



## Professors' and Students' Perspectives on the Ideal Student in Higher Education: A Narrative Review

Amer Yazdanparast<sup>1</sup>, Hasanali Abdali<sup>2</sup>, Mahdieh Parhoon<sup>3</sup>, Mohammad Afras<sup>4</sup>, \*Fatemeh Bahrani fard<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Associate Professor of Pediatric Cardiology, Department of Pediatrics, Faculty of Medicine, Bushehr University of Medical Sciences, Bushehr, Iran. <sup>2</sup>M.A. in Clinical Psychology, Jolfa, East Azerbaijan, Iran. <sup>3</sup>BSN, Bushehr Heart Center Hospital, Bushehr University of Medical Sciences, Bushehr, Iran. <sup>4</sup>PhD in Law, Faculty Member at Islamic Azad University, Bushehr Branch, Bushehr, Iran. <sup>5</sup>MSc in General Psychology, Bushehr University of Medical Sciences, Bushehr, Iran.

### Abstract

**Background:** The definition of an ideal student has long been a significant and widely discussed topic in higher education. Given their distinct roles and experiences, professors and students often hold differing perspectives on this matter. This study aims to review and compare the views of professors and students regarding the characteristics and criteria of an ideal student.

**Materials and Methods:** In this narrative review, a comprehensive search was conducted across electronic databases including PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, CIVILICA, SID, and Google Scholar up to March 2025. Two independent reviewers screened titles, abstracts, and full texts of retrieved articles based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria.

**Results:** The review identifies both overlapping and differing views of professors and students on the ideal university student. Professors emphasize academic strengths such as critical thinking, problem-solving, responsibility, and active class participation, along with communication skills and digital competence. Students prioritize academic achievement alongside a fair and supportive educational environment that fosters emotional well-being and a balance between academic and personal life. Both groups agree on the importance of communication, teamwork, and adaptability, especially in digital literacy. However, professors tend to focus more on intellectual rigor and technical skills, whereas students place greater emphasis on psychosocial support and educational fairness. These differences underscore the need for educational policies that integrate cognitive development with emotional support to enhance effective learning and student well-being.

**Conclusion:** Based on the review, professors emphasize academic skills including critical thinking, responsibility, and technical competence. Students value emotional support, fairness, and balancing academic and personal life. Both groups agree on the importance of communication skills and adapting to digital technologies.

**Key Words:** Higher Education, Ideal Student, Professors, Students, Student Characteristics.

\*Please cite this article as: Yazdanparast A, Abdali H, Parhoon M, Afras M, Bahrani fard F. Professors' and Students' Perspectives on the Ideal Student in Higher Education: A Narrative Review. Med Edu Bull 2025; 6(1): 1107-13. DOI: **10.22034/MEB.2025.539487.1121**

### \*Corresponding Author:

Fatemeh Bahrani fard, Bushehr University of Medical Sciences, Bushehr, Iran.

Email: fatmhbahrani@gmail.com

Received date: Mar. 21, 2025; Accepted date: Jun.22, 2025

## 1- INTRODUCTION

The definition of an ideal student has long been an important and widely discussed topic in higher education. The perspectives of professors and students on this concept often differ, reflecting their distinct roles and experiences within the academic environment. Generally, professors emphasize characteristics related to responsibility, active engagement in learning, and academic interaction, while students also highlight the importance of psychological support, educational fairness, and maintaining a balance between academic responsibilities and personal life (1-7).

With the rapid changes in higher education systems and evolving expectations of new generations of students, understanding both the differences and commonalities in professors' and students' perspectives regarding the criteria of an ideal student has become increasingly significant. Such insights can aid in refining educational program design, enhancing collaboration and interaction within academic settings, and ultimately improving the quality of learning (8-12).

This study aims to examine and compare the views of professors and students concerning the characteristics and criteria of an ideal student using a narrative review approach. It is expected that the findings will provide valuable scientific guidance to educational planners and university stakeholders for better support and policy development tailored to the needs and expectations of both groups (7, 13, 14).

## 2- MATERIALS AND METHODS

### 2-1. Study Design

This study utilized a narrative review design to identify, analyze, and synthesize existing literature on the perspectives of professors and students regarding the characteristics and criteria of an ideal university student.

### 2-2. Data Sources and Search Strategy

A comprehensive literature search was conducted across multiple electronic databases, including PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, and Google Scholar, as well as Persian scientific databases such as CIVILICA and SID, using both English and Persian languages. Key search terms included "ideal student," "student characteristics," "criteria of an ideal student," "professors' perception," "students' perspective," "higher education," and "student engagement." Boolean operators "AND" and "OR" were used to logically combine terms and refine the search strategy. For example, searches combined terms such as ("ideal student" OR "student characteristics") AND ("professors" OR "students") AND ("higher education"). The search covered the entire available timeframe of the databases, from their inception through May 2025.

### 2-3. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Studies were eligible if they explicitly addressed perceptions, expectations, or defining attributes of an ideal university student from either professors' or students' viewpoints. Included studies had to be published in English or Persian, provide full-text access, and consist of original research (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods) or relevant review articles focused on the topic. Studies were excluded if they focused on populations other than university students, lacked specific attention to ideal student criteria, were non-peer-reviewed, limited to conference abstracts, editorials, or commentaries without primary data, or addressed general academic performance without relating to ideal student characteristics.

### 2-4. Study Selection Process

Two reviewers independently conducted the article selection process to ensure reliability and minimize bias. Titles and

abstracts of all retrieved articles were initially screened for relevance, followed by full-text assessments of potentially eligible papers. Any disagreements or discrepancies arising during screening or data extraction were resolved through discussion between the reviewers; if necessary, a third reviewer was consulted to reach consensus.

### **2-5. Data Extraction and Synthesis**

Key information was extracted from the included studies, focusing on findings related to the criteria and perceptions of an ideal student from both professors' and students' perspectives. These insights were organized into thematic categories: activity and responsibility, critical thinking and analytical skills, communication and collaboration, technological competence and innovation, and life balance alongside psychological support. To facilitate a structured comparative analysis, the authors compiled a detailed summary table, which served as a central tool for identifying thematic similarities and differences across perspectives.

### **2-6. Ethical Considerations**

As a narrative review based solely on published literature, this study did not involve the collection of new data from human participants or animals and therefore did not require formal ethical approval from institutional review boards. Nonetheless, the research was conducted in accordance with standard ethical principles for scholarly work. This included accurate and transparent citation practices to respect intellectual property rights and prevent plagiarism, objective and balanced presentation of findings to reduce bias, and adherence to responsible reporting and synthesis guidelines. The authors ensured data integrity and a fair representation of the existing academic discourse. Additionally, ethical considerations regarding the equitable inclusion of diverse perspectives—both

professors' and students'—were addressed to provide a comprehensive and respectful overview of the topic.

## **3- RESULTS**

This narrative review revealed that professors and students share some common perspectives but also hold distinct views regarding the characteristics and criteria of an ideal student in higher education. Each group emphasizes different aspects based on their roles and experiences within the academic context.

### **3-1. Professors' Perspective**

Professors describe the ideal student as active, responsible, and equipped with strong analytical skills, effective time management, and critical thinking abilities that facilitate deep learning and professional success (1, 7, 15, 16). They expect students to participate actively in class discussions and proactively seek academic resources and guidance. Beyond individual academic strengths, professors emphasize the importance of effective communication, teamwork, and a collaborative spirit (10, 13, 17, 18). Additionally, proficiency in digital technologies and adaptability to modern online learning environments are considered essential (1, 10, 11, 19). Professors also stress readiness to embrace innovative teaching methods and to handle educational challenges creatively (10, 20).

### **3-2. Students' Perspective**

Students value academic progress alongside a supportive and equitable learning environment that fosters both academic and personal growth. They stress the importance of constructive interaction with professors, educational fairness, emotional support, mental well-being, and life balance (6, 10, 13, 21–23). Communication and teamwork skills are critical aspects of their development (13, 17, 24), as is active adaptation to digital

competencies and new educational technologies (1, 19, 25).

### 3-3. Commonalities and Differences

Both groups agree on the importance of active learning, communication skills, and adaptability—particularly digital literacy and coping with educational innovations. However, professors place greater emphasis on academic rigor, critical thinking, and technical skills, whereas students highlight psychosocial aspects including emotional support, educational

fairness, and well-being (2, 6, 10, 13, 17, 21, 22). These differences underscore the need for comprehensive educational approaches that address both the cognitive and psychosocial needs of students in a balanced manner, fostering greater satisfaction, motivation, and academic success (26, 27).

For a summarized comparison of these key attributes and differing priorities from each perspective, please refer to **Table 1**.

**Table-1:** Comparison of Ideal Student Characteristics from Professors’ and Students’ Perspectives.

Feature Category	Professors’ Perspective	Students’ Perspective	References
Academic and Analytical Skills	Emphasis on critical thinking, problem analysis, effective time management, deep learning, and academic resourcefulness	Prioritizing deep learning, practical understanding, and professional achievement	1, 7, 15, 16, 23
Responsibility and Active Participation	Active participation in class, commitment to academic goals, monitoring learning progress, and smart use of information technologies	Commitment to academic progress, balancing study and personal life, constructive interaction with professors	1, 7, 13, 23
Communication and Collaboration Skills	Effective communication with faculty and peers; fostering teamwork and a cooperative spirit	Developing communication skills, teamwork abilities, and receiving constructive feedback	13, 17, 18, 21, 24
Digital Competence and Innovation	Proficient and mindful use of new educational technologies and digital environments; adaptability to online learning	Active learning and updating digital skills; adapting to modern educational technologies	1, 10, 11, 19, 25
Psychological Support and Life Balance	Readiness to adopt modern teaching methods and handle educational challenges	Emphasis on educational fairness, emotional support, mental health, and balancing academic and personal life	6, 10, 13, 21, 22, 23

## 4- DISCUSSION

This study aimed to examine and compare the perspectives of professors and students regarding the characteristics and criteria of an ideal university student. The analysis revealed that while both groups emphasize essential attributes such as responsibility, critical thinking, communication skills, and adaptability to new technologies, their priorities and viewpoints differ.

Professors tend to focus more on academic and technical competencies. From their perspective, an ideal student is actively engaged in learning, demonstrates deep analytical and critical thinking skills, and effectively manages their time (1, 7, 8). They also emphasize the importance of

proficient use of information technologies and the ability to adapt to modern teaching methods and digital learning environments (11, 28). Additionally, effective communication, teamwork, and a collaborative attitude are considered crucial for success in contemporary education (29, 30, 31).

Conversely, students place greater emphasis on psychosocial supports and the educational environment. They value a balanced approach that considers academic progress alongside personal well-being, highlighting the need for a supportive learning atmosphere characterized by fairness, constructive feedback, and meaningful interaction with instructors (22, 32). Communication and teamwork skills, alongside digital literacy and

adaptation to emerging educational technologies, are perceived as vital for success in their learning journey (11, 28–31).

These differences reflect the distinct roles and experiences of professors and students within higher education. Professors emphasize the development of rigorous academic capabilities and technical skills essential for professional readiness, while students underscore the importance of emotional support and fairness in their educational experience—factors that strongly influence their motivation, engagement, and mental health. Nonetheless, both groups converge on the critical necessity of digital competence and adaptability to evolving educational contexts, underscoring a shared understanding of the challenges posed by technological advancement in academia (5, 11, 22, 28, 31).

The practical implications of these findings suggest that higher education institutions should develop programs and policies that not only enhance cognitive and technical skills but also address the emotional, social, and psychological needs of students. Creating supportive environments that foster active engagement, critical thinking, and technological fluency—combined with robust psychosocial support systems—can better prepare students to succeed both academically and personally. Furthermore, facilitating open communication channels between professors and students can help bridge expectation gaps and promote tailored support responsive to diverse student needs (1, 8, 10, 22, 28, 31, 32).

However, this study has limitations. The narrative review is based on a diverse set of methodologies and geographic contexts, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Future research should focus on longitudinal and mixed-methods studies to investigate how these ideal student characteristics interact with contextual

factors and academic outcomes across different educational settings.

In summary, the ideal university student is a multidimensional individual who combines academic excellence, critical thinking, and technological aptitude with emotional intelligence, teamwork ability, and resilience. Recognizing this holistic profile is essential for designing educational strategies that meet the evolving demands of higher education in the digital age (1, 7, 8, 10, 22, 28, 31).

## 5- CONCLUSION

This study revealed that professors and students share both common and distinct views regarding the characteristics and criteria of an ideal student in higher education. Professors emphasize the development of academic skills such as critical thinking, responsibility, technical competence, and active participation. In contrast, students highlight the importance of emotional support, educational fairness, a supportive learning environment, and constructive interaction with professors.

Nonetheless, both groups agree on the importance of communication skills, active learning, and adaptability to modern technologies. These convergences and divergences suggest that educational programs and policies should be designed comprehensively to enhance academic and technical competencies while also addressing the psychological, social, and emotional needs of students. Such an integrated approach can promote balanced development, greater satisfaction, and academic success within the dynamic and evolving context of higher education.

## 6- AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Study conception or design: AY, and FB; Data analyzing and draft manuscript preparation: HA, MP, and MA; Critical revision of the paper: AY; Supervision of the research: FB; Final approval of the version to be published: AY, HA, MP, MA, and FB.

**7- CONFLICT OF INTEREST:** None.

## 8- REFERENCES

1. Fu Y, Wang Q, Wang X, Zhong H, Chen J, Fei H, Yao Y, Xiao Y, Li W, Li N. Unlocking academic success: the impact of time management on college students' study engagement. *BMC Psychol.* 2025 Apr 2;13(1):323. doi: 10.1186/s40359-025-02619-x. PMID: 40176191; PMCID: PMC11967054.
2. Chen P, Bao C, Gao Q. Proactive Personality and Academic Engagement: The Mediating Effects of Teacher-Student Relationships and Academic Self-Efficacy. *Front Psychol.* 2021 Jun 8;12:652994. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2021.652994.
3. Mašková, I., Kučera, D., & Nohavová, A. Who is really an excellent university student and how to identify them? A development of a comprehensive framework of excellence in higher education. *European Journal of Psychology of Education.* Advance online publication, 2024; 39: 4329-63.
4. Komarraju, M., Musulkin, S., & Bhattacharya, G. Role of student-faculty interactions in developing college students' academic self-concept, motivation, and achievement. *Journal of College Student Development,* 2010; 51(3):332–42. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.0.0137>.
5. Besser, A., Flett, G. L., & Zeigler-Hill, V. Adaptability to a sudden transition to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic: Understanding the challenges for students. *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Psychology,* 2022;8(2):85–105. <https://doi.org/10.1037/stl0000198>.
6. Stockinger, K., Rinas, R., & Daumiller, M. Student adaptability, emotions, and achievement: Navigating new academic terrains in a global crisis. *Learning and Individual Differences,* 2021;90: 1–10.
7. Alyami, A, Abdulwahed, A, Azhar, A, Binsaddik, A. and Bafaraj, S. Impact of Time-Management on the Student's Academic Performance: A Cross-Sectional Study. *Creative Education,* 2021;12: 471-85. doi: 10.4236/ce.2021.123033.
8. Hassel S, Ridout N. An Investigation of First-Year Students' and Lecturers' Expectations of University Education. *Front Psychol.* 2018 Jan 26;8:2218. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2017.02218.
9. Wong, B., Chiu, Y.-L. T. Exploring the concept of 'ideal' university student. *Studies in Higher Education,* 2021;46(3):497-508. doi: 10.1080/03075079.2019.1643302.
10. Siegel, S. T., & Böttger, T. The ideal student: deconstructing expectations in higher education: by Billy Wong & Y. L. Tiffany Chiu, London, Mc Graw Hill Open University Press, 2021;216:29.99 *Educational Review,* 2021'74(2):361–62.
11. Guri-Rosenblit, S. *Digital Technologies in Higher Education: Sweeping Expectations and Actual Effects.* UK: Nova Science Publishers Inc.; 2009. ISBN-10: 1617611026.
12. Trowler, V. Student Engagement Literature Review. *The Higher Education Academy,* 2010;11:1-15.
13. Zhao, S., & You, L. Exploring the Impact of Student-Faculty Partnership on Engagement, Performance, Belongingness, and Satisfaction in Higher Education. *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice,* 2023;30(2). <https://doi.org/10.52152/kuey.v30i2.980>.
14. Borghi, S., Mainardes, E. & Silva, É. Expectations of higher education students: a comparison between the perception of student and teachers. *Tert Educ Manag,* 2016;22:171–88.
15. Jaramillo Gómez, D. L., Álvarez Maestre, A. J., Parada Trujillo, A. E., Pérez Fuentes, C. A., Bedoya Ortiz, D. H., & Sanabria Alarcón, R. K. Determining Factors for the Development of Critical Thinking in Higher Education. *Journal of Intelligence,* 2025;13(6): 59. doi.org/10.3390/jintelligence13060059.
16. Paul, R., & Elder, L. *The miniature guide to critical thinking concepts and tools (7th ed.).* Foundation for Critical Thinking, 2014. Available from: <https://www.criticalthinking.org/files/ConceptsTools.pdf>.
17. Yaw Owusu-Agyeman, Enna M. Moroeroe. Relationality and student engagement in higher education: Towards enhanced students' learning experiences.

International Journal of Emotional Education, 2023; 15(2):37-53. doi:10.56300/ZANL1419.

18. Meneses-La-Riva ME, Fernández-Bedoya VH, Suyo-Vega JA, Ocupa-Cabrera HG, Grijalva-Salazar RV, Ocupa-Meneses GDD. Enhancing Healthcare Efficiency: The Relationship between Effective Communication and Teamwork among Nurses in Peru. *Nurs Rep.* 2025 Feb 7;15(2):59. doi: 10.3390/nursrep15020059.

19. Zhao, Y., Sánchez Gómez, M. C., Pinto Llorente, A. M., & Zhao, L. Digital Competence in Higher Education: Students' Perception and Personal Factors. *Sustainability*, 2021;13(21): 12184. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su132112184>.

20. Shi, P., Liu, W. Adaptive learning oriented higher educational classroom teaching strategies. *Sci Rep*, 2025; 15:15661. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-025-00536-y>.

21. Fatimi AS, Fatima SS, Martins RS, Iqbal R, Sabzwari S. The cognitive and psychosocial effects of online learning in medical students during and after the COVID-19 pandemic: a mixed-methods study from Karachi, Pakistan. *BMC Med Educ.* 2025 Jul 1;25(1):988.

22. Holliman AJ, Waldeck D, Jay B, Murphy S, Atkinson E, Collie RJ, Martin A. Adaptability and Social Support: Examining Links With Psychological Wellbeing Among UK Students and Non-students. *Front Psychol.* 2021;12:636520.

23. Hagenauer, G., Wallner-Paschon, C. & Kuhn, C. Austrian students' experiences of supportive relationships with teachers, peers, and parents and the mediating effect of school belonging in the context of their academic and non-academic outcomes. *Z f Bildungsforsch* 2021;11: 93–116.

24. Chen, C., Bian, F. & Zhu, Y. The relationship between social support and academic engagement among university students: the chain mediating effects of life satisfaction and academic motivation. *BMC Public Health* 2023;23: 2368. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-023-17301-3>.

25. Murtadho MI, Rohmah RY, Jamilah Z, Furqon M. The role of digital literacy in improving students' competence in digital era. *AL-WIJDÂN Journal of Islamic Education*

*Studies.* 2023 Apr 15;8(2):253-60. doi:10.58788/alwijdn.v8i2.2328.

26. Puiu S, Udriștioiu MT, Petrișor I, Yılmaz SE, Pfefferová MS, Raykova Z, Yıldızhan H, Marekova E. Students' Well-Being and Academic Engagement: A Multivariate Analysis of the Influencing Factors. *Healthcare (Basel).* 2024 Jul 27;12(15):1492. doi: 10.3390/healthcare12151492.

27. Kahu, E. R., & Nelson, K. Student engagement in the educational interface: Understanding the mechanisms of student success. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 2018;37(1):58–71.

28. Dang TD, Phan TT, Vu TNQ, La TD, Pham VK. Digital competence of lecturers and its impact on student learning value in higher education. *Heliyon.* 2024 Sep 3;10(17):e37318. doi: 10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e37318.

29. Auckaili, A., & Al-Rawi, M. Literature review: Effective teamwork and team diversity in engineering education. In 31st Annual Conference of the Australasian Association for Engineering Education (AAEE 2020): Disrupting Business as Usual in Engineering Education, 2020:487-95. Engineers Australia. <https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.727431216080919>.

30. Nyarks A, Enang VS. Teachers' Communication Skills and Students' Academic Performance in Linguistic: Empirical Study of Students in Tertiary Institutions in Akwa Ibom State. *International Journal of Advancement in Education, Management, Science and Technology.* 2020;4(3):1-4.

31. De Prada, E., Mareque, M. & Pino-Juste, M. Teamwork skills in higher education: is university training contributing to their mastery?. *Psicol. Refl. Crít.* 2022; 35: 5. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41155-022-00207-1>.

32. Najeh Rajeh Alsahli, Mohd. Elmagzoub Eltahir, Hajar Alhubaishi. The Impact of Education Quality, Faculty Competence and Learning Environment on the Community Satisfaction in Terms of Student Performance: Moderating Role of Higher Education System. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 2023; 103:62-77.