and believe that they don't really need a large workload under the psychological/pedagogical cycle. The core target audience of the general

track are younger teachers, who wish to develop further in the pedagogical sphere, enhance their qualifications, and are interested not only in taught subjects, but also in a wider education context, such as economics, management or education law.

We see an additional advantage in the general track in that it is possible to reconsider one's path. Mostly, students from more "classical" universities have this illusion that they are choosing pedagogy as a specific specialization. They didn't have teaching practice during their Bachelor's studies, but there still is this romantic notion about school, which we, nevertheless, still wish to build up, trying to instill in them the ideals of a humanistic education, where the child is placed at the centre of all processes. However, there are disappointments in the learning process and practice; this experience often does not live up to students' expectations and they come to understand that their eagerness does not equate with a vocation. Still, with respect to such students, the new standard gives them the opportunity to effortlessly move to the general track in their second year, without having to restart their entire education, whereby after they may go into business or even develop their own academic startup.

Moreover, there is the research trajectory (the combined Master's - PhD track) at the Institute of Education, which is cross-programme. Students in this track remain within their programmes, but get to attend several other courses together. This year, one applicant from our programme was admitted to this track and her thesis topic was embedded in the activities of the Institute of Education's Centre for Contemporary Childhood Research. Our focus is on didactic, methodological, and technological approaches to instruction; previously, the interests of the Institute of Education were aligned with sociology, economics and educational administration, but now the research agenda is expanding.

The new standard offers new opportunities for our programme. Prior to this, we only trained teachers; but now, we want to meet the demand for teaching pedagogical designers, whose skills cover various fields, such as psychometrics and evidence-based education development. The new standard allows for the inclusion of a new area of study in our programme (which is closer in terms of core competencies), while also utilizing the opportunities offered by other programmes for the holistic development of this new area.

In turn, we are also ready to share our expertise. I imagine that each Master's programme can select several key courses, convert them into online formats and offer them externally. We did this with three high-demand courses – Pedagogical Design, History of Education and Pedagogical Thought, and Developmental Psychology in Education.

If we perceive the philosophy of the new standard as a kind of a model for one's future personal development (though as a pedagogue myself, I am against this point of view, as I believe that kindergarten, grade school and, moreover, university are real-life experiences in themselves), then giving Master's students free rein and offering them the right to take

risks and decide on what to do for themselves make for good psychological training for future unpredictable situations and the challenges along the way.

Dr Inna Antipkina, Academic Co-supervisor of Master's Programme in Science of Learning and Assessment

In 2010, the Measurements in Psychology and Education programme was the first to offer instruction in psychometrics in the post-Soviet space. Prior to this, psychometrics as a field had not been developed in Russia owing to a ban first introduced in 1936. Over a 10-year period, we have graduated around 150 specialists in evaluation, who know how to design and implement contemporary testing, examinations and monitoring activities, perhaps some of the best of their kind in Russia. When the idea of updating the programme was first presented, we understood that neuroscience and its instruments – MRT, EEG, eye trackers, etc., - can be effectively combined with psychometric methods. An increasingly fast-paced world means that people need to learn quickly; and to do this, it is necessary to understand the neurobiological foundations for study. This type of approach allows us to create quality educational programmes and provide scientific evidence for accelerated studies. In turn, the ability to assess learning results lets us understand whether the learning approaches applied have helped to make programmes more efficient and whether they need further adjusting. With this in mind, we have developed the Science of Learning and Assessment programme.

We now have a broad outline of our three tracks and we plan to figure them out along the way. The programme is now being reconfigured in terms of its identity, as it earlier focused on research. Over the last three years, the question has been raised as to whether we want to allow project-based thesis works. However, the majority of the academic committee voted against this and only in the last year have they started supporting projects that might not have a specific scientific result, but rather a strong product. We already have lined up with various EdTech companies. Another example of demand for the applied track is that every year, a portion of our graduates went into doctoral studies. But, this year everybody went into EdTech. Perhaps this is an effect of a decline in revenue because of the Covid-19 pandemic, but it is possible that the psychometrics fields have become more familiar for employers and, thus, in-demand. However, the general track, as the one foreseeing unrestricted decision-making with “no strings attached”, is still not entirely clear for us.

The new standard seems to cover all bases, although we still have some disagreements about how highly qualified specialists should graduate. The first year of the programme is adaptive – we provide instruction in what we believe an expert in education and pedagogy should know. Then, in the second year, students have a choice between two topical tracks – neuroscience with cognitive development and

psychometrics; they are almost entirely free to choose from the many courses, including those taught in both or one of two languages. At the core seminar, we plan to discuss individual development strategies with our students. Now, we do not do this as much, since all of their tracks are more or less uniform.

The second concern is that we are losing those subjects that we consider important, while students are unlikely to vote for them “with their feet”. For instance, students are not fans of Experimental and Quasiexperimental Design in Education and Deep Psychometrics, as they are considered difficult because of the statistical methods, albeit they are necessary for normal operations.

Our third worry is that group dynamics might change, as the framework is being loosened up: people from external programmes will come to us for some subjects, while some of our students might go over to other programmes. Still, on the other hand, this is a major opportunity to see the whole wide world and make ourselves visible. So, we have made all of our subjects accessible throughout all of HSE University, including Social and Emotional Development, Academic Analytics, and Staff Performance Reviews.

We have two requirements for student projects: relevance and tasks that ensure development. For instance, our students for three years already have been involved in the organization of a pilot workshop at the Summer School (www.letnyayashkola.org): this is a major educational project, where we talk about development of qualitative tests and surveys for young specialists and new EdTech leaders. Every student has the option of taking part in internships at the Institute of Education's centres and laboratories. This is not big money, but it gives them possibility to work on real research projects and develop networks of contacts. Projects “from clients” acquaint students with the corporate world during their studies, whereby they get to carry out orders under the guidance of their teachers. Moreover, these clients often become future employers. Our alumni work at YandexUchebnik, YandexPraktikum, Uchi.ru, SkyEng, Algoritmika and other EdTech firms.

Dr Valentina Kuskova, Academic Supervisor of Master's Programme in Data and Network Analytics

The Master's Programme in Applied Statistics with Network Analysis was originally designed by Professor Stanley Wasserman. At that time, he was the scientific supervisor of the International Laboratory for Applied Network Research - the programme's “home.” He applied best practices from several major US research universities and envisioned different programme tracks, project-based education, and many other features that are now being implemented at HSE University. We started the programme with a new ethos in mind before the new guidelines were in place.

First and foremost, the programme is English-taught by world-renowned professors from major international universities. We have asked the experts in major fields of analysis,

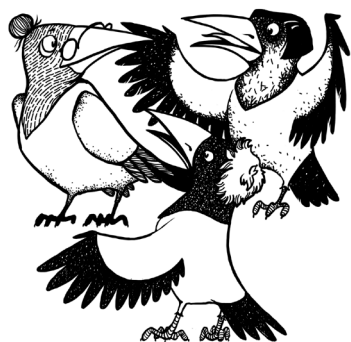
such as data mining, networks, machine learning, categorical data analysis, Bayesian methods, to join our faculty. The programme is also unique as it has an applied focus. We teach applied analytics, and some of our graduates consider themselves data scientists. While I still think that the term data science belongs with computer science departments, it is our approach to focus on data and start with problem formulation, rather than teach theorems and methods. This makes our programme distinct from others. In addition, it is the only programme in Russia (and one of the few worldwide) that has a systematic approach to teaching networks – one of the most exciting analytic areas.

The general track is for those who do not want to specialize. It is the track in which students can select any courses they want from the large pool of electives to tailor their education to their specific needs. The research track is supervised by full-time senior researchers from our laboratory, and we call it the 'PhD preparation track'.

The business track was established in cooperation with our former graduates, now successful business professionals, who are working in the industry and are willing to bring most recent business practices into the classroom. We have joined forces with the HSE St. Petersburg's Management and Analytics for Business programme, where students can pursue business-related courses. Students from the other programme can take our courses in return.

The project approach is integrated on every level. First, almost every course we teach (with exception of some basic math and probability courses) requires that students complete several projects. They often have to formulate problems that interest them, find their own data, and then solve problems using the methods taught in a particular course. Second, projects are implemented at the track level. We have seminar courses that are required for the completion of each of the tracks, and students must submit either research projects or business projects to fulfil their seminar requirements. Finally, projects are implemented at the programme level. First, we have a capstone course, called Statistical Consulting, where students work with real-life clients from either the academic community or the business world, helping them with real-life projects. Second, we have an analytic workshop, which is a major project run by students on a regular basis. It is a pro bono statistical consulting clinic, where clients can get help with any analytics-related questions. As a result, students complete dozens of real-life projects before they ever set foot in the real corporate world, which they then join, well-prepared for any challenge.

All this experience has resulted in a new endeavour – opening an online mirror for the programme – "Master's of Data and Network Analytics" on Coursera. We have taken our international-quality programme to the wider world and made it available to working professionals everywhere.



XXII April Conference

HSE University's XXII April Conference, Russia's most prestigious social sciences conference, reached its conclusion on April 30, 2021. This major event brought together leading Russian and foreign academics, experts, government officials and members of the business community. The issues and topics discussed at this year's Conference both reflected globally focused economic and social agenda and helped shape the Russian government's socio-economic policies.

Back when the April Conference was limited to HSE University's premises, its total participants came to around 2,000 people. However, in 2020, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, the University was forced to hold the Conference remotely for the first time ever, which, interestingly, helped boost its overall audience, but also caused a substantial reduction of its programme, partially the result of changes in its organization.

In 2021, the titular academic event for HSE University saw a marked departure from its traditional timeframe and format: last year's experience allowed us to not only return to the "pre-Covid" programme size, but also attract a record number of participants, while also expanding the number of discussion platforms and including new topics. For instance, the HSE-Sber Discussion Club was our first attempt at a joint project

with a major business partner. The session was actually the most popular expert discussion, bringing in over 500,000 views online.

Furthermore, it is quite important to note that the analytical papers prepared by the University's experts for the April Conference were a core component, combining its academic and forum elements. This year, 16 reports were published, providing a comprehensive review and analytical insight into a wide range of topics, from the economic impact of the pandemic to the global implications of Russia's Arctic policy.

Recordings of the April Conference's events can be viewed on its video channel (www.youtube.com/channel/UCwH5S3ybafYquqbW-bzM6Pg/featured) and are available for all visitors.

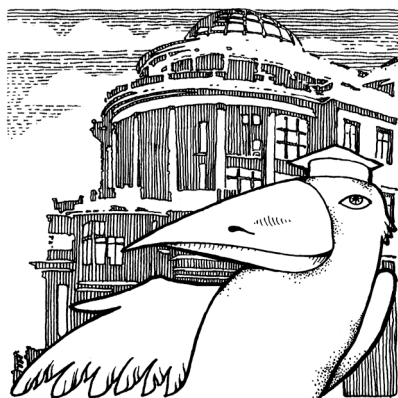
"It was usual to expect all indicators of annual events to grow with every year. It seemed to be the only way to measure conferences' efficiency.

"For instance, with the April Conference, our reports routinely focused on how much increase there was in the number of participants, papers, sessions, etc. However, last year, when the Conference took place online, we understood that we had incomparable figures of 2,000 face-to-face participants in the past and almost 5,000 unique online visitors. At the same time, holding the April Conference remotely, it is a completely different thing. Not so much in terms of the academic quality or the quality of the discussions, but in terms of the effect that we would expect from it.

"The 2021 April Conference is just another new reality: "hybrid" events held both face-to-face and remotely at the same

time, involving the support of the business community (the HSE-Sber Discussion Club), with 500,000 connections to roundtables on the digital economy (which didn't even feature any media stars!), along with completely new topics, such as cyber-security and social networking. I think that the April Conference cannot grow further if we just focus on its usual metrics: it's clearly shifting towards a new level in quality. And what is it exactly? I think that we will definitely find out in a year's time." - notes HSE Vice Rector Ivan Prostakov.

The XXII April Conference is over, but applications to take part in the XXIII April Conference (conf.hse.ru) can be submitted starting this September, while the new programme for its sections should be ready at the beginning of next year. Stay tuned and save the date!



Making a fresh start in challenging times

*The HSE Look is restarting a column about life in Russia, what can be discovered in its various cities, and interesting venues at HSE University and beyond. If you have an interesting experience to share, please contact us at: ifaculty.support@hse.ru. In this issue, we present a column by **Dr Jamie Costley**.*

Dr Jamie Costley is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Educational Programmes, Institute of Education. Jamie was the first international faculty member to obtain a visa and enter Russia in November 2020, after the protective measures were relaxed. Making a fresh start can always be a challenge, especially faced with a serious pandemic like COVID-19. Jamie shares his thoughts about living in Moscow and offers some practical tips.

I arrived in Moscow in November of 2020 and was required to quarantine for two weeks. After my quarantine was completed, I was able to go to work and explore the city. In the beginning, I was mostly interested in visiting my workplace and exploring the area around where I live. The HSE University guest house of the Moscow campus is located in a nice area that is close to a reasonably sized mall with a supermarket. Furthermore, there are many little walkways, paths and small parks, which make walking around the area easy, relaxing and interesting. Also, where I live is within walking distance of Gorky Park, which at the time (winter) wasn't such an enjoyable and safe place to be because the ground was slippery and muddy and there were few leaves on the trees. However, as I write this now (spring), Gorky Park is a great place to stroll through many different winding paths and enjoy the scenery. While it can be busy on the weekends or

public holidays, during the week, it is a great place to visit and you may walk alone and explore the many routes and paths in peace.

As I was unfamiliar with Moscow, I initially took taxis from the guest house to my work at the Institute of Education on Potapovskiy Pereulok. This trip varied widely in terms of the time taken - from twenty minutes, to one hour, when I was coming home on a Friday evening, it took an hour and a half to return owing to the traffic. Luckily, a friendly coworker showed me how to easily navigate Moscow's underground metro system. I live about 200 meters from the stop Leninsky Prospekt, which has trains arriving every few minutes. From there, it takes about 15 minutes to get to the station nearest to my work. This was a vast improvement from taking a taxi. I spent much less time in transit and it was significantly easier on my wallet. The subway system is quite easy to navigate and nearly everything is signposted in English, as well as Russian. Furthermore, I recently downloaded an app, which allows me to use the public bikes and scooters that are located all around Moscow. One can easily use this service (it is in both English and Russian), and it allows you to unlock a bike from the station and then drop it off at another station near where you are going. Now that it is spring, this is a great way to see the city, get some exercise, and travel around.