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## Middle East and North Africa (MENA) University Governance and Quality Assurance Program

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FY 2015-2018



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## I. About the MENA University Governance and Quality Assurance Program

The MENA University Governance and Quality Assurance Program stems from a partnership between the Education Global Practice of the World Bank and the Center for Mediterranean Integration (CMI). Its purpose is to foster openness, information sharing and collective learning among tertiary education institutions in the MENA region, and between them and government policy-makers, quality assurance agencies and the employers' sector.

The Program is guided by three pillars: the improvement of university governance and quality, the financial sustainability of institutions, and the internationalization of tertiary education. Analytical executive summaries of recent mapping exercises of each of these pillars are available on the [Program's webpage](#).

Participating tertiary education institutions in the region conduct periodically a benchmarking process aimed at tracking their progress towards the improvement of their governance and quality (i) with other institutions in the regions; as well as at (ii) towards achieving their goals; using a tool developed as part of the program, known as the University Governance Score Card (UGSC).

The Program is in place thanks to a collaborative framework between the World Bank and the CMI, and it involves active participation of partner organizations including UNESCO, IESCO, the International Association of Universities, the British Council, the Association of Arab Universities and UNIMED.

## II. Key accomplishment of the Program in FY15-18.

During FY2015-18, the Program has achieved significant accomplishments, including the following ones:

- Three regional conferences were convened in each of Lebanon (2015), Algeria (2016), and Marseille (2017) each of which brought together key stakeholders from governments, heads of tertiary education agencies, representatives from international partner organizations, regional experts, and a selected number of the members of the UGSC Network. The aim of these conferences was to think collectively about the emerging trends in governance in tertiary education in the MENA, means of establishing sustainable financing mechanisms, addressing the increasing internationalization trends and share best practices applicable to the region, and to network with peer institutions.
- A revised version of the University Governance Score Card (UGSC)<sup>1</sup> was developed in light of the first round of implementation in 2012-2013 and in close consultation with

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<sup>1</sup> The University Governance Score Card (UGSC) is a benchmarking tool that uses an institution-based approach that focuses on universities and institutions of tertiary education as opposed to (only) national systems or country ratings. It thus has the capacity to: (1) identify strengths and weaknesses at individual institutions; (2) identify governance trends and practices by type of institution; (3) illustrate governance trends at the national level, and (4) generate interest - and peer pressure - in initiating reforms at the institutional, national, and regional level. The UGSC uses five dimensions that together capture the multidimensional nature of governance: (1) Overall Context, Mission, and Goals; (2) Management Orientation; (3) Autonomy; (4) Accountability, and (5) Participation. Each dimension has been attributed a set of indicators and a questionnaire from which governance indicators are scored (by an independent observer on the basis of an interview with the institution's representative and supporting documents). A weighting system aggregates those indicators and translates the questionnaire to a scoring instrument to record the results by institution. The score on a dimension should be interpreted as an indication of the university's situation vis-à-vis one of the global trends in governance practices, and not as a performance score. In addition to the questionnaire, the UGSC includes a self-perception tool, which assess the extent to which the tertiary education institutions is aware of the governance model and practices they follow.



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local institutions of tertiary education. The new tool allowed for increased level of comparative insight into the development of governance in each of the participating institutions.

- Twelve national workshops were conducted to first introduce an updated version of the University Governance Score Card (UGSC) benchmarking tool and then introduce the results of the exercise of benchmarking university governance as follows: two national workshops each in Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Morocco and one workshop each in Algeria, Iraq, Tunisia and Palestine.
- 97 institutional reports were prepared during each round of benchmarking and shared with participating institutions that provided feedback on the results reported, based on which the reports were finalized.
- Following the benchmarking, about 50 of the participating universities developed institutional action plans.
- Eight reports on the financing issues and trends in the participating countries of the MENA region were prepared. These reports highlight key financing practices in each of the eight countries participating in the UGSC activities. Regional trends were drawn from the analysis of national trends of financing.
- Two Working Papers, one on financing tertiary education and the other on internationalization, were presented at the 2017 regional conference in Marseille.
- The UGSC tool implemented in the MENA region has served as the basis for the development of a customized and expanded version which is now implemented in other countries in support of policy dialogue with governments or World Bank operations.
- The UGSC network has been expanded to tertiary institutions from European countries (Italy, Greece, Portugal and Spain).

### III. PILLAR I: Improvement of university governance and quality

Under the first pillar, the University Governance Score Card (UGSC) is being used to support institutions as they work towards the improvement of their governance and quality policies and programs, and also towards the improvement of their performance in both domains. The UGSC is a tool that was developed in 2010 as a benchmarking tool to assess the extent to which tertiary education institutions in the MENA region are following governance practices aligned with their institutional goals, national policies, and international trends. Since 2015, an updated version of the tool has been implemented in 120 tertiary education institutions from eight MENA countries.

During FY 2015-18, three MENA Tertiary Education Conferences were successfully held in Lebanon (2015), Tunis (2016) and Marseille (2017) with active participation of key government officers, heads of tertiary education agencies and authorities of tertiary education institutions from all countries in the MENA region. The conference held in Tunis in 2016 addressed paradigm shifts within systems of tertiary education in light of global changes that are impacting the MENA region, such as changes

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The UGSC is not a ranking tool and does not point to an ideal governance model; it only identifies trends allowing institutions to reflect on their practices. The aim is not to get the maximum score on each dimension but instead to determine if the governance arrangement is coherent. This is why scores from each axis should be interpreted in correlation and not in isolation. The tool has been used on a voluntary basis and the results of the institutional report are confidential. Aggregated results at the national and regional level are publicly disseminated while respecting anonymity of participating institutions. For further information on the methodology, see: WB Regional H.E. MENA Report (2012) *Universities Through the Looking Glass: Benchmarking University Governance to Enable Higher Education Modernization in MENA*



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in university governance and the improvement of quality within the sector aimed at improving competitiveness and the employability of youth and graduates. The event held in Marseille in 2017 continued the discussions and deliberations on issues of competitiveness and equity within the framework of good governance, sustainable financing and internationalization within tertiary education in the region. The event also served as platform to discuss a renewed agenda for future collaboration on these key higher education issues in the region. In addition, it included a discussion on how to move the network to a more sustainable structure, owned by the members themselves.

In addition, national workshops on strengthening governance and improving quality of tertiary education were also held during 2016-17 in Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, with a combined participation of over 400 institutional administrators. During FY 2018 and FY2019, national workshops to present results of the UGSC from participating institutions have been held in Morocco, Egypt, Jordan, Algeria and Lebanon. Tunisia will host its national workshop in November 2019. As part of this activity, institutional benchmarking reports have been released for all participating universities in the UGSC benchmarking initiative. Also, national summaries for each of the participating countries have been released during the corresponding national workshops.

#### IV. PILLAR II: Seeking sustainable financing in tertiary education in MENA

In addition to the in depth national scoping of governance trends within tertiary education in participating countries, the program led efforts mapping policies and practices of financing within the tertiary education sector in the eight participating countries.

Analysis of trends in the financing of tertiary education aimed at highlighting linkages between financial sustainability in tertiary education so that education institutions can meet growing student demands, such as adopting financing strategies that seek alternative sources of revenue and that link funding with improved results and performance. Region-wide tertiary education continues to grow, coupled with low but varying public spending on tertiary education as a proportion of the education budget among the eight countries. The mapping exercise shows that the value of tertiary education for economic growth and broader social and sustainable development has not yet been fully recognized by MENA countries, partly due to the fact that tertiary education financing is largely ad hoc and is not based on any attempt to develop a closer link between sectoral planning and budgeting. Cost-side and revenue side solutions may be sought in an attempt to improve quality, equity and efficiency in tertiary education across countries in the region. The analytical executive summary of this mapping is published on the CMI website.

#### V. PILLAR III: Internationalization of tertiary education in MENA

The program has explored the internationalization of tertiary education in MENA with the aim of both improving the skills and employability of students and boosting institutions' research and innovation capacity. Mapping of internationalization practices within the sector showed that internationalization is still nascent in the region. Some key findings showed only a few countries being able to attract large numbers of international students, and MENA tertiary education institutions rarely being prioritized by others for the development of academic partnerships. A report is being drafted that analyzes the internationalization trends in the region and details some recommendations both for tertiary education institutions and governments in MENA to boost



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internationalization in the region and better reap the benefits it holds. The report is due to be published in FY20.



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## VI. A partnership approach

A key feature of the Program is the development and implementation of a framework allowing related relevant international organizations to participate in the activities of the Program. As co-conveners of the program, the World Bank and the CMI have been enablers of a more efficient collaborative approach in the region on matters of tertiary education by a wide range of international organizations. The partnership approach has attracted the participation of the following international organizations: UNESCO, ISESCO, the British Council, the International Association of Universities, the Association of Arab Universities and UNIMED. Partner organizations supported the program with in-kind contributions, including co-sponsoring the participation of delegates in regional meetings, dissemination of relevant program information to their respective networks, supporting speakers participating at conferences, etc.

The UGSC network has been expanded to tertiary institutions from European countries (Italy, Greece, Portugal and Spain) thanks to the partnership established with UNIMED.

In addition to the current partner members, other organizations have expressed interest in joining the program. Up to now, decisions about involvement of partner organizations have been made on an ad-hoc basis, although in the future it will be necessary to develop guidelines and protocols for involvement.

## VII. The Inter-institutional MENA tertiary education network

The program efforts, activities, publications and partnerships have evolved through the UGSC Network, which has been as a platform to promote the exchange of information and lessons learned from the implementation of reforms.

At the multi-country level, it aims to create a solid knowledge base from which to foster collaboration and cooperation through a network of experts, programs and institutions. At the country level, its objective is to support capacity building at individual tertiary education institutions, through a focus on six priority areas in line with the three pillars highlighted above: (1) Institutional Governance; (2) Internationalization of Tertiary Education; (3) Financial Sustainability; (4) Quality Assurance; (5) Developing Innovation Systems, and (6) Monitoring Results and Benchmarking; with the overall aim of improving tertiary education provision. This platform has been frequently used for a number of collaborative exchanges among institutional, national and international members.

Regionally, good practices and innovations of network members are regularly shared and widely disseminated through both the annual meeting of the MENA Tertiary Education Conference, as well as the program's page including periodic [blogs series](#). The network also supported the work of ministries and local institutions, such as in Lebanon, whereby a national University Governance Task Force, composed of local network members, was appointed by the Minister of Education and Higher Education in 2013 and assigned to support the Ministry in building a culture of good governance and quality improvement in tertiary education within the country. This task force continues to support the ministry's activities through institutional collaborations as well as national initiatives. In Iraq, members of the network convened in 2014 to further advance the work of the UGSC and address opportunities and challenges highlighted by the tool across participating institutions, adding a sixth dimension of governance to match the needs of local institutions. In Tunisia is expected that



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the UGSC tool will be used by institutions participating in a World Bank-supported operation dedicated to strengthening institutional capacity in tertiary education.

### VIII. Activities and Outputs FY 2019

The program continued its work in FY19 with the preparation of the following three key analytical pieces, which will be disseminated in FY20:

- 1) Regional UGSC benchmarking report summarizing key trends and best practices of the universities that have participated in the various national UGSC benchmarking tool exercises and rounds;
- 2) Report on financing of tertiary education in the MENA region; and
- 3) Report on the internationalization of tertiary education in the MENA region.



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## Enclosures

 Beirut Regional Conference Booklet 21	Conference Booklet of the Beirut 2015 MENA Conference
 Algeria Conference 2016 - Complete Bool	Conference Booklet of the Algeria 2016 MENA Conference
 Algeria Conference 2016 - 5th MENA Tert	Conference Report. Algeria 2016 MENA Conference
 Marseille Conference 2017 - Conference pa	Conference Booklet of the Marseille 2017 MENA Conference
 Financing higher education in Egypt_re	Draft. Financing of higher education in Egypt
 Financing Higher Education in Morocco	Draft. Financing of higher education in Morocco
 Financing Higher Education IN Palestine	Draft. Financing of higher education in Palestine
 Financing Higher in Lebanon, Jordan, and	Draft. Financing of higher education in Lebanon, Jordan and KRI
 Financing Higher in Tunisia.docx	Draft. Financing of higher education in Tunisia
 Financing tertiary education in Algeria.d	Draft. Financing of Higher Education in Algeria.
 Marseille Conference Presentation - Financi	Presentation. Financing of higher education in MENA
 Marseille Conference Presentation - Interna	Presentation. Internationalization of higher education in the MENA region.







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 Governance-Egypt.pptx	Analysis of results of UGSC in Egypt
 Governance-Jordan.pptx	Analysis of results of UGSC in Jordan
 Gouvernance_enseignement-supérieur_UC	Analysis of results of UGSC in Morocco
 UGSC 2.0 Institutional Report_L1	Example of an Institutional Report of the University Governance Score Card.



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