



IIOE Partnership Meeting 2021 (Africa and West Asia)

**Building Higher Education Back Better:
An Institutional Ecosystem that Drives and
Supports Online and Blended Learning**

Thursday, July 29, 2021



Background

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has exposed the urgency of adopting online and blended learning, especially at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in developing countries. Even as university campuses are gradually reopening, online learning has become more than a supplement to face-to-face education, but a new normal that supports and is supported by face-to-face education. UNESCO's [global survey](#) launched in June, 2021 shows that more and more countries are shifting to online education, while the blended mode of teaching has become the most popular form. However, the adoption of online and blended learning needs a holistic approach and commitment of all higher education stakeholders, including higher education workforce, HEIs, governments, and the private sector. In order to provide systematic guidance to HEIs and all higher education stakeholders to plan and implement quality online education, a solid quality assurance framework tailored to online and blended learning is urgently needed to support and facilitate HEIs to build a conducive ecosystem for the planning and implementation of online and blended learning.

The International Institute of Online Education (IIOE), launched by UNESCO-ICHEI with 11 leading HEIs in Africa and Asia, 9 global EdTech enterprises, and 4 HEIs in China in December 2019 in Shenzhen, China is committed to addressing common challenges facing higher education in developing countries, such as access to higher education, quality and relevance of HE programmes, as well as the capacity and qualifications of the higher education workforce. Supported by UNESCO, IIOE aims to strengthen the capacity of HEIs and especially the capacity of higher education workforce to conduct online and blended learning, in order to enhance higher education quality and access in developing countries and to help achieve SDG4.

In order to achieve its goals, IIOE has implemented a series of programmes and initiatives to support HEIs in higher education innovation and promote digital transformation. This includes customised capacity building programmes for higher education workforce in terms of online education, and application of frontier ICT technologies (i.e Big Data and Artificial Intelligence) in higher education; provision of multilingual online courses in the field of ICT; and establishing a multi-stakeholder network for online education encompassing HEIs, enterprises and international organisations. As a key component of IIOE, the IIOE Quality Assurance Framework 1.0 and its online self-assessment tool was launched in December 2019 and has been widely utilised by IIOE partner HEIs as a reference and supportive tool to plan their actions in online and blended learning.

Since the 2020 IIOE Annual General Meeting, IIOE partner HEIs that were actively engaged in online and blended learning provided UNESCO-ICHEI with feedback on IIOE's teacher capacity building programmes, development of IIOE online courses and revising the IIOE ICT Competency Framework for Higher Education Teachers. Notably, there is an increasing call for an updated IIOE Quality Assurance Framework to support partner HEIs in planning and implementing online and blended learning. In response to the call of IIOE partner HEIs, UNESCO-ICHEI developed the IIOE Quality Assurance Framework, Guidelines and Toolkit for Driving and Supporting Online and Blended Higher Education (hereinafter referred to as "IIOE Quality Assurance 2.0"). IIOE Quality Assurance 2.0 was developed on the basis of IIOE Quality Assurance 1.0, with special emphasis on issues raised by partner HEIs during its implementation, and especially new challenges facing online and blended learning during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. UNESCO-ICHEI will organise consultations on IIOE Quality Assurance 2.0 with international quality assurance experts and IIOE partner HEIs, and jointly launch the outcome of consultations with participating IIOE partner HEIs.

Within this context, UNESCO-ICHEI invites the IIOE's global partners to meet on July 29, 2021, to discuss issues vital to the future development of IIOE and common concerns of partner HEIs regarding IIOE, share actions taken and lessons learned to ensure higher education continuity and quality during and beyond COVID-19, promising practices to strengthen institutional and teacher capacity for higher education digital transformation, with a focus on harnessing IIOE Quality Assurance 2.0 for HEIs to take up the potential of online and blended learning.

Theme and Format

The theme of the meeting is "Building Higher Education Back Better: An Institutional Ecosystem that Drives and Supports Online and Blended Learning".

The keynote speaker will present IIOE Quality Assurance 2.0, followed by a panel composed of quality assurance experts from Africa and the Asia-Pacific. The panel will discuss IIOE Quality Assurance 2.0 and the current state of quality assurance of online and blended learning worldwide. Subsequently, IIOE partners will participate in roundtables under two themes: "Leveraging online and blended learning to ensure educational continuity and quality" and "Strengthening capacities of higher education workforce to achieve higher education digital transformation". IIOE partner HEIs and enterprises will present their experience and promising practices of leading university and national higher education digital transformation, and deliberate upon issues vital to the future development of IIOE.

Objectives

- Map the challenges facing online and blended learning, as well as the current state of implementing quality assurance of online and blended learning on the partner HEIs' level and national level.
- Share IIOE partner HEIs and partner enterprises' experience, promising practices and vision of building IIOE as a supportive ecosystem to drive online and blended learning.
- Discuss ways to operationalise IIOE Quality Assurance 2.0 to support IIOE partner HEIs in building ecosystems for online and blended learning, and to assist them in implementing online and blended learning.

Expected outcomes

- Develop a meeting report including key viewpoints and promising practices of IIOE partner HEIs and partner enterprises.
- Formulate an updated IIOE Quality Assurance 2.0 after consultation with IIOE partner HEIs and experts. The outcome will be jointly launched by all participating IIOE partner HEIs and UNESCO-ICHEI at a later date after the meeting.
- Initiate knowledge products under the theme of Quality Assurance of online and blended higher education, as a contribution to the III World Higher Education Conference (WHEC) to be held in 2022.

When and Where

The meeting will be held on 29 July, 2021. The in-person meeting will be held at the Convention Centre, Southern University of Science and Technology in Shenzhen, China. The online meeting will be held on the Zoom platform.

The link to the meeting will be available at a later date.

Please note that this event will be recorded. The recording of the webinar will be made available at a later date on this webpage.

Participants

All IIOE partner universities, enterprises, UNESCO system partners and other key stakeholders will be invited to attend the meeting.

Organiser

International Centre for Higher Education Innovation under the auspices of UNESCO
(UNESCO-ICHEI)

Working Languages

The meeting will be conducted in Chinese, English, and French. Simultaneous translations will be provided.

Contact

Should you have any queries, please contact West Asia and Africa Programme Office, UNESCO-ICHEI by email to Ms. Xiaohan Bi: bixh@ichei.org and Mr. Dean Chen: chendean@ichei.org

Preliminary Agenda

Estimated time: 120 mins

Time	Session
Opening session	
20 mins	Opening Remarks 2021 Rotating presidency of IIOE, University of Engineering Technology, Lahore, Pakistan Presenting IIOE: IIOE supporting HEIs to improve online and blended education quality - IIOE Management Centre, UNESCO-ICHEI
Keynote Presentation	
Harnessing Quality Assurance as a developmental agent to take up the potential of online and blended learning for enhancing quality and improving inclusiveness - Presenting IIOE Quality Assurance 2.0	
15 mins	Prof. LIM Cher-ping, IIOE Chief Expert, Chair Professor of Learning Technologies and Innovation, Education University of Hong Kong
Expert Panel	
15 mins	Experts of quality assurance of online and blended learning from Africa and the Asia-Pacific will deliberate upon IIOE Quality Assurance 2.0 and how it could help IIOE's partner HEIs to plan and implement quality online and blended learning

Time	Session
IIOE Partners Roundtable Theme 1: Leveraging online and blended learning to ensure educational continuity and quality	
30 mins	- IIOE partner universities in the Arab region present their experience and promising practices of online and blended learning during and beyond the COVID-19 crisis - IIOE partner enterprise presents how enterprises could support HEIs to ensure educational continuity and quality
Theme 2: Strengthening capacities of higher education workforce to achieve higher education digital transformation	
30 mins	- IIOE partner universities in Sub-Saharan Africa present their experience and promising practices of teacher ICT capacity building at scale, and leveraging ICT to improve education quality, access and equity - IIOE partner enterprise presents university-industry cooperation to upgrade higher education curricula with the latest know-how, and cultivate ICT talent adapted to evolving socio-economic developments
Concluding Remarks	
10 mins	Concluding remarks of UNESCO representatives and UNESCO-ICHEI Director