

Call for Proposal

Reference: HE002/2020

Issue date: 14 July 2020

Request to submit a written proposal for a work assignment with UNESCO

UNESCO is inviting written proposals from an organization for the work assignment described in attachment A.

To enable you to prepare a proposal for this assignment, please find attached the Terms of Reference (see attachment A);

Your written proposal should comprise:

- (a) A cover letter and technical proposal describing how the organization proposes to develop the key deliverables, including the approach and methodology; and
- (b) A financial proposal. Financial estimates should include any detailed fees, including costs to join a five-day meeting (tentatively) in May 2021 in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Your proposal and any supporting documents must be in English.

UNESCO places great emphasis on ensuring that the objectives of the work assignment, as described in the Terms of Reference, are met. Accordingly, in evaluating the proposals for the assignment, attention will focus first on the technical elements. From those proposals deemed suitable in terms of the criteria in the Terms of Reference, UNESCO shall select the proposal that offers the Organization best value for money.

Your proposal should be submitted by e-mail no later than **17:00, Bangkok time, on 14 August 2020**. E-mail proposals should not exceed 5MB.

The technical and financial proposal shall be attached in two separate file and submitted to e-mail address: eisd.bgk@unesco.org

Further information and clarification can be requested in writing to Ms. Aisulu Sulaimanova (a.sulaimanova@unesco.org) and Mr. Wesley Teter (wr.teter@unesco.org).

It is your organization's responsibility to ensure that the proposal is received by the deadline.

Thank you for your interest in this UNESCO assignment; and we look forward to receiving your proposal.

Mr. Libing Wang
UNESCO Bangkok Office
Chief of Section for Educational
Innovation and Skills Development (EISD)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Strengthening quality assurance systems for higher education in Kyrgyzstan:

Baseline analysis and national consultations

Type of contract: Contract for Services

Duration of contract: 1 September – 31 May 2021 (tentatively)

Background

The education system of Kyrgyzstan is at a crucial stage of reform to accelerate economic development, promote the modernization of educational policy and strengthen democracy. To meet these goals, the **National Development Strategy for 2018-2040** outlines an ambitious work plan to improve the quality of education at all levels, including higher education. The Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) is charged with regulating and monitoring quality assurance systems in higher education, which are critical for national and international recognition of qualifications.

The Development Strategy 2040 includes the following three policy priorities to strengthen quality assurance within higher education institutions (i.e. internal quality assurance), and externally at systems level:

- The state not only sets educational standards, but also **guarantees the quality of higher education** providing state recognized diplomas. Higher education institutions should be able to compete in the international market of educational services;
- Policy in the field of education is aimed at **decentralization of university management**, freely choosing between the forms and methods of education based on the use of innovative and scientific approaches;
- The task is set to change the system of higher education sector funding, introduce a **rating system for evaluating universities**, including participation in international and regional ratings.¹

As the only UN agency with a mandate in higher education along with normative instruments² UNESCO has been requested by MoES to conduct the baseline analysis and facilitate a national consultation to strengthen quality assurance systems in Kyrgyzstan. With its headquarters in Paris, France and Field Offices in Almaty with Bishkek antenna and Bangkok, UNESCO draws on a wide range of expertise and experiences from its networks in Asia-Pacific and Europe to strengthen internal and external quality assurance, and promote evidence-based policy in higher education and research.

¹ P.16 National Development Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2018-2040

² UNESCO serves as Secretariat of the Regional/Tokyo and Global Conventions on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education (<https://en.unesco.org/themes/higher-education/recognition-qualifications/global-convention>)

Assignment

Ensuring equitable access to quality higher education for all is critical to the Education 2030 Agenda, including **Sustainable Development Goal Four, target three (SDG4.3)**. In collaboration with MoES, UNESCO will facilitate a national assessment of domestic accreditation agencies and review compliance with international requirements, including in Asia-Pacific and in Europe.

With support from the **Republic of Korea Funds-in-Trust (2020-2023)**, UNESCO's Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education in Bangkok, Thailand will provide technical assistance and liaise with international stakeholders and partners. To support the national consultation and review, MoES aims to establish a Monitoring Commission with experts and quality assurance agencies, as well as national experts in the field of independent accreditation and finance.

Together with MoES, UNESCO plans three joint actions:

1. Conduct an independent assessment of quality assurance standards and relevant international guidelines in Kyrgyzstan;
2. Co-organize a national consultation on quality assurance systems for higher education;
3. Provide actionable recommendations on implementing quality standards to promote international alignment of quality assurance agencies in Kyrgyzstan.

Research approach

Together with UNESCO, the organization will submit a draft inception report on the proposed organizational assessment and prepare a draft national improvement plan for quality assurance in Kyrgyzstan. This includes the following considerations as part of the stakeholder consultation process in three phases:

- Preparatory meetings between a steering committee at MoES, UNESCO, and international consortia members to explain the context of the assessment, particular issues to be looked at, challenges, expected outcomes, agreement on the scope of work and timeline;
- Desk research and independent situational analysis to better understand the organizational structure of quality assurance in Kyrgyzstan, management tools, systems and approaches;
- Development of the data collection instrument, including the case study framework for QA agencies to submit, and any supplemental data from participating higher education institutions;
- Virtual consultations and data collection from QA agencies and key stakeholders;
- UNESCO will facilitate international peer review of the main expected deliverables, including virtual consultations with MoES and QA experts in Europe and Asia-Pacific;
- Continuous monitoring and evaluation based on the mid-term review and final report with actionable recommendations and measures to improve.

The following section outlines the key expected deliverables, which the organization will develop with UNESCO.

Expected deliverables

The three expected deliverables include:

1. **Inception report** – Strengthening quality assurance systems for higher education in Kyrgyzstan (30-40 pages). The tentative outline of the report includes:
 - a. Executive summary
 - b. Background – Towards quality higher education for all

- c. Policies and governance – Managing quality assurance systems in Kyrgyzstan
 - d. Case studies – Promoting QA and fair recognition at agency, national and regional levels
 - e. Initial findings – Ensuring an inclusive approach to quality management in Kyrgyzstan
 - f. Tentative recommendations and questions – Preparing for national consultations on QA
2. **National consultations on QA** – In coordination with UNESCO, support the preparation of the concept note, agenda and outcome documents for the national consultation on QA and international recognition in higher education, tentatively in March 2021.
 3. **Final report** – Together with UNESCO and informed by national and international peer review, submit a final report with detailed recommendations to promote international alignment of quality assurance agencies in Kyrgyzstan and fair recognition (15-20 pages).

The following work assignment will be completed by the indicated tentative timeline:

Activity / Deliverable	Timeline
1. Submit the inception report on strengthening QA systems for quality higher education in Kyrgyzstan	30 November 2020
2. Draft outcome document for the national consultation on QA and international recognition in higher education	31 March 2021
3. Final report with recommendations on strengthening international recognition of QA in Kyrgyzstan	31 May 2021

In line with UNESCO’s overall gender mainstreaming strategy, UNESCO will integrate a gender perspective and apply gender analysis and mainstreaming concepts whenever feasible.