IREX

Higher Education Capacity Assessment and Performance Improvement Support Services

Data is a powerful resource for higher education reform. Without data and analysis, education leaders lack sufficient information to recognize problems, prioritize improvements, and make the case for change. IREX offers an adaptable tool and customized technical assistance to address these needs, to maximize institutions' potential to achieve positive outcomes in the higher education system, and to position them as a central actor for country development.

Higher Education Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool

IREX developed the Higher Education Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool (HEICAT) to enable education leaders to recognize and prioritize performance improvement needs, foster organizational learning, and support strategic decision making.

IREX adapts each application of the HEICAT to its setting, taking into account the higher education system and the key performance objectives of the institution and intervention. Through multiple applications and adaptations, IREX has developed a bank of questions and evidence lists designed to support assessment of over 200 practice criteria, across 12 major categories of university function and operations, which can be adapted and configured as needed.

The 12 HEICAT Assessment Categories

- Mission, vision, and strategic planning
- Staff and faculty management
- Data and institutional research
- Facilities, Equipment, and Learning Resources
- Finances
- Senior management, governance, and accountability
- Academic operations
- Student and alumni engagement
- Workforce development
- Knowledge transfer and external relations
- Quality assurance and enhancement
- Research

Assessment Tool Features

CONTEXTUALIZED TO HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

Designed to align with typical HEI structures and functions, informed by international accreditation frameworks, and tested and adapted with professionals in over 30 higher education institutions.

MODULAR

Provides maximum flexibility to tailor to institutional priorities, available time and resource, offering both expansive review across all functions, or deeper dive into specific areas. For example, our Research Management 360 and Career Center modules enable an institution to unpack over 100 sub-criteria dedicated to research management practice and career center operations.

REFLECTIVE SELF-EVALUATION

To promote institutional autonomy, self-reliance, and ownership of performance goals, the approach encourages universities to self-assess using a collaborative process.

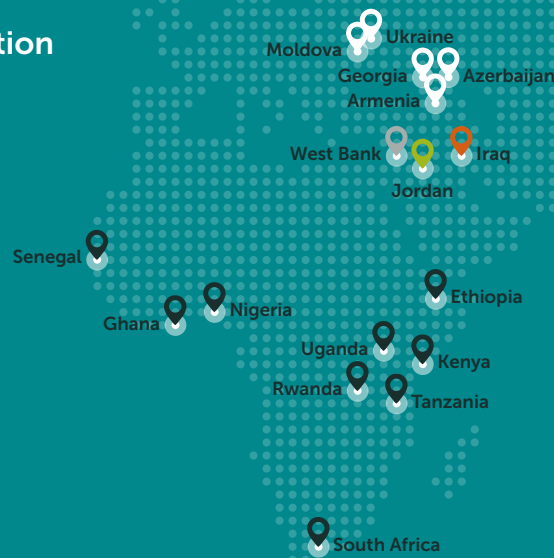Engage partners to define objectives and identify capacity assessment dimensions using IREX's bank of HEICAT practice criterion. → Use HEICAT questions and evidence lists to collect data throughout the organization. → Analyze data, rate capacity using the HEICAT scoring matrix and performance dashboard. → Develop report and performance improvement plan and assign key performance indicators.

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HEICAT Global Implementation

Moldova · Ukraine · Georgia · Armenia · Azerbaijan · West Bank · Jordan · Iraq · Senegal · Ghana · Nigeria · Ethiopia · Uganda · Kenya · Rwanda · Tanzania · South Africa

HEICAT Implementation Snapshots

In Iraq, IREX coached the University of Mosul, Tikrit University, and the University of Fallujah through a self-administered HEICAT assessment to inform rebuilding efforts after the defeat of Daesh. The assessments resulted in a tailored technical assistance package for each university including support to develop a comprehensive research strategy, establishing a faculty development office, and creating an English language center. Longstanding work to support 47 universities in Iraq to launch and enhance new career services has similarly been informed by facilitating the tailored Career Services Professional Standards Matrix.

In Jordan, IREX adapted the HEICAT with Mu'tah University, Hashemite University, Yarmouk University, and the University of Jordan to assess university readiness to implement a new teacher preparation diploma and to target technical and material assistance where it is most needed. The assessments informed a tailored package of technical and material support to each university, including provision of equipment and software, faculty and administrator training, and the launch of professional learning communities. The assessment will be repeated annually to measure progress towards performance improvement goals.

IREX is using the Research Management 360 module to support university leaders across the African Research Universities Alliance to drive institutional change. As part of a Research Management and Leadership course, leaders are tasked with conducting the assessment to inform an implementation plan to improve research management performance. As a result of this process, leaders have introduce new e-Research Administration systems, reconfigured organizational units to support sponsored research, and introduced coaching and mentoring for research administrators. Comparing data from Alliance members is also highlighting trends and variation across the continent.

In the West Bank, IREX adapted the HEICAT to align with the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission's licensure and accreditation requirements, piloted the tool with six universities and ultimately worked with the Commission to incorporate the self-assessment tool into a new Common Framework for Quality Assurance in Palestinian Higher Education, supporting both institutional and program level accreditation.

WHAT CAN IREX OFFER TO HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND THEIR PARTNERS?

Are you a university seeking to enhance performance or a Ministry aiming to strengthen the higher education system? Are you a development partner seeking to support these aims, or planning to work with universities for the first time, but unsure what capacities they have? Drawing on our experience supporting organizational performance improvement across a range of sectors and decades of working with universities, IREX can:

✔ Facilitate partner engagement to identify assessment objectives and define the scope, indicators, and ratings for the tool, whether as a broad institutional assessment or in a focused functional area such as research management or career center services ;

✔ Facilitate or coach partners through the assessment process, including interviews, focus groups, observation and document review, and support analysis and capacity reporting ;

✔ Develop recommendations for organizational performance improvement and use the HEICAT to track progress.

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