

# Digitalization of education – a new stage in the development of a classical university

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## Yastrebov Oleg Alexandrovich

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Oleg Alexandrovich Yastrebov – Rector of the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN, RUDN University), Doctor of Law, Professor, Head of the Department of Administrative and Financial Law.

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1998 – graduated from the Moscow Suvorov Military School.

2004 – graduated from the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the RUDN.

2004–2008 – Senior Lecturer at the Department of Administrative Law, Faculty of Law, RUDN.

2008–2011 – Associate Professor of the Department of Administrative Law, Faculty of Law, RUDN.

2010 – defended his doctoral dissertation. Topic: “Legal entity of public law: comparative legal research”.

2011–2012 – present - Professor of the Department of Administrative Law of the Faculty of Law of the RUDN.

2012 – present – Head of the Department of Administrative and Financial Law of the RUDN Law Institute.

2013 – present - Member of the Expert Council of the Higher Attestation Commission of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation on law.

2014–2020 – Director of the RUDN Law Institute.

2015 – awarded the academic title of professor in the specialty “Administrative law; administrative process”.

2017 – present – President of the Association of Legal Education of the Russian Federation.

2018–2020 – present – Deputy Chairman of the Expert Council of the Higher Attestation Commission of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation on law. 2018–2021 – member of the Higher Qualification Board of Judges of the Russian Federation – a representative of the public.

2019 – present – Member of the Interdepartmental Council for Awarding Prizes of the Government of the Russian Federation in the field of education.

2020 – present – Rector of RUDN University.

**Area of scientific interests:**

\* Problems of classification of public subjects of administrative law. Theories about legal entities.

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\* General characteristics of state and municipal institutions in the context of current Russian legislation.

\* Legal personality of an electronic person.

\* Scientific and educational activities are related to issues of administrative and financial law.

Author of more than 180 scientific publications, including monographs: “State unitary enterprise as a subject of public law”, “Legal entity of public law. Conceptual foundations of the general theory”, “Non-profit organizations as subjects of public law”.

Engaged in mountaineering, surfing, kitesurfing, sailing and hockey.

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## Abstract

The Peoples’ Friendship University of Russia promotes advanced ideas in the field of higher education in Russia. The Rector of RUDN Oleg Alexandrovich Yastrebov spoke about the advantages and difficulties of digitalization of education, about the success of the university in the new conditions, about the university’s positions in world rankings and about the people who made it possible. Teachers and students work together to create a comfortable and eco-friendly educational environment. The successes of the RUDN Law Institute in 2021 are highlighted separately.

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## Keywords

Education; digitalization; information technology; RUDN; classical university; law institute.

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— **There is an opinion that digitalization of education destroys personal contact between a teacher and a student. One can think that communication with the teacher is replaced by a set of videos. Do you share such concerns? Are there any options to avoid it?**

— Last year proved that the university is not walls, but people. Due to the limitations, we had to look for new forms of communication, the transfer of knowledge. Teachers contacted students in real time, many of whom were in other countries. Universities have made a big step forward towards information technology.

The reverse side was the psychological factor. In 2020, after a week of distance learning, we conducted a survey among students concerning their attitude to the new format of study. Among the disadvantages, they noted the lack of live communication with the lecturer and teamwork, the lack of university life and self-discipline. Then it became clear that a complete transition of the educational process to distance learning is impossible. The only way possible is connection with

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traditional forms. The combination of digital technologies and classroom training, direct communication with scientists and access to the materials of the best lectures will help to form the competencies needed in the future.

Modern technologies and teaching methods show their productivity of implementation in the educational process. At RUDN, the transition to online gave impetus to the creation of new educational products. Thus, in 2020, we launched the Digital Preparatory Faculty – an educational project to prepare foreign schoolchildren or students for admission to Russian universities.

Then we went on. This year, students of the Law Institute took an exam on the Theory of state and law using bioproctoring. The process of passing the exam, including identity verification by biometrics and completing tasks, did not cause any significant problems. The students admitted that the service is much more convenient than other forms of remote exams. However, I would like to note that it is more reasonable to combine it with the traditional form of an oral exam. It is the “live” communication with the teacher during the certification that forms students’ skills of argumentation of their own position outside the comfort zone.

Of course, the transition to online cannot be provided for practice-oriented disciplines. RUDN is a multidisciplinary university: doctors, farmers, and chemists study here – it is important for them to attend classes in person, because lectures and textbooks are not enough to become a surgeon. Therefore, we maintain a mixed learning format. At the moment, our seminars are held in person with the parallel use of remote technologies. Streaming lectures are delivered completely at a distance to avoid crowding people in one place. This format of classes has proven to be effective.

**— To what extent is the teaching staff ready to apply information technology in their practice? Are there any programs at the university to improve the level of computer literacy of teachers? Are there any auxiliary units at the university designed to help lecturers master new technologies?**

— Even simple gadgets and programs in the right hands turn into effective tools for teaching very complex subjects. For example, anatomy. The teacher showed biomaterials from several angles at once, using a simple smartphone and laptop. The students liked it because they could take a closer look at everything, noted interesting shots and reviewed the recording of the show. The RUDN engineer from home explained the arrangement of the robot manipulator and showed the main points with the help of a children’s constructor. Geologists also made broadcasts and showed rock samples in close-up. Many teachers say that using online it is possible not to repeat the answers to the same questions – it is enough to orient according to the desired entry.

As for the development of new technologies, the RUDN has its own telecommunications educational and information system - TUIS. At the same time, we gave teachers a separate training course “Creating e-courses to support full-time education and ensure independent work of students.” We have posted publicly available video instructions on teaching in Microsoft Teams and Skype for Business, as well as on working with cloud storage services. A separate video tutorial is dedicated to working with a virtual whiteboard. We have collected all the information about distance learning in a special section on the RUDN website.

**— Modern technologies require the development of new rules both in the field of ethics and in the legal sphere. Does the teacher have the right to record lectures in zoom and demonstrate them to other courses? Is the university obliged to provide the technical possibility of distance learning, or is buying a laptop, connecting to the Internet a student’s responsibility?**

— From the point of view of the law, it is impossible to post a recorded lecture on the Internet without obtaining the consent of the author and the persons depicted in the video. Teachers must notify all students about the recording of an online lesson and obtain their consent before distributing it in the information space.

As for the technical equipment of RUDN students during distance classes, computer classes are open and working for them in the academic buildings of RUDN. If they do not have a personal computer or laptop, they can use the university's equipment at any time. Such classes also worked during the pandemic for those students who live in a dormitory.

Volunteers also help – we have organized a group of guys who help set up personal computers, laptops, smartphones.

### — **What can you say about the admission campaign to the RUDN this year?**

— Successfully. The year 2021, unlike the previous one, was not unexpected and specific because much that was used during this admission campaign was worked out in the past. The university has processed almost 100 thousand applications this year, and the average score has grown to 87.59. We have accepted 3,802 Russian applicants. 1,029 of them entered the budget form of education.

We enrolled 30% more Olympic winners than last year. They chose not only “Linguistics” and “Jurisprudence” but “History”, “Chemistry” and “Philology”.

The directions that are most in demand among the applicants of the RUDN have not changed this year. “Linguistics”, “Advertising and Public Relations”, “Medical business”, “Foreign Regional Studies”, “Dentistry” are still stay ahead.

We continue to support smart guys. 554 RUDN freshmen are high-scoring students. Each of them has more than 270 points on the Unified State Exam – for humanities, 240 – for natural and technical sciences. We pay such students an additional scholarship from 14 to 16 thousand rubles, they can study for free on the module “Translator”.

The overall score of the Unified State Exam has also increased. In some areas – for more than 50 points. These are “Oil and gas business” - an increase of 98 points, “Land management and cadastral” - 92, “Mining” - 74, “Operation of transport and technical machines and complexes” - 67, “Applied Geology” - 63, “Landscape architecture” - 58.

By the way, despite the difficult times, at the annual meeting of honor students of the RUDN this year we presented a car to the law institute girl. Every year we arrange a car drawing among the straight A students who studied for 5 years only for As. This year a law student was lucky.

### — **Does a student who has signed a full-time study contract have the right to return the money if the distance format does not suit him?**

— When transferring studies to distance learning, only the format of the class changes, but not the content. Despite the fact that students do not attend classes in classrooms during online training, teachers conduct classes according to a schedule with approved standards in full in terms of content and number of hours. This academic year, we have set the cost of studying at the RUDN at the level of 2019-2020. At the same time, we approve monthly discounts for contract students, give the possibility of deferral or installments. For example, for excellent studies, you can get a discount of up to 20%.

— **The introduction of digital technologies will require high costs from universities, which will affect the final cost of higher education, making it even more expensive. Do you consider such a trend in education appropriate, necessary for universities and for students?**

— Digitalization launches new processes in higher education that allow you to study at any convenient time, anywhere and from any device, to design an individual educational trajectory. Yes, every decision in favor of digital technologies requires attention and resources, but in case of successful use it facilitates many processes. For example, a number of universities have decided not to return to the usual mode of study, but to switch to a hybrid or completely go online. And many RUDN students were able to continue studying only thanks to distance education technologies because they could not come to Russia for a long time because of closed borders. I would also like to note that digitalization involves the development of relevant competencies among teachers.

— **In your opinion, what is the most important thing that has happened in the RUDN over the past year?**

— We are proud that 33,000 students from 160 countries receive education at RUDN. We remain the most multidisciplinary university in Russia. Future mathematicians, physicists, chemists, agrarians, environmentalists, doctors, economists, philologists, diplomats study here. 200,000 professionals have already received higher education at the RUDN.

RUDN is one of the top 500 leading universities in the world, in 2021 we took the 317th place in the international QS ranking - this is the ranking of the best universities in the world. During the year, we have risen by 9 positions - and this is with the constant strengthening of powerful competitors in Europe, America, Asia.

This year we were again recognized as one of the most environmentally friendly universities on the planet. RUDN has risen to the 28th position of the global ranking of eco-friendly universities UI GreenMetric 2021. This is the best result in the history of the university's participation in the ranking since 2011. We have been leading a group of Russian universities in this list for several years in a row – we are considered the “greenest” university in Russia. No wonder the RUDN campus has been repeatedly recognized as the best campus in Moscow and Russia.

An equally important result is strengthening of the positions of the RUDN in 11 QS subject ratings. Last year, RUDN was presented in five subject ratings: “Modern Languages”, “Linguistics”, “Economics and Econometrics”, “Mathematics” and “Chemistry”. According to all these ratings, we have advanced, and also achieved recognition in the new four subject areas “Oil and Gas business”, “Law”, “Business and Management”, “Computer Science”. RUDN showed the best result in the subject rating “Modern Languages” – we entered the top 100 for the first time. A separate merit of our chemists, who provided the main scientometric indicators for entering the number of the best universities in the oil and gas business. I am also very pleased that the university justly entered the top 200 of the ranking.

In addition, we make the educational environment at the RUDN more comfortable. So, in March, we opened the first university multifunctional center - transferred 54 services for students and employees into one megaservice, equipped a functional stylish space where you can quickly get the most necessary documents: from a certificate of study to a contract for accommodation in a hostel.

We are continuing the redesign of the educational environment. After a major renovation, we opened 100 rooms on the RUDN campus with a new principle of space organization. It is based on the balance of personal and general, style and technology. The first residents moved in this year. Now we are preparing a multistoried dormitory for renovation – we will prepare 445 rooms in the same style.

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— **RUDN closely monitors the positions in the world rankings...**

— The rating system is a good feedback that gives an understanding of the quality and relevance of the programs implemented at the university. It is important that the knowledge that the university provides is in demand on the world market. It's about how well the university is able to integrate into global trends and adapt to changes.

— **If we speak not about the friendship of peoples but about cooperation and partnership - what agreements has RUDN concluded this year?**

— Cooperation with business provides an opportunity to increase the relevance of research, gain access to knowledge and technology, and acquire a reliable partner among employers.

In 2021, we signed more than a dozen cooperation and partnership agreements. Among the new partners of RUDN is the largest Russian investor AFK Sistema. We are launching joint projects with 5 assets of the corporation: MTS PJSC, Medsi Group of Companies, Aeromax LLC, Step Agroholding JSC and pharmaceutical Holding.

At the end of April, we started a joint project with the European Medical Center – “RUDN University Clinic - EMC”. Now we are creating working programs in the areas of “Oncology”, “Radiation therapy”, “Radiation diagnostics”, “Neurology and Neurosurgery”, “Family Medicine”, “Obstetrics and Gynecology”, “Traumatology”, “Dermatology”, “Allergology”, “Health Organization”. Another new partner is Kaspersky Lab. We will conduct joint projects with colleagues on the study of modern cyber-physical systems, industrial cybersecurity, information protection, artificial intelligence.

We will conduct joint research and training in 6 areas of physics, mathematics and life sciences with the Joint Institute for Nuclear Research.

I will not list all the new partners that we have acquired this year, but I will say that we have joint projects with the Rosatom State Corporation, WorldSkills Russia, the Moscow Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Moscow Innovation Agency, the Moscow Urban Center “City”, the Roszapovedcenter of the Ministry of Natural Resources of the Russian Federation.

I would like to note separately that RUDN was the first in Russia to receive the right to validate and verify greenhouse gas emissions in Russia. The law “On limiting Greenhouse Gas emissions” was adopted in July this year. RUDN submitted an application for accreditation. In November, according to the results of an on-site assessment conducted by an expert group of the National Institute of Accreditation of Rosaccreditation, RUDN received the status of a greenhouse gas validation and verification body.

— **What goals do you set for the university in the future?**

— The strategic goal of the RUDN is to consolidate its role as a classical-type, internationally recognized research university.

Among the priorities are the creation of suprasectoral technologies due to the versatility of the RUDN: attracting talented foreign youth to Russian universities; digital reboot of the university and the creation of a digital culture; increasing the number of priority research areas; changes in the university management system; a new educational policy of the RUDN which will help to design academic and career tracks etc.

Dear Oleg Alexandrovich!

Thank you for sharing your opinion on the future of higher education. There are no doubts that your work at the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia will allow the university to occupy the top lines of Russian and world rankings. We wish you further success in the development of the Russian educational system and sincerely hope for further cooperation with our journal.

### **10 facts about the RUDN Law Institute in 2021**

1. Entered the top 200 best law schools in the world in the international QS World University Rankings by Subject 2021: Law & Legal Studies.
2. 302 points – the minimum passing score of the Unified State Exam for admission to the bachelor's degree in "Jurisprudence".
3. The final of the All-Russian Olympiad of Schoolchildren was justly held in RUDN. 262 schoolchildren from 62 regions, 2 rounds, more than 10 hours of competitions.
4. The Rector of the RUDN Oleg Yastrebov is the Chairman of the jury of the International Olympiad on Financial Security in Sirius (Sochi). The Law Institute is one of the organizers.
5. The citation of RUDN articles on legal topics has increased 26 times in a year.
6. A delegation of the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs paid a working visit to the RUDN. The Department of International Law held a presentation of educational programs on Space law.
7. The first enrollment for the master's program "Law in Public Policy" took place. The head of the program is Honored Lawyer of the Russian Federation Andrey Klishas, Chairman of the Federation Council Committee on Constitutional Legislation and State Construction.
8. The Master's program "Civil Law, Family Law, Private International Law" was opened jointly with the Belarusian State University.
9. Aslan Khuseynovich Abashidze, Head of the Department of International Law of the RUDN – winner of the All-Russian Legal Prize named after Gabriel Shershenevich. Aslan Huseynovich and Irina Chernykh joined the Global Expert Group on Sustainable Lunar Activities (GEGSLA) at the non-governmental organization "Association of the Lunar Village".
10. The RUDN Law Institute together with Moskino is the organizer of a series of lectures in the open air. Among the invited guests: Pyotr Kucherenko, State Secretary - Deputy Minister of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation; Vladimir Elizarov, Head of Governance, Risk and Compliance Volskswagen Group RUS; Ruslan Gatsalov, human rights lawyer, founder of the Center for Legal Protection of the Creative Industry ArtLaw and others.

