

January 2024

## Call for Papers on Enhancing Higher Education in Azerbaijan

The World Bank Education Team in Azerbaijan, in partnership with the Ministry of Science and Education, is pleased to announce a **call for policy research papers** to understand current challenges and offer evidence-based actionable policy recommendations to

(a) improve quality and market relevance of higher education institutions, and employability of higher education graduates to meet the needs of sustainable economic growth and future of work in line with the national priorities in Azerbaijan, and

(b) boost research activities and research commercialization of higher education institutions to enhance technological advances and adoption in Azerbaijan.

### 1. Eligibility and Application Requirements:

This Call for Paper encourages both **higher education academics and independent researchers of Azerbaijani citizens** who reside in and outside of the country to submit their proposals. Collaboration with research institutes, civil society organizations, or the private sector is also welcomed and encouraged. Proposals for **both advanced research papers and new research will be accepted**. Collaboration with non-Azerbaijani researchers as co-researchers is also accepted.

A **proposal template is available [here](#)**. Proposals should cover researcher (research team) profile, background and rationale of the proposed study, research questions, relevant theoretical/analytical framework, research methodologies including data sources, relevant hypothesis (or preliminary findings in case of advanced paper), activity timeline, and proposed research partners (if any). CVs of all researchers involved, containing education, experience, and past publication information, must be submitted. Proposals should be written in English.

### 2. Selection Procedure and Funding:

A team comprised of World Bank education specialists will evaluate all submissions in terms of **policy relevance, originality, analytical rigor, and feasibility**. The World Bank aims to select two to three

proposals and will provide financial support per each selected proposal. The maximum financial support per proposal is US\$7,500.<sup>1</sup>

### **3. Support for Research Development:**

It is expected that research teams of selected proposals will continuously engage with the World Bank team throughout the development of the proposal. At least three reviews will be conducted with the World Bank team, including the inception meeting to discuss and confirm the research design and approach, the interim progress review to discuss the first full draft, and the final progress review to discuss the final draft paper.<sup>2</sup> The final papers will be consolidated into a World Bank publication. The names and designations of authors will be recognized in the publication. The World Bank team also encourages the submission and publication of the supported research in an academic journal with an acknowledgment of financial support from the World Bank.

### **4. Topics of interest:**

All papers must respond to a set of explicit research questions related to either of the above-mentioned two overarching challenges in higher education. A non-exhaustive list of relevant topics includes:

- Improving teaching and learning experience through technologies and innovative teaching methods.
- Aligning higher education programs for market-demanded skills and the future of work.
- Enhancing external and internal quality assurance systems for high-quality and market-relevant higher education programs.
- Leveraging financing for improving teaching and learning.
- Professional development system for university faculty members.
- Reforming curriculum of higher education programs.
- Improving employment outcomes of graduates.
- Creating financial and non-financial incentives for increasing research and enhancing research impact.
- Promoting collaborative research with industries and commercialization of research outputs.
- Modernizing institutional governance for more efficient management and high-quality research.
- Any other topics relevant to the two overarching themes (a) and (b) above.

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<sup>1</sup> Selected authors will enter into an individual short-term consultancy contract with the World Bank to receive financial support in the form of consultancy fees.

<sup>2</sup> Prior to completion, the elaborated papers will go through the World Bank's internal Quality Enhancement Review (QER) process to ensure the robustness of research products.

## 5. Timeline:

Those interested should **submit a proposal by February 18, Sunday, by 12.00 noon USA EST**. The authors of accepted proposals will be informed by **February 26, 2024**, and will be requested to **present the research plan** on a mutually convenient date in the last week of February or the first week of March.<sup>3</sup>

All selected authors will be expected to collaborate closely with the World Bank team during the paper preparation period and deliver the **final draft paper by May 31, 2024**.<sup>4</sup>

Authors are expected to participate in a **dissemination workshop hosted jointly by the Ministry of Science and Education and the World Bank in June 2024**.<sup>5</sup>

The final papers will go through the World Bank's quality review in July/August 2024. Authors will be requested to update and finalize the papers based on the comments from the quality review.

Please send any questions to the World Bank team at Shiro Nakata ([snakata@worldbank.org](mailto:snakata@worldbank.org)) and Anna Berdzenadze ([aberdzenadze@worldbank.org](mailto:aberdzenadze@worldbank.org)).

**\*\* Online information session will be provided on February 12, Monday, at 6 pm Baku time / 9 am USA EST**. Please join the meeting using MS Teams [here](#) or using the Meeting ID below. Participation is entirely optional. \*\*

MS Teams: Meeting ID: 221 892 777 403 Passcode: ZGwStR

### About the World Bank:

With 189 member countries, staff from more than 170 countries, and offices in over 130 locations, the World Bank Group is a unique global partnership: five institutions working for sustainable solutions that **reduce poverty and build shared prosperity on a livable planet** in developing countries. Additionally, three priorities guide the work of the World Bank to end poverty and boost prosperity for the poorest people: helping create sustainable economic growth; investing in people

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<sup>3</sup> Immediately after the selection, selected authors are expected to make presentations on their research plan to the World Bank and the MoSE officials to receive initial feedback on research topics and strategies and agree on the formats of the paper and activity milestones.

<sup>4</sup> During the research period, authors will have two online progress review meetings with the World Bank team to share progress updates and receive ongoing feedback (timing to be agreed).

<sup>5</sup> Attendance can be in-person or virtual, depending on the residential location of the authors.

and building resilience to shocks and threats that can roll back decades of progress. More information is available at [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org) and <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education>.

The World Bank plays a prominent role in education development. The World Bank is the largest financier of education globally, working across 90 countries, via investment loans, interest-free credits, and grants. The World Bank has also published numerous documents to **increase understanding of education development challenges and advise governments on policies and programs for improving education outcomes**. These reports, working papers, and documents uphold rigorous methodological and quality standards, are publicly available, and constitute core inputs to the work of the World Bank and its partners.