

CALL FOR CONSULTANCY

Final evaluation of UNESCO's higher education project:

Developing Regional Quality Tools to Facilitate the Cross-Border Mobility of Students in Asia and the Pacific (2015-2019)

Terms of Reference

Type of Contract: Contract for Individual Consultant

Duration of contract: 15 March -17 June 2019

Closing date: 28 February 2019

With support from the Republic of Korea Funds-in-Trust (KFIT)

Background

As the only United Nations agency with a mandate in higher education, UNESCO supports Member States to promote quality assurance, comparability and recognition of higher education qualifications with the aim of facilitating cross-border mobility and fundamentally achieving the overarching global goal to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (Sustainable Development Goal 4). From this perspective, mobility in higher education is an opportunity to develop students’ competencies and global awareness in line with SDG4 and the Education 2030 Framework for Action.

However, substantial differences in quality assurance (QA) arrangements can be a fundamental obstacle to the development of cross-border mobility of students among countries in Asia-Pacific. In order to harmonize different QA systems and make qualifications from different countries more compatible and comparable with one another, UNESCO Bangkok initiated a project in higher education in 2015 on “Developing Regional Quality Tools to Facilitate the Cross-Border Mobility of Students in Asia and the Pacific”, with generous support from the **Republic of Korea Funds-in-Trust (KFIT)**. The first phase of the project ends in July 2019.

After four years of implementing the KFIT Higher Education Project, UNESCO Bangkok will invite an **external expert to review, deepen and validate a self-evaluation by UNESCO staff**. The evaluation is intended to help UNESCO Bangkok determine the relevance and fulfillment of the project’s objectives, efficiency, initial impact and sustainability, which will guide the second phase of the KFIT Higher Education Project (2019-2022).

The goals of the KFIT Higher Education Project are:

- **Raise awareness among Member States**, especially those with emerging higher education systems, about the significance of quality issues in higher education and their impact on the cross-border mobility of students;
- **Collect and consolidate best policies and practices** in quality assurance in higher education;
- **Develop regional quality tools** at system, subject, and programme levels to promote recognition of higher education qualifications (e.g. developing regional guidelines on National Qualifications Frameworks), and contribute to the cross-border mobility of students in the region;
- **Assist Member States** to establish or reform their quality assurance systems in accordance with the regional guidelines; and
- **Monitor and evaluate** the application of regional quality tools in the Member States throughout Asia-Pacific.

To date, UNESCO Bangkok has engaged researchers, officials and practitioners from Member States in Asia and the Pacific, including:

South Asia: India, Nepal, Sri Lanka

Southeast Asia: Cambodia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand

East Asia: China, Japan, Republic of Korea (including Ministry of Education; KCUE; NILE)

Pacific: Australia, Fiji

Countries from Central Asia will also be included in early 2019. In doing so, the KFIT Higher Education Project has supported initial stocktaking exercises among participating Member States in Asia-Pacific related to the development of quality tools. This includes the recently launched **Regional Guidelines on National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF)**¹ and forthcoming National Subject-Specific Quality Standards and on Programme Level Specifications.

As an extrabudgetary activity, the KFIT Higher Education Project was designed to support UNESCO's core mandate. All projects by UNESCO supported by KFIT are designed to contribute to the expected results of UNESCO's Programme and Budget (C/5). The performance indicators should therefore not only evaluate the individual project, but also consider contributions to achieving UNESCO's Expected Results as outlined in UNESCO's Regular Programme and medium-term Strategy. In this way, UNESCO's activities are designed based on an overarching results-based management system.

In line with UNESCO's approach, the purpose of the final evaluation is to understand how the KFIT Higher Education Project was implemented from 2015 to 2019 and identify strategies for improvement going forward. Based on a self-reflection by UNESCO staff, an external expert(s) will be invited to review, validate and deepen understanding of the role of the KFIT Higher Education Project with special attention to the donor country, the Republic of Korea. The following section explains further about the evaluation approach and research questions.

¹ UNESCO Bangkok, 2018. [Guidelines on Developing and Strengthening Qualifications Frameworks in Asia and the Pacific - Building a Culture of Shared Responsibility](#).

Evaluation approach and research questions

Given the scope and budget of the KFIT Higher Education Project, the mode of evaluation is a **self-evaluation by UNESCO project officers with validation from an external expert**.² Specifically, the external expert will provide feedback on the scope of UNESCO Bangkok's self-evaluation and draft evaluation report. The results of the reflection and consultation process will be a final narrative report by UNESCO Bangkok with validation by the external expert based on their assessment.

As a final evaluation, the focus of the evaluation is on whether the project has achieved its objectives efficiently and effectively, with relevance and sustainability. The mid-term evaluation conducted in 2017 to explore the initial contribution of the project will also be considered as a reference to assess improvements of the project. Key thematic areas to assess include the following:

Relevance

1. To what extent is UNESCO's work on the KFIT Higher Education Project aligned with national needs and priorities in target countries, as well as national, regional, international priorities, strategies and frameworks (i.e. a focus on target countries, including the Republic of Korea)?
2. What is the added value of UNESCO in spearheading and supporting these initiatives?

Efficiency

3. To what extent were the interventions implemented in accordance with plans, target groups, timeline, and what were the key enabling factors and obstacles?
4. How has the KFIT Higher Education Project contributed to synergies at UNESCO and throughout Asia and the Pacific?

Effectiveness

5. To what extent did the KFIT Higher Education Project meet its intended goals to date?
6. How are the achievements relevant to the Republic of Korea and the Asia-Pacific region?
7. To what extent was UNESCO's approach effective considering the scope and size of the projects?

Sustainability

8. To what extent are the benefits of the project likely to be sustained or taken forward independently by government, researchers and other development partners in collaboration with UNESCO?

The sustainability dimensions will be particularly important benchmarks to guide future phases of the KFIT project (2019-2022), including how to conduct a well-defined needs assessment of participating Member States. A framework and planning tool should be incorporated in the evaluator's analysis based on the KFIT project's scope and potential going forward.

² UNESCO Internal Oversight Service (2013). [Guidance note on the evaluation of UNESCO's extrabudgetary activities](#).

The final evaluation report will be guided by the sub-themes and questions above, which will be refined in consultation with the invited expert(s). Expected qualifications are outlined in the following section.

Qualifications

The external expert should possess the following mandatory qualifications and experience:

- University degree at Ph.D., or masters level or equivalent in Education, Social Sciences, Political Sciences, or a related field;
- At least ten years of working experience acquired at the international level or in an international setting;
- Senior experience in evaluation, project and/or programme planning and management;
- Knowledge of and experience in applying qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques and Results Based Management (RBM) principles;
- Understanding and knowledge of UNESCO’s mandate and its programming in relation to higher education;
- Demonstrated expertise in collaborating with Republic of Korea’s Ministry of Education (MOE) or other government bodies;
- Fluency in Korean;
- Excellent analytical and drafting skills in English;
- No previous involvement in the implementation of the activities under review.

Desired Qualifications

- Work experience in the UN or experience with assignments for the UN;
- Experience with evaluating stakeholder partnerships, and/or higher education capacity building in Asia and the Pacific.

Verification of these qualifications will be based on the provided curriculum vitae. Candidates are also encouraged to submit 2-3 references such as recent research papers or articles that demonstrate their expertise with the subject under review.

Deliverables and Schedule

Activity / Deliverable	Timeline
Selection of external evaluation expert/ team; contractual arrangements completed	Mid-March 2019
Planning meeting to finalize evaluation framework (virtually or in person in Bangkok)	Early April 2019
Self-evaluation completed by UNESCO staff	Late April 2019
Review and validation by evaluator	Early May 2019
Final evaluation report and PPT presentation	Mid-June 2019

How to submit a proposal

An offer comprising of a technical proposal (2-3 page proposal) and a financial proposal should be attached in an email to UNESCO Bangkok in two separate files. Financial estimates should include costs for the final consultation in Bangkok, Thailand (2 days). Proposals shall be sent to the following email address no later than **28 February 2019**: eisd.bgk@unesco.org.

For any requests for clarification, please contact Mr. Wesley Teter (wr.teter@unesco.org)