

## Damir Iskakov

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### Education

**Nazarbayev University | Foundation Year Program** (Astana, Kazakhstan) **September 2024 - May 2025**

- Completed advanced coursework in Mathematics, Physics, Academic English, and Leadership.
- Voluntarily audited additional university-level courses (non-credit): MATH 161–162 (University Calculus I–II), CSCI 151–152 (Intro to Computer Science & Data Structures), PHYS 161–162 (University Physics I–II), and WCS 151 (Writing & Rhetoric).

**National School Of Physics & Math** (Almaty, Kazakhstan) **September 2021 - May 2024**

- School Pride Award (top 5% of the class).
- Software Engineering Club founder; Isol Podcasts founder/interviewer; Mentor 300+ hours (Math, Physics, CS).

**Yandex Lyceum | Python programming & Data Science** **October 2021 - July 2023**

- Passed a nationwide, three-stage selection – 45/1000 accepted.
- Honor Graduate (top 3%) of the class for two consecutive years.

### Professional Experience

**Vetra AI** **March 2024 – Present**

*Co-Founder & CEO*

- Built a full-stack personal AI secretary that turns everyday messages into organized plans and tasks, acting as the invisible layer inside Telegram, WhatsApp, Gmail, Outlook, Asana, and Slack.
- Recognized among Top 100 Startups in Central Asia by Digital Business Magazine (2025)
- Top 15/300+ startups at Astana Hub Startup Garage Accelerator Program (3-month International Accelerator, guided by mentors from YC and StartX alumni).
- Selected for international accelerators: Gwangju Technopark (South Korea) and Hero Training (Silicon Valley, Draper University collaboration).
- Established partnerships with the Institute of Smart Systems and Artificial Intelligence (ISSAI) and UK startup Runa (\$200M valuation) to advance AI pilots.
- Secured \$200K in tech credits (Google, OpenAI, Microsoft, Cloudflare) and a \$600K pre-seed investment offer from an international VC fund.
- Featured in national media (1M+ reach) [\[1\]](#), [\[2\]](#), [\[3\]](#), [\[4\]](#), [\[5\]](#), [\[6\]](#), [\[7\]](#), [\[8\]](#).

**Research** **June 2025 – Present**

*The Rise of the AI-Augmented Solo-Founder: Redefining Team Structures in Early-Stage Startups*

- Conducting study on how AI reshapes early-stage team dynamics and founder decision-making.
- Interviewed 100+ founders from YC, StartX, and unicorn startups; research guided by Prof. Poh Kam Wong (MIT PhD, NUS Business School, top 2% most-cited researcher).
- Held discussions with Geoffrey Moore (Stanford '67, author of Crossing the Chasm, 1M+ copies sold) and the Higgsfield AI founding team (15M+ users, Fastest growing startup globally, Kazakhstan's first unicorn).
- Joined nFactorial Solo – a global accelerator for solo founders (100+ graduates) – as a mentor to observe how AI tools enable single-person startup growth in practice.

**nFactorial** **November 2025 – Present**

*Mentor/Speaker*

- Led the nFactorial Solo track for solo founders in AI, guiding participants from early-stage idea validation to interviews, MVP design, go-to-market strategy, and first sales.
- Taught the Generative AI track, demonstrating automation and generative AI use cases: deep dives into ChatGPT/Claude/Gemini, image and video generation, and no-code workflows in n8n with integrations into core business tools.

**BlueBots (Duke & Yale student startup)** **August 2025 – Present**

*Growth & Innovation Lead*

- Launched early pilot programs that expanded product adoption and positioned the startup for VC fundraising, refining long-term growth strategy.
- Formed partnerships with investors and top-tier researchers, improving AI product reliability and academic validation across multiple testing cycles.

**OyLab – Accelerator & Startup Battles** **August 2025 – Present**

*Co-Founder / Strategic Advisor*

- Scaled participants from 500 to 1,500+ across 4 new countries, elevating OyLab to an international level.
- Secured 10+ new partnerships with sponsors and organizations; increased prize pool 4x.

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- Expanded media presence and visibility, positioning OyLab as a leading accelerator for school-aged entrepreneurs.

### Research Assistant

October 2024 – April 2025

#### Nazarbayev University Foundation Program

- Conducted independent research on human trust in AI systems, examining how different AI explanations affect user perception and decision efficiency.
- Supervised by my English for Academic Purposes instructor; presented findings in a university-style research seminar and received peer feedback.
- Designed surveys and decision-making tasks; analyzed quantitative data using Python and Excel; synthesized academic literature on human–AI interaction and trust.

### BCC Invest JSC

June 2024 - August 2024

#### Software Engineer Intern

- Selected as the first high-school intern at a leading investment firm and Top-3 Kazakhstan bank subsidiary serving 380K+ users.
- Built and deployed an analytics dashboard for a major app update, visualizing client trading activity and purchasing trends to support internal decision-making.
- Integrated an AI-powered chatbot module (intent classification + smart replies), improving response accuracy and support speed for customer inquiries.

### Veritas AI (Deep Dive AI + Finances Cohort)

December 2023 - March 2024

#### Research Scholar & Coder

- Completed selective global AI research program (4–6% acceptance rate), awarded full financial aid.
- Developed machine learning model for credit card approval and fraud risk detection, analyzing bias and prevention methods in banking.
- Mentored by alumni and graduate students from Stanford and Harvard universities.

### RatingKZ

October 2023 - February 2024

#### Co-Founder

- Developed a nationwide platform helping students and parents find, compare, and review educational centers across Kazakhstan.
- Built verified rating and review systems, integrated Google Maps search, and designed comparison dashboards for transparency and accessibility.
- Graduated from Jas Ventures AI Accelerator (Top 10 of 70 startups) and earned 2nd place out of 30 teams at the American Space & MakerSpace STEM Incubation Program, strengthening product and community reach.

### Nobel Navigators

May - July 2023

#### Programming Mentor Intern

- Completed courses in Web Design, Leadership, Internet Troubleshooting, and Pitch Presentation.
- Mentored a Web Design course, teaching and guiding over 40 participants through hands-on projects and concepts.

### Upaze

September 2021 - May 2023

#### Founder

- Developed a web platform providing mock exams and interactive preparation tools for applicants to competitive STEM high schools.
- Digitized 1,000+ official exam questions and built an automated testing system with instant feedback and analytics.
- The platform is used by 500+ students for self-paced, high-quality preparation.

### Kazakh-British Technical University

June - August 2022

#### Admission Officer Assistant

- Reviewed over 6,000 applications, verifying official documents for accuracy and completeness.
- Managed daily operations by opening and closing the admissions office and addressing applicant inquiries.
- Trained new employees, ensuring they were well-versed in application processing and customer service protocols.