UNESCO Chairs / UNITWIN Networks Consultation Report Form[1]

Under the UNESCO World Higher Education Conference (WHEC 2022)
Section for Higher Education | Division for Education 2030

Basic information

Date of consultation	28/07/2021
Location of consultation	Online
Hosting UNESCO Chair or UNITWIN Network (include webpage if available)	Canadian Commission of UNESCO, UNESCO Chair in Community-based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education
Name and email address of key contact person	Isabelle LeVert-Chiasson, Education Program Officer, Canadian Commission for UNESCO (CCUNESCO), Isabelle.levert-chiasson@ccunesco.ca
Complete name, title, and affiliation of moderator(s)	Liette Vasseur, CCUNESCO President, UNESCO Chair in Community Sustainability: from Local to Global, Professor, Biological Sciences, Brock University
Language of consultation	English and French
Time spent in consultation (minutes)	90
Number of participants	17 (including organizers, notetakers)
Participant profiles (please, briefly describe the composition of the group)	UNESCO Chairs across Canada, with a few international Co-Chairs
Countries represented by participants	Canada, India

Stakeholder groups (please mark with an "x" as appropriate)	☒ Professors/ Researchers	☐ Students/Youth	☐ Higher education managers/authorities	☐ Private sector
	☐ NGOs/civil society	☐ International organisations	☐ Policy makers/government	☐ Others (please, specify):

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[1] This template includes some elements used by the consultation developed by The Futures of Education initiative.

Which theme did you choose for this consultation?

☐ Theme 1: Impact of COVID-19 on higher education

☒ Theme 2: Higher education and the SDGs   ☐ Theme 7: Financing higher education

☒ Theme 3: Inclusion in higher education   ☒ Theme 8: Data and knowledge production

☐ Theme 4: Quality and relevance of programmes   ☐ Theme 9: International cooperation to enhance synergies

☐ Theme 5: Academic mobility in higher education   ☐ Theme 10: The futures of higher education

☐ Theme 6: Higher education governance   ☐ Other (please, specify):

Synthesis of contributions

Kindly provide a summary, synthesising and reflecting the ideas provided by all participants. There is no need to identify participants. Consultation reports should not exceed 1,200 **words**, including the responses to the three questions outlined below (consider a balance of approximately 400 words per response). If necessary, add attachments. Remember that question 1 is general, but questions 2 and 3 should refer to the specific theme you have chosen (see list in **Annex 1**).

Question 1: What should be the present and future role of higher education to favour the wellbeing of humans and sustainability of societies?

> It is crucial that higher education institutions embrace a global perspective in all their activities in order to advance Agenda 2030 and the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For example, organizing global virtual conferences and collaboratively exploring the internationalization of higher education at universities could be helpful.
>
> Higher education institutions should lead the way by being globally aware and connected, being inclusive and having global policies adapted to their local contexts to be supportive of the SDGs, equity, diversity and inclusion, and the decolonization of knowledge. Higher education should also reconnect humans and nature to ensure better knowledge of the importance of nature and a better understanding of environmental sustainability through conservation and restoration of degraded ecosystems. Higher education should aim to develop capabilities and aspirations, those of autonomy and adaptability.

Question 2: What are the main **challenges/problems/gaps** in relation to SDGs and Higher Education, Inclusion in Higher Education, and Data and Knowledge Production?

> **SDGs: Global Awareness**
> Unfortunately, not all higher education institutions are aware of the global context of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, as they can remain more focussed on their governance and financial status. There is also a misconception that the SDGs are only relevant to those working in the field of environmental sustainability and/or only deal with economic development. Higher education should aim to redefine SDGs as societies evolve.
>
> **Inclusion: Cultural change and local context**

Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) policies are sometimes imposed by external contexts and need to be evaluated in terms of the higher education institution's specificities. In the same way that greenwashing exists, there is also *EDI washing.* The meaning of diversity may be different in rural higher education institutions compared to the ones located in urban areas, and resource access may also vary.

Data and knowledge production: *Inequities, access, ethics, decolonization of knowledge*
Inequality with respect to access to publications exists. The difficulty in accessing scientific publications in *cégeps* (post-secondary institutions in Quebec) was highlighted as an example of the importance of open educational resources. Access is likely an issue as well for many Global South institutions. Another challenge is the use of scientific jargon in articles or output, which often is difficult for the general public to understand.

*Question 3: What needs to **change** or be **created** to face these challenges **within** and/or **outside** of higher education institutions?*

SDGs and higher education
Higher education institutions need to increase global awareness of the SDGs and encourage international partnerships and networking to support advancement of the SDGs. UNESCO Chairs noted the importance of connecting their research projects with specific SDGs. It is recommended to have a national and global policy to track and connect the achievement of the SDGs at the governance level. Connections between SDGs are also important (i.e., SDGs 1 and 4 are rooted in the experiences of youth and remain with individuals throughout their lives). It would also be important to explore curricular reform within higher education institutions within all faculties and subject matters to better integrate the SDGs in teaching and learning for all students.

Inclusion
Mentorship is very important in the context of higher education for students. Without networking opportunities and knowledge sharing from mentors, first-generation university students will often end their academic journey earlier.

EDI policies do not always apply to all campus realities: it needs to be revisited to evaluate a specific situation, and inclusion and equity need to be redefined. We need to ensure that there is a real willingness from the institution to apply these policies (i.e. ensure that staff is also diverse). A culture change can be hard to implement. A change in mentality is needed in some institutions, so it is not perceived as an obligation. The socio-economic context is also important to take into account for inclusion. Most university positions are more likely to be filled by people who are from higher socio-economic backgrounds.

Data and knowledge production
UNESCO Chairs mentioned that there are many collaborations between Chairs from various international regions. Participatory research with communities can support data and knowledge production and open science. By using arts-based research tools, like storytelling and podcasting, knowledge or output can be more easily accessible to the general public. The use of technology can also be useful to share research outcomes.

In particular, partnerships with Indigenous communities are a very important way to include traditional knowledge in academic research. Publications should be shared first with those communities, which should be acknowledged as co-authors. Non-Indigenous researchers

highlighted the need to learn more on best practices in researching and working with Indigenous communities.

Increase mobility of people and idea

There remain many cultural, financial, administrative and legal barriers that limit the capacity of individuals to acquire autonomy and leadership. These barriers range from national protectionism to the academic publishing culture that drives researchers and teachers away from engaging more directly with one another and with people outside of higher education.

Which Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were particularly emphasised during this consultation?

☐ Goal 1: No poverty

☐ Goal 2: Zero hunger

☐ Goal 3: Good health and well-being

☒ Goal 4: Quality education

☒ Goal 5: Gender equality

☐ Goal 6: Clean water and sanitation

☐ Goal 7: Affordable and clean energy

☐ Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth

☐ Goal 9: Industry, innovation, and infrastructure

☒ Goal 10: Reduced inequality

☐ Goal 11: Sustainable cities and communities

☐ Goal 12: Responsible consumption and production

☐ Goal 13: Climate action

☐ Goal 14: Life below water

☐ Goal 15: Life on land

☐ Goal 16: Peace and justice strong institutions

☒ Goal 17: Partnerships to achieve the goals.

You may provide additional feedback…

Are there any other issues that should be considered in relation to higher education challenges and options in your community, your region, the world?

Is there any other comment you wish to share with UNESCO or the organisers of the WHEC2022?

List of participants

[Please, include the moderator (s)]

Mr. / Mrs.	First name	Last name	Title/organisation	Nationality	Email address (if the participant wishes to receive information about the WHEC2022)	Indicate with a "NO" if the participant DOES NOT want to be publicly identified as a participant in this consultation.
Mr.	Budd	Hall	Professor Emeritus, School of Public Administration, University of Victoria & UNESCO Chair in Community-Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education	Canada	bhall@uvic.ca	
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