Activating Higher Education's Potential

The Higher Education Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool (HEICAT)

A Tool for Supporting Capacity Strengthening and Performance Improvement in Higher Education Institutions

IREX

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Read more: www.irex.org.

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Introduction

Higher Education Institutions have the potential to be a tremendous force for positive social and economic development by fostering people's skills and habits, creating new knowledge, and driving innovation through communities and networks.

IREX's Higher Education Capacity Assessment Tool (the HEICAT) seeks to equip education leaders to identify areas of strength, recognize capacity gaps, and prioritize improvements in pursuit of institutional goals. In this document, we share the HEICAT assessment framework alongside implementation guidance to enable higher education institutions, and actors who want to support the development of higher education systems and institutions, to adopt and adapt the tool to assess capacity and inform their own performance improvement processes.

The Potential of Higher Education

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) perform a vast range of functions in their communities and regions; developing the skills of youth, supporting lifelong learning, driving local and regional development through research, engagement and innovation, and serving as social and civic hubs.[1] When HEI's core functions of teaching and learning, research, and external engagement are strategically aligned with social and economic need, and properly activated, they are uniquely positioned to address local and global challenges and support sustainable development.[2]

Despite this potential, the contribution of HEIs is often not fully realized with common challenges including misalignment between teaching, learning and labor market need, limited participation in global research output, and weak engagement with industry, government and civil society, creating missed opportunities to co-create solutions to society's most pressing needs.[3] Many institutions struggle to secure financial, human and physical resources to effectively deliver this mandate, but as the financial contributions made by taxpayers and students increase, so to do calls for accountability and, where institutions are perceived to be failing in their core missions, public trust is being eroded.[4]

1. OECD (2019) Benchmarking Higher Education System Performance, Higher Education | oecd-ilibrary.org) and USAID (2021) Higher Education Program Framework | edu-links.org.
2. The Contribution of Higher Education to the SDGs | UNESCO-IESALC.
3. Unterhalter, E. Howell, C. Oketch, M. (2020) The role of tertiary education in development: A rigorous review of the evidence | British Council.
4. van Vught, F. (2021). Universities Can Regain the Public's Trust. In: van't Land, H., Corcoran, A., Iancu, DC. (eds) The Promise of Higher Education | Springer.

HEIs are also navigating fundamental shifts in their operating environment: many higher education systems face reduced public funding and are expected to diversify their income through tuition fees and revenue generating activities or face declining quality; in systems with low levels of higher education participation, HEI's are tasked with widening access to new populations and scaling while managing costs; digital transformation creates both threats and opportunities; and the changing world of work brings into question the value of traditional degree pathways. HEIs ability to recognize and respond to external trends is central to unlocking their potential.

HEIs will be best positioned to navigate these challenges and opportunities, and meet their objectives, if they have the governance structures and leadership expertise to inclusively plan, finance, govern, manage, and improve their performance across their core functions.

The Higher Education Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool (HEICAT)

Aligned with IREX's approach to advancing institutional change,[5] IREX developed the HEICAT to equip education leaders, and those who support them, with sufficient information and data to recognize gaps in their capacity, prioritize improvements, and specify technical, material and financial assistance needs in pursuit of performance improvement. Through repeated use, it can also be used to track changes in capacity over time. In doing so, it supports HEIs to be more effective, accountable and equitable.

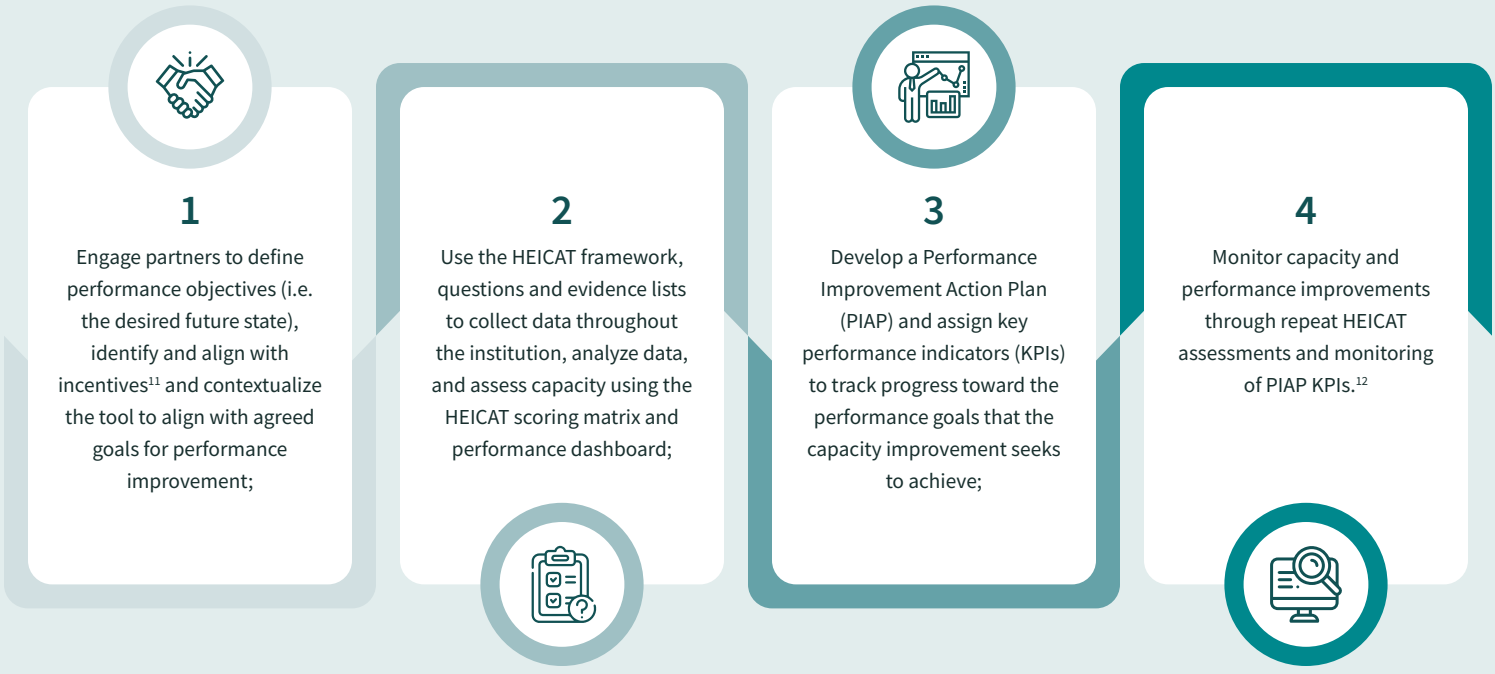
5. IREX People Centered Approach to Institutional Change | IREX.

HEICAT Development and Guiding Principles

Organizational Capacity Assessment Tools (OCAT) are widely used by donors, development organizations and businesses to recognize capacity gaps, prioritize improvements, and make the case for change and a number of tested frameworks exist.[6] By putting local institutions in the driving seat, OCATs support locally-led development[7] enabling partners to identify, own and manage their growth trajectory, particularly when they are embedded within a wider process of capacity and performance improvement.[8]

OCATs are most effective when they are adapted or custom-designed for the organization and its operating context.[9] Recognizing that HEIs are complex organizations with diffuse missions and goals, and loosely coupled operating units, IREX developed the HEICAT to provide a highly contextualized and practical tool, which assesses HEI's capacity to achieve outcomes related to their core functions of teaching and learning, research, and external engagement. The framework is intentionally designed to use language familiar to the higher education sector, align with typical institutional structures and functions, and build familiarity with the constructs and processes typically interrogated by international accreditation and research funding agencies.[10]

The HEICAT is not intended to be a standalone assessment. Instead, it is part of a dynamic process of organizational performance improvement comprised of four key steps:



6. For a selection of OCAT tools see: UK-Aid-Direct-OCA-Guidance | ukaiddirect.org and Organizational Capacity Assessment | USAID Learning Lab.
7. Local Capacity Strengthening Policy | USAID.
8. Human and Institutional Capacity Development Handbook |USAID.
9. A Guide to Using OCA Tools | hewlett.org.
10. An extensive range of accreditation frameworks and donor terms and conditions have been reviewed in the development and evolution of the tool.
11. For a range of resources that explore the important role of incentives in a Thinking and Working Politically-informed approach, see Useful Resources – TWP | twpcommunity.org.
12. The approach is aligned with IREX's performance improvement process IREX's Guide to Organizational Performance Improvement | IREX.

Maximize Data Utility

Couples in-depth qualitative data collection with the quantification and summary of results in visual data dashboards, which help us and our partners to absorb complex information without losing the richness of the approach.

Reflective Self-Evaluation

To promote institutional autonomy, self-reliance, and ownership of performance goals, the approach encourages universities to self-assess using a collaborative process.

Drive Performance Improvement

Data is used to identify and prioritize performance improvement efforts and help education leaders to make the case for change.

Participative

The highly participative process engages partners in tool contextualization and brings actors from across the institution to discuss capacity and performance, building relationships and enabling triangulation of views.

Modular

Provides maximum flexibility to tailor to institutional priorities, available time and resource, offering both expansive review across all functions, or deeper dives into specific areas.

In a climate where HEIs are often driven by performance in international league tables,[13] the HEICAT encourages institutional leaders to focus on their core functions and the broad ranging capacities required to fulfil their mandate. The HEICAT is not designed as an audit or inspection, nor an accreditation assessment, however, because it has been designed with reference to the requirements of a range of external accreditation bodies and research funders, it can be used as a useful scaffold to help institutional leaders engage in critical self-reflection and identify performance improvement priorities in support of these efforts. In this way, the HEICAT aims to support strategic decision making, foster organizational learning, support institutions' efforts to secure external recognition, and maximize the potential of HEIs to achieve positive outcomes in the higher education system and become central actors for development.

13. Sometimes leading to perverse behaviours, see Rethinking Quality: UNU-convened Experts Challenge the Harmful Influence of Global University Rankings | United Nations University.

HEICAT Use Cases and Impact

Since 2016, IREX has facilitated, refined and adapted the HEICAT for use with 30 HEIs in 17 countries cultivating shared ownership of performance improvement priorities, enabling targeted technical and material assistance, and supporting organizational developments that have improved the quality of teaching and learning, advanced knowledge and research and promoted external engagement. Partner universities have also adopted the HEICAT as part of their own internal strategic planning and institutional enhancement processes.

The HEICAT has been used in a range of scenarios including:

As a scaffold to support institutional preparation for the pursuit of international accreditation.

As a tool for prioritizing efforts to rebuild HEIs in post-conflict contexts.

As a framework to develop national accreditation and quality assurance systems.

As a tool to inform host country – U.S university partnerships.

As a learning tool to build the capacity of university administrators.

As a framework for prioritizing technical and material assistance in capacity strengthening support activities.

Introduction of University-Based Teacher Preparation in Jordan

In Jordan, IREX adapted parts of the HEICAT with University of Jordan, Yarmouk University, Mu'tah University, and Hashemite University to assess university readiness to implement a new teacher preparation diploma and to target assistance where it was most needed. The assessments informed a tailored package of technical and material support to each university, including provision of equipment and software, faculty and administrator training, and the launch of professional learning communities. These interventions have so far enabled the universities to collectively support student-centered learning for over 2000 students annually, manage practicum placements in over 400 schools, achieve a graduate employment rate of over 70% and progress through the first two stages towards international accreditation with the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). Mu'tah University has now adopted the HEICAT as part of its own annual School of Education enhancement process and will use the tool independently.

University Re-Building in Iraq

The HEICAT has been used by IREX to inform capacity building initiatives and partnership projects in higher education institutions across Federal Iraq and the Kurdish Region of Iraq. Data collected from the HEICAT self-assessment through the Higher Education Partnership program was used to drive strategic development initiatives involving over 50 institutional partnerships with U.S. universities. Through the Liberated Universities programs, IREX coached the University of Mosul, the University of Fallujah, the University of Al-Hamdaniyah and Ninewa University through a self-administered HEICAT assessment to inform rebuilding efforts after the defeat of Daesh. These Initiatives, related to curriculum development, faculty training, research management and governance, and workforce development, were served by insights gained on administrative and operational attributes from HEICAT results and supported Iraqi universities in improving the quality and relevance of higher education in Iraq.

Learning Tool For University Research Managers

IREX uses the research-oriented sections of the HEICAT to support selected university leaders in the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) to prioritize and pursue performance improvement as an embedded activity within a Research Management and Leadership course. Participants from each university are tasked to collaboratively conduct the assessment to inform an implementation plan to improve research management practice. The course is supplemented by a one-month exchange at a U.S. university and the HEICAT assessment has also been highlighted by both host mentors and travelling participants as a useful framework for building a shared understanding of host and home university practice. As a result of this process, leaders have established a range of administrative enhancements including new e-Research Administration systems, reconfigured organizational units to support sponsored research, and new resources for coaching and mentoring for research administrators.

The HEICAT Structure

The structure was designed to foreground the purpose of HEIs and recognize commonly found organizational units, which can assist in identifying appropriate participants across different departments and stakeholder groups as well as focusing dialogue around common areas of interest. While the HEICAT is designed to explore capacity rather than performance, capacity criteria are organized according to the performance objectives that they serve. This helps to keep assessment teams focused on the ultimate goal of the assessment, which is to identify where improvements to capacity could improve institutional performance. As such, the framework first introduces thematic pillars, objectives and Practice Areas, before identifying the capacities that drive performance in each.

Pillars

At the highest level, the HEICAT is structured around the primary purpose of HEIs: quality teaching and learner journeys; advancing knowledge and research; and external engagement for relevance and impact, as well as the cross-cutting institutional functions that support these aims.[14] Depending on the degree of centralization in the institution, these factors may be interrogated at central or departmental levels, and as standalone categories or integrated across the framework.

Objectives and Practice Areas

Within each pillar, a series of high level objectives are identified. These are detailed below, along with the practice areas that contribute to their achievement.

Good Governance and Leadership:
This cluster explores the capacities that enable HEIs to effectively plan, lead, govern and improve their performance. It draws on principles of good governance including clarity of vision, participatory planning, transparent, data informed and responsive decision making, effective, efficient and aligned policies, processes and practices that support institutional aims, accountability, and equitable and inclusive approaches that incorporate staff and faculty voice.[15] It also includes climate resilience, including the institutional commitment to green operations, teaching and learning and research.

Sufficient Resources:
This cluster explores the capacities that enable HEIs to manage human and financial resources and provide sufficient infrastructure, facilities, equipment and resources to support their institutional objectives and to provide quality teaching, supportive and inclusive learner journeys, and a productive research environment.

Quality Education and Training:
This cluster explores the capacities that enable HEIs to deliver consistently high-quality courses that apply best pedagogical practices and meet required benchmarks, and that enable the institution to learn, adapt and improve their programs over time.

Supported and Inclusive Learner Journeys:
This cluster explores the capacities that enable HEIs to provide a positive "learning to earning" journey[16] including fair, transparent and accessible application and selection processes, ensuring that all students are supported with the information and services they need to support wellbeing and success, supporting transition to employment, and maintaining contact with alumni.

Productive Research Environment:
This cluster explores the capacities that enable HEIs to promote and incentivise research, identify and access funding.

Research Quality and Compliance:
This cluster explores the capacities that enable HEIs to ensure research integrity, produce internationally recognized research of the highest ethical standards, and effectively access and manage sponsored research.

14. IREX People Centered Approach to Institutional Change | IREX.
15. Governance Principles, Institutional Capacity and Quality |undp.org.
16. Understanding Youth Learning to Earning Journeys | IREX.

Relevant Education and Training:
This cluster explores the capacities that enable HEIs to enhance the relevance of teaching and learning by strategically aligning with industry and employers and engaging employers in program design and delivery.

Research Impact and Innovation:
This cluster explores the capacities that enable HEIs to drive local and global innovation ecosystems and maximize the impact of their research by engaging community, government or industry partners across the research lifecycle and contributing to the development of new or improved policies, processes, products, or services that meet critical societal or business needs, including through commercialization of research outputs.

Pillar	Objectives	Practice Areas
Foundations for Institutional Excellence	Good Governance and Leadership	Strategic Leadership and Action Planning
		Data and Enhancement
		Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
		Climate Resilience
	Sufficient Resources	Human Resources Management and Development
		Financial Management
		Resources for Teaching, Learning and Research
		Infrastructure
Quality Teaching and Learner Journeys	Quality Education and Training	Academic Standards and Governance
		Program Management and Delivery
		Quality Assurance and Continuous Enhancement
	Supported and Inclusive Learner Journeys	Learner Recruitment, Marketing and Enrolment
		Student Support
		Transition to Employment
Advancing Knowledge and Research	Productive Research Environment	Promoting Research
	Research Quality and Compliance	Research Governance
		Management of Research
External Engagement for Relevance and Impact	Relevant Education and Training	Strategic Alignment with External Networks
		Industry Aligned Teaching and Learning
	Research Impact and Innovation	Research Visibility and Dissemination
		External Engagement for Knowledge and Technology Exchange
		Research Commercialization and Intellectual Property

Capacity Criteria

Under each of the practice areas listed above, the framework guides the facilitator through a series of associated capacity criteria. In total, the framework currently includes 100 capacities, which can be adapted and configured as needed. The capacities are listed in Annex 1, which provides the full HEICAT framework.

The framework also facilitates the assessment of cross-cutting themes that emerge across multiple categories, as described in the adjacent column.

Cross-Cutting Themes

Inclusion:

The capacities that enable HEIs to embed inclusion across institutional practice to support an inclusive organisation and address any inequalities of opportunity and outcomes for students and staff. This includes the extent to which students have a voice in the decisions that impact them, including the quality assurance of their programs.[17]

Data for Decision Making:

The extent to which the institution has capabilities to effectively use data to inform decision making.

Digital Transformation:

The extent to which the institution has capabilities to leverage digital tools in support of its core functions and objectives and its readiness to manage digital disruptors such as Artificial Intelligence.

The full framework can be seen in Annex 1. The practice areas and criteria will continue to evolve as HEIs adapt to changing factors in their operating environment, learner needs and market demand.

17. Catalyzing youth participation is a core tenet of IREX's people centered approach to institutional change.

HEICAT Components

Using the framework above, the facilitator engages the partner to finalize the assessment tools:[18]

Questionnaire

Within each practice area, a series of questions should be designed to establish the "current state" of the institution's capacity including system, organization, and individual factors.[19]

Evidence Lists

For each criteria, a list of possible evidence sources should be identified. Review of supporting documents should support the scoring process.

Scoring Matrix

A scoring matrix should be created, including a dashboard that helps to visualize the key findings of the assessment, including criteria, category and cross-cutting theme scores. IREX has used different tools including excel spreadsheets, PowerBI and KoboToolbox.

Rubric

A rubric should be created to guide the scoring process, including the identification of capacity benchmarks. The facilitator should work with local partners to determine appropriate labels but "Fledgling", "Emerging", "Consolidating" and "Sustaining" have worked in many contexts.

Report Template

A report template should be created to maximize the value of the feedback to the institution under study, combining a quantitative dashboard with space for qualitative narrative on particular areas of strength, weakness and innovation and priorities for capacity and performance improvement.

An example list of questions, evidence lists, and capacity benchmarks is provided for the Academic Standards and Governance Category in Annex 2.

The facilitation process should be adapted and contextualized to the purpose and circumstances of the assessment and can be tailored to institutional priorities, available time and resource. A typical HEICAT assessment process is detailed on the next page.

18. IREX contextualizes these components for each application but has a bank of resources ready to go.
19. IREX's Guide to Organizational Performance Improvement | IREX.

1-2 MONTHS

Prepare Facilitators and Partners

- Train facilitators in the HEICAT methodology.
- Build understanding of the HEI under study through desk review, site visits and introductory meetings to establish their strategic priorities to inform HEICAT adaptation.
- Build understanding of the higher education system, including its political economy, incentives for institutional strengthening, and the extent of institutional autonomy.[20]
- Develop the overall objective, approach and expectations of the assessment with the partner institution's leaders and seek their feedback and buy-in.
- Agree on the purpose of the assessment (e.g. to recognize and prioritize performance improvement needs, foster organizational learning, and support planning and strategic decision making; or to support benchmarking, accreditation, and accountability. Note there can be tensions between these functions.
- Depending on the degree of centralization in the higher education system, and the intended purpose of the assessment, dialogue with the Ministry responsible for higher education and/or the national quality assurance body may be beneficial.
- Identify a Partner Lead and work with the partner to create a diverse participant list that reflects voices across the institution, as well as student and employer voices where appropriate.
- Agree the detailed process and secure commitments for an appropriate level of engagement across the organization.

1-5 DAYS

Contextualize the HEICAT

- Hold a workshop with the Partner Lead and selected representatives to review HEICAT practice areas, criteria and scoring benchmarks and configure and contextualize the tool as appropriate.
- Finalize the tool and share with the partner institution for feedback, finalization and buy-in to commence the assessment.
- Performance improvement partnerships are most successful when they are built on trust and mutuality, and when IREX assumes a facilitator (rather than ownership) role to ensure successful outcomes.

20. Although not scored, the HEICAT questionnaire also provides for detailed consultations with relevant government officials and other relevant regional and national players in the higher education system including employers and students. This is recommended to ensure that the cultural, political and economic context in which the institution operates is thoroughly understood so that facilitators can benefit from a Thinking and Working Politically-informed approach – for a range of resources see https://twpcommunity.org/our-archive.
21. IREX People Centered Approach to Institutional Change | IREX.

3 DAYS

Facilitate the HEICAT

- Establish a repository to collect documents and engage with the Partner Lead to compile evidences.
- Work with the Partner Lead to arrange a series of workshops (usually over 3 days) to convene an appropriate configuration of participants to address each HEICAT pillar and/or practice area.
- Within each session, the facilitator uses the guiding questions to facilitate discussion and scoring against each capacity criterion.
- The co-facilitator and/or note taker completes the scoring matrix noting down justifications and evidences. The facilitator completes a brief narrative report to accompany the quantitative dashboard.

2-3 DAYS

PIAP development

- Work with the Partner Lead to arrange a workshop to 1) review, ratify and interpret the assessment results and 2) develop a Performance Improvement Action Plan that includes tasks, roles and responsibilities, timelines, technical and material support, and Key Performance Indicators. An example template is provided in Annex 3.

Resourcing the HEICAT

HEICAT facilitation teams normally include a lead facilitator, co-facilitator and two note takers. Lead and co-lead facilitators should be allocated to thematic areas in which they have some expertise and experience. This will allow them to ask targeted follow up questions and make informed assessments of current capacity and potential areas for improvement.

It is important that the review allows for sufficient dialogue to gain a good understanding of practice in the reviewed HEICAT criteria. If the full framework is being used, a minimum of six facilitation sessions of approximately 1.5 – 2 hours each are recommended for a total of 9 – 12 hours of facilitated dialogue. While each session typically engages a different range of HEI staff aligned with the capacities under discussion, sessions should be scheduled to enable sufficient breaks for facilitators and note takers if they are leading multiple sessions.

In addition to facilitation, the implementing team should be given sufficient time to:

- Familiarize themselves with the pillars, objectives, practice areas and criteria for the areas of the HEICAT they are reviewing. This will allow them to confidently deliver effective facilitation sessions;
- Debrief after each session to ensure that the notetakers have captured key observations and that the facilitators can start to shape their comments and recommendations;
- Secure and review additional supporting evidence where applicable;
- Prepare the HEICAT Reports.

In most cases, the HEICAT dialogues are hosted within the HEI but implementors may want to consider securing an external venue if this is perceived as necessary to avoid distraction.

What Can IREX Offer to Higher Education Institutions and their Partners?

Are you a university seeking to enhance performance or a Ministry aiming to strengthen the higher education system? Are you a development partner seeking to support these aims, or planning to work with universities for the first time, but unsure what capacities they have? Drawing on our experience supporting organizational performance improvement across a range of sectors, and decades of working with universities, IREX offers a range of customized consulting and project support services.

IREX can:

- Facilitate partner engagement to identify assessment objectives and define the scope, criteria, and ratings for the tool, whether as a broad institutional assessment or in a focused functional area such as research management or career center services;
- Facilitate or coach partners through the assessment process, including interviews, focus groups, observation and document review, and support analysis and capacity reporting;
- Co-develop recommendations for institutional performance improvement and use the HEICAT to track progress;
- Facilitate the development of a Performance Improvement Action Plan using HEICAT results;
- Facilitate the development of Key Performance Indicators and systems for tracking performance improvement.

Annex 1: Full HEICAT Framework

Components denoted with a * indicate that IREX has an aligned tool that can facilitate a deeper dive into this component.

Pillar	Objective	Practice Area	Capacity Criteria	Inclusion	Data	Digital Transformation
Foundations for Institutional Excellence	**Good Governance and Leadership**	Strategic Leadership and Action Planning	Mission, Vision and Strategic Planning		x	
			Action and Business Planning		x	
			Governance			
			Trust and Accountability	x	x	
		Data and Enhancement*	Data Strategy		x	x
			Data Capacity			
			Data-informed Enhancement		x	x
			Digital Transformation		x	x
		Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)	x		
			Inclusive Leadership and Staff Teams	x		
			Faculty and Staff Voice	x		
		Climate Resilience	Green Strategy			
			Green Curriculum			
			Green Campus			
	Sufficient Resources	Human Resources Management and Development	Recruitment Policies			
			Performance Management			
			Career Progression			
			Faculty and Staff Professional Development			
			Faculty and Staff Wellness and Support			
		Financial Management	Financial Strategy and Budgeting Practices		x	
			Financial Resources			
			Revenue Generation			
			Financial Control			
		Resources for Teaching, Learning, and Research	Resource Strategy		x	
			Appropriate, Industry Relevant Teaching and Training Resources			
			Sufficient Research Resources			
			Library/Self-study Resources			x
			ICT Resources and Classroom Technology			x
			Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)			x
		Infrastructure	Capacity to Accommodate Programmes and to Support Student Centred Learning		x	
			Attractive and Safe Learning and Research Environment			
			Student Social Facilities and Accommodation/Housing			
			Accessible Learning Environment	x		

Pillar	Objective	Practice Area	Capacity Criteria	Inclusion	Data	Digital Transformation
Quality Teaching and Learner ourney	**Quality Education and Training**	Academic Standards and Governance	Accreditation			
			Programme Development, Approval, and Modification			
			Assessment and Awards			
			Academic Appeals, Misconduct, and Complaints	x		
		Program Management and Delivery	Program Management Regulations, Policies and Procedures			
			Program Documentation			
			Good Practice Teaching, Learning and Assessment Practices			
			Developing Staff Capacity for Good Pedagogical Practice			
			Digital Tools and Educational Technology to Enrich Program Delivery *			x
			Digital Tools to Facilitate Program Administration			x
		Quality Assurance (QA)	Quality Assurance Strategy and Processes	x		
			Monitoring Learning and Student Outcomes	x	x	
			Monitoring Teaching	x	x	
			Monitoring Off-campus Learning	x	x	
			Digital Tools to Facilitate Quality Assurance of Education and Training			x
	Supported and Inclusive Learner Journey	Marketing and Enrolment	Marketing		x	
			Recruitment and Entry requirements	x		
			Enrolment and Orientation			
			Digital Tools to Facilitate Marketing, Recruitment and Enrolment			x
		Student Support	Inclusive Teaching and Learning Models	x		
			Student Support Strategy and Resources			
			Student Voice	x		
			Student Wellbeing and Enrichment			
			Financial Inclusion			
			Alumni Engagement			
		Transition to Employment*	Career Information Advice and Guidance Strategy and Resource			
			Progression			
			Employability Skills			
			Entrepreneurship and Learner Enterprises			
			Digital Tools to Enhance Career Support and Planning			x

Pillar	Objective	Practice Area	Capacity Criteria	Inclusion	Data	Digital Transformation
Advancing Knowledge and Research	**Productive Research Environment**	Promoting Research	Research Planning		x	
			Research Expectations, Incentives, and Accountability		x	
			Monitoring Research Productivity		x	
			"Pre-Award" Support Structures and Services			
			Promoting Student Research			
	Research Quality and Compliance	Research Governance	Research Approval Processes			
			Research Ethics and Responsible Conduct of Research			
			Sharing Research Practice			
			Research Performance Data		x	
			Developing Staff Capacity for Ethical and Responsible Research			
		Managing Research*	"Post-Award" Support Structures and Services			
			Management of Research Funding			
			Developing Staff Capacity to Conduct and Manage Externally Funded Research			
			Digital Tools to Support Research Management			x

Pillar	Objective	Practice Area	Capacity Criteria	Inclusion	Data	Digital Transformation
External Engagement for Relevance and Impact	Relevant Education and Training	Strategic Alignment with External Networks	Embedding External Stakeholders in Institutional Planning and Governance			
			Industry Knowledge and Labor Market Data			
			Established External Networks			
			Strategic Alignment of Program Portfolio with Industry Demand			
		Industry Aligned Teaching and Learning	Employer Engagement in Program Design and Delivery			
			Work-Based Learning (WBL) Models and Processes			
			Flexible Pathways and Credentials	x		
			Student Safeguarding	x		
	Research Impact and Innovation	Research Visibility and Dissemination	Raising Research Visibility			x
			Open Access Preparedness			
			Traditional Research Dissemination Activities			
			Non-traditional Research Dissemination Activities			
			Developing Staff Capacity for Research Dissemination			
		External Engagement for Research	External Engagement for Research Strategy			
			Research Engagement with Local Community Challenges			
			External Engagement Expectations, Incentives, and Accountability			
			External Engagement Operational Resource			
			External Engagement for Research Processes			
			Developing Staff Capacity for External Engagement for Research			
		Research Commercialization and Intellectual Property (IP)	Intellectual Property (IP) Policy			
			Expectations, Incentives, and Accountability for Commercialization			
			Commercial Resource			
			Protocol and Processes for Research Commercialization			
			Developing Staff Capacity for Research Commercialization and IP			

Annex 2: Example Capacity Benchmarks, Evidence Lists and Questions

The following table provides example capacity benchmarks, evidence lists and questions for the academic standards and governance practice area.

Academic Standards and Governance				
Capacity Criteria	**Criteria Objectives**	**Criteria Benchmarks**	**Evidence that may be present**	**Guiding questions for assessment**
Program Development, Approval and Modification	Consistently high quality courses that meet required benchmarks Promote and facilitate enhancement so that courses adapt to needs over time Programs at university are comparable to national and other external benchmarks	Program designers are required to reference external benchmarks Clear strategy for engaging external stakeholders in program development and approval Requirement for market research Clear organizational structure and policy to guide program approval and modification, which provides clarity on types and volume of changes permitted to approved programs Documented and uniformly implemented processes for program approval and modification including standardized templates Clearly documented roles and responsibilities for program approval and modification Guidance and professional development for staff Staff are capable and motivated to implement	Program approval policy Program approval processes and flowcharts Program approval templates and completed documentation Evidence of external benchmarks in program documentation Meeting/Committee TOR and Minutes Program Modification Policy and Procedures Program Modification Templates and completed documentation	What is the process for approving a new program? What are the key roles and responsibilities for program approval? Who is involved? • Are there written policies, procedures and templates? • What criteria do programs need to meet to be approved? e.g. are there mandated learning hours and/or credit hours, mandated assessments? • Is there any requirement to engage external stakeholders or information? e.g. engage employers in program approval panels and/or engage staff from other universities in program approval. • Are program design teams required to reference external benchmarks when they create their programs? (e.g national standards; international standards; professional accreditation bodies; employers etc.) What is the process for modifying an existing program? • Are there written policies, procedures and templates? • Are there written rules about what can and cannot be changed without formal approvals? How are staff oriented to these processes? (e.g. do they receive training, written guidance etc.) Do staff follow the process? Do they value the process? Are completed documents of high quality? Do they serve their intended purpose? Are records reviewed and centrally stored? Is there anything you would change or improve about the university's program approval and modification practice?

Capacity Criteria	Criteria Objectives	Criteria Benchmarks	Evidence that may be present	Guiding questions for assessment
Assessment and Award	Fair, transparent and consistent assessment that effectively determines acquisition of intended learning outcomes Transparent process for awarding credit	Clear organizational structure and policy to guide high quality assessment of work e.g. assessment regulations that promote use of intended learning outcomes and a variety of assessment methods. Formative assessment is encouraged Clear documentation and process to ensure consistent assessment e.g. consistent use of learning outcomes; clear grade criteria Clearly documented roles and responsibilities for assessment of work Guidance and professional development for staff including best practice assessment Staff are capable and motivated to implement External moderators are involved in the award of credit Clear organizational structure and policy to guide award of credit including the requirement for panel involvement in award of credit (e.g. Exam Boards) Clear documentation and process to steer the activities of credit awarding panels e.g. schedule and templates Clearly documented roles and responsibilities for award of credit Guidance and/or CPD for staff Staff are capable and motivated to implement	Assessment regulations Grade criteria Assessment rubrics TOR for Exam Boards	What policy and guidance does the university provide to govern assessment of student work? Is assessment based on intended learning outcomes? Does the university's assessment policy promote formative assessment? What are the university's grade criteria? What is the pass mark? Does the university take steps to ensure that grade criteria are consistent with national degree specifications and other accrediting bodies? What types of assessments does the university/ education faculty use? Is diversity of methods encouraged? e.g. exams, assignments, portfolios, presentations, groups assessments? • Are there any mandates relating to assessment method? e.g. requirement for multiple assessment types? Mandatory exams? etc. Do staff receive professional development to improve assessment practice e.g. on application of grade criteria, on development of effective learning outcomes, on good practice assessment methods? What is the process for awarding academic credit? What policy, standards and guidance governs the award of academic credit? What institutional structures are used to determine whether a student should be awarded academic credit? E.g. do individual faculty have authority to award credit, or does authority sit with a panel/Exam Board? Does the university engage external experts (e.g. faculty from other universities) in the award of academic credit? Is there anything you would change or improve about the university's approach to assessment and awarding credit?

Capacity Criteria	Criteria Objectives	Criteria Benchmarks	Evidence that may be present	Guiding questions for assessment
Academic Appeals, Misconduct and Complaints	Maintain fair and transparent process through right to appeal Maintain high quality services Maintain high quality academic and scholarly practice	Clear organizational structure and policy to guide response to academic appeals, misconduct and complaints, including panel involvement in decision making and right to reply Clear documentation and process to address appeals, misconduct and complaints including templates for recording decisions Process is accessible, transparent and without prejudice Clearly documented roles and responsibilities for appeals, misconduct cases and complaints Guidance and professional development for staff Staff are capable and motivated to implement	Academic Appeals Policy Academic Appeals Procedure Academic Misconduct Policy Academic Misconduct Documentation from open and closed cases Complaints policy and procedure documentation Anonymous complaint hotline or website	How does the institution deal with academic appeals? • Is there a policy for dealing with academic appeals? • What criteria is established to determine when a student can and can't submit an appeal? • Who is involved in making a decision on an academic appeal? Does authority sit with an individual, or is there a panel/committee structure for this purpose? • What procedure do students and staff follow in the case of an appeal? Are there standard templates and forms to guide the process? How does the university deal with complaints? • Is there a policy for dealing with complaints? • Who is involved in making a decision on a complaint? • Does authority sit with an individual, or is there a panel/committee structure for this purpose? • What procedure do students and staff follow in the case of a complaint? Are there standard templates and forms to guide the process? How does the university deal with suspected cases of academic misconduct? • Is there a policy for dealing with academic misconduct? • Who is involved in making a decision on an academic misconduct case? Does authority sit with an individual, or is there a panel/committee structure for this purpose? • What criteria is established to describe academic misconduct? Is this clearly defined in writing? • What procedure do students and staff follow in the case of an allegation of academic misconduct? Are there standard templates and forms to guide the process? What is the institutional culture around academic misconduct? Is it a high profile issue with significant attention paid to it? Are staff encouraged and motivated to identify and report cases? What professional development or guidance do staff receive to deal with academic appeals, misconduct and complaints? Are staff motivated to implement the procedure when required? Are requirements consistently applied? Is there anything you would change or improve about the university's academic appeals, misconduct or complaints practice?

Annex 3: Example Template for Performance Improvement Action Plan

HEICAT Pillar	Pillar as per HEICAT
HEICAT Objective	Objective as per HEICAT
HEICAT Practice Area	Numbered as per HEICAT
Current HEICAT Score	Practice or criteria score as applicable
Action	Describe the proposed actions to improve capacity
Desired Performance Outcome	Describe the desired performance outcome
Priority	To be defined for each activity | Critical | High | Medium | Low
Technical Assistance	Describe the technical assistance needed
Material Resources	Describe any material resources needed
Assigned to from University	Identify HEI focal point
Assigned to from IREX	Identify IREX Technical Lead
Start date	DD.MM.YY
Due date	DD.MM.YY
Status	In progress | Complete | Delayed | Cancelled
KPI	Define the Key Performance Indicators for performance improvement

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