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**NEW MODE OF MAGISTRACY:  
THE “INTEGRATED” CONTROL SET-UPS TO ADVANCE  
AND UPGRADE OF PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATIVE  
AND SOCIOCULTURAL COMPETENCIES  
(CREATIVE FORMS OF PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY)**

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*This research paper is the attempt to analyse the examination session period in Master’s programs in view of the language requirements, especially “Business foreign (English) language”. The research paper states that the training process should be the whole spectrum of foreign-language communicative competences, as well as the research activity. The article deals with the improvement of intercultural business communication skills in the preparation of Master’s degree students of the Russian higher educational institution for international projects within the foreign languages framework. The Federal State Educational Standards of Higher Education are analysed; recommendations are given on changing the content of the foreign language course in the magistracy.*

**Keywords:** *post-graduate studies; examination period; foreign language; objective and subjective assessment forms; communication problem; intercultural exchange; professional communication; language competencies.*

**НОВЫЙ РЕЖИМ МАГИСТРАТУРЫ:  
«ИНТЕГРИРОВАННЫЕ КОНТРОЛЬНЫЕ  
УСТАНОВКИ» ДЛЯ УЛУЧШЕНИЯ И МОДЕРНИЗАЦИИ  
ПРОФЕССИОНАЛЬНОЙ КОММУНИКАТИВНОЙ  
И СОЦИОКУЛЬТУРНОЙ КОМПЕТЕНЦИИ (ТВОРЧЕСКИЕ  
ФОРМЫ ПРОФЕССИОНАЛЬНОЙ ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТИ)**

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*Данная статья представляет собой попытку проанализировать период экзаменационной сессии в магистерских программах*

*с учетом требований к языку, особенно «Деловой иностранный (английский) язык». В статье указывается, что учебным процессом должен быть весь спектр коммуникативных компетенций на иностранном языке, а также исследовательская деятельность. В статье рассматривается возможность совершенствования навыков межкультурного делового общения при подготовке студентов магистратуры высшего учебного заведения по международным проектам в рамках иностранных языков. Проанализированы федеральные государственные образовательные стандарты высшего образования; даются рекомендации по возможному видоизменению содержания иностранного языка в магистратуре.*

**Ключевые слова:** *магистратура; экзаменационный период; иностранный язык; объективные и субъективные формы оценки; проблема коммуникации; контрольные установки; профессиональная коммуникация; языковые компетенции.*

### **Introduction**

The Master's degree is considered mainly as a foundation stage for undergraduate studies, lasts 2 years, and during this period the examinations including the foreign language are passed. The main goal is to prepare for the exam, the requirements for which are defined in the program. This state program defines the parameters for certain academic works, mainly aimed at getting information from the written text. The state program provides the definition of what an undergraduate student should know and be able to do in using a foreign language for academic purposes and operates with the "competence" notion [7]. Thus, this exam format doesn't motivate undergraduates for further foreign competencies development. Moreover, the basic skills and the speech activity skills among graduate students are much higher than those that are provided "at the entrance" of the Master's program, even if they studied English as a second foreign language [5]. The mentioned above statement also applies to the main type of foreign language activity, presented in the Master's program as the main goal - translation. In the so-called "humanitarian" specialities, the course "theory and practice of translation"

is read, and when implementing a course project on this discipline, students are trained only in translation skills [3]. Different translation types are also present in other disciplines related to the first foreign language.

The identical format of final control for higher education has not been established yet, and hardly ever possible due to the variety of the preparation programs and specializations. Graduates are offered their own final examination, which assesses the knowledge, abilities, skills and competencies stated in the foreign language program for each University. Nevertheless, the educational process control includes the continuous monitoring not only the students' knowledge, but also the analysis, evaluation and training materials and, if necessary, their possible adjustment [10].

Under the notion, "Control Set-ups" refers to assignments combining professional, sociocultural and linguistic competencies and uses to determine and assess the degree and competences quality. Such assignments correspond to the methodological principles and approaches identified in the course curriculum (in this case, at the master's level), and are closely correlated with the types of study assignments that were offered to students. In turn, the curriculum is focused on those requirements for the graduates' competencies, which present modern training [9]. The term "format" was preferred to the terms control "form" or "function" as more general and correlated with the functional-stylistic concept of the discourse format.

***The aim of this research paper*** is an attempt to apply situational analysis for comparing master's programs in English, built on formally different grounds, however trying to take into account the language requirements. As is clear from the stated aim, it is triune that includes both professional and language training, which implies the whole spectrum of foreign-language communicative competences, as well as the research activity.

***Material and methods.*** However, during rapid and abrupt changes in higher education, many approaches to the curricula improvement and the control formats are obligatory experimental in nature, and the control forms on the learning process are analysed fluently and aren't always taken into account. Ideally, the curriculum should be led by the scientific study of the professional language specialist [8] at the certain

stage in the particular country. Then we can expect, the final control will combine the objective and subjective assessment forms.

In this regard, the English language proficiency for special purposes that have already tested their programs has some feedback from both undergraduate students and employers, and they were able to take into account their wishes while developing the upcoming training materials [6].

So as the international requirements concern – the “target portfolio” and the business game “international summit: organization and conduct” were introduced into the English language course including cognitive, sociocultural and linguistic competencies [7]. The course itself is organized in the three aspects-modules:

1. General English course C1 level (advanced), completed with test similar to CAE or IELTS test.
2. The “scientific speaking and interpretation in English” module, which contains the English-Russian or Russian-English terminological vocabulary presentation. The portfolio includes a set of written works, as documents, related to the summit.
3. The “language of speciality and translation” module which alongside with representation assumes the portfolio components – the business game “international scientific conference” and the research appendix on the studied subject from the translations of modern scientific articles, monographs and documents performed according to the course program.

The specified elements of final control are fixed for undergraduates in the English test form – the examination admission and are approved by Faculty Council. Along with external motivation, such course adaptation creates internal personal motivation of undergraduates for further improvement in foreign-language competences.

### **Discussion**

The analysis of the Federal State Educational Standards of the third generation at the master’s level allows us to assert that intercultural competencies are listed in the list of both Overall Cultural (OK), Academic (OPK) and Professional (PK) competences. Intercultural com-

petences include linguistic, sociocultural and strategic components [2]. *Linguistic components* at least for one foreign language. *Socio-cultural components* presuppose knowledge of the etiquette in international negotiations, the ability to conduct business correspondence, communication skills in the context of diversity, stereotypes and norms, knowledge in the economy and politics. *Strategic components* are related to the willingness to develop and implement long-term plans for achieving effective results when working in a multinational team [3], as well as with the skills to correctly use professional foreign language vocabulary on the subject of communication [1]. In the process of internationalization, a foreign language teacher should possess the methodology for the development of the Russian language [2].

For example, FGOS VO in the direct training of 40.04.01 “Law” (Master’s level) includes Overall Cultural competence related to the foreign language: “... the ability to use Russian and foreign languages freely as a means of business communication (OK-4); the competent use of acquired skills in practice in the research works, in the team management (OK-5); and contains the Academic competence – “to have a foreign communicative competence in official, business, educational, professional, scientific, socio-cultural, day-to-day spheres of foreign language communication (OPK-5).” [5].

The purpose of studying in a magistracy in the area “Law: the international public law, European law” is training on the international profile expert with the English language knowledge and being capable for research activity in the field of international law and to perform executive functions in the companies which are carrying out the international economic and law activity. The English language program for undergraduates is aimed at developing and improving a number of skill groups and competencies [10]:

*Professional activities and communication situations* (i.e. communicative competence) should: maintain daily working contacts with native speakers, colleagues inside the company (where the working language is English) and business partners; conduct informal and formal negotiations; understand the implicit information in oral speech

in personal communication; speak on professional topics; organize the foreign partners' congregation and inform them about the company's policy; conduct the instructions and understand the instructions of higher-level officials; write the corporate law proposal, the list of agreements for the employees; keep correspondence inside the company; give instructions, write memos, records of meetings; fill out questionnaires, business trips' declarations.

*Information and analytical work:* receive, understand and analyse professional information from the following sources: business documents, reports, agreements, etc.; scientific literature on professional subjects; lectures, seminars, presentations and trainings in English; publications in newspapers, magazines and other periodicals of a business nature; news radio and television programs of a business nature; reference literature; find the necessary information and critically analyse it; understand idiomatic expressions, metaphors, allusions, and other figures of speech that are often found in the professional literature.

*Organizational and management work:* law practices, the structure of companies' various forms, ways of anti-crisis management; create a successful working team, manage personal knowledge, time management, project management; law sphere: proficiently do law contracts/agreements.

*Sociocultural sphere:* teamwork; communicate and negotiate with representatives of other cultures personally; conduct a conversation taking into account the peculiarities of the interlocutor national culture; respect other opinions and views (tolerance).

*Scientific-research area:* read and understand scientific literature on professional subjects in English; compare different opinions on the scientific problem; apply different research methods; make presentations at scientific student conferences: logically build a speech and effectively use the expressive means of English; distinguish between styles and discourse registers; translate verbal information into a graphic; collaborate on a project related to the search and use of information in English; use the disciplines' knowledge in the English classes; write a resume in English.

*Translation work:* make a two-way consecutive interpreting of business conversation and negotiations using the adequate lexical means; translate professionally oriented texts from Russian into English, etc.).

*Annotation:* write abstract within the professional sphere of communication and make translate Russian abstracts into English.

Some of the above-mentioned skills develop at the bachelor's level, although, stating that graduates from other universities enter the magistracy, the repetition and improvement of certain competencies are correct and appropriate. Ideally, the foreign language competences (the English language) of a master's degree must correspond to the European qualification level requirements for the second level of higher education, the requirements of the Cambridge exam BEC Higher (in terms of listening) and the European scale of general language competencies - C1. According to the latter, the level of "Professional Ownership" (Effective Operational Proficiency) assumes that the undergraduate can:

1. Understand the voluminous complex texts on different topics, recognize the hidden meaning.
2. Speak spontaneously at a fast pace, having less or no difficulty with the selection of words and expressions.
3. Flexible and effectively use the language for communication in scientific and professional activities.
4. Translate from English into Russian: contracts, business plans, reports, analytical notes; articles on professional subjects.
5. Create an accurate, detailed, well-built message on complex topics, demonstrating the text organization, communication facilities and the integration of its elements.

At the same time, the learning level of the educational material and the skills and competencies formation is realized not only by the final but also by the current and intermediate control, using various types of lingual-didactic tests [4]. Communicative competences in the course "English for professional purposes (linguistic, discourse and sociocultural)" are mainly established in learning interactive forms, such as discussions, role games and simulation, reports, case studies, project work, etc. These competencies are checked in a multipart, in commu-

nication situations, as close as possible to the conditions of future professional activity.

The example is case study as the learning method designed to improve skills and experience in the following areas:

- identifying, selecting and solving problems;
- work with information – understanding the details described in the situation;
- analysis and synthesis of information and arguments;
- work with assumptions and conclusions;
- alternatives evaluation; making decisions;
- listening and understanding other people – “the collaboration skills”.

#### **Case study: LFM**

1. Read the introduction of LFM (Law Firm Management: How to Think Big) <http://www.cle.bc.ca/practicepoints/PRAC/11-Law-FirmManagement.pdf>
2. Analyse “The Business Case: Management vs. Leadership” and provide the information to the following aspects:
  - Autonomy – Why Micromanage?
  - Evaluation of the Alternatives.
  - Credibility with Stuff.
3. Explain the rationale behind creating “Open Door Policy” and “Legal Administrator”.
4. Prepare a 5-minute presentation of the “Legal administrators do: key performance indicators”.
5. Write a Report related to the future profession (200—250 words) on the following issues:
  - “Lawyers should concentrate on what they are trained for – the practice of law.
  - Lawyers should not be spending their time on administrative management tasks which can be delegated to others who are better trained and more capable of carrying out those assignments.

- It’s trickling down and the reason is that lawyers are realizing they’re not very good at management tasks and they really don’t want to do them ... If they do the math on how many billable hours they lost, it’s easy to figure out that someone else can pay for themselves pretty quickly.
- What’s happening is that as law firms have become more sophisticated and partners realize that they have to spend more time generating more business or paying attention to their current business, they don’t have the time to take care of their day-to-day activities” [9].

Upon the report completion, undergraduates usually either write essays or make presentations (3-4 topics are suggested for their choice). The typical assignment for PPP (PowerPoint Presentation): Your company is planning to expand worldwide. Prepare a 10-minute Power-Point presentation for your colleagues “The impact of differences in legal systems or policies”:

- Study the topic, use a variety of sources.
- Analyse the information.
- Write the detailed plan for your presentation.
- Make up the list of functional English word combinations used in sign-posting.
- Prepare the assessment list for your group mates in the form of DOs and DON’Ts list.
- Get ready to deliver your presentation in class. Be ready to interact in the form of questions-answers and comments.

### ***Role-play***

- 1) As the head of “Law & Co,,” you are faced with the problem of downshifting among some of your highly qualified employees. Arrange the meeting and discuss the possible solutions.
- 2) Two or three students of the group will assume the roles of «downshifters». Give your reasons for wanting to downshift: your decision is sure to affect the situation in the company and its performance.
- 3) Try to resolve the situation agreeably by suggesting some work-life balance schemes.

### ***Portfolio.***

Write the professionally oriented essay (approximately 280-300 words) on one of the following topics:

- The Law culture of generation «X».
- The future of the law arrangement: predictions and implications.
- The importance of emotional literacy in policy making, etc.

Essays related to the future profession are arranged in the part of the current, intermediate, and final control. Current monitoring also includes written tasks intended to test the “absorption” level of professional terminology, for example:

- 1) What are the three main attributes of a successful commercial lawyer?
- 2) What do you think about the principle of Legal Aid? Should clients have to pay for services they use in all circumstances?
- 3) What do you know about the impact of the Human Rights Act on the law in this country?
- 4) What sort of advocacy experience do you have? Do you think you would need to undergo training for advocacy?
- 5) Do you think you require training in management skills? Why?

– *Find a suitable job offer on a jobs site, write a resume /CV to apply for the vacancy [https://lawjobs.com/search/action/advanced\\_search/keywords/lawyer+%7C+attorney/submit/Find+jobs/job\\_industry\\_filter/Legal+Services](https://lawjobs.com/search/action/advanced_search/keywords/lawyer+%7C+attorney/submit/Find+jobs/job_industry_filter/Legal+Services). Do your best to convince the employer that you are the right person for the job.*

Undergraduates’ sociocultural competencies are checked during current monitoring throughout the entire study course - each session contains a problematic topic, which includes various assignments, for example:

- *Read the passage [9] and explain:* 1) what can be the potential communication problems in an intercultural exchange? 2) what other variables may also cause problems in the intercultural exchange between lawyer and client? 3) state other factors affecting the intercultural exchange.

“... A Japanese client interacting with a United States lawyer may send a message consistent with Japanese cultural norms but that will be misunderstood by the lawyer. One researcher cites differences between Japanese and United States thought patterns as a factor in intercultural communication problems. For instance, Ishii explains that “the Western mind, human activity is paramount and ultimately will lead to the discovery of truth.” The Taoist tradition, however, holds truth as an “active agent, and if it is to be known it will be through the activity of truthmaking itself apparent.” Ishii states that while a United States author may use a “linear pattern” of writing with topic sentences and then subdivisions and examples, a Japanese writer may use an indirect approach. These differences may lead a United States lawyer to perceive the Japanese client as ambiguous, while the United States lawyer may be perceived as loud and aggressive.

A United States lawyer may arrive at inaccurate assumptions about the meaning of a Japanese client’s responses. For example, there is a Japanese custom of speaking and acting “only after due consideration has been given to the other person’s feelings and points of view” and “a habit of not giving a clear-cut yes or no answer, a habit on a long tradition of avoiding unnecessary friction.” The Japanese may hold silence in higher esteem than their United States counterparts; Ishii states that the Japanese would be less likely to exaggerate and more likely to understate a point. Further, the Japanese would be more likely to value “mutual dependence to keep interpersonal harmony”, while United States citizens might be more likely to have “mutual confrontations to keep things moving”.

In a legal setting when counselling a Japanese client, or a client who has been strongly influenced in his communication style by Japanese traditions, a “yes” may be given by the client although there is real disagreement with the United States lawyer’s suggestions, or the client may keep silent or understate the point. The lawyer must be aware of the possibility of misinterpretation and pursue the issues for clarification. Empathy may also be a key to effective intercultural communication.” [9]

– *Express your opinion on the following extract:* “Bennett suggests that in intercultural exchanges one person must not use the Golden Rule and “do unto others as you would have them do unto you”, but rather think of how the person from the other culture is feeling and consider how his cultural background affects his perceptions and influences his reactions. As emphasized by the solution section of the model, empathetic listening is a critical tool for the lawyer.” [9]

***Final control: pass/fail test (credit) and the State exam***

Pass/fail (credit):

- Test in proficiency of legal terminology.
- The overall assessment: students’ portfolio and sessions’ evaluation work.
- Participation in the role-game “Law & Co” and the proficiencies level in the discussion, argumentation, credence and etc.

The State exam is permitted for Master’s who have a credit for the third semester. The test is held orally for those whose final grade is below 70%. Students pass the semester material (orally) and present the portfolio with the completed written works for the semester.

***The State Exam requirements and its structure:***

*Component 1. “Language of the profession and special translation”* the following skills and abilities are checked: translation skills; knowledge of legal terminology and business language; knowledge of legal realities; understanding the Russian language business style; the ability to negotiate/argue in English on the point of view of a legal problem.

*Written exam:*

- Translation from English into Russian the text of law content. 1500 characters. Preparation time – 40 minutes.
- Translation from Russian into English, the professional-oriented text. 1500 characters. Preparation time – 40 minutes.

*Oral exam:*

- Translation: from the English language into Russian: law document (1300 characters).
- Mini-presentation (for 2 min.) in English on one of the topics studied during the semester.

*Component 2. “Language practice (business communication and law)”* the following competencies are checked: perception / understanding of English language by listening, ability to allocate the main thing; the ability to structure a written statement in accordance with a given genre; the ability to compose the written statement logically and coherently; knowledge in professional terminology; the ability to use expressive means of language; knowledge in English idioms; literacy.

*Written exam:*

- Receiving the given information from the English audio text after 2 presentations and performing the following tasks. The international business English exam BEC Higher, which corresponds to the European level C1 (common language competencies). Listening time (part 1) – 10 min.; listening time (part 2) - 9min. 30 seconds. Preparation time – 40 min.
- Essay (350 words) on the topic related to future professional activities. Preparation time – 40 minutes.

*Oral exam:*

*The research article (3500–4000 characters) on professional and research area* and the follow-up conversation (3 to 4 questions). The following competencies are checked: the ability to analyse and summarize the article; unprepared monologue and dialogical speech; the ability to express the views reasonably and defend it.

*Discussion on the master’s thesis.* The following competencies are checked: knowledge of scientific research methods, in particular, in the law field; ability to talk (handle conversation) on scientific topics; knowledge of scientific terminology.

*Notes:*

- Two academic hours are assigned for the written examination in translation.
- For the written examination in listening and the essay – 40 minutes.
- The oral examination (preparation and answer) is given 60 minutes per student.
- The number of characters in texts can be slightly changed in any direction, depending on their complexity.

The final assessment is made taking into account the implementation of the group project work “Establishment of the Law agency”, which is an integral test aimed at testing the certain number of foreign-language communicative competencies. The project work allows integrating the profiling disciplines knowledge and appropriate language competence. The project allows revealing the progress of general competencies and personal qualities, such as creativity, analysis and synthesis, critical thinking, ability to apply knowledge in practice, teamwork, leadership, research skills, personal knowledge management, time management, the ability to develop and manage projects, etc.

### **Conclusion**

Consequently, the programs for the second stage of higher education show that the tasks actually performed by them partially overlap, which can be attributed to the overall differences in the structure: the control set-ups in general and the final, in particular. The intercultural competencies analysis given in the educational standards shows that the foreign language study in the Master’s program is not limited to traditional training skills of translation. To prepare graduates who are ready to participate in international projects, it is also necessary to develop presentation skills, business correspondence skills, and practice communication on the future professional activity. Priority language is English, but in some cases where the level of the professional self-determination of the Master’s students allow to declare about the exact plans for his future partnership with a certain country, it is possible to choose an individual training trajectory with an emphasis on another foreign language.

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