

The UNESCO/OECD Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education

The UNESCO/OECD Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education aim to provide an educational response to the increasing trend of cross-border higher education, based on UN and UNESCO principles and instruments. The Guidelines aim to support and encourage international cooperation and understanding of the importance of quality provision in cross-border higher education. The purposes of the Guidelines are to protect students and other stakeholders from low-quality provision and disreputable providers as well as to encourage the development of quality cross-border higher education that meets human, social, economic and cultural needs.

The Guidelines recommend actions to six stakeholders: governments; higher education institutions/providers including academic staff; student bodies; quality assurance and accreditation bodies; academic recognition bodies; and professional bodies

The Guidelines are based on the principle of mutual trust and respect among countries and on the recognition of the importance of international collaboration in higher education.

They also recognize the importance of national authority and the diversity of higher education systems. Countries attach a high importance to national sovereignty over higher education. Higher education is a vital means for expressing a country's linguistic and cultural diversity and also for nurturing its economic development and social cohesion. It is therefore recognized that policy-making in higher education reflects national priorities. At the same time, it is recognized that in some countries, there are several competent authorities in higher education.

The effectiveness of the Guidelines largely depends on the possibility of strengthening the capacity of national systems to assure the quality of higher education. The development and implementation of the UNESCO regional conventions and further support to the ongoing capacity-building initiatives of UNESCO, other multilateral organizations and bilateral donors in this area will sustain and be complementary to the Guidelines. These initiatives should be supported by strong regional and national partners.

The Guidelines acknowledge the important role of non-governmental organizations such as higher education associations, student bodies, academic staff associations, networks of quality assurance and accreditation bodies, recognition and credential evaluation bodies and professional bodies in strengthening international cooperation for quality provision in cross-border higher education. The Guidelines aim to encourage the strengthening and coordination of existing initiatives by enhancing dialogue and collaboration among various bodies.

Cross-border higher education encompasses a wide range of modalities from face-to-face (taking various forms such as students travelling abroad and campuses abroad) to distance learning (using a range of technologies and including e-learning).