

## Terms of Reference

# Independent cluster Evaluation of UNITAR's joint master's degrees and other postgraduate diploma

### Background

1. The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) is a principal training arm of the United Nations, with the aim to increase the effectiveness of the United Nations in achieving its major objectives through training and research. UNITAR's mission is to develop the individual, institutional, and organizational capacity of countries and other United Nations stakeholders through high-quality learning solutions and related knowledge products and services to enhance decision-making and to support country-level action for overcoming global challenges.
2. UNITAR develops human capacity with a view to developing organizational and institutional capacity to deliver defined outcomes and higher-level results through training<sup>1</sup>, education,<sup>2</sup> and professional development.<sup>3</sup>
3. Over the past several years there has been an increase in the number of joint [master's degree and other postgraduate diploma initiatives](#) (e.g., executive diploma, professional and postgraduate diploma) designed and implemented by UNITAR in collaboration with universities and other academic institutions in both developed and developing countries. Similarly, the number of beneficiaries from academia represents about a third of UNITAR's overall learning beneficiaries.<sup>4</sup> The proportion of university partners represents up to 20 per cent in 2018 and 2020 (and slightly less in 2019 and 2021). Finally, collaborations with universities represented 3 per cent of UNITAR's income in 2020 and 5 per cent in 2021<sup>5</sup>. In 2022, 29 master's degrees and related qualifications were implemented by six UNITAR programme units and the CIFAL global network of affiliated training centres.<sup>6</sup> At least six additional programmes are currently planned to start in 2023 and 2024.
4. UNITAR's role in higher education collaborative provision ranges from outreach and communication, quality assurance, curricular design and delivery of learning modules, organization of field visits and coaching sessions, to placement of students in internships within international organisations. Multiple reasons may motivate UNITAR and the university to offer joint programmes, including combining theoretical and practical content, benefitting from the different outreach opportunities, providing participants with recognized diplomas from accredited institutions and certification from a UN training institute, amongst others.

---

<sup>1</sup> Training provides individuals with a set of knowledge, skills, awareness and/or values. In many cases, this set may be for an individual's current job or role, but it may also be designed to empower an individual to take on a more active role, such as to become a trainer, negotiate a treaty, preside over a major United Nations conference, or engage in community-based peacebuilding activities.

<sup>2</sup> While the product is still knowledge and skills, education is intended for a future job, typically the next job (as opposed to training, which is intended for the present job).

<sup>3</sup> Professional development is a term we hear about a lot. Examples include talent development and leadership development. In this sense, professional development is similar to education, but its focus is more long-term i.e., we are still improving knowledge and skills but with an eye on a longer-term career path (as opposed to a current job, i.e., with training, or the next job, i.e., with education). It can involve getting a vocational degree, a professional certification or credential, different jobs or special assignments.

<sup>4</sup> Ranging between 31 per cent in 2018 and 11 per cent in Academia.

<sup>5</sup> This does not include revenue in the form of course fees directly from enrolled participants.

<sup>6</sup> Master's programmes and other qualifications have been organized by the Peacekeeping Training Programme Unit (PTPU), Multilateral Diplomacy Unit (MDPU), Social Development Programme (SDP) and the CIFAL Global Network (CIFAL), New York Office (NYO), United Nations Satellite Centre (UNOSAT), and OED (Office of the Executive Director). A complete list of the academic programmes is presented in Annex A.

5. UNITAR's partnership with universities and other academic institutions will most likely continue growing with opportunities for scaling up the Institute's engagement with these stakeholders. As such, this cluster evaluation will provide much opportunity for organizational learning and informing strategic development in the future.

### **Purpose of the evaluation**

6. The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, likelihood of impact and likelihood of sustainability of UNITAR's joint master's programmes and other qualifications delivered in partnership with universities; to identify good practices and opportunities of growth as well as any challenges encountered during the implementation of the programmes; to issue recommendations, and to identify lessons to be learned. Apart from providing findings and conclusions in response to the key evaluation questions, the evaluation's primary purpose is to provide recommendations and lessons learned to contribute to the programming improvements and broader organization learning. The evaluation should not only assess how well UNITAR's programming has performed, but also seek to answer the "why" question by identifying factors contributing to (or inhibiting) successful delivery of the results.
7. The evaluation will include an assessment of all six OECD-DAC criteria and gender, disability and human rights, and environmental sustainability considerations. The evaluation's purpose is to be as forward-looking as possible to inform strategic decisions on the design, planning and implementation of possible future focus areas of UNITAR's work, i.e., degrees with universities and other type of academic institutions.

### **Scope of the evaluation**

8. This cluster evaluation will focus on master programmes and other postgraduate qualifications organized and delivered jointly by UNITAR and academic partners during the period starting from 01 January 2018 to 31 December 2022. The evaluation will cover all initiatives in all Divisions that have been offering master programmes and other postgraduate diploma during this period, including initiatives that have been discontinued. While the focus of the evaluation will be on 2018-2022, it will also take into consideration programmes implemented before that timespan and programmes planned for delivery in the next years.<sup>7</sup> The evaluation will be forward-looking with a strategic view to providing recommendations to inform future UNITAR programming. The audience of this evaluation are both the demand side (students, beneficiaries, etc.) as well as the supply side (UNITAR, universities, and other partners).

### **Evaluation criteria**

9. The evaluation will assess UNITAR's implementation of master programmes and other academic degrees in partnership with universities, and other academic institutions, using the following criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, likelihood of impact and likelihood of sustainability. The evaluation questions related to gender equality and the empowerment of women dimension are marked with "GEEW". Questions related to environmental sustainability are marked with "ENVSUSE". Disability and human rights considerations are also considered throughout the evaluation questions.
  - **Relevance:** *Are UNITAR's joint master's degrees and other postgraduate diploma relevant to the beneficiaries and partners' needs and priorities and how do they contribute to UNITAR's strategic objectives and support to helping Member States achieve the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals?*

---

<sup>7</sup> Only master's degree programmes identified by UNITAR programme units at the start of this evaluation. The list of planned academic programmes is also included in Annex A.

- **Coherence:** *To what extent do UNITAR's joint master's degrees and other postgraduate diploma complement other programming and have been adhering to UNITAR quality standards?*
- **Effectiveness:** *How effective have UNITAR's programme units delivered planned results and to what extent have participants reached the learning objectives/met the qualifications?*
- **Efficiency:** *To what extent have UNITAR's joint master's degrees and other postgraduate diploma delivered results in a cost-effective manner and optimized partnerships? What is the added value for universities, for students, and for the Institute?*
- **Likelihood of impact:** *What are the cumulative or long-term effects expected from UNITAR's implementation of master's degrees and other postgraduate diploma, including contributions towards the intended impacts, positive or negative impacts, or intended or unintended changes?*
- **Likelihood of sustainability:** *To what extent are the results and partnership strategies likely to be sustained in the long-term? What lessons can be drawn from the current implementation to guide UNITAR's strategic direction in working with universities in the future?*

### Principal evaluation questions

10. The following questions are suggested to guide the design of the evaluation, although the final set of questions will be confirmed by the evaluator following the initial document review and engagement with programme management with a view to ensuring that the evaluation is as useful as possible. Gender, disability and human rights, and environmental considerations are indicated in brackets.

### Relevance

- *How relevant have UNITAR's joint master's degrees and other postgraduate diploma been to UNITAR's programming efforts to help Member States achieve the Goals of the 2030 Agenda and its principles, e.g., LNOB, and to implement its Strategic Frameworks (2018-2021, 2022-2025)?*
- *How relevant are UNITAR's services to the needs and priorities of its academic partners?*
- *How relevant have UNITAR's joint master's degrees and other postgraduate diploma's design and implementation been to the academic and professional needs and priorities of the enrolled participants? To what extent were the programmes relevant to training, education or professional development goals of the participants?*
- *To what extent has UNITAR been reaching participants from groups made vulnerable (e.g., women, youth, persons with disabilities, indigenous Peoples, etc.) and from countries in special situations (LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS and countries in and emerging from conflict) and to what extent is UNITAR an enabling environment for these groupings (e.g., offerings in different languages, etc.)? (GEEW)*

### Coherence

- *To what extent are UNITAR's joint master's degrees and other postgraduate diploma aligned with the Institute's quality standards in the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) and the partner academic institutions' quality standards, such as [FHEQ](#) and EU Qualifications Framework?*
- *To what extent do UNITAR's joint master's degrees and other postgraduate diplomas, including learning material that may have been developed complement other UNITAR programming from the same administering entity and leverage these experiences, including partnerships arrangements?*
- *What were the factors in selecting the focus of joint programmes and the UNITAR-led modules? Were opportunities for cross-UNITAR collaboration/synergies with other UNITAR units/divisions explored? To what extent are UNITAR's joint master's degrees and other postgraduate diplomas contributing to other larger capacity-development projects?*

- *To what extent are UNITAR's joint master's degrees and other postgraduate diploma complementing the landscape other degrees offered by other universities and partners?*
- *What other institutions, UN partners and international organizations are offering joint master's degrees (and which ones) and what can we learn from these partnerships and build synergies?*

### **Effectiveness**

- *To what extent have the projects' objectives been achieved and what have been the challenges and opportunities of co-delivering master's degrees, at the participant, faculty and administration level? What are the factors affecting the participant's and the master programme's performance?*
- *To what extent and how are the master's degrees contributing to changed behaviour at the individual and at organizational level, when applicable?*
- *To what extent and how well has UNITAR adapted and aligned to the requirements of the academic institutions (and other strategic partners and vice versa) e.g., when it comes to grading schemes? How has this been done?*
- *To what extent have human rights-based approaches and inclusion strategies (e.g., gender, disability) been incorporated in the design, planning and implementation of the master's degree programmes co-organized by UNITAR? (GEEW)*
- *To what extent have shorter UNITAR interventions such as one-week study trips or longer two-year contributions to master's degrees leveraged different results?*
- *Are there any differences between partnerships lasting for more than one cycle versus one-off partnerships? To what extent can a typology of UNITAR's current and future collaborative provision defined, articulated and organised by partnership type and key characteristics?*

### **Efficiency**

- *To what extent have UNITAR's joint master's degree programmes been produced in a timely and cost-efficient manner (in comparison with other UNITAR programming) and how? What differences can be observed between face-to-face and online programmes?*
- *What factors inform tuition fees and scholarship conditions?*
- *How were agreements with universities set up? Can this process be streamlined at Institute level?*
- *To what extent and how has UNITAR maximized resource efficiencies through partnerships with universities, for example through the deployment of human resources by both institutions for administrative purposes. How have costs and income from such initiatives been shared between UNITAR and academic partners?*
- *What criteria (University rankings, thematic expertise, partnership experience, etc.) were applied to select University partners? How is UNITAR operating collaborative partnerships specifically with the UK-based universities?*
- *What is the value of a UNITAR certificate alone and under the partnership, i.e., traditional UNITAR certificate versus university degree? What is the value added of the partnership with UNITAR for universities and participants from the master's degrees, including in terms of accreditation and recognition? How can UNITAR's involvement be even more relevant for academic partners and students? What other promising avenues do partners see beyond or within the MA's domain where collaboration with UNITAR can add value for them and for students (e.g., research, applied projects, undergraduate degrees, business/professional trainings, etc.)?*
- *To what extent has UNITAR engaged downstream implementing partners in such programmes, and has such collaboration been cost-effective?*
- *How environmentally friendly (natural resources) have the master's degree programmes been and what measures have been deployed to mitigate any environmental risks or externalities? (ENVSUSE) To what extent find universities the partnership with UNITAR's efficient? What improvements would they recommend, if any?*
- *To what extent have the master's degrees adjusted to the new realities during and after COVID-19, particularly for the originally planned face-to-face events and study trips, and how efficient have webinars and virtual meetings been?*

## Likelihood of Impact

- *What real differences have the UNITAR's joint master's degree programmes made towards the achievement of UNITAR's strategic objectives?*
- *What real differences have UNITAR's joint master's degree programmes made in the academic or professional lives of the participants, and, if applicable, the organization they work for, including positive and negative impact, intended and unintended changes? What are participants doing after the programme? Are there any differences of impact between the degree obtained, e.g., master's degree and postgraduate diploma? How are graduates contributing to the achievement of higher-societal outcomes?*

## Likelihood of sustainability

- *How sustainable, in terms of reaching impact and effectiveness in results, are the master's degree programmes?*
- *What can we learn from the implementation of master's degree programmes with partner institutions to inform the future design and implementation of future UNITAR's joint master's degree programmes or similar initiatives? What can we learn from the initiatives that have been discontinued?*
- *What financial arrangements and strategies (donor funded, fee-based, in-kind support, funded by a partner etc.) are most sustainable on the long term?*
- *To what extent have the master's degree programmes and the partnerships positively contributed to environmental sustainability? (ENVSUSE)*

## Gender equality and the empowerment of women (GEEW), disability and environmental sustainability

The evaluation questions with gender equality and women empowerment dimensions are marked with “**GEEW**” in the above. Environmental sustainability “**ENVSUSE**”. Disability considerations are considered throughout the evaluation questions.

## **Evaluation Approach and Methodology**

11. The evaluation is to be undertaken in accordance with the [UNITAR Evaluation Policy](#) and operational guidelines, the UNEG [norms and standards for evaluation](#) and the [UNEG ethical guidelines](#). The evaluation will be undertaken by a supplier or an international consultant (the “evaluator”) under the supervision of the UNITAR Planning, Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Unit (PPME). PPME shall support the evaluation team in gathering background documentation and other data collection processes.
12. In assessing results, the evaluation should look at the different dimensions of capacity development, including:
  - **Individual dimension**, as it relates to the people involved in terms of knowledge, skills levels, competencies, attitudes, behaviours, networks and values that can be addressed through facilitation, training, and the development of competencies.
  - **Organizational dimension**, as it relates to public and private organizations, civil society organizations, and networks of organizations. The change in learning that occurs at individual level affects, from a results chain perspective, the changes at organizational level.
  - **Enabling environment dimension**, as it refers to the context in which individuals and organizations work, including the political commitment and vision; policy, legal and economic frameworks, and institutional set-up in the country; national public sector budget allocations and processes; governance and power structures; incentives and social norms; power structures and dynamics.

**Table 1: Capacity areas within the three dimensions**

<b>Individual</b>	Skills levels (technical and managerial skills) Competencies	Knowledge Attitudes, behaviours, and values Personal/Professional networks
<b>Organizational</b>	Mandates Horizontal and vertical coordination mechanisms Motivation and incentive systems Strategic leadership Inter/intra institutional linkages Programme management Multi-stakeholder processes	Organizational priorities Processes, systems, and procedures Human and financial resources Knowledge and information sharing Infrastructure
<b>Enabling environment</b>	Policy and legal framework Political commitment and accountability framework Governance	Economic framework and national public budget allocations and power Legal, policy and political environment

13. In order to maximize utilization of the evaluation, the evaluation shall follow a participatory approach and engage a range of stakeholders in the process, including the project partners, participants, project management at UNITAR, and other relevant stakeholders. A list of stakeholders is provided in Annex B. Data collection should be triangulated to the extent possible to ensure validity and reliability of findings. Proposed data collection methods and tools are discussed below.
14. The evaluator should engage in quantitative and qualitative analysis in responding to the principal evaluation questions and present the findings qualitatively or quantitatively as most appropriate.
15. The evaluation shall develop a sampling strategy that allows for a deep dive and 3-4 case studies, focusing on specific master programmes offered by different divisions. The evaluation shall use a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. Case studies can be particularly useful for understanding how different elements fit together and how different elements (implementation, context and other factors) have produced the observed impacts. Different types<sup>8</sup> of case studies shall be explored:
- Illustrative: This is descriptive in character and intended to add realism and in-depth examples to other information about a program or policy. These are often used to complement quantitative data by providing examples of the overall findings.
  - Exploratory: This is also descriptive but is aimed at generating hypotheses for later investigation rather than simply providing illustration.
  - Critical instance: This examines a single instance of unique interest, or serves as a critical test of an assertion about a program, problem or strategy.
  - Program implementation: This investigates operations, often at several sites, and often with reference to a set of norms or standards about implementation processes.

<sup>8</sup> Source: [Case Study | Better Evaluation](#)

- Program effects: This examines the causal links between the program and observed effects (outputs, outcomes or impacts, depending on the timing of the evaluation) and usually involves multisite, multimethod evaluations.
- Cumulative: This brings together findings from many case studies to answer evaluative questions.

The sampling strategy and development of case studies can facilitate the understanding of the setting in which the master's programmes are delivered, however an institution-wide analysis is expected from the evaluation.

### **Proposed data collection methods**

#### *Comprehensive desk review*

The evaluator will compile, review, and analyse background documents and secondary data/information related to the implementation and design of the UNITAR master's degree programmes. A list of background documentation for the desk review is included in Annex C.

#### *Stakeholder analysis*

The evaluator will identify the different stakeholders involved in the implementation of master's degree programmes at UNITAR. Key stakeholders include, but are not limited, to:

- UNITAR Programme management involved in delivering master's degrees
- UNITAR partner universities (faculty and administrative staff);
- Other partners than the universities;
- UNITAR experts/trainers;
- Participants;
- Other relevant stakeholders.

#### *Survey(s)*

With a view to maximizing feedback from the widest possible range of relevant stakeholders, the consultant will develop and deploy a survey(s) following the comprehensive desk study to provide an initial set of findings and allow the evaluator to easily probe during the key informant interviews.

#### *Key informant interviews*

Based on stakeholder identification, the evaluator will identify and interview key informants. In preparation for the interviews with key informants, the consultant will define interview protocols to determine the questions and modalities with flexibility to adapt to the particularities of the different informants.

#### *Focus groups or group interviews*

Focus groups (or, alternatively, group interviews) should be organized with selected relevant stakeholders to complement/triangulate findings from other data collection tools.

#### *Theory-based approaches to outcome/impact evaluation*

In the absence of quality quantitative data to measure impact, the evaluator should also consider the most appropriate tools/methods to collect data and answer the key questions related to impact evaluation. This may include participatory approaches such as [Outcome mapping](#) / [Outcome harvesting](#) / [outcome evidencing, process tracing, contribution analysis](#),

[episode study](#), or other theory-based approaches to evaluate outcomes, are suitable tools for answering the evaluation questions.

#### *Observation*

Should field visits be difficult to organize, given the geographical location of the academic institutions, the evaluator shall use direct (or indirect) observation of online modules of the academic programmes as a data collection method for evaluation.

### **Gender, disability and human rights, and environmental sustainability**

16. The evaluator should incorporate gender, disability, human rights, and environmental sustainability perspectives in the evaluation process and findings. All key data collected shall, at least, be disaggregated by sex, age grouping, disability, and nationality (or country classification) and be included in the draft and final evaluation report. This could involve developing dedicated evaluation questions addressing these issues, including gender consideration in data collection and analysis.
17. The guiding principles for the evaluation should respect transparency, engage stakeholders and beneficiaries; ensure confidentiality of data and anonymity of responses; and follow ethical and professional standards ([UNEG Ethical Guidelines](#)).

### **Timeframe, work plan, deliverables and review**

18. The proposed timeframe for the evaluation spans from January 2023 (initial desk review and data collection) to July 2023 (submission of final evaluation report). An indicative work plan is provided in Tables 1 and 2.
19. The consultant shall submit a brief evaluation design/question matrix following the desk study, stakeholder analysis and initial key informant interviews. The evaluation design/question matrix should include a discussion on the evaluation objectives, methods, sampling strategy (if applicable), and, if required, revisions to the suggested evaluation questions or data collection methods. The evaluation design/question matrix should indicate any foreseen difficulties or challenges/limitations in collecting data and confirm the final timeframe for the completion of the evaluation exercise.
20. Following data collection and analysis, the consultant shall submit a zero draft of the evaluation report to the evaluation manager and revise the draft based on comments made by the evaluation manager.
21. The draft evaluation report should follow the structure presented under Annex D. The report should state the purpose of the evaluation and the methods used and include a discussion on the limitations to the evaluation. The report should present evidence-based and balanced findings, including strengths and weaknesses, consequent conclusions and recommendations, and lessons to be learned. The length of the report should be approximately 20-30 pages, excluding annexes.
22. Following the submission of the zero draft, a draft report will then be submitted to UNITAR Programme Management (Focal points of the master's degree programmes at UNITAR) to review and comment on the draft report and provide any additional information using the form provided under Annex E by 26 June 2023. Within one week of receiving feedback, the evaluator shall submit the final evaluation report. The target date for this submission is 03 July 2023. Subsequently, PPME will finalize and issue the report, and present the findings and recommendations to UNITAR Programme Management, the UNITAR Executive Director and other invited stakeholders, such as the partnering universities.

**Table 1: Indicative timeframe**

Activity	January 2023	February 2023	March 2023	April 2023	May 2023	June 2023	July 2023
Evaluator selected and recruited							



Initial data collection, including desk review, stakeholder analysis							
Evaluation design/question matrix							
Data collection and analysis, including survey(s), interviews and focus groups and field visit							
Zero draft report submitted to UNITAR							
Presentation of the evaluation findings and lessons learned							
Draft evaluation report consulted with UNITAR evaluation manager and submitted to Programme Management							
Programme Management reviews draft evaluation report and shares comments and recommendations							
Evaluation report finalized and management response by Programme Management							
Presentation of the evaluation findings and lessons learned							

**Table 2: Summary of evaluation deliverables and indicative schedule**

<b>Deliverable</b>	<b>From</b>	<b>To</b>	<b>Deadline*</b>
Evaluation design/question matrix	Evaluator	Evaluation manager	13 February 2023
Comments on evaluation design/question matrix	Evaluation manager	Evaluator	20 February 2023
Zero draft report	Evaluator	Evaluation manager	22 May 2023
Comments on zero draft	Evaluation manager	Evaluator	5 June 2023
Presentation of the emerging findings,	Evaluator/evaluation manager	Programme Management	tbc

recommendations and lessons learned			
Draft report	Evaluator	Evaluation manager	12 June 2023
Comments on draft report	Programme Management	Evaluation manager	26 June 2023
Final report	Evaluator	Evaluation manager	03 July 2023

**OPTIONAL:** A reference group is considered a good practice in independent evaluations. Members of the reference group could be a representative from project management or from partners. These stakeholders would then be included throughout the evaluation phases and would e.g., be able to provide comments on the draft report.

### Communication/dissemination of results

23. The final evaluation report shall be written in English. The final report will be shared with all partners. The report will furthermore be posted on an online repository of evaluation reports open to the public on the UNITAR website and the UNEG library.

### Evaluation management arrangements

24. The evaluator will be contracted by UNITAR and will report directly to the Director of the Strategic Planning and Performance Division and Manager of Planning, Performance Monitoring, and Evaluation Unit (PPME) ('evaluation manager').
25. The evaluation manager reports directly to the Executive Director of UNITAR and is independent from all programming related management functions at UNITAR. According to UNITAR's Evaluation Policy, in due consultation with the Executive Director/programme management, PPME issues and discloses final evaluation reports without prior clearance from other UNITAR Management or functions. This builds the foundations of UNITAR's evaluation function's independence and ability to better support learning and accountability.
26. The evaluator should consult with the evaluation manager on any procedural or methodological matter requiring attention. The evaluator is responsible for planning any meetings, organizing online surveys, etc.

### Evaluator Ethics

27. The evaluator selected should not have participated in the master programme's design or implementation or have a conflict of interest with project activities. The selected consultant shall sign and return a copy of the code of conduct under Annex F prior to initiating the assignment and comply with [UNEG Ethical Guidelines](#).

### Professional requirements

The evaluator should have the following qualifications and experience:

- MA degree or equivalent in evaluation, capacity building, education studies, learning and teaching/training methodologies, practices, or design; or a related discipline.
- At least 7 years of professional experience conducting evaluation in the field of capacity building, training/education/career development, and learning, with preference to individuals with experience evaluating online, in-person and blended programmes.
- Excellent research and analytical skills, including experience in a variety of evaluation methods and approaches.
- Excellent writing skills.
- Strong communication and presentation skills.
- Cross-cultural awareness and flexibility.
- Fluency in English. Other languages such as French, Russian and Arabic are an advantage.

**Annexes** *(to be added)*

**Annex A. List of master programmes co-organized by UNITAR.**

**Annex B. List of stakeholders/focal points.**

**Annex C. Background documentation for the desk review.**

**Annex D. Evaluation report structure.**

**Annex E. Audit trail.**

**Annex F. Evaluator code of conduct.**

**Annex G: List of quality standards.**