

Policy Forum – Concept note

UNESCO IESALC, Brasilia, 15 March 2024

The Policy Forum is an annual open event organized by UNESCO-IESALC where policymakers, institutional leaders and other stakeholders with a role or an interest in higher education policy internationally discuss key topics and common challenges. Through the exchange of ideas, experiences and practices, the Policy Forum promotes the dissemination of innovative solutions in higher education, fosters international dialogue, enhances capacities for higher education leadership and strengthens cross-cultural understanding while opening new avenues for international collaboration.

The first edition of the Policy Forum will take place on 15 March 2024 within the framework of the CRES+5 conference in Brasilia. The event will comprise two panel discussions, each focusing on a crucial topic for higher education internationally: 1) improving quality in higher education and 2) funding higher education. Both panels will also consider the transversal topic of how policies related to each topic can strengthen the impact of higher education on sustainability and the Sustainable Development goals (SDGs).

Each panel will feature four distinguished lead panelists, eminent policymakers from countries in Latin-America and the Caribbean. The sessions will be moderated by UNESCO IESALC. Discussions will be further stimulated with short interventions from key contributors representing different HE stakeholders: rectors, associations of higher education institutions, teacher unions, student associations, representatives from private higher education, quality assurance agencies, etc. The lead panelists will respond to these interventions. To foster a comprehensive dialogue, the audience will have the opportunity to engage in the discussion through a Q&A session at the end of each panel.

Sessions overview

Panel 1: Improving quality in higher education and considerations for sustainability

The first panel discussion will explore the challenges and opportunities for enhancing quality in higher education. The panel will adopt a comprehensive perspective on quality. It will cover aspects such as quality monitoring and improvement within institutions; system-level oversight by quality assurance agencies; international quality standards for the recognition of foreign degrees and qualifications; quality in the delivery of missions (teaching, research and administration); faculty and staff competencies and professional learning; relevance of higher education and research for societal needs; and innovation in quality improvement practices. In this context, the panel will consider how policies to enhance quality can strengthen the contribution of higher education to sustainability and the SDGs.

Panel 2: Innovative approaches to higher education funding and considerations for sustainability

The second panel will delve into diverse perspectives on funding higher education. This multifaceted discussion will encompass aspects such as public and private funding mechanisms for higher education institutions; financial support schemes for students through grants and loans; considerations for staff employment and working conditions; allocation of research grants; cost-effective ways for a quality, accessible and inclusive higher education; financial autonomy of institutions; and innovative funding approaches. The relationship between policies related to funding higher education and the sector's contribution to sustainability and the SDGs will also be discussed. Participants will contribute insights from their experiences and discuss effective strategies for constructing sustainable funding models aiming at responding to the needs of higher education while optimizing its impact for society.

Agenda

09:00-09:15 am	Introduction by UNESCO IESALC
09:15-10:30 am	Panel 1: Improving quality in higher education and considerations for sustainability
10:30-10:45 am	Coffee break
10:45-12:00 am	Panel 2: Innovative approaches to higher education funding and considerations for sustainability

Event information

- Date: 15 March 2024
- Location: Auditório, International Convention Center of Brazil, Brasília
- Time: 09:00 am – 12:00 noon (Brasília time). Live broadcasting online
- Language: Spanish, Portuguese and English (interpretation available)
- Registration link: <https://forms.gle/ubhMUHHqARHQ31x49>

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