III World Higher Education Conference (WHEC 2021)
Guidelines for the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme
UNESCO Section of Higher Education

Content

Background

The UNESCO Section of Higher Education (ED/E30/HED) is responsible for supporting the Member States in strengthening their higher education (HED) systems under the human rights approach, the 2030 Development Agenda, and its pledge to *leave no one behind.* Within this framework, the Section promotes knowledge development, exchange, and dissemination; provides technical assistance; and develops policy recommendations to contribute to improving HED capacities at national, regional, and international levels. Among its main upcoming actions, the Section will lead the organization of the **Third World Higher Education Conference** (**WHEC2021**), which is expected to take place in Barcelona, on October 7-9, 2021 (see **Concept Note,** available in a separate file).

The WHEC2021 aims at *breaking away from the traditional models of higher learning and opening the door to new innovative, creative and visionary conceptions that not only serve the current global agendas for sustainable development, but also pave the way for a future learning community that speaks to all, is inclusive of all lifelong learners.*

The Conference and its preparatory events expect to define and prepare knowledge-based, participatory scenarios to shape a new era of HED systems (norms, policies, structures, stakeholders) and institutions (universities, specialized entities, think tanks, networks), particularly after the COVID-19 global crisis. The WHEC2021 will encompass the production and dissemination of data, information and knowledge; involvement of diverse stakeholders in all stages of the process; collaboration between experts and key stakeholders; definition of norms, administration and logistics for organization; communication and diffusion strategies; evaluation mechanisms focused on results.

Scope

As a valuable component of WHEC2021, all UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks are invited to participate before and during the conference's main event by producing and sharing knowledge as well as promoting policy dialogue. Specifically, UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks may participate in at least **three ways**:

- Activity A. Encouraging **policy dialogue by organizing consultations through focus groups** and producing correspondent consultation reports (see details below).
- Activity B. Elaborating one or more **policy briefs** under one of these modalities (see details below):
    o Individual (elaborated by one UNESCO Chair)
    o Collective (elaborated by two or more UNESCO Chairs or a UNITWIN Network)
- Activity C. Produce one or more **short videos** on a higher education relevant issue (see details below).

UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks may collaborate in activities A, B and C. Furthermore, one UNESCO Chair may present an individual policy brief and be also part of a collective policy brief.

To enhance synergies with the WHEC2021 agenda, it is strongly recommended that these activities be framed under the main themes of the conference (see detailed subthemes in **Annex 1**).

These contributions will enrich the process of updating knowledge and recommendations on higher education and prepare its road map in the framework of the 2030 Development Agenda. As appropriate, the UNESCO Chair or UNITWIN Network may consider UNESCO's references listed in **Annex 2**.

Activity A. Policy Dialogue and Consultation

UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks may encourage policy dialogue and consultation by organizing focus groups that will:
- Engage 8 to 12 persons participating on a voluntary basis.
- Take place between **February 15 and July 12, 2021**.
- Maximize participant's engagement by promoting inclusion and diversity (gender, ethnicity, nationality, knowledge field, different capacities, work experience, etc.)
- Be conducted by one or more moderators.
- Last between 90 and 120 minutes.

The agenda for the focus groups may follow these key points:

1. Introduction (Time: 10%).
2. Presentation of the WHEC2021 purpose and scope (separate ppt available) (Estimate time: 5%).
3. Questions and exchange (allocate maximum time possible) (Estimate time: 75%).
4. Wrap-up (Estimate time: 10%).

UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks are kindly requested to prepare a brief report of **1200 words** (**Template available in a separate Word file**) that will integrate central ideas produced by the correspondent focus group. Although the exchanges within focus groups may be conducted in any language, reports should be sent in one of three languages of the conference: **English, French, or Spanish**.

We will appreciate that consultation reports be sent via email to the email address **whec2021@unesco.org** or uploaded on the WHEC2021 website no later than **August 9, 2021** (11:59 pm, Paris Time).

Activity B. Policy Briefs

UNESCO Chairs may prepare policy briefs **individually** (one UNESCO Chair) or **collectively** (two or more UNESCO Chairs that agree to work together or a UNITWIN Network or UNTIWIN Networks that agree to work together).

Policy briefs are expected to synthesize relevant theory and practice on a specific issue relating to one of ten themes of the WHEC2021 (see **Annex 1**). Final versions of policy briefs should be submitted via email to this address: **whec2021@unesco.org**, or uploaded on the conference's website no later than **June 30th 2021** (11:59 pm, Paris time). If sent via email, insert the email's subject one of these titles as it corresponds:

- "*UNESCO Chair Policy Brief – Individual*" or
- "*UNESCO Chair Policy Brief – Collective*"
- "*UNITWIN Network, Policy Brief*" or
- "*UNITWIN Networks, Policy Brief, Joint Report*"

All documents complying with the requirements will remain available on the conference's website (be sure to see details in **Annex 3**).

Selection and publication of outstanding policy briefs

Evaluation teams organized by the Section of Higher Education will revise policy briefs (individual or collective) and will score them based on these criteria:

- Focus on a relevant, specific, current problem on higher education.
- Rigorous literature review (theory and practice).
- Relation to one or more of the conference's main themes.
- Clear recommendations or options for solutions.

Based on the assessment and recommendations provided by these teams, a board of 5 experts will select 10 to 15 outstanding policy briefs. **This selection will be published as a working document and delivered during the conference's main event**.

Activity C. Short Videos

As part of its Communication Strategy, the WHEC2021 encourages media creation, including videos. UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks are invited to produce and submit good-quality and creative videos on higher education challenges. Keep in mind that videos should:

- Be short - no longer than **4 minutes**
- **Focus on a specific question relating to the conference purpose** or **main themes**. See below a list of illustrative questions *(do not hesitate to think creatively and pose challenging, innovative questions and solutions):*
    - How higher education may become more inclusive?
    - How to help students to enter, stay and complete higher education?
    - How higher education can respond to changing workforce needs?
    - How higher education may contribute to sustainability of the planet?
    - How to overcome the digital divide in higher education?
    - Which strategies or practices lead to greater quality in higher education programmes and services?
    - How contributions in higher education are essential for developing sciences, humanities, arts?
    - How to promote international mobility and/or exchanges in higher education?
    - What skills need to develop higher education in present and upcoming generations of youth?
    - How higher education system may help humans to face challenges posed by the SDG agenda?
    - How has higher education evolved around you?
    - Etc.
- **Tell a compelling story** or **pose a clear argument** that promotes awareness among key HED stakeholders, communicates inspiring ideas, invites higher education institutions to change and innovate, and/or provide evidence of good practices to face higher education challenges.
- **Interview students/other HED stakeholders on the same question to offer contrasted answers.**
- **Comply with ethical criteria**: property rights in the use of content and images; ensure consent of individuals participating in the video and its sharing on various social media platforms (including *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *YouTube*, etc); **include credits and mentions of social media accounts** as appropriate.
- **Be in English** (if audio uses another language, consider translation into English: subtitles, captions) and saved in a **MP4 format**.
- Be sent as a shared file (use OneDrive, Google Chrome, WeTransfer or similar platforms) between **April 1st and July 31st 2021** to the email address: **whec2021@unesco.org** or uploaded on the conference's website as available.

We invite UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks to keep in mind these other tips:

- Engage higher education experts, professors or students specialized in journalism, communications, social media, knowledge management, community engagement, higher education and/or related fields.
- Consider creative, diverse visual resources: real people, images, sounds, music, pictures, digital animation, etc.

Contact Information

For further information, please sent an email to this address: **whec2021@unesco.org**

Related Resources

1. WHEC 2021 concept note – independent Pdf file
2. WHEC 2021 executive presentation – independent Pdf file
3. UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks consultation report form – independent Word file.
4. UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks policy brief form – independent Word file (applicable to individual and collective documents).

Annexes

Annex 1. WHEC2021 Main Themes

Theme 1: Impact of COVID-19 on Higher Education.
- Impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on the global economy and society.
- Disruption effects on HED (public, private).
- Response of HED to COVID-19 crisis.
- Moving ahead to the "new normal" and facing new emergencies.
- Innovative solutions and lessons learned from COVID-19 disruption.

Theme 2: Higher Education and the SDG (Sustainable Development Goals).
- Relevant research agendas for human development.
- Global citizenship: embedding the 17 SDGs in teaching, learning, research.
- SDG4: progress, gaps, and options (role of HED to improve the whole education system and the teaching profession).
- Capacity building for research in HEIs and other actors.
- Third mission of HEIs: community services and local practices adopting global perspectives.

Theme 3: Inclusion in Higher Education.
- Leaving no one behind: enabling vulnerable groups to enter, transit and complete HED.
- Financial support to youth from low-income families.
- Enhancing gender equality in HED.
- The value of ethnic, multicultural diversity in HED.
- Flexible programmes to integrate population with special needs.
- Diminishing inequities, promoting diversity and maximizing outcomes for all graduates.

Theme 4: Quality and Relevance of Programmes.
- Diversification and flexibility of curriculum, programmes, and courses.
- Expanding use of ICTs and AI to enhance learning and collaboration.
- Quality assurance of innovative higher learning modalities and spaces.
- Partnerships for success: students, teachers, employers, communities.
- Evolving learning skills for evolving workforce paths.
- Innovative post-secondary options in tertiary education.

Theme 5: Academic Mobility in Higher Education.
- National and institutional policies and practices for widening access to students with different backgrounds.
- Institutions as lifelong learning communities for all.
- Teachers and researchers in an increasingly diverse campus.
- Building a global campus of learning, teaching and research.
- Acknowledging talent, skills, knowledge, and competences for diversity.
- Recognition of Qualifications concerning higher education.

Theme 6: Higher Education Governance.
- System level governance in higher education.
- HED institutions governance and responsiveness to dynamic contexts.
- Participation, diversity, and pluralism in higher education.
- Institutional autonomy, organizational effectiveness, and accountability.

Theme 7: Financing Higher Education.
- Financial options for access, quality, equity and inclusion in HED.
- Per-student investment in higher education.
- Optimizing public investment in HED: impact and accountability.
- Private sector investment in HED.
- Cost-effectiveness in HED.
- Developing/sustaining a global fund for HED.

Theme 8: Data and Knowledge Production.
- Monitoring higher education in the framework of SDG4 and the 2030 Agenda.
- Towards global quality standards of data collection, processing, and delivery.
- Machine learning, big data and data analysis in HED.
- Use of information for policy decision making and organizational quality improvement.
- Mapping global quality, equity and inclusion.

Theme 9: International Cooperation to Enhance Synergies.
- Articulating inter-governmental initiatives in favour of higher education.
- Collaboration strategies of international donors and sponsors in higher education.
- Higher education and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).
- Links with open sciences and open learning movements.
- Networks, platforms and knowledge management for advancing international cooperation.
- Use of knowledge, technology, and innovation to promote collaboration.

Theme 10: Preparing for the Future of Higher Learning.
- Beyond 2030: HEIs and the next development agenda.
- Lifelong learning and new sites for learning relevant to changing economies, evolving work environments, and a dignifying life.
- The next generation of learners, their profiles and needs.
- Teachers role and new skills.
- Future proofing graduate knowledge and skills (cross-cutting abilities and specialized learning).
- Strategic policies today for anticipating the university of tomorrow.

Annex 2. UNESCO Relevant Documents for Policy Papers

- *Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action* (for the implementation of SDG 4) (*)
- *Making Higher Education more inclusive* SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee Report (July 2020) (*)
- *Leaving no one behind: the imperative of inclusive development*, Note by the Secretariat on the World Social Situation 2016 (*)
- *Promoting Inclusion Through Social Protection*, 2018 Report on the World Social Situation (*)
- *Inequality in a Rapidly Changing World*, World Social Report 2020 (*)
- *Inclusion and Education: 2020 Global Education Monitoring* (GEM) Full Report
- *Inclusion and Education: 2020 Global Education Monitoring* (GEM) Summary Report (*)
- *The Future is Now – Science for Achieving Sustainable Development.* Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) 2019. New York: United Nations (*)
- *The Sustainable Development Goals Report* (2020) (*)
- *Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* World Youth Report (2019) (*)
- *UNDP Support to the implementation of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development*
- *Successfully achieving the Sustainable Development Goals: what is to be done?*
- *Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals* (Report of the Secretary-General)
- *Long-term future scenarios and the impact of current trends on the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals* (Report of the Secretary-General)
- *Implementation of education for sustainable development in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (Report of the Director-General of UNESCO)
- *Progress in the implementation of resolution 2/3 on investing in human capacity for sustainable development through environmental education and training* (Report of the Executive Director)
- *Roadmap for Localizing the SDGs: Implementation and monitoring at subnational level*
- *Right to education: the implementation of the right to education and Sustainable Development Goal 4 in the context of growth of private actors in education* (Report of the Special Rapporteur)
- *Education for sustainable development in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 19 December 2019. 74/223.
- *Framework for the Implementation of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Beyond 2019*
- *UNDP Strategic Plan, 2018-2021*

Annex 3. Requirements for UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks Policy Briefs

Policy briefs are expected to approach challenges, issues or problems faced currently in the higher education sector. The following requirements apply to policy briefs prepared either **individually** (by one UNESCO Chair) or **collectively** (by a group of UNESCO Chairs or UNITWIN Network/s).

Requirements

Policy briefs should:

- Be original, synthetical, sound and updated.
- Be presented in the recommended format (**Template available in a separate Word file**)
- Comply with these criteria:
  - Focus on a relevant, specific, current challenge, issue, or problem in higher education at a country, regional or global level.
  - Be based on rigorous literature review (including theory and practice).
  - Be framed in one of the ten main conference themes (see **Annex 1**).
  - Provide clear recommendations or options for solutions.
- Include a summary that does not exceed 250 words.
- Be written in English, French, or Spanish.
- Use Calibri 11 font, left alignment and single space.
- Limit narrative including footnotes to a maximum of **4000 words** (but exclude bibliographical references as appropriate and any annexes if the latter are needed).
- As possible, follow the Style Manual for English texts-intended for publication by UNESCO , particularly to what refers to quotations (p. 26) and bibliographical references (p. 39-44).
- As relevant, consider the list of UNESCO reports provided in **Annex 2**.
- Identify in the cover page the UNESCO Chair(s) or UNITWIN Network that has/have prepared the document.
- Be submitted in a Word file to the Section of HED or uploaded on the Conference's website no later than **June 30**th 2021.

Optional features

Policy briefs may:

- Below the title, identify its author(s): name, title, and organization.
- Be supported on consultation and/or other methodologies (interviews, surveys, etc.) to collect data.
- Use tables, figures, infographics, illustrations (properly designed, these may highlight key messages and add value to the document).