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Designing Future-Ready Business Degrees in an AI-Augmented and Sustainable Economy: An Integrative Review and Curriculum Framework for Bachelor's and Master's Education

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This article generates an evidence-informed framework for what modern Bachelor's and Master's business curricula should contain in an economy transformed by generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), data-driven decision-making, sustainability pressures, and employer expectations. Design/methodology/approach: The structured integrative evidence synthesis integrates peer-reviewed management-education and higher-education research, employer and labour-market studies, accreditation and quality standards, and established learning and capability theories. The verified corpus contains 44 sources. Sources were selected based on criteria of relevance, credibility, recency, or seminal importance, transferability and verifiability, and thematically coded, triangulated across four evidence families and documented in a source-level audit trail. Findings: The synthesis identified cross-source support for eight interrelated curriculum domains: business foundations; digital and AI literacy; data analytics and decision-making; leadership and people management; strategy, innovation and entrepreneurship; sustainability, ethics and governance; global and cross-cultural business; and communication, employability and professional practice. Bachelor's curricula should emphasise breadth, foundational literacies and scaffolding of application; Master's curricula should emphasise synthesis, critique, research-informed judgement, leadership under uncertainty and accountable decision-making. Practical implications: The article offers indicative ranges of curriculum content, principles of authentic assessment, implementation criteria, and dynamic renewal cycle for the curriculum. Originality/value: Instead of considering AI, sustainability and employability as add-on modules, the article positions existing standards and capability frameworks within an integrated architecture that connects labour-market signals to discipline-specific knowledge, qualification level, pedagogy, assessment, and programme governance.

KEYWORDS: business education; curriculum design; artificial intelligence; employability; sustainability; experiential learning

1. INTRODUCTION

Business and management curricula are being rethought in unprecedented circumstances of external pressure. Digital transformation, generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), geopolitically fragmented environment, sustainability regulation and changes in employment structure are transforming what managers do and how organisations generate value. The World Economic Forum (2025) reports that 39% of workers' skillsets are expected to be transformed or rendered obsolete by 2030. Analytical thinking remains the most frequently mentioned core skill, while AI and big data, networks and cybersecurity, technological literacy, creative thinking, resilience, curiosity and lifelong learning, and leadership are expected to grow most rapidly. Such signals create an obvious challenge for a curriculum: a curriculum based on static inventory of functional knowledge is expected to obsolesce faster than the traditional cycle of curriculum review.

However, a simple solution - introduction of additional modules in AI, sustainability, and analytics - is inadequate. Relevance of business education has been discussed for many years. Already in 2002, Pfeffer and Fong questioned the link between business-school education and management outcomes, while Bennis and O'Toole claimed that business schools moved too far away from practice of management towards scientific models. Rubin and Dierdorff's (2009) empirically grounded analysis became highly significant since it showed that MBA curricula do not cover competencies of 8,633 managers as derived from their own assessments of their key capabilities; later Datar, Garvin and Cullen (2010) called for balanced approach of knowing, doing and being in management education. Hence, the current AI revolution intensifies rather than creates a long-standing problem of relevance of the curriculum.

The recent evidence makes things worse. According to the 2026 EFMD/CarringtonCrisp study, 77% of employers expect graduates to have some experience of using AI tools, while 58% consider that universities are not doing enough in developing graduates' skills in GenAI; 76% want students to acquire knowledge of common workplace AI tools, 60% expect ethical AI knowledge and 53% expect GenAI literacy (EFMD and CarringtonCrisp, 2026). Simultaneously, three-quarters of employers consider sustainability to be a very or extremely important focus of business curriculum. According to the 2025 GMAC's Corporate Recruiters Survey, based on 1,108 recruiter and hiring manager responses in 46 countries, 31% consider knowledge of using AI tools an important factor when hiring graduate management talent, compared with 26% in 2024. GMAC notes that this year-to-year difference lies within margin of error. Problem-solving, strategic thinking, communication and interpersonal skills still remain central (GMAC, 2025). These findings challenge any dichotomy between 'technical' and 'human' skills. Emerging requirement is a hybrid competency profile, whereby managers can work with intelligent systems without offloading responsibility, judgement, and accountability to such systems.

This paper aims to solve a central problem of business curriculum: what should contemporary Bachelor's and Master's business curriculum contain, what are differences between these two types of curriculum, and how should schools keep the curriculum current without chasing every technological fad? This paper makes four contributions. First, it synthesises labour-market, employer, accreditation and scholarly evidence rather than relying solely on evidence of a stakeholder group. Second, it integrates human-capital, graduate-capital, constructive alignment, experiential learning and dynamic capabilities perspectives into a curriculum-design framework. Third, it develops an eight-domain Future-Ready Business Curriculum Framework, differentiates expected performance at Bachelor's and Master's levels, and shows how this framework extends rather than duplicates AACSB, QAA, PRME, DigComp and employability frameworks. Finally, it translates content priorities into assessment, implementation and dynamic renewal mechanisms of curriculum. This framework is deliberately not a syllabus, but a guideline since national qualification frameworks, institutional missions, disciplinary specialties and local labour-market conditions still matter.

RQ1: What knowledge, skills, dispositions and professional capabilities are consistently reported as priorities for contemporary business graduates?
RQ2: How should these priorities be translated into different curriculum expectations for Bachelor's and Master's business curricula?
RQ3: What pedagogic, assessment and governance mechanisms are needed to develop, evidence and dynamically renew these capabilities?

2. METHODOLOGY: STRUCTURED INTEGRATIVE EVIDENCE SYNTHESIS

2.1 Review design

This study adopts the structured integrative review approach instead of systematic review and meta-analysis. Integrative reviews are appropriate in the cases when a problem requires a critical synthesis of heterogeneous evidence and when the objective is to develop a new conceptual framework rather than to estimate a pooled effect (Torraco, 2005; Snyder, 2019). Management review methodology emphasises transparency, explicit selection logic and evidence-informed synthesis while recognising that management research questions are context-dependent and methodologically heterogeneous (Tranfield, Denyer and Smart, 2003). The verified evidence corpus used for the development and testing of the framework contains 44 sources: 35 scholarly or theoretical sources and 9 institutional, employer or quality-standard sources.

2.2 Evidence identification and search logic

Evidence identification was done in August 2026 through the use of structured and purposive keyword searches across scholarly discovery databases, publisher platforms and official institutional repositories. Searches were performed with pairs of an education-related term and one or more capability-related terms. A typical search syntax was: ("business education" OR "management education" OR "business curriculum" OR "MBA curriculum") AND (employability OR "managerial competencies" OR "artificial intelligence" OR "generative AI" OR "digital literacy" OR "data analytics" OR sustainability OR "responsible management" OR leadership OR "experiential learning" OR "work-integrated learning" OR assessment OR "curriculum reform"). Candidate references were checked against DOI records, publisher pages or official institutional records wherever possible. Recent 2020-2026 evidence was prioritised for fast-changing topics, while seminal studies were retained in case they provided a durable theoretical or historical foundation. The search was iterative and concept-building, not database-exhaustive. Database-specific duplicate counts and screening totals were not retained; hence, the reproducible audit unit is the final verified corpus documented in Appendix B, not PRISMA flow.

Table 1. Review design and evidence protocol.

Element	Protocol used
Review form	Structured integrative evidence synthesis; conceptual framework development rather than statistical meta-analysis.
Identification approach	Structured purposive keyword searches across scholarly discovery databases, publisher platforms and official repositories; iterative citation checking; DOI, publisher or official-record verification where available.
Evidence streams	Peer-reviewed scholarship; employer/labour-market evidence; accreditation/quality standards; established theory.
Temporal emphasis	2020-2026 for fast-changing technology and labour-market evidence; earlier seminal sources retained for theory and management education critique.
Core inclusion criteria	Direct relevance; credible method or institutional authority; transferable curriculum implication; recency or seminal value; verifiable bibliographic record.
Core exclusion criteria	Unsupported commentary; weak relevance to higher/business education; duplicate or superseded evidence; unverifiable bibliographic details.
Extraction fields	Context, method/sample, capability signal, curriculum implication, degree level, limitations.
Synthesis	Two-cycle thematic coding; qualitative evidence profile (explicit/supporting/contextual); cross-family triangulation; qualification-level differentiation; critical comparison.
Representative search syntax	(business/management education or curriculum terms) AND (employability, AI/digital, analytics, sustainability, leadership, experiential learning, assessment or curriculum-reform terms).
Screening record	Purposive concept-building review; duplicate-free candidate counts and database-specific screening totals were not retained, so no PRISMA claim is made.
Audit trail	Final verified 44-source corpus mapped by evidence family, primary contribution, principal domains and limitation in Appendix B.

2.3 Eligibility, source quality and verification

Sources were retained where they made a direct contribution to at least one research question and met credibility and transferability criteria. Empirical peer-reviewed studies, systematic or scoping reviews and influential conceptual papers were prioritised; official reports were included when they provided transparent survey evidence, qualification expectations or accreditation standards. Sources were excluded where claims were unsupported, the educational context was too distant from higher or business education to allow transfer, the item was duplicated or superseded by better evidence, or bibliographic details could not be verified. DOI-bearing references and institutional sources were checked against publisher or official-source records wherever possible. Eligibility decisions and the evidential role assigned to each retained source are summarised in Appendix B.

2.4 Evidence extraction, thematic coding and convergence analysis

Each retained source was read for its evidential function rather than merely counted. Extraction fields included source type; country or institutional context, where applicable; method and sample; capability or curriculum signal; learning or assessment implication; relevance to Bachelor's and/or Master's study; and evidential limitations. Coding involved deductive categories derived from the research questions and inductive clustering of recurring concepts. First-cycle codes were consolidated into higher-order domains through iterative comparison and review (Braun and Clarke, 2006). For the qualitative evidence profile in Table 3, each domain-evidence family intersection was classified as explicit, supporting or contextual. Explicit support required a source to name, require or explicitly recommend the capability; supporting evidence required a clearly aligned empirical or theoretical finding; contextual evidence indicated relevance. Anchor sources are shown in the table; no numerical convergence score is calculated.

2.5 Triangulation and qualification-level differentiation

Analysis was triangulated across four evidence families: (1) employer and labour-market demand; (2) accreditation, quality and professional standards; (3) peer-reviewed empirical and review evidence; and (4) theory. These families played different roles and were not treated as interchangeable: employer studies indicate perceived or predicted demand; standards articulate normative expectations; scholarly studies examine patterns or mechanisms; and theory explains how capability may be developed and managed. Domain was considered to be well-supported where several families converge, while contradictory or qualifying evidence was retained. Qualification-level differentiation was informed by QAA and AACSB expectations and by cognitive demand: Bachelor's provision emphasises foundational knowledge, scaffolded application and professional formation, while Master's provision emphasises synthesis, criticality, research-informed judgement, uncertainty and leadership.

2.6 Methodological boundaries

The review is purposive and concept-building rather than exhaustive. It does not claim saturation of the global literature, and the lack of retained database-specific screening counts limits strict procedural replicability. English-language sources and internationally recognised accreditation and employer reports are likely to be overrepresented, while regional business-school traditions are likely to be underrepresented. Evidence extraction and thematic coding were done by one reviewer rather than independently double-coded; therefore, qualitative evidence profile indicates cross-source support, not inter-rater reliability, effect magnitude or causal strength. Appendix B enhances traceability through documentation of the final corpus and assignment of evidential roles, but it does not eliminate these design limitations. The framework is consequently presented as an adaptable architecture to be tested and contextualised rather than universally validated syllabus. Figure 1 summarises the seven-stage evidence synthesis process.

Structured Integrative Evidence-Synthesis Process

Figure 1. Structured integrative evidence-synthesis process used to derive and audit the curriculum framework.

3. CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS: FROM A CONTENT INVENTORY TO CAPABILITY ARCHITECTURE

3.1 Human capital is necessary but insufficient

Human-capital theory frames education as investment in productive knowledge and skill (Becker, 1964), which is still important, since business graduates must possess true competence in finance, accounting, marketing, operations, economics, strategy and people management. However, used alone, this approach reduces employability to a list of marketable skills. Tomlinson's (2017) graduate-capital theory broadens this account to human, social, cultural, identity and psychological capitals.

A broader perspective requires productive capability and adaptive agency. Graduates must be able to communicate, collaborate across cultures, build trust, refuse unethical instructions and learn new technologies, not simply matching current job requirements. The CareerEDGE model by Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007) similarly links subject knowledge and experience with generic skills, emotional intelligence, reflection and self-efficacy.

3.2 Constructive alignment: curriculum quality is an alignment problem

Biggs' (1996) constructive alignment model provides the pedagogical mechanism: learning outcomes define the performances that students are expected to demonstrate, teaching activities elicit them and assessment evaluates them at the intended cognitive level. The curriculum reform fails where new content is introduced without changing pedagogy and assessment - for example, claiming AI literacy, but rewarding uncritical text production, or promoting sustainability, but assessing only short-term financial optimisation.

Alignment must occur at program level. Decision-making requires repeated analysis of data, assumptions, uncertainty and recommendations; Master's-level judgement requires incomplete and conflicting evidence, not only well-structured textbook cases. Outcomes, activities, assessment and feedback must be developed together.

3.3 Experiential learning and authentic practice

According to Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory, capability emerges only when experience is linked to reflection, conceptualisation and experimentation. Therefore, work-integrated learning, simulations and live projects are not automatically educational. As shown by Jackson (2015) and Vlachopoulos and Pachni Tsitiridou's (2026) review of 84 studies, the outcomes of such programs depend on their design, authentic professional engagement and structured reflection.

Business curricula must create an experience-reflection-conceptualisation-application cycle through cases, simulations, placements, live projects and reflective analysis. The degree becomes a portfolio of accumulating consequential decisions, not just a collection of unconnected modules.

3.4 Dynamic capabilities as a theory of curriculum governance

Teece, Pisano and Shuen's (1997) dynamic capabilities theory shifts attention to the organisation. Applied to curriculum governance, schools must sense changes in technology, employment, regulation and society; prioritise enduring educational needs; and reconfigure curriculum, assessment, faculty development and partnerships. This would avoid both curricular inertia and fashion-chasing.

3.5 Integrated conceptual framework

Figure 2 integrates the theoretical foundations into a single model linking graduate capability, learning architecture and curriculum governance.

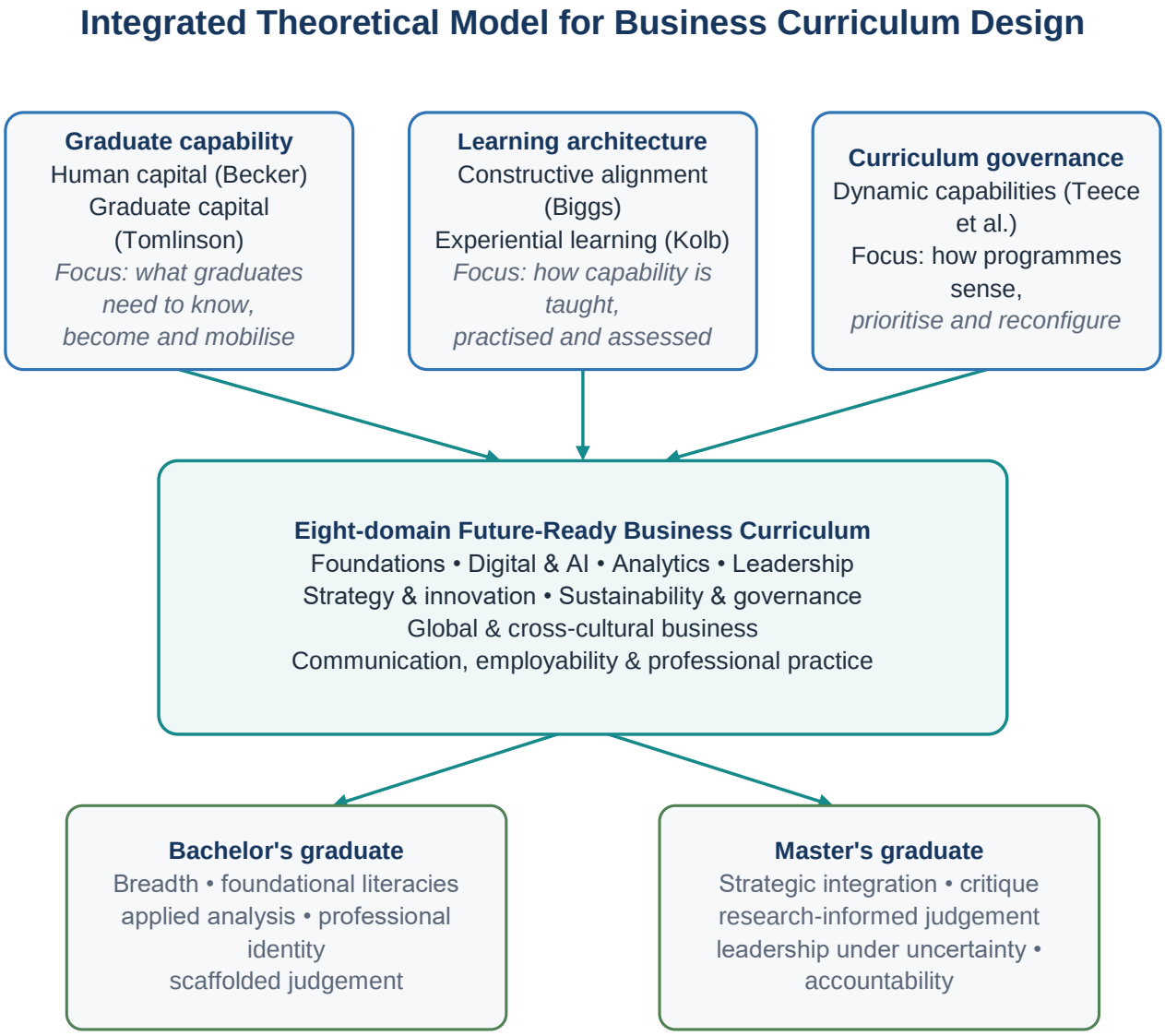

Figure 2. Integrated theoretical model linking graduate capability, learning architecture and curriculum governance.

Combining these theories reveals different but complementary roles of these theories. Human-capital and graduate-capital perspectives determine productive, social, identity and adaptive capacities that a degree should develop. Constructive alignment explains how program outcomes, teaching activities and assessment should align. Experiential learning explains why capability requires experience-reflection-conceptualisation-reapplication cycles, not mere exposure to practice. Dynamic-capabilities theory shifts the attention to the business school as an organization: the organization must continually sense changes, prioritise enduring requirements and reconfigure curricula, faculty capability and partnerships. The integrated framework in Figure 2, thus, connects graduate formation, learning architecture and curriculum governance rather than treats them as separate issues.

Such integration clarifies the normative position of this paper. Employability is necessary but not sufficient condition: a curriculum should develop graduates to obtain and perform their jobs as well as question organizational objectives, analyse evidence, consider stakeholder consequences and behave responsibly. This is especially important for business education, since managers' decisions can allocate risks and rewards to employees, consumers, communities and ecosystems (Colombo, 2023; André, 2025).

4. RESULTS OF THE EVIDENCE SYNTHESIS

4.1 Cross-source demand signals

The evidence supports a different approach to knowledge in the business discipline rather than the abandonment of traditional business knowledge. Specifically, the evidence suggests that the nature of the relationship between disciplinary knowledge, digital capability and human judgement needs to be revised. Figure 3 shows selected demand signals for business curriculum renewal separately represented in evidence cards since their percentages come from different respondents, questions and instruments. These are directional signals, and not measures to compare, and their analytical power lies in convergence of independent sources indicating a rise in demand for AI fluency, analytical reasoning, sustainability competence and continuing belief in the value of graduate management education when these competences are incorporated. Table 2 below connects the external signals to the curriculum implications and evidential cautions.

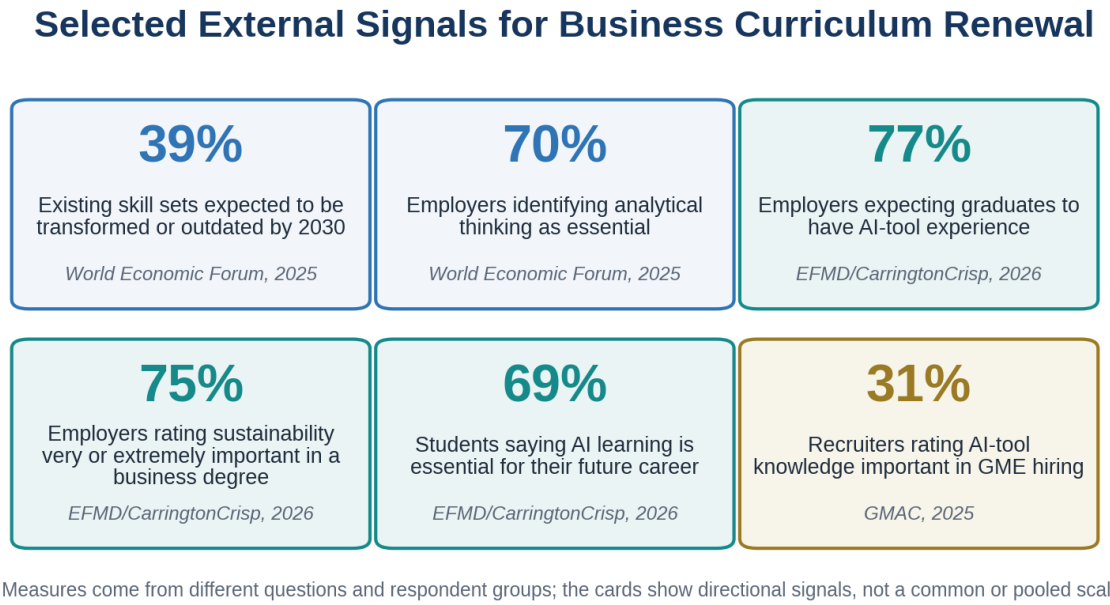

Figure 3. Selected external demand signals for business curriculum renewal. Sources: World Economic Forum (2025); GMAC (2025); EFMD and CarringtonCrisp (2026). Measures come from heterogeneous questions and respondent groups and should not be interpreted as a common scale or pooled statistic.

Table 2. Triangulated external evidence informing the proposed curriculum framework.

Evidence source	Selected evidence	Curriculum implication	Critical caution
World Economic Forum (2025)	Employers expect 39% of workers' existing skill sets to be transformed or become obsolete by 2030; analytical thinking is one of the top core skills, and AI/big data and technological literacy are among the fast growing skill categories.	Develop analytical, digital and AI capability along with adaptability, creativity and lifelong learning skills.	Employer expectations are forecasts and not direct measures of learning effectiveness.
EFMD/CarringtonCrisp (2026)	The multi-stakeholder study conducted in 2026 received 1,863 answers in total. Employers responded 77% of whom expected new graduates to have AI-tool experience, 58% believed that universities were not doing enough regarding AI and 75% considered sustainability as very or extremely important issue for business degree programs.	Approach AI and sustainability as transversal capabilities with clearly specified learning outcomes and practices.	Stakeholders have different preferences; students, academics and employers prefer different ways to incorporate the capabilities into the business degree program.

Evidence source	Selected evidence	Curriculum implication	Critical caution
GMAC (2025)	The study involved 1,108 recruiters and hiring managers in 46 countries. 31% identified knowledge of using AI tools as an important capability in recruiting graduate management education talent (26% in 2024), although the year-to-year changes are within the margin of error; problem solving, strategy and communication are central aspects.	Develop complementary human-AI capability rather than replacing core managerial skills with tool training.	Focused on graduate management education and recruiter perceptions; the reported year-on-year AI difference should not be treated as statistically decisive.
AACSB (2020, updated 2025)	The curriculum should be up-to-date, relevant, future-looking, global and agile with regard to new technologies; graduate programmes should foster synthesis and integration.	Differentiate degree levels by complexity and integration of the capabilities rather than add more content.	Accreditation standards specify expectations but not curriculum.
QAA (2023)	Business curricula comprise data analytics, digital business, evidence based decision making, sustainability, entrepreneurship, leadership and experiential learning.	Develop a broad business core with transversal digital, sustainability and professional practice capabilities.	A UK benchmark. Local qualification frameworks and missions are still relevant.

4.2 Evidence convergence and derivation of the eight domains

The eight domains resulted from the consolidation of the recurrent codes and challenging the resulting themes with the four evidence families. Table 3 below represents a qualitative evidence profile rather than a quantitative score. The labels 'explicit', 'supporting' and 'contextual' mean that the evidence in the anchor sources names, requires and explicitly recommends the domain respectively; they align with the capability empirically or conceptually and indirectly relate to it. While the selected citations provide a judgement trail, the full corpus of 44 sources is documented in Appendix B. It should be mentioned that the evidence profile is not an estimate of an effect size and does not imply equal methodological importance of each source and evidence family.

Table 3. Qualitative cross-source evidence profile for the eight-domain framework. Labels indicate the relationship of anchor evidence to each domain; they are not effect sizes or numerical scores.

Curriculum domain	Employer / labour market	Standards / benchmarks	Scholarly evidence	Theory / interpretation
Business foundations	Contextual - WEF (2025); GMAC (2025)	Explicit - AACSB (2020); QAA (2023)	Explicit - Pfeffer and Fong (2002); Rubin and Dierdorff (2009); Datar et al. (2010)	Human capital and constructive alignment. Foundation knowledge provides basis for valid analysis and proper use of AI.
Digital and AI literacy	Explicit - WEF (2025); EFMD/CarringtonCrisp (2026); GMAC (2025)	Explicit - AACSB (2020); QAA (2023); DigComp 3.0; UNESCO (2023)	Explicit - Abbasi et al. (2025); Csaszar et al. (2026); Kaul et al. (2026); Reicho et al. (2026); Ma et al. (2025)	Human agency, trust calibration and epistemic accountability.
Data analytics and decision-making	Explicit - WEF (2025); GMAC (2025)	Explicit - AACSB (2020); QAA (2023)	Supporting - Mohan et al. (2025); Abbasi et al. (2025); AI-education reviews	Human capital, research literacy and constructive alignment.

Curriculum domain	Employer / labour market	Standards / benchmarks	Scholarly evidence	Theory / interpretation
Leadership and people management	Explicit - WEF (2025); GMAC (2025)	Explicit - AACSB (2020); QAA (2023)	Explicit - Rubin and Dierdorff (2009); Succi and Canovi (2020); Mohan et al. (2025)	Graduate capital and experiential learning bridge interpersonal skills and professional identity.
Strategy, innovation and entrepreneurship	Explicit - GMAC (2025); WEF (2025)	Explicit - AACSB (2020); QAA (2023)	Explicit - Datar et al. (2010); Attah and Ndubuisi-Okolo (2026); Csaszar et al. (2026)	Experiential learning and dynamic capabilities enable opportunity evaluation and adaptation.
Sustainability, ethics and governance	Explicit - EFMD/CarringtonCrisp (2026)	Explicit - QAA (2023); PRME (2024)	Explicit - Wiek et al. (2011); Lambrechts et al. (2013); Lozano et al. (2017); André (2025); Hope and Molthan-Hill (2026)	Systems, normative and stakeholder reasoning; responsibility extends beyond firm-level optimisation.
Global and cross-cultural business	Contextual - global employer reports and multi-country samples	Explicit - AACSB (2020); QAA (2023)	Supporting - Succi and Canovi (2020); Olo et al. (2022); Colombo (2023)	Cultural and social capital; the outcomes should be locally contextualised.
Communication, employability and professional practice	Explicit - WEF (2025); GMAC (2025); EFMD/CarringtonCrisp (2026)	Explicit - AACSB (2020); QAA (2023)	Explicit - Jackson (2015); Olo et al. (2022); Chieng et al. (2024); Attah and Ndubuisi-Okolo (2026); Vlachopoulos and Pachni Tsitiridou (2026)	Graduate capital and experiential learning; authentic evidence should capture individual contribution.

The qualitative profile shows an asymmetry of the convergence rather than its equality. The domains of digital and AI literacy, analytics, sustainability and professional practice enjoy high employer signals together with standards and scholarship. The domains of business foundations and global or cross-cultural capability rely more on qualification benchmarks, established theory and the literature on management education relevance. This does not make them less significant domains; foundation knowledge is necessary to interrogate the AI-assisted analysis, and global capability should be interpreted within the local context. Thus, the profile rejects the short-term employer 'shopping list' and an undifferentiated statement about equal support of every domain.

4.3 Artificial intelligence, digital capability and the validity of assessment

AI requires a special focus due to its influence on the content of the curriculum and on the validity of the assessment. According to Csaszar, Jacobides and Zemsky (2026), management education may enter a new epoch due to the fact that GenAI can perform a substantial part of activities historically used for business-school teaching and assessment. In their business-education research review, Kaul et al. (2026) distinguish curriculum redesign, teaching practice, assessment integrity and professional skills as major themes. In their international study, Abbasi, Wu and Luo (2025) find out that the use of AI, faculty knowledge, institutional support and expectations correlate with the development of curriculum. Reicho et al.'s (2026) systematic review of 206 articles goes even further: GenAI literacy includes technical, personal/interpersonal, ethical and critical competencies, and evidence base is mostly conceptual rather than empirical. Similarly, Ma et al. (2025) argue that the reform of AI curriculum requires literacy, problem-oriented pedagogy and dynamic updating mechanisms. Higher-education research provides us with the same idea, however, it also warns about risks related to accuracy, cognitive dependence, integrity of assessment and ethical governance (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Kasneci et al., 2023; Tlili et al., 2023). Thus, these studies inform us about potential integration, but they also warn us against using the current set of tools as a final version of the curriculum.

These findings indicate that we need to make a distinction that is critical for the design of future-ready business curriculum. AI fluency is not the same as prompt fluency. In order to design a durable curriculum, it is important to train students to define the business problem, decide what kind of data is relevant, select an appropriate method of analysis or AI assistance, critically evaluate the output, identify false statements, test the sensitivity, evaluate risks, communicate the uncertainty and remain responsible for the decision. UNESCO (2023) similarly frames GenAI use with a focus on human agency, inclusion, privacy, ethics and pedagogical appropriateness. The European Commission's DigComp 3.0 framework (Cosgrove and Cachia, 2025) integrates AI competence transversally into the wider concept of digital competence rather than separating it as a technical speciality. Such an approach allows designing a programme-wide framework for responsible AI use.

4.4 Sustainability, responsibility and systems-level judgement

Similar design challenges are presented by the topic of sustainability. As QAA (2023) states, economic, social and environmental sustainability should be integrated across business and management functional areas, and PRME (2024) places the responsibility of an organisation to society and the planet at the core of management education. Research on the topic of sustainability competence highlights systems thinking, anticipatory and normative reasoning, strategic action and collaboration (Wiek, Withycombe and Redman, 2011; Lozano et al. 2017). In the context of management programmes, evidence suggests that sustainability competence is difficult to acquire through isolated content (Lambrechts et al., 2013). More recently, the debate within the area of management education becomes even more critical regarding business-centered sustainability: André (2025) argues that schools have to teach the change at the systemic level of ecology, not only 'sustainability for the firm', while Hope and Molthan-Hill (2026) emphasise the importance of practical evolution, climate solution literacy and cross-disciplinary implementation. However, a single sustainability module is insufficient if the finance, marketing, operations and strategy continue assessing decisions while considering environment and society as externalities to the managerial responsibility.

5. DEVELOPMENT OF THE FUTURE-READY BUSINESS CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

5.1 Relationship to existing frameworks and distinctive contribution

The existing standards and theories contribute to each other complementarily but partially. AACSB and QAA define expectations of business content, quality and qualification level; PRME emphasises the responsibility to society and the planet; DigComp and UNESCO provide definitions of digital and AI competence, human agency and governance; graduate-capital and CareerEDGE models expand the understanding of employability beyond simple job matching; constructive-alignment, experiential-learning and dynamic-capabilities theories explain the mechanisms of development and renewal of capability. None of the sources listed above aims to provide an integrated business-degree architecture that covers disciplinary content, AI, sustainability, employability, assessment, degree-level progression and curriculum governance. Table 4 shows how the proposed framework is related to these standards and theories and what boundary it covers.

Table 4. Relationship between established standards or theories and the proposed integrated curriculum architecture.

Framework / source	Primary contribution	Boundary of intended use	Role in the proposed architecture
AACSB business-accreditation standards	Relevant and globally oriented current business education; emerging technology; assurance of learning; graduate-level integration.	Outcome and quality standards rather than a prescribed whole-programme curriculum.	Anchors the business core, level differentiation, currency and assurance requirements.
QAA Business and Management benchmark and Master's characteristics	Subject breadth, data and digital business, sustainability, experiential learning, research, criticality and professional responsibility.	UK benchmark and qualification statements; not a continuous-renewal model.	Anchors domain coverage and the distinction between Bachelor's and Master's performance.
PRME principles	Responsibility to society and the planet; values-led responsible management education.	Not intended to be a complete disciplinary or assessment architecture.	Makes sustainability, ethics and governance a transversal rather than isolated concern.

Framework / source	Primary contribution	Boundary of intended use	Role in the proposed architecture
DigComp 3.0 and UNESCO GenAI guidance	Technology-neutral digital competence; AI literacy; privacy, ethics, inclusion and human agency.	Cross-sector guidance rather than business-degree or qualification-level design.	Informs programme-wide responsible AI use, verification and governance.
Graduate-capital and CareerEDGE models	Employability as knowledge, experience, networks, identity, psychological resources and career management capability.	Not intended to specify business content, AI, sustainability or programme governance.	Informs communication, professional identity, equity and cumulative employability development.
Constructive alignment, experiential learning and dynamic capabilities	Mechanisms of aligning outcomes and assessment, learning through action and reflection, and renewing institutional capability.	Process theories; they do not specify the content of a business degree.	Provide the learning, assessment and governance layers surrounding the eight domains.
Future-Ready Business Curriculum Framework	Eight interdependent domains, qualification progression, authentic assessment, implementation indicators and a renewal cycle.	Conceptual and adaptable; requires contextual and empirical validation.	Integrates the partial contributions into one traceable programme architecture.

5.2 Proposed capability architecture

Figure 4 presents four interacting layers. Future-ready graduate sits in the middle of the framework, surrounded by eight capability domains connected via programme-wide constructive alignment, experiential learning, authentic assessment and visible reasoning. Qualification progression differentiates between the broadness of the Bachelor's degree and synthesis, critique and leadership under uncertainty of the Master's one, while the dynamic curriculum governance ensures evidence-based renewal. Table 5 translates the architecture into the level-specific expectations and authentic evidence.

Future-Ready Business Curriculum Framework

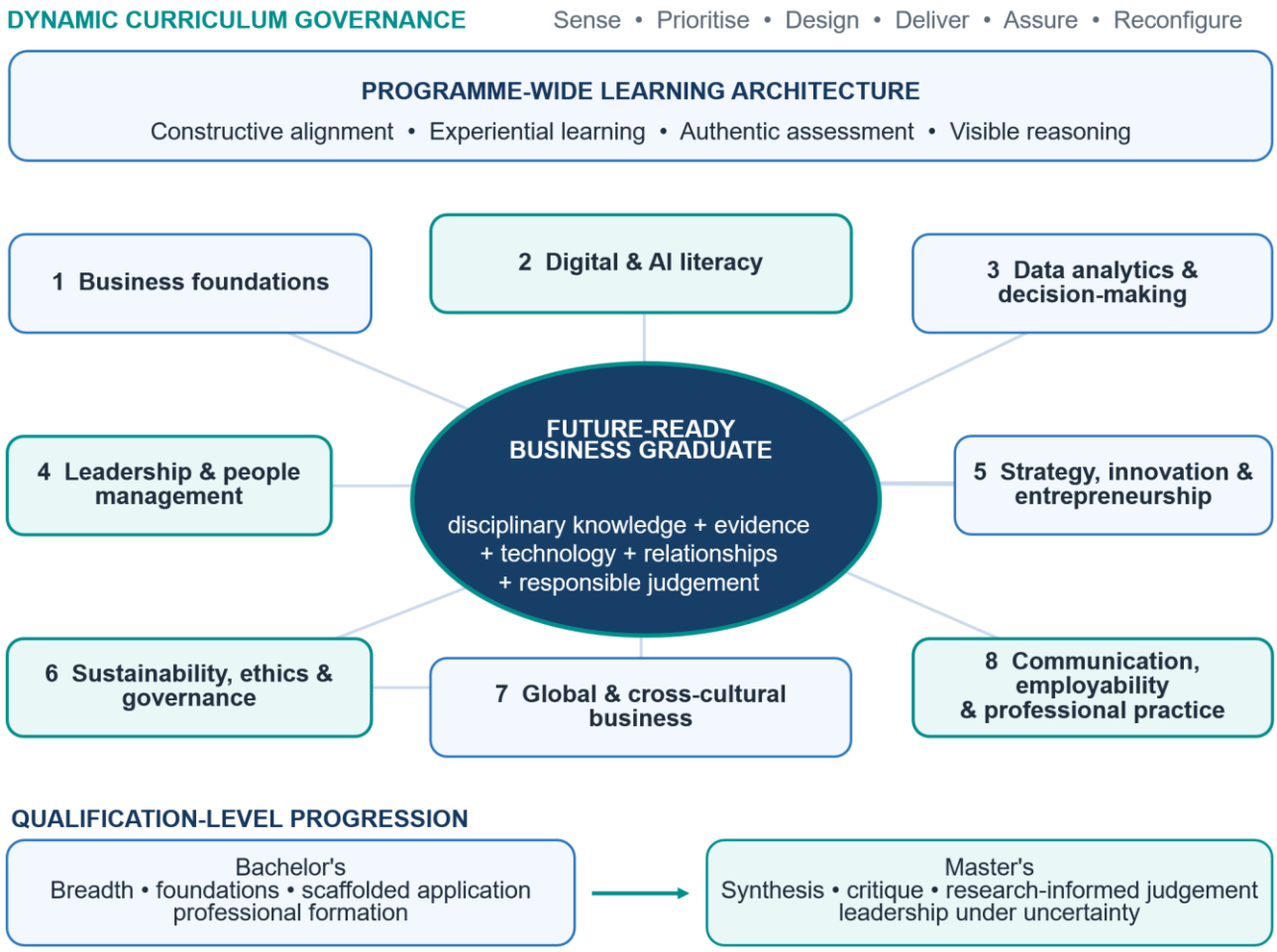

Figure 4. Future-Ready Business Curriculum Framework. The eight capability domains are connected to programme-wide learning architecture, qualification progression and dynamic curriculum governance. Original conceptual figure developed for this article.

Table 5. Progression across the eight curriculum domains.

Domain	Bachelor's emphasis	Master's emphasis	Indicative authentic evidence
1. Business foundations	Broad literacy across accounting, finance, economics, marketing, operations, people management, law and information systems.	Integration across functions; strategic trade-offs; interpretation of specialist evidence for enterprise-level decisions.	Integrated case, business diagnostic, management simulation.
2. Digital and AI literacy	Responsible use of common AI/digital tools; data/privacy awareness; verification; basic automation and digital workflow literacy.	AI strategy, governance, human-AI decision rights, digital transformation, implementation risk and organisational redesign.	AI-assisted analysis with audit trail, governance memo, transformation plan.
3. Data analytics and decision-making	Descriptive statistics, spreadsheet modelling, visualisation, research literacy, evidence evaluation and basic forecasting.	Advanced analytics for managerial decisions, uncertainty, experimentation, scenario analysis and model-risk critique.	Decision notebook, dashboard plus oral defence, scenario model.

Domain	Bachelor's emphasis	Master's emphasis	Indicative authentic evidence
4. Leadership and people management	Teamwork, communication, motivation, conflict, inclusion, self-management and professional identity.	Leadership under ambiguity, change, culture, power, negotiation, talent systems and cross-boundary influence.	Leadership simulation, stakeholder negotiation, reflective evidence portfolio.
5. Strategy, innovation and entrepreneurship	Competitive analysis, business models, opportunity recognition, design thinking and project fundamentals.	Strategic synthesis, innovation portfolio, ecosystem/platform thinking, entrepreneurial judgement and execution.	Board paper, live innovation challenge, venture/intrapreneurship proposal.
6. Sustainability, ethics and governance	ESG/sustainability foundations, business ethics, stakeholder impacts, responsible consumption/production and governance basics.	Sustainability strategy, climate/transition risk, responsible investment, integrated reporting, governance and accountability.	Materiality assessment, sustainability strategy, ethical decision hearing.
7. Global and cross-cultural business	International environments, institutions, culture, trade and inclusive collaboration.	Geopolitics, global strategy, non-market risk, cross-border governance and comparative institutional analysis.	Country/market entry analysis, geopolitical scenario exercise.
8. Communication, employability and professional practice	Academic/professional writing, presentation, teamwork, career management, networking and work-integrated learning.	Executive communication, consulting, client management, influence, professional judgement and lifelong-learning strategy.	Consultancy engagement, executive presentation, professional portfolio.

6. GUIDELINE FOR A BACHELOR'S DEGREE IN BUSINESS

A Bachelor's degree should provide intellectual breadth, disciplinary grounding and scaffolded application. AACSB defines accounting, economics, finance, management, management information systems, marketing and quantitative methods as characteristic business content at Bachelor's level, while QAA similarly emphasises finance, people and organizations, operations and innovation, data analytics/digital business, strategy, entrepreneurship and responsible management (AACSB, 2020; QAA, 2023). The mentioned foundations remain indispensable since the output of AI is useful if the user possesses enough domain knowledge to judge its relevance and error. Removal of the foundation on the premise that 'AI can do it' will result in dependency without the ability to judge.

However, the curriculum should still move away from isolated functional silos. For instance, a student might know discounted cash flow in finance, customer lifetime value in marketing, capacity constraints in operations and employee turnover in HR, but still fail to integrate them while making a strategic decision which has implications for all four of the functional areas. It means that integration has to be started early via common data sets, cross-module cases and progressively larger decisions. It should not be the first time when a student comes across a whole-business problem.

A good design heuristic for a curriculum is the seven-domain portfolio, expressed in ranges rather than in percentages. The ranges reflect three design principles: protect the substantial business and economic core; give visible room to digital, analytical, leadership, sustainability and global capabilities; and keep room for integrative professional practice. Institutions have to choose one value from each range in order to get a total of 100% for their final programme; the minimum and maximum values are not intended to be added across rows. A module may cover several domains - for example, sustainable supply-chain simulation will develop operations, analytics, sustainability and teamwork simultaneously. Table 6 provides the illustrative ranges.

Table 6. Illustrative Bachelor's curriculum portfolio. Institutions should select values within the ranges that total 100%; ranges are design heuristics, not empirical estimates or accreditation requirements.

Indicative design range	Curriculum purpose	Examples of learning
30-40%	Business and economic foundations	Accounting and finance; economics; marketing; operations/supply chain; organisational behaviour/HRM; business law; information systems.
10-20%	Data, digital and AI capability	Quantitative methods; spreadsheet/model literacy; statistics; visualisation; business intelligence; AI literacy; verification; privacy/cyber awareness.
10-15%	Leadership, communication and collaboration	Team processes; presentations; writing; negotiation; inclusion; self-management; career development.
10-15%	Strategy, innovation and entrepreneurship	Competitive analysis; business models; design thinking; entrepreneurship; project management; innovation.
5-10%	Sustainability, ethics and governance	Business ethics; ESG; climate and transition issues; responsible marketing/finance/operations; governance.
5-15%	Global/contextual and elective learning	International business; institutions; culture; geopolitics; languages or sector specialisms/electives.
10-15%	Experiential professional practice	Live client project, internship/placement, simulation, enterprise project or integrative capstone.

At Bachelor's level, AI should start with the literacy and responsible practice. The student should have knowledge about the capabilities and limitations of GenAI, prompt design as a minor technique rather than as a learning objective, source verification, hallucination, bias, privacy, intellectual property, cybersecurity, and the difference between prediction, generation and causal inference. Then, a student should apply AI in disciplinary tasks - for example, compare an AI-generated market analysis with primary data, audit a financial explanation against an annual report, or check whether an AI-based HR recommendation reproduces discriminatory assumptions. The educational goal is calibrated trust, neither prohibition nor uncritical adoption.

Data capability should be also applied in a similar way. Every graduate should feel comfortable to import and clean modest data sets, choose appropriate descriptive measures, construct defensible visualisations, interpret correlations carefully, communicate uncertainty and explain the managerial meaning of the results. Coding is valuable but it cannot become a substitute for the general data literacy in general business degrees. The durable outcome is the ability to reason with evidence and recognise the moment when specialist expertise is required.

Professional practice should be cumulative and equitable. Internships are valuable but access to them can be uneven due to geographic location, disability, caring responsibilities, visa restrictions or barriers to unpaid work. Therefore, a good programme should have multiple forms of professional practice: internships, live briefs, virtual consulting, simulations, student enterprise and employer-mentored projects. It is consistent with QAA's emphasis on authentic and experiential learning and with the research on work-integrated learning that has to be carefully designed, rather than just provided (Jackson, 2015; QAA, 2023). Every student should be able to graduate with the authentic evidence of having applied the theory to a consequential business problem.

In order to embed the employability, it is not enough to add a careers workshop to the end of a degree. Multi-stakeholder and intervention evidence suggests that career and professional development should be cumulated throughout the programme rather than performed once as a terminal activity (Olo, Correia and Rego, 2022; Chieng et al., 2024). Experiential entrepreneurship and work-integrated learning can develop the transferable capability when the authentic activity is combined with reflection and the evidence of learning (Attah and Ndubuisi-Okolo, 2026; Jackson, 2015; Vlachopoulos and Pachni Tsitiridou, 2026). Differences in student and employer priorities and industry 5.0 employability evidence additionally support the programme-wide professional-practice spine (Succi and Canovi, 2020; Mohan, Sharma and Dana, 2025).

7. GUIDELINE FOR A MASTER'S DEGREE IN BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT

A Master's degree should not be a compressed version of undergraduate business content. As QAA (2020) characterises the graduates of Master's programmes as those who have in-depth and advanced knowledge

informed by current scholarship and practice, critical awareness of current issues, research capability, professional responsibility and reflective ability. Similarly, AACSB expects higher-order synthesis and integration from graduate programmes, and expects general business Master's degrees to prepare students to lead organizations, manage globally, think creatively, make sound decisions under uncertainty and integrate knowledge across fields (AACSB, 2020).

This distinction should be evident in the learning outcomes and assessment. At Bachelor's level, students can be asked to apply a recognised framework correctly to a defined problem. At Master's level, students should be asked if the framework is appropriate, what assumptions it brings, what evidence would falsify the analysis, how stakeholders would interpret the decision and what should be done when models contradict each other. The Master's graduate should be able to explain the limitations of an analysis, not merely produce an elaborate one.

Illustrative Master's portfolio should also use ranges rather than a fixed allocation. Strategic integration can take up 15-25%; advanced analytics and AI-enabled management 10-20%; leadership, change and organizational capability 10-20%; innovation and entrepreneurship 5-15%; sustainability, ethics and governance 5-15%; global strategy, risk and geopolitics 5-15%; and research, consultancy or capstone work 15-25%. The institution should choose a coherent combination adding up to 100%. A good capstone should require students to diagnose the real or realistic organizational problem, gather and criticise the evidence, use analytics or AI tools transparently, evaluate alternatives, address implementation and governance issues and defend the recommendations to the expert audience. Table 7 summarises the ranges and expected performance.

Table 7. Illustrative Master's curriculum portfolio. Institutions should select values within the ranges that total 100%; ranges are design heuristics rather than empirical estimates.

Indicative design range	Master's curriculum purpose	Expected level of performance
15-25%	Strategic integration	Integrate finance, markets, operations, people, technology and risk; make trade-offs under uncertainty.
10-20%	Advanced analytics and AI-enabled management	Use and critique analytics/AI; evaluate model risk; design human-AI decision processes; govern data and automation.
10-20%	Leadership, change and organisational capability	Diagnose systems and culture; lead transformation; negotiate; manage power, talent, inclusion and resistance.
5-15%	Innovation and entrepreneurship	Evaluate innovation portfolios, ecosystems, business-model change and entrepreneurial options.
5-15%	Sustainability, ethics and governance	Integrate ESG/climate/social impacts into strategy, finance, operations and governance; defend responsible choices.
5-15%	Global strategy, risk and geopolitics	Evaluate institutional differences, geopolitical scenarios, supply-chain resilience and non-market risk.
15-25%	Research, consultancy or capstone	Design rigorous inquiry; synthesise evidence; create and defend an actionable, ethically justified recommendation.

At Master's level, AI should move from tool use to managerial architecture. Master's students will need to understand where value is created by AI, how use cases should be framed, what complements in terms of organisational processes are required, where decision rights lie between human and systems, how outputs can be monitored and accountability preserved. Recent research in the field of management and education is highly relevant in this context: if GenAI can take over some of the activities involved in case analysis, summarization and option generation, the educational premium shifts to framing, triangulation, counterfactual analysis, implementation judgement and ethical accountability (Csaszar, Jacobides and Zemsky, 2026; Kaul et al., 2026). A Master's curriculum focused on teaching students how to produce good-quality analyses is highly vulnerable to AI; a curriculum focused on teaching them how to question and govern intelligent analysis is not.

Accordingly, Master's students will need to be able to make choices as to what tasks should be automated, augmented or kept in human responsibility; design controls for bias, privacy and model risk; analyse organisational complements, including data quality, process design and capability; and justify the division of decision rights. This kind of accountability is consistent with both evidence from employers who consider AI

valuable alongside problem-solving, strategy formulation and communication skills (GMAC, 2025) and findings that technical proficiency can co-exist with poor ethical, critical or interpersonal competence (Reicho et al., 2026). Methods of research should remain core to the curriculum as well. In the context of an increasingly AI-rich environment, research literacy is becoming even more important. Managers need to be able to discern evidence from plausible language, causality from correlation, representative data from convenience samples, reliable measurement from vanity metrics, and uncertainty from false precision. Research methods are thus serving both academic standards and the decision quality of managers. Accordingly, capstone should be requiring transparent evidence chain and an explicit justification of any AI use in the case of the latter.

8. PEDAGOGY AND ASSESSMENT: DESIGNING FOR OBSERVABLE JUDGEMENT

Curriculum content cannot be considered separately from the design of assessments. The strongest response to GenAI is neither returning to purely closed-book examinations, nor allowing full AI use in all assessments. Both approaches are too simplistic. Assessment should be designed with the capabilities of interest in mind. If graduates are supposed to work with AI, then some assessments should allow and even require responsible use of AI. If graduates are expected to demonstrate independent foundational knowledge, then other assessments should test this knowledge without the use of any aids. And if graduates are supposed to exercise judgement, then assessment should allow observing this judgement.

A balanced assessment architecture could include four layers. First, the foundational mastery can be tested through individual tasks, short analytical exercises and oral questions. Second, applied capabilities can be tested through data analysis, cases, simulations and technical artefacts. Third, judgement can be tested through ambiguous problems, board papers, consulting briefs, scenario analysis and viva/oral defence. And fourth, professional development can be demonstrated through reflective portfolios, feedback from peers/clients and learning logs. This multi-method assessment architecture will be less susceptible to any single technology or format and will be consistent with AACSB's assurance of learning expectations and QAA's principles of authentic assessment. Table 8 shows how these four layers could be translated into the formats of assessment, AI policy and evidence of quality.

Assignments supported by AI should include the element of auditability. Students can be asked to submit a short statement of their use of AI, key prompts or workflow decisions, if applicable, source-validation notes, corrections of the AI-generated output, and reflections on the limitations. The point should not be in surveillance as an end in itself but in epistemic accountability. The student, who cannot articulate reasons for finding an AI-generated recommendation credible, is not exercising Master's-level judgement even if the final output looks polished.

An employability-focused curriculum can become too employer-led if the only design criteria are current preferences of employers. Universities also have an obligation to foster ethical reasoning, critical thinking, civic responsibility, and the ability to challenge harmful organizational practices. Tomlinson's (2017) graduate capital framework and PRME's (2024) responsible management principles provide support for a wider notion of graduate formation.

Table 8. Assessment architecture for an AI-augmented business curriculum.

Capability	Appropriate assessment forms	AI policy position	Evidence of quality
Foundational knowledge	Individual quizzes/exams, short calculations, concept explanations, oral checks.	Restricted or clearly controlled where independent recall/reasoning is the objective.	Accuracy, conceptual understanding, transparent working.
Applied analysis	Dataset task, case analysis, dashboard, simulation, operational plan.	Permitted where AI is part of authentic practice; workflow must be documented.	Method choice, data integrity, interpretation, validation.
Integrative judgement	Board paper, strategy memo, scenario analysis, live consultancy, viva.	AI may support option generation; student remains accountable for assumptions and recommendations.	Trade-off reasoning, uncertainty, stakeholder effects, defensibility.

Capability	Appropriate assessment forms	AI policy position	Evidence of quality
Professional capability	Team project, negotiation, presentation, reflective portfolio, client feedback.	Context-dependent; use should not erase individual contribution.	Communication, collaboration, ethical conduct, self-awareness, learning transfer.

9. CONTINUOUS CURRICULUM RENEWAL: A DYNAMIC-CAPABILITY MODEL

The rapid pace of technological innovation creates the problem of governance: tool-specific content can become out-of-date faster than the annual module review, while foundational concepts should not be revised casually. Layered renewal, therefore, allows distinguishing between durable foundations, regularly renewed applied methods and cases, and rapidly changing tools, provided through short courses or bootcamps or micro-credentials. Figure 5 employs dynamic capabilities logic as a closed six-stage cycle: sense of the outcomes and external changes, prioritisation of durable mission-related capabilities over transient tools, design of curriculum in light of the alignment of outcomes, content, pedagogy and assessment, delivery depending on faculty capability and external engagement, assurance of authentic performance, and reconfiguration of curriculum, resources, partnerships and faculty development before the next stage of sensing.

Dynamic-Capability Model for Continuous Curriculum Renewal

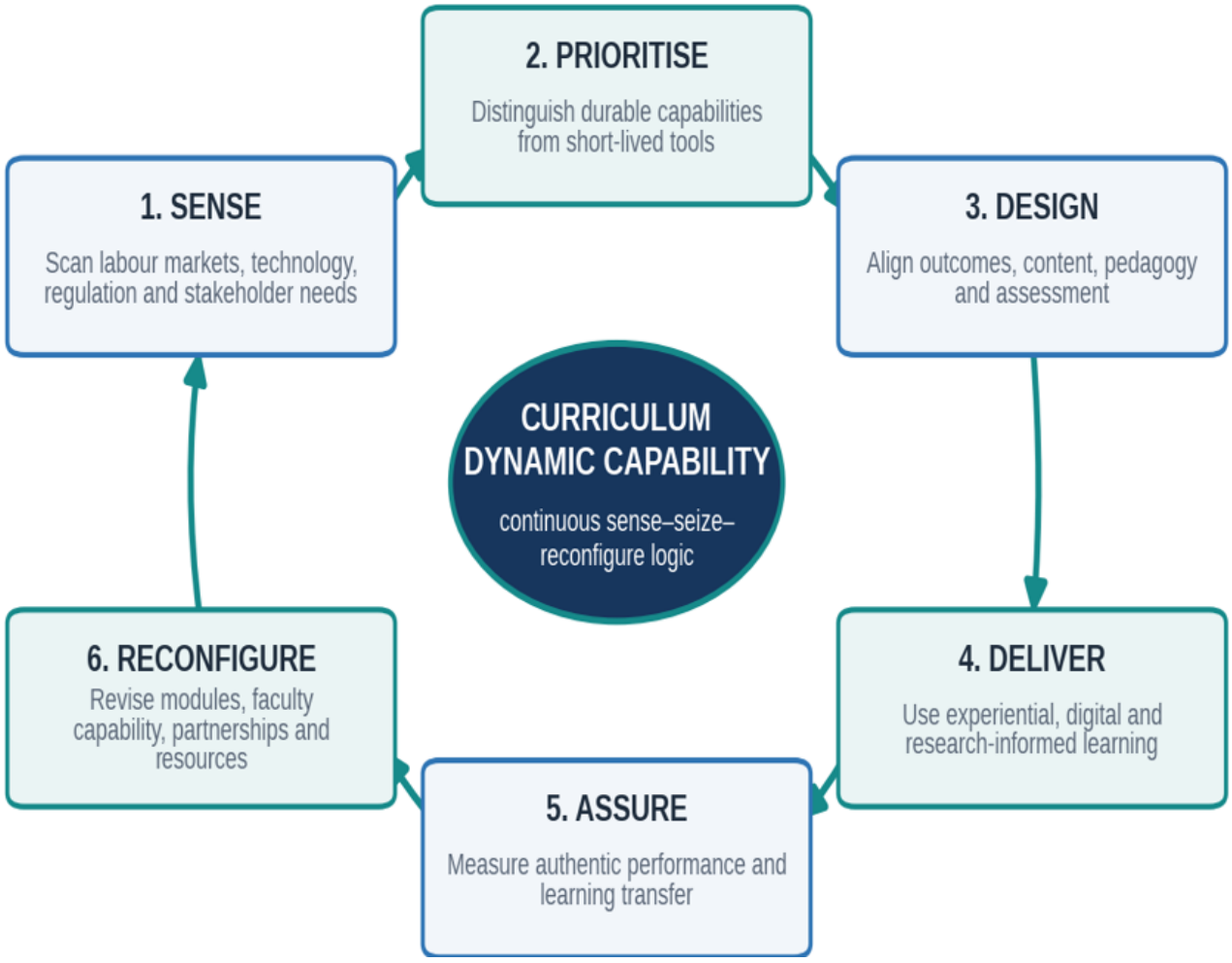

Figure 5. Dynamic-capability model for continuous curriculum renewal, adapted conceptually from Teece, Pisano and Shuen (1997) and applied to programme governance.

At the same time, the above approach also deals with faculty capability. The curriculum will not be credible in requiring AI-enabled analysis, sustainability integration and advanced experiential assessment without appropriate development and workload models for faculty. EFMD/CarringtonCrisp (2026) evidence is quite illustrative in this respect: although faculty recognise potential benefits of AI, they also express concern about ethical, intellectual property and data protection issues, while students think they know more about AI than their professors. Consequently, curriculum renewal will also have to involve faculty learning communities, practitioner collaboration, access to secure institutional tools, assessment redesign and time for experimenting. Adoption of new technologies without developing faculty will result in surface-level integration.

Programme governance should rely on an external advisory board, however with safeguards against its capture by short-term interests of employers. Membership of the board should include employers from different industries, alumni, professional bodies, entrepreneurs, experts in sustainability/ethics and technology/data and academic staff. The evidence reviewed annually should include graduate destinations, employer feedback, performance in assessments, comments from external examiners, student experience, inclusivity gaps, placement opportunities, patterns of academic integrity, and emerging external requirements. Major revisions of the curriculum could be made on a 3-5-year cycle, while cases, datasets and tool-specific learning would need to be updated annually or even more often.

10. CRITICAL DISCUSSION: TENSIONS A HIGH-QUALITY CURRICULUM MUST MANAGE

10.1 Breadth versus depth

The first tension relates to curricular overload. Addition of discrete modules on each emerging topic inevitably means breadth without depth. Hence, the framework uses AI, sustainability, ethics, communication, and evidence use as transversal capabilities practiced through the functional subjects, while providing spaces dedicated to conceptual depth (Lambrechts et al., 2013).

10.2 Durable capabilities versus tool-specific training

The second tension lies in the relationship between employability and rapid obsolescence of training. While students need to get familiar with existing tools and technologies, software-specific training becomes obsolete quickly. The technology-neutral position of DigComp 3.0 recommends evaluation of the following principles - data quality, workflow design, verification, privacy, model limitations, and human oversight - with contemporary tools being just a context rather than the ultimate goal of the curriculum (Cosgrove and Cachia, 2025).

10.3 AI productivity versus epistemic dependency

The third tension is about cognitive offloading. GenAI can increase efficiency of drafting, summarisation, ideation, and coding. However, efficiency can be misleading regarding understanding and hence assessment validity (Kaul et al., 2026). Therefore, the curriculum needs to encourage “productive friction” - students build or demonstrate understanding of the concept first, use AI to perform better, and finally compare assumptions, evidence, and mistakes of humans and machines.

10.4 Employability versus the wider purpose of higher education

While employability is important, it is not sufficient by itself. A purely employability-driven curriculum turns into narrow vendor training. Given the distribution of resources, risks, and opportunities among various stakeholders, graduates should have judgement related to ethics, society, and the environment, in addition to skills that are in demand in the labor market. This broader purpose is confirmed by the reports of QAA (2023), PRME (2024), and EFMD/CarringtonCrisp (2026) on sustainability-related demands.

10.5 Global standardisation versus contextual relevance

The fifth tension concerns global comparability and local relevance. The transferable principles are endorsed by AACSB, QAA, PRME, and international employers' reports. However, regulation, dominant industries, entrepreneurship ecosystems, cultural factors, and priorities of sustainability are different in each jurisdiction. Therefore, the framework provides the specified common outcome domains, but requires localisation of case studies, sectors, technologies, and regulatory contexts. It is an architectural framework, not a syllabus.

10.6 Evidence quality, causality and curriculum fashion

The sixth tension is related to evidence quality. Employer reports are recent and relevant, but they usually measure perceptions or expectations; accreditation standards are authoritative, but normative; and much of GenAI research remains conceptual or rapidly evolving (Reicho et al., 2026). Neither one percentage nor one publication can serve as the justification for mandatory modules. Any durable change will require cross-family evidence. Tool-specific

content should be located in electives, workshops, and micro-credentials until the evidence is established. Triangulation should precede any curricular commitments to protect the universities from inertia and fad chasing.

10.7 Master's-level value versus credential inflation

A seventh tension is the risk that Master's programmes become longer lists of advanced-sounding topics without a commensurate increase in intellectual demand. Reusing the same frameworks and assessment forms with more reading produces content inflation rather than level progression. QAA and AACSB instead point to critical awareness, research capability, synthesis and judgement under uncertainty; the Master's premium should be visible in what students can integrate, defend and take responsibility for.

This distinction affects admission, teaching and assessment. Entrants without prior business study may require accelerated foundations, but this should not displace advanced synthesis. Master's assessment should require explicit engagement with evidence quality, competing models, uncertainty, implementation, ethics and stakeholder consequences, distinguishing the qualification through epistemic and strategic maturity rather than vocabulary or workload.

11. IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINE FOR UNIVERSITIES AND BUSINESS SCHOOLS

The framework can be operationalised through ten design rules. First, the program graduate capabilities should be defined before module content is planned. Second, each capability should be mapped across introduction, development, and mastery stages to ensure visible progression. Third, a rigorous functional business core should be protected, with AI, data, sustainability, and ethics embedded in them. Fourth, Bachelor's and Master's programs should be differentiated by cognitive complexity - breadth and application at the Bachelor's level; synthesis, judgement in uncertainty, critique, research, and leadership judgement at the Master's level. Fifth, all students should complete meaningful authentic learning, and not just optional internships available to a part of students. Sixth, assessment should involve a combination of methods ensuring observability of individual reasoning, and selective rather than uniform use of AI. Seventh, responsible-AI curriculum policy addressing data/privacy, disclosure, verification, intellectual property, tool access, and human accountability should be developed. Eighth, both dedicated and embedded sustainability learning should be employed so that climate, social, and governance-related issues impact decisions in finance, marketing, operations, HR, and strategy. Ninth, faculty capability and industry/third-sector partnership as curriculum infrastructure, not enrichment, should be developed. Finally, dynamic renewal cycle based on evidence and thresholds for change should be implemented. Appendix A gives an example of the progression map from Bachelor Year 1 to the Master's capstone.

Implementation should be measurable, rather than inferred from new module titles. Some suggested programme-level indicators include: percentage of core modules using authentic assessment; percentage of students completing live or simulated external projects; attainment of AI, data, sustainability, and professional-practice outcomes; employers'/alumni feedback on specific capabilities; access gaps in placements and other forms of experience; external examiner evidence of degree-level challenge; ability to defend AI-assisted work orally; and percentage of curriculum changes linked to documented evidence. They align curriculum review with capabilities rather than relevant topics. Table 9 shows the indicators and evidence.

Table 9. Programme-level implementation and assurance indicators.

Indicator	What it tests	Illustrative evidence
Authentic-assessment coverage	Whether programme claims are translated into practice	% of core modules using cases, datasets, simulations, live briefs or professional artefacts
External-engagement access	Whether every student can apply learning beyond the classroom	% completing placement, live consultancy, virtual client project or validated simulation
Capability attainment	Whether priority outcomes are actually learned	Assurance-of-learning results for AI/data, sustainability, communication and integrated judgement
Reasoning visibility	Whether students can explain and defend their work	Oral defence/viva performance; audit trail for AI-assisted tasks
Equity of opportunity	Whether experiential and digital opportunities are inclusive	Participation gaps by student group, disability, visa/work constraints or tool access
External challenge	Whether degree level and relevance are credible	External examiner, employer/client and professional-body feedback

Indicator	What it tests	Illustrative evidence
Evidence-linked renewal	Whether curriculum changes are justified	% of major changes linked to documented external or learning-outcome evidence

12. IMPLICATIONS FOR UNIVERSITIES, ACCREDITATION BODIES AND EMPLOYERS

12.1 Universities and business schools

Institutions need to start from defining programme-level graduate capabilities and mapping where each of them is introduced, developed, and mastered. Eight domains should not be mapped one-to-one into eight modules; cross-functional cases, datasets, simulations, and capstones can integrate multiple capabilities, while reducing overload. Faculty capability, secure tools, pedagogic infrastructure, and external engagement are necessary curriculum infrastructure, not enrichment.

12.2 Accreditation and professional bodies

Accreditors and professional bodies can promote curriculum agility by specifying outcome and evidence requirements, rather than prescribing comprehensive content inventory. Assurance should distinguish between mere topic inclusion and students' demonstrated performance: curriculum maps referring to AI or sustainability represent weak evidence, if students are not required to use, criticise, and defend them.

12.3 Employers and external partners

Employers need to participate in curriculum co-design, as clients, mentors, and evaluators, but not as the sole custodians of the curriculum. The most valuable contribution of employers is contextual - live problems, constrained data, stakeholder ambiguity, and feedback on professional standards. Advisory structures should cover various sectors and include alumni, entrepreneurs, civil society, sustainability and technology experts, to make sure that practice relevance promotes academic criticism.

13. Limitations and research agenda

The framework is conceptual and evidence-based, rather than experimentally validated. Employer and stakeholder surveys measure perceived importance and expected demand, but cannot prove that particular modules lead to better employment or management performance. International reports aggregate data across industries and jurisdictions. The purposive review was unable to keep track of screening counts of each database. Coding was done by one reviewer only; Appendix B improves traceability, but not the inter-rater reliability and completeness of literature. Proposed credit range is only a heuristic and should be tested against the local qualification frameworks, program missions, and graduate outcomes. GenAI evidence base is rapidly evolving; certain technologies or practices mentioned above might outpace the traditional publications cycle.

Further empirical research is needed to test the framework in multiple ways. Longitudinal studies can examine how the capability profiles of graduates predict their employment quality, adaptability, responsible decision making, or progression. Quasi-experiments can compare different AI integration and authentic assessment modalities. Curriculum-mapping studies can analyse whether declared transversal priorities of the university, such as sustainability, manifest in the actual learning. Employer studies should move beyond the stated preferences to hiring and performance outcomes. Finally, equity-focused research should evaluate whether placement, paid digital tools, or AI-enhanced learning creates inequality in access to graduate capital.

14. CONCLUSION

The review reveals, in response to RQ1, a hybrid capability profile, rather than a choice between traditional business knowledge and novel technologies. Contemporary graduates need business foundations, data and digital literacy, responsible AI capability, leadership and communication skills, strategic and entrepreneurial thinking, sustainability and governance competence, global awareness, and significant professional practice. These domains are mutually reinforcing: AI without business knowledge leads to brittle judgement; analytics without ethics optimises the wrong goal; sustainability without finance and operations is rhetoric; and leadership without evidence is opinion.

Answering RQ2, the synthesis suggests capability differentiation by performance quality. Bachelor's programs should develop breadth, foundational quantitative and digital skills, professional identity, and repeated application to increasingly ambiguous problems. Master’s programs should require strategic integration, research-informed critique, governance of AI and data, leadership in uncertainty, and accountability for complex stakeholder consequences. The Master's premium resides in synthesis and judgement, not vocabulary growth or increased reading.

Finally, answering RQ3, the framework moves from topic coverage to capability architecture. Constructive alignment should make priority capabilities observable in the assessment; experiential learning should provide repeated cycles of action and reflection; transparent AI policy should make human accountability visible; and dynamic governance should distinguish durable concepts from transitory tools. Business schools need to ask not about topics, but about what graduates can reliably do, explain, question, and be responsible for. With intelligent systems able to generate competent-looking analyses quickly, the unique value of business education is problem framing, evidence interrogation, cross-functional integration, ethical responsibility, collaboration, and judgement.

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Appendix A. Example programme-level curriculum map

Appendix Table A1. Illustrative progression map; institutions should adapt to national qualification frameworks and programme missions.

Stage	Primary focus	Typical experiences	Programme-level evidence
Bachelor Year 1 / Level 4 equivalent	Foundations and academic/professional literacies	Business functions; economics; quantitative foundation; digital and AI foundation; teamwork; introduction to ethics and sustainability.	Controlled individual assessment; initial data analysis task; team exercise; reflective learning plan.
Bachelor Year 2 / Level 5 equivalent	Application and cross-functional connection	Analytics; operations; people management; finance and marketing integration; international dimension; responsible AI; real-world or simulated client challenge.	Cross-functional case study; data dashboard; group project with individual defence; employer review.
Bachelor Year 3 / Level 6 equivalent	Integration, independence and professional practice	Strategy; innovation; sustainability/governance; advanced electives; placement/live consultancy; capstone.	Independent project/capstone; board-style presentation; portfolio of professional evidence.
Master's taught phase / Level 7 equivalent	Advanced synthesis and judgement	Strategic integration; AI/digital transformation; advanced analytics; leadership/change; global risk; sustainability strategy; research methods.	Ambiguous case study; scenario analysis; executive report; oral defence; research design.
Master's capstone	Independent evidence-based impact	Applied research, consultancy, venture or organisational transformation project.	Transparent evidence chain; implementation analysis; ethical/governance appraisal; client/expert presentation or viva.

Appendix B. Source-level evidence audit trail

Table B1 shows the resulting corpus of 44 sources and the role of evidence within the process of concept development. This table acts as a source audit rather than as a PRISMA screening checklist, since duplicate-free candidate numbers were not kept. The abbreviations used for domains are the following: BF (business foundations); DAI (digital and AI literacy); AD (analytics and decision-making); LPM (leadership and people

management); SIE (strategy, innovation and entrepreneurship); SEG (sustainability, ethics and governance); GCB (global and cross-cultural business); and CEPP (communication, employability and professional practice).

Appendix Table B1. Final source corpus, assigned evidential function and principal contribution.

Source	Evidence family / design	Primary evidential role	Principal domain(s) and caution
AACSB (2020; updated 2025)	Standards / accreditation	Business-content currency, emerging technologies, global orientation, assurance of learning, graduate integration.	BF, DAI, AD, LPM, SIE, GCB, CEPP. Normative and non-prescriptive.
Abbasi, Wu and Luo (2025)	Scholarly empirical; international faculty/student study	Institutional support, faculty knowledge, AI use and expectations associated with curriculum-development activity.	DAI. Association rather than causal curriculum effect.
André (2025)	Scholarly conceptual	Systems-level ecological responsibility in business and management education.	SEG. Normative argument.
Attah and Ndubuisi-Okolo (2026)	Scholarly mixed-method evidence	Experiential and reflective entrepreneurship education linked to transferable capability and work-readiness.	SIE, CEPP. Context-dependent.
Becker (1964)	Theory	Human-capital rationale for productive knowledge and skill development.	BF, CEPP. Insufficient if used as a narrow employability model.
Bennis and O'Toole (2005)	Scholarly critique	Practice relevance and the limitations of excessively abstract business-school models.	BF, SIE, CEPP. Conceptual critique.
Biggs (1996)	Learning theory	Constructive alignment among outcomes, activities and assessment.	All domains. Pedagogic rather than content-specific.
Braun and Clarke (2006)	Methodological source	Iterative thematic coding and higher-order theme development.	Review method only.
Chieng et al. (2024)	Scholarly empirical intervention	Embedded career-management learning and perceived employability among business students.	CEPP. Context and self-report limitations.
Colombo (2023)	Scholarly conceptual	Civic purpose and responsibility in management education.	SEG, CEPP. Normative argument.
Cosgrove and Cachia (2025)	Digital competence framework	Technology-neutral digital competence with AI integrated transversally.	DAI, AD. Not business-degree-specific.
Csaszar, Jacobides and Zemsky (2026)	Scholarly conceptual / strategic analysis	How GenAI changes management-education tasks, value and assessment.	DAI, SIE, assessment. Forward-looking.
Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007)	Employability model	CareerEDGE: subject knowledge, experience, generic skills, emotional intelligence, reflection and self-efficacy.	CEPP, LPM. Conceptual model.
Datar, Garvin and Cullen (2010)	Scholarly book / framework	Balance among knowing, doing and being in management education.	BF, LPM, SIE, CEPP. Broad framework.
Dwivedi et al. (2023)	Multidisciplinary scholarly perspectives	GenAI opportunities, risks, governance and implications for research and practice.	DAI, SEG, assessment. Early-stage and largely conceptual.

Source	Evidence family / design	Primary evidential role	Principal domain(s) and caution
EFMD and CarringtonCrisp (2026)	Employer, student and faculty survey report; 1,863 responses	AI-tool expectations, perceived university gaps and sustainability importance.	DAI, SEG, CEPP. Perceptions across heterogeneous stakeholder groups.
GMAC (2025)	Recruiter/employer survey; 1,108 respondents in 46 countries	AI-tool knowledge, problem-solving, strategic thinking, communication and interpersonal capability.	DAI, AD, SIE, CEPP. Graduate-management and recruiter focus.
Hope and Molthan-Hill (2026)	Scholarly conceptual	Climate-solution literacy and practical evolution of management education.	SEG. Conceptual.
Jackson (2015)	Scholarly higher-education study	Work-integrated-learning barriers, design conditions and employability-skill development.	CEPP, LPM. Outcomes depend on experience quality.
Kasneci et al. (2023)	Scholarly review / perspective	Educational opportunities and risks of large language models.	DAI, assessment. Broad higher-education scope.
Kaul et al. (2026)	Scholarly scoping review	GenAI in business education: curriculum, pedagogy, integrity and professional skills.	DAI, CEPP, assessment. Emerging field.
Kolb (1984)	Learning theory	Experience-reflection-conceptualisation-experimentation cycle.	CEPP, LPM, SIE. Experience alone is insufficient.
Lambrechts et al. (2013)	Scholarly curriculum analysis	Integration of sustainable-development competences in Bachelor management programmes.	SEG. Programme and context specific.
Lozano et al. (2017)	Scholarly literature review and framework	Links sustainability competencies with pedagogical approaches.	SEG, LPM. Broad higher-education synthesis.
Ma et al. (2025)	Scholarly curriculum-reform study	AI literacy, problem-oriented pedagogy and dynamic updating mechanisms.	DAI, governance. Rapidly developing evidence base.
Mohan, Sharma and Dana (2025)	Scholarly empirical	Analytical, cognitive, leadership and technology capabilities associated with management-graduate employability.	AD, LPM, DAI, CEPP. Context-specific association.
Olo, Correia and Rego (2022)	Scholarly multi-stakeholder study	Employer, student and academic perspectives on employability-oriented curriculum development.	CEPP, LPM. Stakeholder perceptions.
Pfeffer and Fong (2002)	Scholarly critique	Questions business-school outcomes and curriculum relevance.	BF, CEPP. Seminal but historically situated.
PRME (2024)	Principles / normative framework	Responsibility to society and the planet in management education.	SEG. Not a complete curriculum specification.
QAA (2020)	Qualification benchmark	Master's-level advanced knowledge, critical awareness, research capability and professional responsibility.	All domains and level progression. UK context.
QAA (2023)	Subject benchmark	Business content, analytics and digital business, sustainability, leadership, strategy and experiential learning.	Broad domain coverage. UK context.

Source	Evidence family / design	Primary evidential role	Principal domain(s) and caution
Reicho et al. (2026)	Systematic review; 206 studies	GenAI literacy as technical, personal/interpersonal, ethical and critical competence.	DAI, SEG, CEPP. Evidence base remains substantially conceptual.
Rubin and Dierdorff (2009)	Scholarly empirical analysis; competency data from 8,633 managers	Misalignment between required MBA curricula and managerial competencies.	BF, LPM, CEPP. Historical occupational data.
Snyder (2019)	Review-method source	Guidance on literature review designs and methodological fit.	Review method only.
Succi and Canovi (2020)	Scholarly empirical	Differences between student and employer perceptions of soft-skill priorities.	LPM, CEPP. Perception data.
Teece, Pisano and Shuen (1997)	Organisation theory	Dynamic capabilities: sensing, seizing and reconfiguring in changing environments.	Curriculum governance by analogy.
Tlili et al. (2023)	Scholarly case / perspective	ChatGPT opportunities, ethical risks and educational implications.	DAI, SEG, assessment. Early case evidence.
Tomlinson (2017)	Graduate-capital theory	Human, social, cultural, identity and psychological capitals in employability.	LPM, GCB, CEPP. Conceptual model.
Torraco (2005)	Review-method source	Guidance for integrative literature reviews and conceptual synthesis.	Review method only.
Tranfield, Denyer and Smart (2003)	Review-method source	Transparent, evidence-informed review in management research.	Review method only.
UNESCO (2023)	International guidance	Human agency, inclusion, privacy, ethics and pedagogic appropriateness in GenAI use.	DAI, SEG, assessment. Guidance rather than empirical effect evidence.
Vlachopoulos and Pachni Tsitiridou (2026)	Systematic review; 84 studies (2015-2025)	Authentic professional engagement, project/challenge learning and university-industry collaboration.	CEPP, LPM. Heterogeneous interventions and outcomes.
Wiek, Withycombe and Redman (2011)	Scholarly competence framework	Systems, anticipatory, normative, strategic and collaborative sustainability competencies.	SEG. Conceptual framework.
World Economic Forum (2025)	Employer / labour-market report	Forecast skill disruption; analytical thinking, AI/big data, adaptability, creativity and leadership.	DAI, AD, LPM, CEPP. Forecast and employer-perception evidence.