IAU Membership Consultation on the Policy Statement:

Transforming Higher Education in a Digital World
for the Global Common Good

Practical instructions

The aim of this policy statement is to outline key principles and values that are essential to shape a human-centred, ethical, inclusive, and purpose-based digital transformation of higher education and society for the global common good.

We invite all IAU Members to review and provide suggestions in case they find that some aspects are omitted or not covered sufficiently and inform us if they support the statement.

IAU Members can provide feedback in two different ways:

1) General remarks and observations can be submitted by letter or in an email.

2) Proposed amendments or edits can be submitted by returning the draft Statement with the proposed changed clearly indicated in track-changes.

Please address your contribution to Trine Jensen (t.jensen@iau-aiu.net) indicating "*IAU Policy Statement*" in the subject line before **1 November 2020**.

The consultation will remain open until 1 November and thereafter the IAU Secretariat will work with the Expert Advisory Group to address the comments and feedback received. The outcome document will be presented at the IAU 16th General Conference (26-29 October 2021 in Dublin, Ireland) for endorsement by the Members. Once approved, it will guide future activities of IAU in this field.

Your participation, support and contributions are of outmost importance to jointly outline principles and values that must underpin the continuous digital transformation taking place in various forms and ways according to the local context.

Thank you in advance for your commitment!

Draft IAU Policy Statement:
Transforming Higher Education in a Digital World
for the Global Common Good

Preamble

0.1   The International Association of Universities (IAU) calls for a human-centred, ethical, inclusive and purpose-based digital transformation of higher education for the common global good. This call is anchored in the mission and vision of the IAU and the fundamental values promoted by the Association[1].

0.2   Technology has the potential to remedy many societal problems and improve the human condition, yet it also brings new challenges. The pace of development tests human capacity for understanding, analysing and regulating the new opportunities and risks. This statement encompasses essential principles and values that must underpin the digital transformation of higher education and society to shape the digital world for the common good.

0.3   The responsibility of higher education institutions is twofold in the digital era: continuous transformation of the higher education sector and contributing to shaping society.

0.4   Conditions for digital transformation vary between and within countries. Governments must agree to develop and implement international standards for fair and more sustainable technology development. Considering the context, diversity and voice of each country, such agreements will require multiple stakeholder collaboration, including higher education, to ensure that opportunities are made available to all citizens of the world. Building infrastructure to close the digital divide is a global responsibility.

0.5   This statement supports the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and particularly Sustainable Development Goal 4 on Quality Education: *Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all* and its target 4.3:
> "*By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.*"[1]

The UNESCO Education 2030 Framework for Action stipulates that:
> "*A well-established, properly regulated tertiary education system supported by technology, open educational resources and distance education can increase access, equity, quality and relevance, and can narrow the gap between what is taught at tertiary education institutions, including universities, and what economies and societies demand. The provision of tertiary education should be made progressively free, in line with existing international agreements*."[2]

0.6   IAU calls for higher education leaders, national authorities and decision-makers, and international organizations to actively shape the digital transformation of higher education and society. This policy statement represents the commitment of Members of the International Association of Universities and its partners to pursue the outlined principles and values.

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[1] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg4
[2] http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ED/ED_new/pdf/FFA-ENG-27Oct15.pdf (page 14)

1. Lead digital change in higher education and society for the global common good

Governance

1.1 Higher education leaders can foster an institutional culture that harnesses the transformative power of technology, incite effective and appropriate use in teaching, learning and research. Mobilizing change necessitates engagement of staff and inclusion of the student needs and perspectives. It is essential that higher education leaders recognize the need to continuously build institutional technological capacity.

1.2 The use of technology in higher education has the potential to increase equitable access to quality higher education, including for vulnerable groups of society. Higher education leaders can make a difference by prioritizing this issue at the leadership level.

1.3 In the transition towards increased digital management of student and staff data, higher education leaders are responsible for ensuring transparent institutional data governance policies and procedures that respect personal privacy and provide for secure data management.

1.4 A dedicated unit at the executive level, such as a Chief Information Office or equivalent, can be a means to lead digital transformation across the institution, facilitate liaison between faculties and departments, and sharing of experiences and successful initiatives.

Education

1.5 Higher education is educating tomorrow's citizens, leaders and innovators. It is, therefore, duty-bound to provide students with the best possible conditions and competencies to enable them to contribute to society regardless of their field of study. To this end, higher education leaders can facilitate, motivate and encourage teachers to appropriately and ethically leverage the potential of new technologies in teaching and in learning. This concerns not only the mode of learning, but also the content of curricula to align with an increasingly digital economy and knowledge society.

1.6 Technology has the potential to offer open, distance, online and blended programmes and resources to increase the share of citizens benefiting from higher education. To democratize information, increase access to knowledge and develop and sustain repositories of high-quality content, higher education leaders can make a difference by encouraging the use and creation of Open Educational Resources (OER), in line with the principles of the UNESCO 2019 recommendations on the use of Open Educational Resources[3]. Through national and international collaboration, universities and learners benefit from the information available and have the opportunity to adapt OERs to specific needs in a local context and to translate them into different languages.

Research

1.7 Universities contribute to the development of new technologies. In an environment of institutional autonomy, academic freedom, and social responsibility, higher education must equally be at the forefront of examining and analysing the potential benefits and risks of these on society and humanity to inform the public debate and evidence-based policymaking.

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[3] https://en.unesco.org/themes/building-knowledge-societies/oer/recommendation

1.8 To build bridges between academic disciplines, higher education leaders can encourage and prioritize interdisciplinary research. Leaders should consider expertise from all disciplines when technologies are developed. This will facilitate the exploration of technological potential from a holistic perspective and identify and limit risks.

1.9 Technology has the potential to democratize access to scientific research findings. Open Science, Open Data, Open Government and Open Access make knowledge available to a wider public who can reuse or adapt the information to other research or to make informed decisions about their lives. This should ultimately lead to new discoveries and solutions to societal challenges. Higher education leaders can support open initiatives by implementing incentives that encourage researchers to publish through open access sites.

2   Call for international and national frameworks conducive to leverage the potential of digital transformation

2.1 Technology transcends national borders; it is hence crucial to define international ethical standards for the use of technology in higher education, to commit to technological progress for good, and to limit risks and negative consequences. IAU calls for multilateral collaboration and international normative and legal frameworks committing to common technology norms and values rooted in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. This process requires multi-stakeholder participation, including higher education.

2.2 Digital technology facilitates opportunities for collaboration among countries and regions. Research collaboration can build an international scientific and technological community for sharing data and information, while conducting collaborative research based on mutual respect and international standards for science and scientific research.[4]

2.3 IAU calls for dialogue and exchange between higher education leaders, national policymakers and higher education governing bodies. This will allow assessment and identify weaknesses in governance structures that may hinder or hold back new approaches and solutions.

2.4 States must enable a safe and trustworthy digital environment based on human rights, ethical conduct and the rule of law; and develop a transparent and accountable digital governance system that enshrines the right to data privacy, neutrality and equal access. Higher education has a crucial role to play to support this process and holding states to account by demonstrating the negative consequences when this is not the case.

3   Building bridges to counter digital divides and to pursue universal access

3.1 Digital transformation offers new opportunities, but the conditions, infrastructures and possibilities are widely diverse. IAU calls for awareness of this situation and action to counter digital divides between those who have access to explore and benefit from the potential of digital transformation and those who do not and thus may be adversely affected by it.

3.2 It is essential to recognize existing inequalities to avoid exacerbating divides. Although digital transformation is not a panacea for getting rid of all socioeconomic differences, it brings opportunities for universities to foster inclusive and democratic education and to strive for

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[4] https://en.unesco.org/themes/ethics-science-and-technology/recommendation_science

universal access. IAU calls for policies that enable social inclusion and democratic engagement, including digital literacy.

3.3 Through solidarity and collaboration, higher education institutions around the world can facilitate knowledge transfer. Higher education should play a key role in favouring a digital space that represents cultural, language and gender diversity, avoiding biases and underrepresentation of vulnerable or marginalized groups.

3.4 IAU calls on international and regional organizations, partners and states to accelerate the development of infrastructures and competencies in areas and for people at risk of lagging behind or being excluded from the potential of digital transformation.

4 Foster ethical and responsible conduct and dialogue

4.1 Technology increasingly replaces or surpasses human capacity and activity. Higher education institutions, as independent and authoritative organizations, can take the lead in fostering and facilitating interdisciplinary debates and conversations on the impact on human-machine and human-human relationships with a view to ensure complementarity and human well-being.

4.2 Trustworthy and secure digital spaces are a prerequisite for realizing the potential of technology in higher education and in society. Digital transformation continuously challenges regulatory and legal frameworks in areas such as data protection and privacy and the right to privacy. Through research, advice and modelling of best practice through its own actions, higher education can inform policymaking on ethical, responsible and accountable conduct in cyberspace.

4.3 Unethical and immoral conduct can far outweigh any advances gained by technology. Higher education leaders, staff and students should develop and discuss ethical and moral codes of conduct for navigating in cyberspace. All academic disciplines should incorporate digital literacy, codes of ethical and responsible conduct in their curricula. Higher education equally has an important role to play in order to engage in promulgating ethical guidance for use of technology.

4.4 Technologies such as artificial intelligence, data science, virtual reality, augmented reality, the Internet of Things (IoT) and blockchain among others have the potential to enhance meaningful value creation. They can improve governance, provide innovative education systems, promote history, culture and art and new forms of student engagements. Yet, at the same time, these developments require careful ethical consideration on the impact on society and humanity.

4.5 Technological developments should improve the human condition and create sustainable societies for the common good. Technology is merely a means to an end. Therefore, the ethical dimensions and implications of the 'end' and 'purpose' of technological developments should be continuously questioned and challenged, to ensure that they are being developed *for good*. It is likewise essential that humans are held accountable, and not machines.

5 Prepare staff, students, citizens and higher education constituents for lifelong learning in a rapidly transforming world

5.1 As independent institutions, higher education plays an important role in preparing students to critically evaluate the potential, risks and impact of new technologies. It carries an important responsibility to prepare stakeholders (students, faculty, staff, and citizens) to live in a rapidly transforming world and to actively shape future society.

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5.2 It is difficult to know, or even imagine, the future skills and competencies that students will require. Higher education must consider local needs and global developments and regularly assess and review curricula to ensure that higher education graduates are well equipped to contribute to society and to take part in a globalized world.

5.3 Higher education leaders can foster change and stimulate development of new teaching and learning opportunities for lifelong learning. Online and distance as well as blended learning can be useful tools as part of this structural change in providing learning opportunities and new knowledge acquisition.

5.4 Higher education should consider the perspectives of students and the needs of society in discussions about change and transformation of higher education. Diverse viewpoints contribute important perspectives on how to effectively leverage technology in higher education.

5.5 To create a conducive environment open to change and transformation, higher education leaders must favour a collegial and trustworthy working environment. Leadership should encourage and reward experimentation while recognizing that not all new teaching pedagogies or learning assessments will succeed. Failure is an essential part of the learning process.

6 Advance together through collaboration and exchange

6.1 Commitment is no longer sufficient; it is time to act, to exchange and shape digital transformation for the global common good. Collaboration and solidarity are essential for building bridges instead of divides and making opportunities available to all.

6.2 Guided by the principles in this statement, the International Association of Universities provides a unique platform for exchange and collaboration beyond countries and regions to share knowledge, ideas, concerns and lessons learned, and to create a just higher education landscape that strives for excellence, relevance and quality higher education for all, regardless of national contexts and the diversity of institutions.

6.3 Technological advances are human-made and human values must inform their use and shape regulatory framework for digital transformation. Guided by fundamental values and principles laid out in this statement, IAU believes that digital transformation can serve the global common good and enhance the human condition in pursuit of developing sustainable societies. Together we will actively shape a fair and equitable digitalized world.

The Members of the International Association of Universities and partners.