## BASIC INFORMATION

### A. Basic Project Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Project ID</th>
<th>Project Name</th>
<th>Parent Project ID (if any)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>P171050</td>
<td>Ukraine Improving Higher Education for Results Project</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
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<th>Estimated Board Date</th>
<th>Practice Area (Lead)</th>
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<td>EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA</td>
<td>29-Jan-2021</td>
<td>31-Mar-2021</td>
<td>Education</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Financing Instrument</th>
<th>Borrower(s)</th>
<th>Implementing Agency</th>
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<tr>
<td>Investment Project Financing</td>
<td>Ukraine through the Ministry of Finance</td>
<td>Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine</td>
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### Proposed Development Objective(s)

The Project Development Objective is to improve efficiency, conditions for quality, and transparency in the higher education system of Ukraine.

### Components

- Sector-Wide Improvements to Governance, Financing, Quality and Transparency
- Alliances and Partnerships for Improved Efficiency and Quality
- Capacity Building and Education Environment Enhancement
- Project Management, Monitoring & Evaluation

## PROJECT FINANCING DATA (US$, Millions)

### SUMMARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Project Cost</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total Financing</td>
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<tr>
<td>of which IBRD/IDA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financing Gap</td>
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### DETAILS

**World Bank Group Financing**

| International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) | 200.00 |
Environmental and Social Risk Classification
Moderate

Decision
The review did authorize the team to appraise and negotiate

B. Introduction and Context

Country Context

1. Ukraine is a large lower-middle-income country with a gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of US$ 3,141 as of 2019, although the economy is expected to contract by about 5.5 percent for 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2014-16, Ukraine experienced acute political, security and economic challenges leading to the Euromaidan uprising, the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine, extensive financial exposure to a deteriorating global economic environment, and a large cumulative contraction of the economy of 16 percent. Economic growth has since recovered to 3.3 percent in 2018 and a solid 3.2 percent in 2019. Even so, at the current growth rate, it will take Ukraine more than 50 years to reach income levels of today’s Poland. Poverty incidence increased from 3.5 percent in 2014 to 7.8 percent in 2015 and while it has come down slightly since 2015, it remains above pre-crisis levels. Consumption of the bottom 40 percent contracted in the period between 2011-2016 emphasizing the need for faster economic growth. However, this has been further impacted by the COVID crisis.

2. Improving labor productivity and the quality of human capital is key to faster growth in Ukraine as well as ensuring a recovery after the COVID-19 crisis. In recent years, the share of labor income in total income has started to decline due to a significant decline in real wages, rather than an increase in labor productivity. This hints at a mismatch in the skills produced by the education system and the needs of the economy. Furthermore, human capital represents only 34 percent of total wealth in Ukraine, compared to 51 percent in lower-middle-income countries, 62 percent in the ECA region, and 70 percent in high-income OECD countries. In fact, 40 percent of employers surveyed across four sectors in Ukraine reported significant skills gaps among their employees which harm business objectives. Further jeopardizing Ukraine’s economy is a declining labor force due to demographic pressures and outward migration (brain drain), creating yet further pressure to improve labor productivity and growth.

3. On top of the preexisting barriers to growth, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced a sudden slowdown in economic activity and a significant contraction is expected. In 2019, economic growth was solid at 3.2 percent, led by a good agricultural harvest and sectors dependent on domestic consumption. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected the economy through reduced disposable incomes and consumption (resulting from necessary restrictions and closures), as well as lower

1 WB (2017) Skills for a Modern Ukraine
remittances due to weaker economic activity in neighboring countries. The economy is expected to contract by 5.5 percent in 2020, as weaknesses in the first half of the year are only partly offset by a recovery in domestic demand in the second half and positive contributions from net exports. Going forward, growth is expected to remain modest at 1.5 percent in 2021, rising to about 3.7 percent by 2023. The outlook depends on the duration of the health crisis and reforms that address bottlenecks to investment and safeguard macroeconomic sustainability. Thus, support will be required to address this COVID and post-COVID context while building longer term fundamental structural reforms that will enhance the human capital in Ukraine.

4. Strengthening public trust, accountability, and transparency also remains a key cross-cutting objective for the Government. The Euromaidan uprising reflected the public’s demand for better governance and transparency. Surveys consistently show strong public support for reform: over 60 percent of Ukrainians believe in the success of reforms to date. Anti-corruption and transparency reforms are perceived to be most important by the public.\(^2\) A recent survey of the Razumkov Centre found that almost 80 percent of Ukrainians trust the new president (compared to 57 percent for the government in general).\(^3\) This level of support will help to sustain momentum for reform, but it also indicates that engagement with stakeholders and broader efforts to improve transparency and public accountability are needed to build trust again.

5. In the context of these vulnerabilities and opportunities, Ukraine recognizes human capital and skills development as a key priority for both resilience and growth. The Government’s plan of reform identifies human capital development and education system reform as a core priority for contributing to the ultimate goals of increasing economic growth, attracting foreign direct investment, and creating new jobs\(^4\) while bridging the COVID-19 crisis and minimizing its impact on the most vulnerable.

Sectoral and Institutional Context

6. Higher education coverage in Ukraine has increased substantially over the last 20 years, and higher education represents the top objective for most young Ukrainians, particularly for long-cycle degree programs in universities. The growth in the higher education system—particularly in HEIs offering academic degrees—was accompanied by a large increase in the higher education coverage rate, from about 45 percent at the time of independence in 1993 to 82 percent as of 2018. Approximately 75 percent students enroll in long-cycle degree programs in universities, academies and institutes, whereas colleges have 25 percent of enrollments. Colleges were recently part of the higher education system but are now designated as pre-tertiary education institutions. The share of the population age 25+ with at least some higher education has reached about 40 percent, exceeding that of the OECD average and many other countries. Returns to higher education have remained high compared to returns to upper secondary general or vocational education.

7. To meet the growing demand over the last decades, the higher education sector in Ukraine has grown to contain an extensive and diverse array of universities, academies, and institutes (academic HEIs).

\(^2\) Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation – 2019 public opinion polls
\(^3\) Razumkov Centre for Economic and Political Studies – 2019 public opinion poll.
\(^4\) Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine (2020). Education and Science Reform.
As of 2019, Ukraine had a total of 327 HEIs (231 public and 96 private). The majority of State-funded public HEIs (141 institutions) are subordinated to the MOES, although a subset of HEIs are also subordinated to other ministries like Ministry of Health, Culture, Internal Affairs, and Defense. Expansion of the higher education system was driven by the development of private HEIs, upgrading the status of some institutions to academies and universities, and the establishment of branches and separate structural divisions of HEIs.

8. A large supply of higher education graduates, many with insufficient skills for the needs of the modern labor market, has contributed to unemployment and education-job mismatch, particularly among young university graduates. The share of workers with higher education among the unemployed has increased from 32 percent in 2004 to 47 percent by 2013. Moreover, 40 percent of young university graduates were working in lower-level jobs which did not require university-level education, as of 2013, compared to 29 percent for prime-age and older workers. Only one-third of youth believe that Ukrainian education meets the needs of the modern labor market, compared to 73 percent in the EU, according to Eurobarometer. In the labor market, a serious skills mismatch has been identified: 40 percent of employers report significant skills gaps, including both cognitive and socioemotional skills, which harm business objectives. Only half of job vacancies in a recent study even mention needing a minimum educational level and less than a third a specific field of study. This disconnect between educational credentials and labor market needs is driven by the high number of Ukrainians with higher education as well as the poor signaling value of many higher education credentials as evidence of high-quality education and relevant skills. This challenge is further hindered by low internal labor mobility, which stands at 4.5 percent, half that of comparator countries.

9. Since the peak in 2008, Ukraine’s higher education system has been facing a significant decline in enrollments largely due to the declining population as well as greater numbers of students going abroad for higher education. The number of students in universities, academies and institutes (HEIs) declined by 45 percent between 2008 and 2018, from over 2.37 million students in 2008 down to about 1.33 million in 2018. Overall, this trend is projected to continue over the coming years given the demographic conditions in Ukraine. At the same time, more and more students have sought to study abroad, due in part to deterioration in higher education quality and relevance in Ukraine, as well as the perception that it will facilitate access to a better job market. Between 2009 and 2016, the number of Ukrainians going abroad for higher education increased by 176 percent (reaching nearly 70,000 students). Declining enrolments puts further pressure on Ukraine’s already large higher education system to improve resource sustainability and differentiation to avoid duplication of efforts.

10. Consequently, the main challenges facing the higher education sector in Ukraine include improving quality and relevance to meet labor market needs while also supporting the sector to maintain continuity of learning in the face of COVID-19, strengthening fiscal sustainability and efficiency across the sector, and rebuilding public trust in educational credentials through greater transparency and governance. These challenges are underscored in the recent World Bank’s 2019 Education Flagship Study.

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5 In addition to the 327 HEIs, Ukraine also has 349 colleges and technical colleges that are classified as pre-tertiary professional education institutions.
6 STEP Survey 2014
and are described in more detail below centered around three major sector challenges: (i) poor relevance and quality and teaching, learning and research; (ii) inadequate incentives for network rightsizing and mergers to make the system fiscally sustainable; and (iii) lack of financial autonomy, poor transparency, accountability and low public trust in the higher education system.

11. Teaching and learning in universities remains focused on knowledge acquisition, often with outdated content and pedagogical methods that are not adjusted to the European Standards and Guidelines on student-centered learning and teaching or new trends, research or technology that affect the labor market and wider economy. Although there is little systematic information on quality of learning outcomes in higher education, there is evidence that curriculum, pedagogical teaching methods, and learning environments need to be modernized to reflect the evolving needs of society and the economy, including on technology, sustainability and climate change. For example, one-third of Ukrainians surveyed in 2016 by the Democratic Initiatives Foundation highlighted the divergence of higher education from the demands of the labor market as a major problem in higher education, along with poor infrastructure and facilities in higher education institutions. Furthermore, nearly half of HEIs surveyed in 2016 reported that they do not evaluate curriculum and program contents, pedagogical approaches and intended learning outcomes on a regular basis. Higher education programs delivering applied business, financial, and management skills are in short supply in Ukraine, and only a few universities actively use project or problem-based learning or promote entrepreneurship training and programs. Business executives surveyed by the World Economic Forum also noted the low quality of management training in Ukrainian universities which serves as a barrier to developing the skills important for economic competitiveness.

12. COVID-19 has significantly affected teaching and learning in Ukrainian universities, with many ill-equipped to make the transition to effective distance education. The switch to online modes of teaching and learning has revealed significant challenges. HEIs have used various e-learning platforms, videoconferencing platforms, and social media networks to maintain learning continuity, but HEIs have largely operated independently in determining how to organize study processes. Access to technical and digital infrastructure, competences and pedagogies for distance learning remains a major constraint. Students also have challenges in coping with distance learning, and many students particularly in rural areas have difficulty with internet connectivity and inadequate digital devices. A survey of 540 higher education students in Ukraine found that major challenges include limited access to the internet (cited by 45%), lack of motivation (37%), and vague or unclear guidance from instructors (29%).

13. The divide between higher education and research also limits the quality and relevance of higher education. Ukraine still retains the legacy in which HEIs focus on education (teaching), whereas research and scientific innovation occurs in the National Academy of Sciences and the six sectoral national academies of science. The Government’s reform envisions more integration between research carried out in HEIs and in the academies, thereby making better use of resources and potentially increasing Ukraine’s competitiveness in European and global research areas. For example, HEIs are now eligible to

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12 Nenko, Kybalna, and Snisarenko (2020)
apply for designation as research universities, entitling them to additional research funding. Furthermore, available research indicates that since the 2014 higher education reform law was passed, most universities explicitly refer to research and/or innovation, along with education, in their institutional mission statements, indicating a growing focus and expectation for research activities in universities.\(^\text{13}\)

14. However, research activities in universities remain weak and most universities are poorly equipped to integrate research activities with teaching. Only 50 percent of HEIs perform any kind of research and development (R&D), receiving only 7 percent of the State budget that is allocated for R&D. At the same time, around 70 percent of Candidates of Science and Doctors of Science are working in the higher education sector, mainly involved in teaching rather than research. Although research output overall remains quite limited due to Ukraine’s historical isolation and limited use of English or other foreign languages, Ukrainian HEIs do produce some research output that is primarily concentrated in STEM fields. Even so, existing facilities and equipment to support research in many HEIs are significantly out-of-date, depreciated, or absent. For example, lack of material, technical, financial, and other equipment in universities was highlighted as a major barrier to quality of education by 60 percent of survey respondents.\(^\text{14}\) Lack of resources and outdated teaching and research facilities is a particular barrier in engineering and natural sciences programs.\(^\text{15}\)

15. The network of public HEIs is oversized and inefficient, relative to a declining population and poses challenges both for financial sustainability and quality of service delivery. With a total population of around 42.2 million, Ukraine’s network of 327 HEIs—of which 231 are public—is quite large. This amounts to 7.7 HEIs per 1 million population, or 5.4 public HEIs per 1 million (see Figure 3) which is high compared to other countries in Europe. Around 60 percent of academic HEIs enroll fewer than 5,000 students, particularly academies and institutes where the average enrollment size is around 680 students for institutes and 1,800 students for academies. There are over 300 public colleges and technikums in Ukraine, with an average enrollment size of approximately 550 students. The majority of HEIs and the colleges/technikums – about 75 percent – are legally subordinated to the MOES.

16. The Government has also identified the need for strong incentives to drive for optimal consolidation of the massive network of HEIs using a bottom-up approach. In recent years, there has been a 25 percent reduction in the number of HEIs, including colleges and branch colleges that were ‘diploma mills’ but more needs to be done. Further aggregation of universities is required through a bottom-up process while differentiating and diversifying the types of universities (such as research, professional, teaching) and optimizing their geospatial catchment area. Governance and policymaking in higher education is fragmented, since the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine (CMU) is obliged by law to take any decisions that lead to changes in funding, which affect many government agencies with subordinate universities under them. This means that approaches driven by higher education institutions themselves and with strong incentives (bottom up) are needed to encourage institutions to merge, thereby generating efficiencies and improving quality. To effectively undertake such an exercise institutional audits are needed for each HEIs.

\(^{13}\) Hladchenko (2016). ‘Organizational Identify of Ukrainian Universities.’ \textit{Tertiary Education and Management}, 22(4).


17. Low transparency in the system and poor information feedback loops contribute to this problem. For example, Ukrainians have a high demand for higher education, and approximately 85 percent of youth plan to obtain higher education. However, this high demand is poorly informed by information on available educational paths and corresponding employment outcomes, leaving students and their families in the dark when making an important choice regarding the transition to higher education.

18. Within this context, the World Bank and the MOES are preparing an investment project with a results-based component that aims to improve the efficiency, conditions for quality, and transparency in Ukraine’s higher education system. The project aims to support the next stage in transforming and modernizing Ukraine’s education system, with anticipated long-term impacts of greater skills relevance, better articulation between higher education and the labor market, and more sustainable and transparent approaches to service delivery.

C. Proposed Development Objective(s)

Development Objective(s) (From PAD)
The Project Development Objective is to improve efficiency, conditions for quality, and transparency in the higher education system of Ukraine.

Key Results

19. The following PDO level indicators would be used to measure the outcomes specified in the PDO statement:
   a. Performance-based funding formula is used to allocate public funding to HEIs during at least two consecutive fiscal years (yes/no) (efficiency and financial transparency)
   b. Number of institutions that have developed change management plans for improving university governance and teaching and learning (conditions for quality)
   c. Number of institutions with active performance-based contracts in place (conditions for quality and transparency)
   d. Number of mergers of public HEIs under MOES (efficiency) (PBC 4)

D. Project Description

20. In response to the COVID-19 crisis and with a view to address longer term structural reforms, a sizeable share of project financing particularly under Component 3 will be directed towards mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 crisis over the coming years, while the remaining funds will be directed towards the much needed structural reforms over the medium-term. The project would finance strategic investment activities critical for the success of reforms in higher education, along with specific results

16 ILO School-to-Work Transition Survey 2015
along the results chain to incentivize reform implementation using a results-based approach. The lion’s share of reform implementation however will be financed through the State budget. Project interventions are mainly targeting public HEIs, while some of the legislative, governance, and financing policies would affect the entire sector, including private HEIs.

21. The project will support fiscal efficiency of higher education networks through incentives for consolidation, driven by the new governance and financial autonomy reforms, the introduction of a performance-based financing formula and through demand-driven investments to incentivize university mergers and associated quality improvements in higher education based on proposals from universities. This will lead to a more cost-efficient and simpler network of higher quality as well as better managed HEIs aligned to the economy. The project will support improvements in the conditions for quality through strategic investments in learning environments and digital capabilities of HEIs to ensure learning continuity through remote and distance learning modalities, support modern practice-based teaching approaches integrated with opportunities for research, capacity building, and incentives to enhance university studies with greater market relevance. Finally, the project will improve transparency of inputs and outputs through support for key information and feedback tools and through transparent allocation and use of funds in higher education. Ultimately, the project is expected to provide a better match between relevance of skills acquired through education and labor market needs, and to contribute to stronger productivity growth. The Project components are described below.

22. Component 1: Sector-Wide Improvements to Governance, Financing, Quality and Transparency. The objective of this component is to support the Government with implementation and monitoring of sector-wide reforms affecting higher education governance and financing, quality, and transparency. This component contains two mutually reinforcing sub-components: 1.1 which supports strategic sector-wide investments to strengthen system management, planning and monitoring, and 1.2 which reimburses against specific results through performance-based conditions (PBCs).

23. Sub-component 1.1 – Strategic sector-wide investments to support autonomy, transparency, and monitoring. This sub-component would support strategic investments in information systems, surveys and evaluations, as well as digital tools for learning assessments for higher education. IT would also support strategic communications related to both the project and the larger higher education reform. In particular, these strategic investments are needed to support the introduction of autonomy reforms and performance-based incentives for HEIs, and to improve transparency of funding and information flows within the sector.

24. Sub-component 1.2: Strategic results to strengthen performance-based incentives in higher education. To incentivize policy changes and implementation of key activities, this sub-component will finance critical performance-based conditions related to introduction and implementation of performance-based incentives at the system-level and at institutional levels in the higher education sub-sector. Under PBCs, the project will co-finance results that will lay the foundations for performance-based incentives to improve efficiency, conditions for quality, and transparency in higher education while building on the strategic activities financed under sub-component 1.1.

25. Component 2: Alliances and Partnerships for Improved Efficiency and Quality. The objective of this component is to support the Government improve fiscal efficiency in the higher education sector and to support merged HEIs to improve conditions for quality teaching and learning as part of institutional
merger processes. This component is also divided into two sub-components: sub-component 2.1 which supports strategic investments to improve conditions for quality and merger implementation in select HEIs, and sub-component 2.2 which finances specific results through PBCs.

26. Sub-component 2.1: Strategic investments to ensure successful university mergers. Under this sub-component, the Project would finance packages of investments, including goods and minor civil works, for merged HEIs. These would be specified in detail in the Project Operational Manual, but they would be selected by MOES to promote successful implementation of governance and financial autonomy reforms, as well as quality and relevance improvements. In particular, merger support packages would include *inter alia* laboratories for teaching, research, and/or learning, equipment for laboratories, learning support facilities, and other learning spaces, modern digital infrastructure and IT to support distance learning, and minor refurbishment/rehabilitation. New construction will not be supported.

27. Sub-component 2.2 - Strategic results to support consolidation in higher education. To incentivize policy changes and implementation of key activities, this sub-component will finance a critical PBC related to institutional mergers and consolidation of the network of higher education institutions in Ukraine. Under this PBC, the project will co-finance a result that will incentivize consolidation and partnerships, thereby putting the overall sector on a path to greater fiscal efficiency and economic sustainability while supporting HEIs to develop a critical mass for quality teaching and learning.

28. Component 3 – Capacity Building and Education Environment Enhancement. The objective of this component is to build capacity of academic managers and improve educational environments and research capacity in HEIs, including with a focus on supporting HEIs to maintain learning continuity and operational resilience via remote and distance modalities. This will ultimately improve the overall relevance, quality and external economic efficiency of the HEIs and their graduates in support of innovation and economic development. In support of this, the project would finance pre-defined categories of goods and services, including modern digital infrastructure for distance learning, digital devices, multimedia equipment and software, electronic learning management systems, and similar types of IT investments to improve quality of distance learning modalities. Investments could also include modern basic teaching laboratories and advanced scientific research laboratories, equipment, and minor refurbishment and rehabilitation. To build capacity of academic managers, this component would also support targeted training for managerial staff.

29. Component 4 – Project Management, Monitoring & Evaluation. The objective of this component is to support the effective management and implementation of the proposed project. The component would finance the day-to-day management and monitoring of the proposed project, including fiduciary, environmental and social risk management staff and incremental consultants, training activities, targeted technical assistance, and operating costs, including outreach related to the project and the project-specific Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Legal Operational Policies</th>
<th>Triggered?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Projects on International Waterways OP 7.50</td>
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30. Project investments have a country wide coverage and will include locations in built-up areas of urban and rural settlements, high- and low-income neighborhoods, not in proximity to areas of biodiversity significance. Operations will minor involve civil works via contracted labor for the rehabilitation of existing facilities within a footprint of land allocated to the educational institution. Potential environmental risks and impacts are predictable, expected to be temporary and reversible, low in magnitude, and site specific. The expected environmental impacts may include increased pollution due to improper care, handling and storage of construction material and waste, generation of excessive noise and dust levels, and health impacts related to inadequate disposal of asbestos-containing material, old lead-containing paints, labor safety risks, etc. In this regard the Bank will require adoption of adequate occupational health and safety (OHS) practices.

31. The Environmental and Social Risk Classification for the project has considered the potential environmental and social risks associated with civil works especially excavations for the expansions of classroom blocks, demolitions of walls during renovations, replacement or roofing materials, installation of boreholes and construction of water and sanitation facilities including septic tanks. These activities will not generate significant adverse environmental impacts or substantial risks on human population, and the predictable impacts are expected to be temporary, reversible, moderate in magnitude and site specific. No adverse impacts such as involuntary land acquisition, impacts on indigenous peoples, on biodiversity and habitats are expected.

32. At this stage of preparation, the specific institutions where physical works will take place are yet to be identified, but based on the project description of the possible activities, key environmental and social issues will be related to (i) waste management of construction spoils, (ii) noise and air pollution with dust; (iii) hazardous materials such as asbestos containing materials, and maybe old lead containing paints; (iv) health and safety of students, teaching staff and visitors during the construction phase, (v) disruption of classes during construction (vi) erosion from earth works and run-off; (vii) labor safety risks; (v) impacts on water quality and quantity; etc. Adequate adoption of work-related health and safety practices (OHS requirements) during construction both for the construction workers and the education personnel and students would be a requirement by the Bank.

E. Implementation

Institutional and Implementation Arrangements

33. The proposed Project will be implemented over a six-year period by the Ministry of Education and Science (MOES) of Ukraine. The MOES would have the overall responsibility for project coordination and monitoring of implementation progress. Skilled staff and consultants will be recruited to support project implementation on a regular basis throughout the project period, under the supervision and direction of MOES leadership. Capacity enhancement of the MOES will be financed by the Borrower to maintain,
throughout project implementation, qualified staff in sufficient numbers, as well as adequate funds, facilities, services, and other resources for project implementation (including procurement, financial management, environmental and social aspects and monitoring and evaluation and PBC verification), all acceptable to the Bank. Key qualified staff which are needed for project implementation include fiduciary consultants who would support the MOES on financial management, procurement, monitoring, and administration; and thematic or technical consultants in line with the activities envisioned under the project.

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 | James Gresham |
| Approved By |
| Practice Manager/Manager: | |
| Country Director: | Anthony A. Gaeta | 01-Feb-2021 |