6th Edition | 2026-2027

Zairi International Awards

FOR EXCELLENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION








Rewarding Excellence In
Higher Education

Administered By

CLICKS
Center for Learning Innovations & Customized Knowledge Solutions

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AUAP Association of Universities of Asia And The Pacific
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About

Professor Mohamed Zairi

Professor Mohamed Zairi, a globally recognized thought leader, guru, and international expert in Total Quality and Excellence Management, profoundly influenced quality management thinking for over 35 years, leaving behind a legacy that continues to shape the field today.

A true pioneer, Professor Zairi was among the early architects of the benchmarking concept, authoring five seminal books in the field, including the first-ever case study book on benchmarking applications globally in the early 80s. He was also the founder of the internationally acclaimed Benchmarking: An International Journal and the Business Process Management Journal, both of which continue to shape scholarship and practice in the field.

He held the distinction of being the first Professor in Best Practice Management globally and remains the only academic to have written extensively on the role of quality across all four Industrial Revolutions. His most recent work focused on quality in the digital age, where he was recognized as one of the originators of the Quality 4.0 concept. His latest body of work—seven books—continues to center on advancing Quality 4.0 thinking.

Professor Zairi's prolific contributions to research are reflected in his exceptional academic impact, earning him the second-highest Google Citation Index (H-Index) globally in the field of Quality. His scholarly output includes over 70 books and over 400 scientific publications, and his work has been recognized through numerous prestigious international honors. These include the Lancaster Medal, the Grant Medal from the American Society for Quality, the Ishikawa–Harrington Medal from the Asia Pacific Quality Organization, the Yoshio Kondo Medal from the International Academy for Quality, and the Lifetime Achievement Medal from the Australian Quality Organization, among many others.

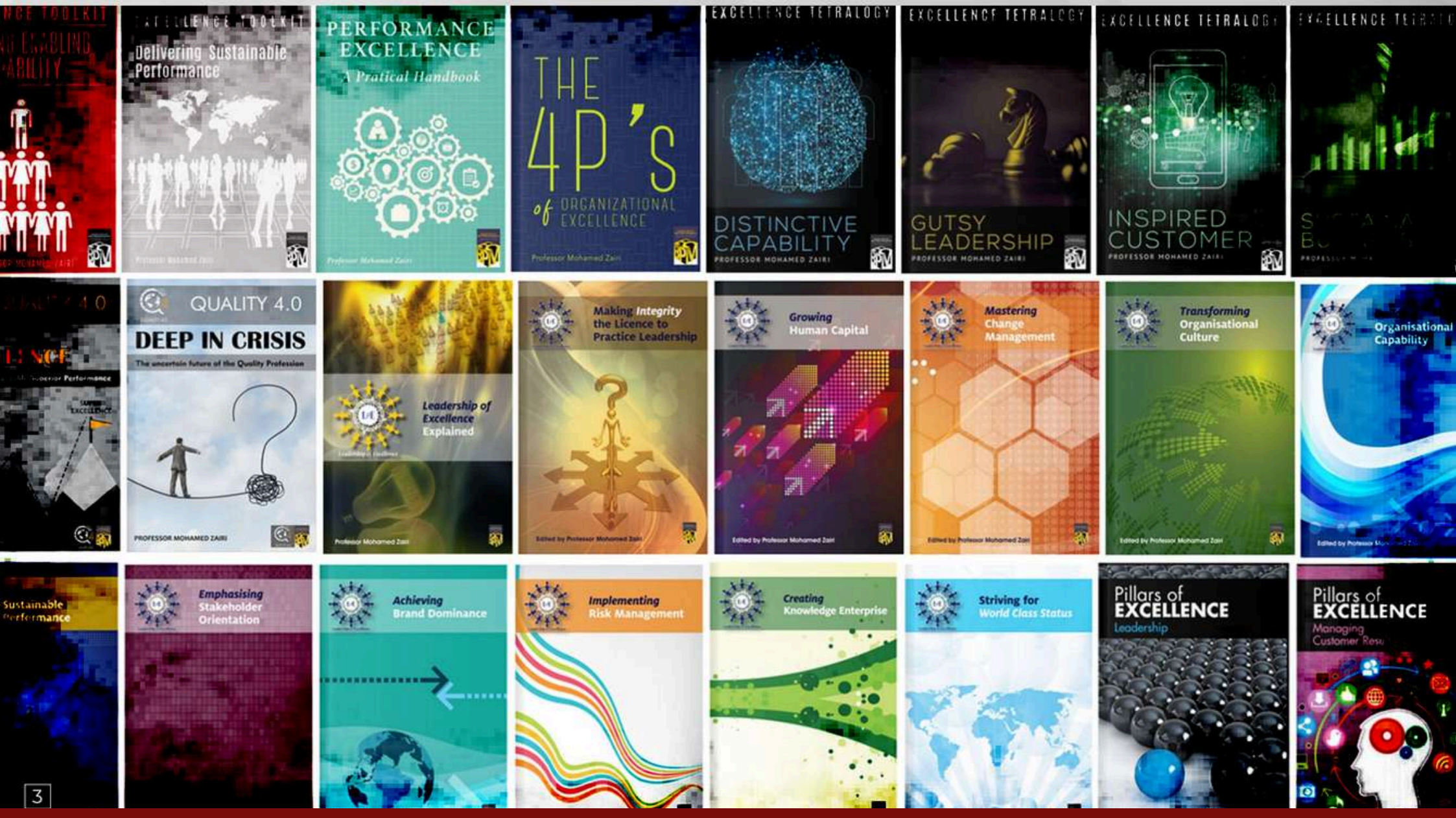
Beyond academia, Professor Zairi played a pivotal role in advancing the global quality movement. He acted as a catalyst for excellence initiatives worldwide, including founding Excellence Yorkshire (now North of England Excellence), contributing to the creation of the EFQM framework, supporting the establishment of the British Quality Foundation, and founding and chairing the European Best Practice Benchmarking Award.

Until his passing, Professor Zairi served as a Senior Advisor at the Prime Minister's Office (UAE Government). He chaired the jury of leading excellence programs, including the Abu Dhabi Government Excellence Program, the Dubai Government Excellence Program, and the Sheikh Khalifa Government Excellence Program. His contributions were instrumental in advancing the quality movement across the MENA region over the past 25 years.

He was also the originator and co-founder of the Middle East Quality Association, co-founder of the Hamdan Bin Mohammed Smart University —the first eLearning university in the region— and the founder of 19 international awards and medals, leaving behind a lasting legacy of excellence and innovation.



Some of the Books By
Professor Mohamed Zairi





The Award

The Award represents a prestigious international recognition of Higher Education Institutions from across the globe that are creating meaningful impact in key areas such as research, digital transformation, community engagement, internationalization, equity, and beyond.

The Award is administered by the Center for Learning Innovations and Customized Knowledge Solutions (CLICKS) and is independently evaluated through a rigorous process led by an international assessment committee and a distinguished jury, ensuring objectivity, transparency, and credibility at every stage.

The Award criteria and evaluation process are endorsed by leading institutions from across the globe, including associations of universities and internationally recognized quality organizations, further reinforcing its global relevance and standing.

The Award aims to highlight inspiring success stories of higher education institutions and to celebrate those that have developed and implemented innovative and impactful responses to current and emerging challenges in the sector.

The Award is open to all public and private higher education institutions worldwide and seeks to foster the development of distinctive capabilities that drive outstanding performance and institutional excellence.

Award recipients are unveiled either during the MENA Higher Education Leadership Forum or at a distinguished gala dinner ceremony, providing an international platform to recognize and celebrate excellence in higher education.

Submissions from HEIs should clearly demonstrate what distinguishes the institution, particularly in relation to its achievements over the past 2–3 years, and should include relevant examples and supporting documentation to substantiate impact and outcomes.

Objectives

The Zairi International Awards for Excellence in Higher Education serve not only as a recognition platform, but as a global catalyst for advancing excellence, innovation, and impact across higher education systems.

OBJECTIVE 1

To elevate the global visibility and reputation of institutions demonstrating sustained and transformative impact in areas such as digital transformation, teaching and learning, research and innovation, community engagement, internationalization, and equity.

OBJECTIVE 2

To enable global benchmarking and the transfer of best practices, supporting institutions in learning from one another across diverse contexts and cultural settings.

OBJECTIVE 3

To recognize and showcase excellence, innovation, and measurable impact, highlighting outstanding institutional achievements and success stories from across the global higher education sector.

OBJECTIVE 4

To promote a culture of integrity, ethical competition, and continuous improvement, while fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange across institutions and systems.

OBJECTIVE 5

To catalyze new cross-regional collaborations and strategic partnerships among high- performing higher education institutions recognized through the Award.

Award Categories

- Award of Excellence for Digital Transformation
- Award of Excellence for Research Impact
- Award of Excellence for Disruptive Education
- Award of Excellence for Equity & Inclusion
- Award of Excellence for Internationalization
- Award of Excellence for Outstanding Not-for-Profit Contribution to the Community



Winners of the Previous Cycles

	Award of Excellence for Digital Transformation	Award of Excellence for Outstanding Not-for-Profit Contribution to the Community	Award of Excellence for Research Impact	Award of Excellence for Disruptive Education	Award of Excellence for Equity & Inclusion	Award of Excellence for Internationalization
2021 - 2022 CYCLE	UEMF The Kingdom of Morroco	Academy of Health Sciences Syrian Arab Public	UNISA Republic of South Africa	Islamic Republic of Pakistan	—	—
2022 - 2023 CYCLE	IUHS School of Medicine Saint Kitts and Nevis	University of Global Health Equity Republic of Rwanda Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	National University Sultanate of Oman	—	—	Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore Republic of Italy
2023 - 2024 CYCLE	AUM American University Of The Middle East State of Kuwait	Université Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah Kingdom of Morocco	Islamic Republic of Pakistan	—	SENSE Kaleidoscopes Republic of India	MUBS Modern University for Business & Science Republic of Lebanon
2024 - 2025 CYCLE	أكاديمية شرطة دبي Dubai Police Academy United Arab Emirates	African Rural University Republic of Uganda	جامعة الجوف Jouf University Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	—	The American University of Kurdistan Kurdistan, Iraq	جامعة عجمان Ajman University Kurdistan, Iraq
2025 - 2026 CYCLE	UAEU United Arab Emirates	MUBS Modern University for Business & Science Republic of Lebanon	—	CEU Universidad San Pablo Kingdom of Spain	UNC Universidad Nacional de Córdoba Argentine Republic	جامعة خليفة Khalifa University United Arab Emirates

Outstanding Contribution
2021-2022 cycle

SPECIAL OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION

For its Outstanding Contribution to Research Leadership

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

For its Outstanding Contribution to Digital leadership

Higher Colleges of Technology كليات التقنية العليا

United Arab Emirates

Zairi International Awards

FOR EXCELLENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Award of Excellence for Digital Transformation



Award of Excellence for Digital Transformation

Digital transformation is a journey that impacts the entire higher education ecosystem. It requires specific capabilities and well-crafted strategies that can be defined from multiple perspectives.

Submissions are expected to demonstrate a clear, institution-wide approach, supported by evidence of implementation and measurable impact.

Award of Excellence for Digital Transformation

Selection Criteria

Important Note: All claims must be supported by clear evidence (data, examples, documentation, or outcomes). Submissions that are purely descriptive, without demonstrated impact, will not be considered competitive.

1. Digital Transformation Strategy

Considers how the institution transforms or operates to increase its competitive advantage through digital initiatives and how this is integrated within its strategic priorities and plans.

Expectation:

- Clear articulation of a digital transformation strategy aligned with institutional vision and strategic priorities
- Evidence of leadership commitment and governance structures supporting digital transformation

Indicative examples of evidence include, but are not limited to:

- Institutional strategy documents or digital transformation roadmaps
- KPIs linked to digital initiatives
- Governance structures (e.g., digital committees, leadership roles such as Chief Digital Officer)

2. Student Experience

Reflects on how digital technologies have been adopted to create/enhance a student-centric learning experience; this involves, but is not limited to, new modes of digital delivery and digitally enabled student services.

Expectation:

- Demonstrated improvement in student engagement, access, personalization, and learning outcomes through digital solutions
- Consideration of inclusivity, accessibility, and equity in digital delivery

Indicative examples of evidence include, but are not limited to:

- Student satisfaction data or survey results
- Retention, progression, or success rates linked to digital initiatives
- Examples of personalized/adaptive learning, virtual labs, or digital advising systems

3. Technology

Looks at the digital technologies and innovations that have been harnessed to implement digital transformation and how they align with institutional strategic priorities, including considerations of equity and access.

Expectation:

- Strategic selection and integration of technologies (not just adoption) Consideration of inclusivity, accessibility, and equity in digital delivery
- Demonstration of how technology choices address institutional needs and challenges.

Indicative examples of evidence include, but are not limited to:

- Description of platforms used (e.g., LMS, AI tools, data analytics systems) and their purpose
- Integration across systems (e.g., LMS with SIS, analytics dashboards)
- Evidence of accessibility features or initiatives to bridge the digital divide

Award of Excellence for Digital Transformation

Selection Criteria

Important Note: All claims must be supported by clear evidence (data, examples, documentation, or outcomes). Submissions that are purely descriptive, without demonstrated impact, will not be considered competitive.

4. Implementation & Results

Considers the execution and sustainability of the digital transformation strategy and how digital technologies are driving and enhancing the student learning experience, institutional management, and overall efficiency and effectiveness.

Expectation:

- Clear evidence of implementation (not just plans or intentions)
- Demonstrated measurable outcomes and impact over time
- Evidence of sustainability and scalability of initiatives

Indicative examples of evidence include, but are not limited to:

- Before-and-after data (e.g., efficiency gains, cost savings, improved outcomes)
- Performance dashboards or institutional reports
- Evidence of scaling initiatives across faculties or campuses

5. Institutional Culture & Capacity Building

Reflects on how the institution has developed an organizational culture to support digital transformation at all levels and how it strives to build capacity among different stakeholders.

Expectation:

- Evidence of cultural change and stakeholder engagement (faculty, staff, students)
- Structured capacity-building initiatives to support digital adoption

Indicative examples of evidence include, but are not limited to:

- Faculty development programs related to digital pedagogy
- Staff training initiatives and participation rates
- Change management strategies or communication plans
- Incentives or recognition schemes for digital innovation

Zairi International Awards

FOR EXCELLENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Award of Excellence for Outstanding Not-for-Profit Contribution to the Community



Award of Excellence for Outstanding Not-for-Profit Contribution to the Community

This award seeks to highlight the outstanding achievements of higher education institutions that demonstrate excellence in engaging with the community, including areas such as volunteerism, community-based learning or research, outreach, fostering community partnerships, and building institutional commitment to serving the community and the public good.

Submissions are expected to clearly articulate the context in which the institution operates, including the community being served, prior to describing the initiatives undertaken and how students, staff, and other stakeholders have been actively involved in creating meaningful impact.

Award of Excellence for Outstanding Not-for-Profit Contribution to the Community

Selection Criteria

Important Note: All claims must be supported by clear evidence (data, examples, documentation, or outcomes). Submissions that are purely descriptive, without demonstrated impact, will not be considered competitive.

1. Stakeholders' Engagement

Considers the extent to which the institution engages various stakeholders in community-based activities and the types of opportunities and incentives available for students, alumni, and staff to participate.

Expectation:

- Clear demonstration of active and inclusive engagement of students, staff, alumni, and external stakeholders
- Evidence of structured opportunities and incentives to encourage participation

Indicative examples of evidence include, but are not limited to:

- Participation rates of students, staff, and alumni in community initiatives
- Volunteer programs, service-learning courses, or community-based research initiatives
- Incentive schemes (e.g., recognition, credits, awards) to encourage engagement

2. Significance and Needs

Reflects on the extent to which institutional community-based activities focus on a clearly identified community need or opportunity.

Expectation:

- Evidence that initiatives are aligned with community-identified needs rather than institution-driven assumptions
- Clear articulation of the relevance and significance of the targeted need or opportunity

Indicative examples of evidence include, but are not limited to:

- Needs assessments or community consultations
- Baseline data or contextual analysis of the community served
- Alignment with local, national, or global development priorities (e.g., SDGs)

3. Impact and Sustainability

Looks into how HEIs demonstrate a long-term commitment to community engagement that is measurable, relevant, sustainable, and which offers tangible, long-lasting benefits to the community.

It also takes into consideration evidence of community satisfaction and the impact created on the community.

Expectation:

- Clear evidence of measurable impact on the community
- Demonstration of sustainability and long-term commitment beyond short-term initiatives
- Evidence of community satisfaction and perceived value

Indicative examples of evidence include, but are not limited to:

- Impact data (e.g., number of beneficiaries, improvements in community outcomes)
- Testimonials or feedback from community partners or beneficiaries
- Longitudinal data demonstrating sustained impact over time
- Evidence of scaling or replication of initiatives

Award of Excellence for Outstanding Not-for-Profit Contribution to the Community

Selection Criteria

Important Note: All claims must be supported by clear evidence (data, examples, documentation, or outcomes). Submissions that are purely descriptive, without demonstrated impact, will not be considered competitive.

4. Institutional Culture

Looks into how the institution has developed an organizational culture to support community engagement at all levels and how it strives to support various institutional stakeholders in engaging with the community.

Expectation:

- Evidence of institutional commitment to community engagement embedded in mission, strategy, or policies
- Demonstration of internal support mechanisms enabling stakeholder participation

Indicative examples of evidence include, but are not limited to:

- Institutional policies or strategies related to community engagement
- Dedicated offices, centers, or units supporting outreach and engagement
- Training or capacity-building initiatives for staff and students

5. Community Partnerships

Emphasizes long-term partnerships and collaborations established to maximize the institution's potential for community engagement.

Expectation:

- Evidence of sustained and mutually beneficial partnerships with community organizations
- Demonstration of collaboration beyond transactional or short-term engagements

Indicative examples of evidence include, but are not limited to:

- Memoranda of understanding (MoUs) or formal partnership agreements
- Joint initiatives or co-created programs with community partners
- Evidence of continuity and growth of partnerships over time

Zairi International Awards

FOR EXCELLENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Award of Excellence for Research Impact



Award of Excellence for Research Impact

This award recognizes higher education institutions that distinguish themselves through engaging in groundbreaking research that addresses real-world challenges—whether social, economic, political, cultural, or other—and that has made a meaningful impact on communities and/or had a significant influence on the field or discipline. The Award recognizes and celebrates outstanding achievements in research.

It highlights notable research activities by higher education institutions that demonstrate tangible benefit and impact. Submissions are expected to provide clear evidence of exceptional performance against relevant indicators such as research output, innovation, external funding, and impact.

Award of Excellence for Research Impact

Selection Criteria

Important Note: All claims must be supported by clear evidence (data, examples, documentation, or outcomes). Submissions that are purely descriptive, without demonstrated impact, will not be considered competitive.

1. Research Priorities & Strategy

Refers to the key research priorities identified by the institution and translated into its research agenda, aimed at addressing local, regional, or global challenges across disciplines, including outcomes such as policy development, product creation, or advancements that significantly impact the discipline.

Expectation:

- Clear articulation of institutional research priorities aligned with societal, economic, or global challenges
- Evidence of a coherent research strategy translating priorities into actionable agendas

Indicative examples of evidence include, but are not limited to:

- Institutional research strategies, strategic plans or priority frameworks
- Alignment with national agendas or global frameworks (e.g., SDGs)
- Examples of targeted research programs addressing defined challenges

2. Innovative Approaches

Considers the innovative approaches adopted by the institution to achieve real impact and how it sustains and grows its research activities.

Expectation:

- Evidence of innovative research methodologies, models, or interdisciplinary approaches
- Demonstration of how innovation contributes to sustained and scalable research impact

Indicative examples of evidence include, but are not limited to:

- Interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary research initiatives
- Use of emerging technologies (e.g., AI, data analytics) in research
- Novel funding models, incubation, or research commercialization approaches

Global or subject-specific rankings (e.g., research rankings) as supporting indicators of research performance

3. Research Culture & Leadership

Focuses on the established institutional culture and environment supporting research, the type of support available for research and scholarly activities, and demonstrated vision and leadership for research.

Expectation:

- Evidence of a supportive research environment and enabling infrastructure
- Demonstrated leadership commitment to advancing research excellence

Indicative examples of evidence include, but are not limited to:

- Research policies, funding schemes, or incentive structures
- Faculty development and research capacity-building initiatives
- Leadership roles, governance structures, or strategic research units

Award of Excellence for Research Impact

Selection Criteria

Important Note: All claims must be supported by clear evidence (data, examples, documentation, or outcomes). Submissions that are purely descriptive, without demonstrated impact, will not be considered competitive.

4. Impact and Results

Considers institutional research output (e.g., publications, citations, patents, external grants) in terms of quality and the impact achieved.

Expectation:

- Clear evidence of research outputs and their quality
- Demonstrated impact beyond academia (e.g., societal, economic, policy, or industry impact)

Indicative examples of evidence include, but are not limited to:

- Publications in high-impact journals, citation metrics, or rankings
- Patents, licenses, or commercialization outcomes
- External research funding and grants secured
- Evidence of policy influence, industry uptake, or societal benefit

5. Research Partnerships and Collaborations

Considers productive partnerships established within or outside the sector to support the research priorities and agenda of the institution and for knowledge co-creation.

Expectation:

- Evidence of strategic and impactful collaborations supporting research priorities
- Demonstration of co-creation of knowledge with partners across sectors

Indicative examples of evidence include, but are not limited to:

- Joint research projects with industry, government, or international institutions
- Collaborative publications or co-funded research initiatives
- Formal agreements (e.g., MoUs) and long-term research partnerships

Zairi International Awards

FOR EXCELLENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Award of Excellence for Disruptive Education



Award of Excellence for Disruptive Education

This award recognizes higher education institutions that demonstrate innovative and disruptive approaches to shaping and re-imagining the future of higher education in response to the rapidly changing global landscape.

For the purpose of this Award, “disruptive education” refers to transformative approaches that fundamentally rethink and redesign traditional models of higher education—rather than incremental improvements. These approaches challenge conventional structures related to curriculum design, delivery modes, assessment, credentials, and the role of the learner.

Award of Excellence for Disruptive Education

Examples of disruptive education (indicative, not exhaustive) may include:

- Introduction of non-traditional program models (e.g., modular, stackable, competency-based, interdisciplinary degrees)
- Adoption of alternative credentialing systems (e.g., micro-credentials, digital badges, lifelong learning pathways)
- Integration of work-integrated and experiential learning at scale
- Use of emerging technologies (e.g., AI, immersive learning, adaptive learning systems) to personalize and transform learning
- Development of flexible, learner-driven pathways that move beyond rigid program structures
- New models of university-industry collaboration embedded within the curriculum

It considers institution-level initiatives and projects that promote innovative and experimental approaches to education, whether through the design of new, responsive, agile, and non-traditional programs, or through the reinvention of pedagogical methods that empower learners, focus on 21st-century skills, and align with employability and evolving market needs.

Submissions are expected to demonstrate concrete examples of disruption in practice, rather than incremental improvement, supported by clear evidence of effectiveness and impact.

HEIs applying for this award are required to provide at least three examples of programs/projects as evidence, demonstrating effectiveness, efficiency (where applicable), and relevance to their institutional context.

Award of Excellence for Disruptive Education

Selection Criteria

Important Note: All claims must be supported by clear evidence (data, examples, documentation, or outcomes). Submissions that are purely descriptive, without demonstrated impact, will not be considered competitive.

1. Forward Looking

Considers how higher education institutions are introducing new ideas in relation to programs and innovative approaches to delivering learning while addressing 21st-century challenges and the evolving context of the sector. It also examines how these ideas are translated into practice.

Expectation:

- Evidence of bold, forward-looking thinking that challenges traditional higher education models
- Demonstration of how innovative ideas are operationalized and implemented in practice

Indicative examples of evidence include, but are not limited to:

- New program models (e.g., modular, stackable, interdisciplinary, competency-based)
- Innovative delivery formats (e.g., hybrid, immersive, experiential, work-integrated learning)
- Institutional initiatives responding to emerging global trends (e.g., AI, sustainability, future of work)

2. Relevance

Considers how the initiative/project addresses a significant issue or problem within the context of a given country or region.

Expectation:

- Clear alignment between the initiative and a defined contextual challenge or opportunity
- Evidence that the initiative responds to real needs (e.g., workforce, societal, economic)

Indicative examples of evidence include, but are not limited to:

- Labor market data or skills gap analysis informing program design
- Alignment with national or regional priorities
- Stakeholder input (e.g., employers, industry, community)

3. Transferable & Replicable

Takes into consideration the possibility of transferring and replicating the initiatives/projects (curriculum, pedagogical approaches, etc.) as best practices in different settings or contexts.

Expectation:

- Evidence that the initiative can be adapted or scaled beyond its original context
- Clear articulation of key success factors enabling transferability

Indicative examples of evidence include, but are not limited to:

- Adoption of the model across faculties, campuses, or programs
- Interest or uptake by other institutions
- Documentation of frameworks, toolkits, or models enabling replication

Award of Excellence for Disruptive Education

Selection Criteria

Important Note: All claims must be supported by clear evidence (data, examples, documentation, or outcomes). Submissions that are purely descriptive, without demonstrated impact, will not be considered competitive.

4. Effective & Impactful

Looks into the success and tangible positive impact of the initiatives/projects and the types of changes and transformations observed since implementation.

Expectation:

- Clear evidence of effectiveness and measurable outcomes
- Demonstration of tangible transformation at the student, program, or institutional level

Indicative examples of evidence include, but are not limited to:

- Student outcomes (e.g., employability rates, skill attainment, progression)
- Program performance indicators or institutional performance improvements
- Evidence of innovation leading to improved learning experiences or efficiencies

5. Learners' Empowerment

Reflects on how the initiatives/projects empower learners to succeed in a disruptive and evolving landscape. It considers how the institution prepares learners with in-demand skills for the future, including but not limited to critical thinking, lifelong learning, and adaptability.

Expectation:

- Evidence that learners are actively empowered as agents of their own learning
- Demonstration of development of future-ready competencies and skills

Indicative examples of evidence include, but are not limited to:

- Integration of 21st-century skills within curricula
- Student-led learning approaches (e.g., project-based, inquiry-based learning)
- Evidence of skill development aligned with future workforce needs

Zairi International Awards

FOR EXCELLENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Award of Excellence for Equity & Inclusion



Award of Excellence for Equity & Inclusion

The rapid expansion of higher education in recent years, alongside growing technological advancements and the emergence of technology-enabled learning models, has increased access to higher education globally. However, it has also created significant barriers for vulnerable and underrepresented groups. The COVID-19 pandemic further amplified issues of access and inclusion, exposing and widening the digital divide due to unequal access to technology among students at all levels.

Ensuring equitable and inclusive access to higher education is strongly aligned with global priorities, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4), and remains one of the most critical priorities for higher education institutions worldwide.

Award of Excellence for Equity & Inclusion

For the purpose of this Award, equity and inclusion refer to intentional, systemic, and sustained efforts to remove barriers to access, participation, and success for all learners—particularly those from underrepresented, disadvantaged, or marginalized groups—while fostering an inclusive institutional environment where diversity is valued and supported.

This award honours exemplary higher education institutions (HEIs) that embrace the value of equity and inclusion in their work and activities through sound leadership and well-articulated strategies. It takes into account how institutions are developing and implementing innovative concepts to maximize access, equity, and inclusion across their core functions, including curriculum, teaching practices, research, community engagement, student support, and institutional culture.

Submissions are expected to demonstrate a comprehensive, institution-wide approach supported by clear evidence of implementation, measurable outcomes, and sustained impact.

Award of Excellence for Equity & Inclusion

Selection Criteria

Important Note: All claims must be supported by clear evidence (data, examples, documentation, or outcomes). Submissions that are purely descriptive, without demonstrated impact, will not be considered competitive.

1. Institutional Commitment

Looks into the institutional short- and long-term commitment to advancing equitable and inclusive access to education, and to supporting diversity among students, faculty, and staff in line with its mission and strategic priorities, with the aim of addressing inequalities and identifying pathways to resolve them.

Expectation:

- Clear evidence of institutional commitment embedded within vision, mission, and strategic priorities
- Demonstration of leadership accountability and governance structures supporting equity and inclusion

Indicative examples of evidence include, but are not limited to:

- Institutional strategies, policies, or frameworks on equity, diversity, and inclusion
- Leadership roles or dedicated units (e.g., EDI offices, diversity committees)
- Targets, KPIs, or institutional benchmarks related to access and inclusion

2. Institutional Initiatives

Describes the evidence-based efforts (e.g., projects, programs, initiatives) undertaken to promote and practice access, inclusion, and equity. Such work should demonstrate outstanding leadership, be collaborative and sustainable, and be aligned with the institution's vision, mission, and strategic priorities.

Expectation:

- Evidence of well-designed, impactful initiatives addressing equity and inclusion
- Demonstration of alignment with institutional priorities and sustained implementation

Indicative examples of evidence include, but are not limited to:

- Outreach, recruitment, and retention initiatives targeting underrepresented groups
- Inclusive pedagogical approaches and curriculum design
- Student support programs (e.g., financial aid, mentoring, accessibility services)
- Initiatives improving institutional climate for minorities and vulnerable groups

3. Relevance

Considers how the initiative/project addresses a significant issue or problem within the context of a given country or region.

Expectation:

- Clear alignment between initiatives and identified contextual challenges
- Evidence that initiatives respond to real institutional, societal, or systemic inequities

Indicative examples of evidence include, but are not limited to:

- Data highlighting disparities or access gaps
- Alignment with national policies or priorities related to inclusion
- Stakeholder input (e.g., students, communities, advocacy groups)

Award of Excellence for Equity & Inclusion

Selection Criteria

Important Note: All claims must be supported by clear evidence (data, examples, documentation, or outcomes). Submissions that are purely descriptive, without demonstrated impact, will not be considered competitive.

4. Impact and Sustainability

Looks into how HEIs demonstrate a long-term commitment to equity and inclusion that is measurable, relevant, sustainable, and impactful. It also considers how the institution evaluates its efforts and the outcomes resulting from such activities.

Expectation:

- Clear evidence of measurable outcomes and impact over time
- Demonstration of sustainability beyond short-term initiatives
- Evidence of continuous monitoring and improvement

Indicative examples of evidence include, but are not limited to:

- Changes in access, retention, or success rates among target groups
- Student satisfaction and sense of belonging indicators
- Longitudinal data demonstrating progress
- Institutional reports or evaluation frameworks

5. Transferable & Replicable

Takes into consideration the possibility of transferring and replicating the initiative(s)/project(s) undertaken by the institution as best practices in different settings or contexts.

Expectation:

- Evidence that initiatives can be adapted or scaled to other contexts
- Clear articulation of models, frameworks, or practices enabling replication

Indicative examples of evidence include, but are not limited to:

- Adoption or adaptation of initiatives across faculties or campuses
- Interest or uptake by other institutions or partners
- Documentation of models, toolkits, or frameworks

Zairi International Awards

FOR EXCELLENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Award of Excellence for Equity & Inclusion



Award of Excellence for Internationalization

This award recognizes higher education institutions that are making significant, well-planned, well- executed, impactful, and sustainable internationalization efforts, while embracing innovative and creative approaches. It recognizes and celebrates the outstanding contributions of HEIs that demonstrate institutional commitment to excellence and leadership in internationalization.

For the purpose of this Award, internationalization refers to a comprehensive, strategic, and institution-wide approach to integrating global and intercultural dimensions into teaching and learning, research, partnerships, and the overall student experience—going beyond isolated activities to achieve meaningful and sustainable global engagement.

Submissions are expected to demonstrate a coherent internationalization strategy supported by clear evidence of implementation, measurable outcomes, and sustained impact.

Award of Excellence for Internationalization

Selection Criteria

Important Note: All claims must be supported by clear evidence (data, examples, documentation, or outcomes). Submissions that are purely descriptive, without demonstrated impact, will not be considered competitive.

Internationalization in higher education requires specific strategies, plans, capabilities, and resources that enable the achievement of impactful internationalization agendas and activities. The following criteria will be taken into consideration:

1. Internationalization Strategy

Looks into the institutional strategy and roadmap through which the institution leverages internationalization to enhance its global positioning and competitive advantage, and how such efforts are reflected in the institution's mission, strategic priorities, plans, and results. It also considers how sustainability dimensions are integrated within the internationalization strategy.

Expectation:

- Clear articulation of a comprehensive internationalization strategy aligned with institutional mission and priorities
- Evidence of integration of global engagement and sustainability within strategic planning

Indicative examples of evidence include, but are not limited to:

- Institutional internationalization strategies or roadmaps
- KPIs and targets related to internationalization
- Evidence of alignment with global priorities (e.g., SDGs, global partnerships)

2. Institutional Efforts

Considers institutional projects, initiatives, and efforts undertaken to support the internationalization agenda, including but not limited to international student enrollment, international faculty recruitment, capacity-building initiatives, mobility programs, access to international experiences, campus experience for international students, establishment of international campuses or hubs, and the internationalization of research and knowledge exchange. It also considers how internationalization is embedded within the curriculum and student experience.

Expectation:

- Evidence of diverse and well-implemented internationalization initiatives across institutional functions
- Demonstration of integration of internationalization into teaching, learning, research, and student experience

Indicative examples of evidence include, but are not limited to:

- Student and faculty mobility programs (inbound/outbound)
- International student recruitment and support initiatives
- Internationalized curricula or joint/dual degree programs
- Global research collaborations or knowledge exchange initiatives
- Global rankings or international reputation indicators as supporting evidence of global positioning

Award of Excellence for Internationalization

Selection Criteria

Important Note: All claims must be supported by clear evidence (data, examples, documentation, or outcomes). Submissions that are purely descriptive, without demonstrated impact, will not be considered competitive.

3. Impact and Sustainability

Explores how the institution demonstrates a long-term commitment to internationalization that is measurable, relevant, sustainable, and impactful, and how such efforts create tangible, long-lasting benefits for the institution and the wider community.

Expectation:

- Clear evidence of measurable outcomes and long-term impact
- Demonstration of sustainability and continuous evaluation of internationalization efforts

Indicative examples of evidence include, but are not limited to:

- Trends in international student enrollment, retention, and success
- Impact of international partnerships on research output or funding
- Institutional reports or dashboards tracking internationalization performance
- Longitudinal data demonstrating sustained outcomes

4. Partnership and Outreach

Takes into consideration how HEIs have developed strategic partnerships and cultivated external relations that contribute to their internationalization efforts, including the models developed through such partnerships and their outcomes.

Expectation:

- Evidence of strategic, mutually beneficial, and sustained international partnerships
- Demonstration of outcomes achieved through partnerships

Indicative examples of evidence include, but are not limited to:

- Memoranda of understanding (MoUs) and long-term agreements
- Joint programs, research initiatives, or capacity-building projects
- International networks, consortia, or alliances
- Evidence of outcomes achieved through partnerships

5. Institutional Culture

Looks into how the institution has developed an organizational culture that supports internationalization at all levels, how such efforts are recognized and rewarded, and how stakeholders actively participate in planning, developing, and sustaining internationalization across the institution.

Expectation:

- Evidence of an institutional culture that values and promotes internationalization
- Demonstration of stakeholder engagement and support mechanisms

Indicative examples of evidence include, but are not limited to:

- Institutional policies or frameworks supporting internationalization
- Incentives or recognition for international engagement
- Staff and faculty development initiatives related to global competencies
- Evidence of stakeholder participation across institutional activities

Application Guidelines

- Higher education institutions from across the globe are eligible to apply for the Award.
- The application must be completed by a senior administrator of the institution and must be formally endorsed by the Head of the Institution through a separate letter of endorsement, which must be submitted alongside the application.
- All applications and supporting documents (including annexes) must be submitted in English, using the official application form. Any supporting documents originally in another language must be accompanied by an English translation.
- Each institution may apply for one category only per cycle.
- Applications that do not adhere to the submission guidelines, are incomplete, or are submitted after the specified deadlines will not be considered. The Award Secretariat will notify applicants of any ineligible submissions.
- All applications are evaluated through a two-stage assessment process, based on the defined selection criteria.

What should the Application Include?

Applications must be submitted using the official award application form (available in both Word and PDF formats). The main application should not exceed ten (10) pages in length. Appendices (annexes) must be used to provide supporting evidence, examples, and documentation. A letter of endorsement from the Head of the Institution (e.g., Rector, President, Vice Chancellor) must be submitted alongside the application.

Important Note: The application should present a clear, well-structured, and evidence-based narrative, explicitly aligned with the selection criteria of the chosen award category. Applicants are expected to demonstrate impact, effectiveness, and sustainability, supported by relevant examples and documentation provided in the annexes.

Description

Details of the institution, its context, and the initiative(s) undertaken, including their objectives and scope.

Expectation:

- Clear contextualization of the institution and the environment in which the initiative operates
- Description of the initiative(s) aligned with the selected award category

1

Justification

Why the HEI should be considered for this award, with explicit reference to the stipulated selection criteria.

Expectation:

- Clear alignment with each of the selection criteria
- Evidence-based justification demonstrating strengths and achievements

2

Innovation

How the HEI has incorporated innovative approaches, perspectives, resources, or partnerships within the initiative(s), in line with the nature of the award category.

Expectation:

- Demonstration of innovation beyond standard practice
- Clear articulation of what differentiates the initiative(s) within the institutional and/or sector context

3

What should the Application Include?

Examples (Evidence of Impact)

Tangible examples demonstrating the impact, effectiveness, and sustainability of the initiative(s)/project(s).

Expectation:

- Clear evidence of measurable outcomes and impact
- Demonstration of effectiveness and long-term value

Indicative examples of evidence include, but are not limited to:

- Data, metrics, or performance indicators
- Case examples or project outcomes
- Testimonials or stakeholder feedback
- Reports, dashboards, or evaluation results

4

Adaptability

How the initiative(s)/project(s) can be adopted, transferred, or replicated in different institutional or contextual settings.

Expectation:

- Clear articulation of the transferability and scalability of the initiative(s)
- Identification of key success factors enabling replication

5

Selection & Assessment Process

The assessment of all applications is conducted in accordance with the official timeline published for each award cycle.

The assessment and selection process is conducted in an independent, fair, consensus- based, and transparent manner, and is carried out virtually through the following stages:

1



Screening

All applications are initially screened by an Executive Committee established by CLICKS to ensure compliance with the submission guidelines and eligibility criteria.

This stage is administrative in nature and does not involve evaluation or scoring of applications.

Applications that do not meet the requirements may be deemed ineligible and will not proceed to the next stage.

2



Assessment

An Assessment Committee, comprising 6 to 12 international experts in higher education and quality assurance, is responsible for evaluating the applications based on the defined selection criteria.

The Committee reviews the submitted applications and supporting documentation and proposes up to three (3) finalists for each award category.

The Assessment Committee may request additional information or clarification from applicants, where necessary, to support the evaluation process.

3



Jury Selection

The applications of the shortlisted finalists for each award category are reviewed by an independent Jury, composed of three (3) distinguished experts drawn from government, international organizations, or higher education institutions.

As part of the selection process, the Jury may request a virtual meeting (up to 30 minutes) with the leadership of the institution to seek further clarification or insight prior to making a final decision.

Following deliberation, the Jury will select the winner for each award category.

The Award reserves the right to determine the number of shortlisted finalists in each category based on the quality of applications received. In cases where submissions do not meet the required standards, a shortlist may not be announced and/or an award may not be conferred for that category in a given cycle

The Awards Executive Committee

The Executive Committee is responsible for overseeing the overall administration and day-to-day operations of the Awards and serves as the permanent secretariat.

The Committee is responsible for the following:

- Managing the application and screening processes, and communicating with applicants throughout the cycle
- Creating global awareness of the Awards and supporting outreach efforts
- Supervising the organizational and administrative processes of the Awards
- Seeking sponsorship and financial support to sustain and enhance the Awards
- Following up on and addressing any issues that may have significant implications for the Awards
- Promoting the Awards and inviting high-quality submissions
- Providing feedback and recommendations on the methodology and processes of evaluation and selection to enhance future editions
- Performing any other tasks as required to support the effective delivery of the Awards

The Awards Assessment Committee

- All submissions are evaluated by an independent international Assessment Committee against the criteria stipulated for each award category. The Committee reviews all eligible applications and proposes a shortlist of leading institutions, which is then submitted to the Jury for final selection.
- The Assessment Committee is responsible for thoroughly reviewing each application, providing an objective and evidence-based evaluation, and shortlisting the top submissions for each category, based on the quality of applications received.
- The Assessment Committee consists of 6–12 international experts, appointed for a term of three (3) years, which may be renewed. The number of Committee members may be expanded as the Award grows in scope and outreach.
- The Assessment Committee may, at its discretion, be organized as a single panel or into sub-committees (including category-specific panels), depending on the number and nature of applications received. Where sub-committees are formed, each may be chaired by a designated member of the Assessment Committee to ensure consistency, rigor, and quality of assessment.
- To ensure integrity and impartiality, applications or nominations from institutions with which Assessment Committee or Jury members are affiliated will not be considered.
- The Assessment Committee also supports the Awards Executive Committee through the periodic review and refinement of the award criteria and their weighting, contributing to the continuous improvement of the Awards.

The Awards Assessment Committee



Dr. Larry Johnson
President and CEO, EdFutures, USA

Dr. Larry Johnson is an acknowledged expert on the long-term trends and patterns in all things digital, to include social media, mobile technologies, networks and the cloud, and much more. He has devoted the bulk of his formal career to understanding and articulating the arc of digital technology, via research, reports, books, papers, and for more than a decade as an acclaimed and globally in-demand public speaker.

Over his career, he has produced dozens of significant publications, including six books, six book chapters, 14 peer-reviewed journal articles, and 41 major technical reports. In 2008, he was asked to provide Congressional Testimony about his research into the uses of virtual environments. His work led to invitations to give more than 125 keynote addresses at prestigious national and international conferences and forums all over the world.

Johnson's educational background includes an MBA in Finance, a Ph.D. in Education, and a postdoc at Harvard University. Among many other recognitions, Dr. Johnson has been honored as a Distinguished Graduate by the University of Texas at Austin and in 2015 was named as one of the Top 50 Education Influencers globally.



Robin Mann
CEO, Best Practice Competition,
New Zealand

Dr. Robin Mann is the founder of the TRADE Best Practice Benchmarking Methodology – a systematic approach for effective benchmarking – to identify and implement best practices. Dr Robin Mann is an expert consultant and advisor for the Asian Productivity Organization and is frequently assigned to assist national productivity organizations with developing and providing benchmarking and business excellence services. Dr Robin Mann is chairman of the Global Benchmarking Network which represents over 23 countries.

The Awards Assessment Committee



Prof. Maurits van Rooijen

Group Rector & Chief Academic Officer, Global University Systems UK and Rector & President University of Europe, Germany

Professor Maurits van Rooijen is Group Rector and Chief Academic Officer of Global University Systems (GUS). In addition to this role, on 1st September 2019, Professor van Rooijen was appointed as Rector of the University of Europe for Applied Sciences. He is also Chairman of IBAT College Dublin and GISMA Germany. He studied and lectured at Utrecht University before joining the Erasmus University Rotterdam. In 1993 he moved to the University of Westminster, London from which he retired as Executive Vice President when he took up the position of Rector Magnificus and CEO of the Dutch “corporate leadership” university, Nyenrode. In 2012 he joined forces with the entrepreneur Aaron Etingen and Global University Systems was created.

Professor van Rooijen has held visiting and honorary appointments at universities globally in his academic field (sustainable urbanisation) and has published widely on international education and university management. He is the former President of the Compostela Group of Universities (2008–2016) and is the long serving co-chairman of the World Association for Co-operative and work Integrated learning. He holds various international awards including the Constance Meldrum prize for Vision and Leadership (EAIE 2012) and the Emblema Ouro or Golden Insignia of the Universidad Santiago de Compostela (2014).



Susanna Karakhanyan

Global Tertiary Education Expert, 7th (former) President, INQAAHE, UAE

Dr. Susanna Karakhanyan is Director of Higher Education Regulation & Licensing at the Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK), UAE, former President of INQAAHE (2015-2021). With advisory experience in nearly 40 countries, she has led tertiary education initiatives for UNESCO, the World Bank, the Council of Europe, and the Asian Development Bank.

Her expertise includes tertiary/higher education governance, policy, quality assurance, curriculum modernization, including micro-credential design and delivery, and academic integrity. Dr. Karakhanyan holds an M.S.Ed from the University of Pennsylvania and a PhD in Social Sciences from Radboud University Nijmegen. One of her major contributions to the body of knowledge in TE QA evolves around founding and leading Global Trends in Higher Education Quality Assurance – a research project carried out once per five years exploring trends in tertiary education systems globally.

The Awards Assessment Committee



Dr. Fanta Aw

Executive Director and CEO,
Association of International
Educators (NAFSA), USA

Fanta Aw, PhD, currently serves as the executive director and CEO of NAFSA: Association of International Educators, having previously held its presidency from 2013 to 2016. NAFSA is the world's largest and most comprehensive international education association, with more than 10,000 members at more than 4,000 institutions in 140+ countries. NAFSA is dedicated to the advancement of international education and exchange.

Dr. Aw is dedicated to addressing pivotal issues. She often serves as a keynote speaker, sharing her expertise on various topics, including internationalization; international educational exchange; diversity, equity, and inclusion; student success; women in leadership; global trends; geopolitics; public policy; and immigration.

Dr. Aw is also a champion for innovation and transformation in the realm of higher education. She speaks to the importance of humanity coexisting with artificial intelligence and the social responsibility of educators in preparing and nurturing the next generation of empathetic leaders.

Dr. Aw dedicated more than three decades to American University (AU) in Washington, D.C., where she earned a BS in accounting, an MA in public administration with a specialization in organizational development, and a PhD in sociology with a focus on international education, social stratification, political economy, and transnational migration.

During her extensive tenure at AU, Dr. Aw held several leadership positions, including serving as the vice president of undergraduate enrollment, campus life, and inclusive excellence. She has been recognized as an award-winning lecturer while holding the title of Hurst Senior Professorial Lecturer at AU's School of International Service. In 2023, her significant contributions to AU were honored with the Neil Kerwin Alumni Achievement Award.

Dr. Aw serves on numerous boards, including the Board of Directors for World Education Services (WES); the Times Higher Education (THE) International Education Advisory Board; The Alliance for International Exchange; The International Advisory Council of Fundação Dom Cabral, the top business school in Brazil; and an advisor on the Expert Council of the Talent Mobility Fund. She previously chaired the ETS TOEFL board.

Originally from Mali, Dr. Aw has lived in both East and West Africa as well as the United States, gaining a broad and diverse cultural perspective. Her passion for global experiences has led her to explore more than 70 countries. Her knowledge has been acknowledged by major global media outlets, such as CNN, Wall Street Journal, New York Times, The Economist, Bloomberg, Agence France Press, USA Today, the Washington Post, The Chronicle of Higher Education, National Public Radio, the Middle East Broadcast Corporation, the Washington Business Journal, WAMU, Washington Diplomat, and China Daily, among others.

The Awards Assessment Committee



Dr. Julie Furst-Bowe
Vice President for Academic Affairs,
Arkansas Tech University, USA

Dr. Julie Furst-Bowe is an experienced executive leader and consultant in higher education. After beginning her career as a faculty member in career and technical education, Julie went on to serve in numerous senior leadership roles at several institutions, including Provost at the University of Wisconsin-Stout, Arkansas Tech University, Winona State University, Georgian Court University, Chippewa Valley Technical College and Chancellor at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. She currently serves as the Academic Vice President at Saint Mary's University of Minnesota.

After leading efforts for the University of Wisconsin-Stout to become the first and only university to receive the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, Julie became a national and international speaker and consultant for numerous colleges and universities that were interested in continuous improvement and performance excellence. Over the past 25 years, she has consulted with more than 50 educational institutions, and she presents to audiences around the globe. She has served as an advisor to the Ministry of Education in Singapore and currently serves as an assessor and trainer for the United Arab Emirate's Government Excellence Program. She is a Fulbright Scholar who has completed Fulbright assignments in Azerbaijan and Jordan.

In her roles as chief academic officer and chief executive officer, Julie has provided leadership for academic affairs, enrollment management, student services, diversity and inclusion, information technology and administration and finance. She has a proven record of success in key areas including accreditation, assessment, strategic planning, program development, online learning, enrollment growth, international education, student retention and resource alignment, and she is often invited to share her expertise in these areas. She has served as a facilitator for several state, national and international higher education leadership development programs.

For the past 25 years, Julie has also served as a peer reviewer, team chair, trainer, and mentor for the Higher Learning Commission. She has edited two books and several book chapters and articles on systems thinking and performance excellence in higher education. She is an active member of several professional associations. Two highlights of her career include receiving the Outstanding Achievement Award from Wisconsin Women in Higher Education Leadership and the Woman Leader of Educational Excellence Award from the International Vocational Education and Training Association. Julie received her doctorate in education from the University of Minnesota where her dissertation received the Award of Excellence for Outstanding Research from the International Society for Performance Improvement. She was recently awarded the Distinguished Alumni Award from the University of Minnesota's College of Education and Human Development.

Jury Panel

The Jury Panel is an independent international body composed of highly recognized experts in the fields of excellence and/or higher education. The Jury is responsible for reviewing the shortlisted applications submitted by the Assessment Committee and selecting the winner for each award category.

Members of the Jury are appointed for a term of three (3) award cycles and will elect a Chair from among their members.

In the event that the Jury determines that the pool of shortlisted nominees is insufficient in number or does not meet the required standards of excellence, it reserves the right to request additional nominations. Such nominations must follow the same submission requirements as all other applications and will be evaluated on an equal basis.



Jury Panel



Prof. Francisco Marmolejo

Higher Education President, Qatar Foundation, Qatar

Francisco Marmolejo is Higher Education President at Qatar Foundation (QF) in Doha, where he leads QF's work in support of 8 prestigious universities established at Education City in Doha offering more than 70 academic programs to students from more than 110 countries. During 2012-20, he worked at the World Bank, where he served as the Global Coordinator of Higher Education, based in Washington, DC., and later as Lead Higher Education Specialist for India and South Asia, based in New Delhi. During 1995-2012, he served as founding Executive Director of the Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration, a network of more than 160 colleges and universities primarily from Mexico, Canada, and the U.S based at the University of Arizona, where he also worked as Assistant Vice President for Western Hemispheric Programs. He has been American Council on Education Fellow at the University of Massachusetts, Academic Vice President of the University of the Americas in Mexico, and International Consultant at OECD in Paris.



Dr. Peter J. Wells

Head of Education, Regional Office for Southern Africa, Zimbabwe UNESCO

Since 2016, Peter has lead UNESCO's priority area of quality higher education with an emphasis on widening access, quality assurance and academic mobility, the latter reinforced by the Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education adopted in 2019. He also co-leads on the UNESCO Qualifications Passport for Refugees and Vulnerable Migrants initiative that aims to support access to learning and employment opportunities for displaced persons. Prior to taking up his current post, Peter was a Higher Education Specialist and Director of the UNESCO's European Centre for Higher Education for ten years. He is author of strategy papers and monographs on the topic of higher education reforms, quality assurance, and inclusion in national HE systems. Originally from the UK, Peter has taught at the HE and TVET levels in the USA, Poland, the UAE and Romania. He holds a Master's degree in International Relations and a PhD in Quality Enhancement of Higher Education Systems.



HE Dr. Rimah Saleh Imah Alyahya

Member of the Saudi Shuraa Council and Former Deputy Minister for Private Higher Education, KSA

Dr. Rimah Alyahya was raised in the United States of America and completed her elementary, intermediate and secondary education with honors in Monroeville, Pennsylvania. She then procured her higher education in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia completing her Bachelors and Masters degree in English Literature from King Saud University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. She then went on to complete her Ph.D in English Literature from Princess Nora University with high honors and was one of the first Saudi women to have her Ph.D thesis recommended for public publishing. Immediately following her graduation in 2005, Dr. Rimah was appointed Chairperson of the English and Translation Department in PNU for three consecutive years. She has also taught English Literature Courses in PNU, Prince Sultan University and The Open Arabic University for several years. The Ministry of Higher Education has asked Dr. Rimah to research several issues concerning the level of educational aptitude in Saudi Arabia which have had excellent results. She has published much research in English Literature in renowned journals with high impact factors, her focal area of interest being immigrant literature. Dr. Rimah was awarded the title of Goodwill Ambassador for Peace and Women's development in Saudi Arabia in 2016 as well as winning the Educational Leadership Award in the same year. She was appointed as the first female Vice Rector of Prince Sultan University for 7 years and then was appointed as one of the first Female Deputy Ministers in the Ministry of Education holding the title of Deputy Minister for Private Higher Education. She is currently a member of the Saudi Shura Council.



Considerations

All assessors and jurors are required to declare any potential conflict of interest in relation to submitted applications.

In such cases, they will not participate in the evaluation, discussion, or voting on the concerned applications. These applications will be reassigned to another assessor or juror to ensure fairness, objectivity, and integrity of the process.

What do Award Recipients Receive?



Formal Recognition
Award winners will be formally recognized during the MENA Higher Education Leadership Forum, held in Dubai, UAE on a biennial basis, or at a distinguished Awards Ceremony gala dinner in years when the Forum is not organized.

Each winning institution will receive an official award trophy and certificate in recognition of its achievement.

Visibility & Knowledge Sharing
Award-winning projects and initiatives will be featured on the Awards website and shared across CLICKS' global higher education network and social media platforms.

Institutions may also be invited to document and showcase their initiatives through a short case study or video, which will be made available to the wider higher education community as part of ongoing knowledge-sharing efforts.

Presenting at the MENA Higher Education Leadership Forum
Representatives from award-winning institutions will be given the opportunity to present their work at the MENA Higher Education Leadership Forum, providing a platform to share insights and engage with global higher education leaders.

One complimentary full pass will be provided for a representative from each awarded institution (confirmation of attendance must be received 60 days prior to the event).

Media Exposure & Global Recognition
Award winners will benefit from enhanced visibility and media exposure, contributing to increased global recognition of their institution and its initiatives.

Award recipients may also reference the Award in their institutional communications as: "Winner of the Zairi International Awards for Excellence in Higher Education" (relevant category and cycle).

Sponsorship Opportunities

Sponsoring the Awards provides organizations with a unique opportunity to align their brand with excellence, innovation, and impact in higher education on a global scale. It enables sponsors to actively contribute to recognizing and celebrating the outstanding achievements of higher education institutions worldwide.

By becoming a sponsor, organizations benefit from direct exposure to a global audience of over 1,000 higher education institutions over several months, through a comprehensive and integrated outreach campaign. This includes email communications, direct engagement, and social media promotion, ensuring sustained visibility before, during, and after the Awards cycle.

Sponsors' names and logos will be prominently featured across all promotional activities, maximizing brand visibility and positioning sponsors as key partners in advancing excellence in higher education.

Some of our previous sponsors

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A Cloud Platform by Naseej منصة سحابية من نسيج

Studiosity
Support and Validate

Sponsorship Packages

Gold Sponsor
AED 30,000



- Sponsor logo featured prominently on all relevant symposium and Awards promotional materials, including invitations, electronic mailers, event slides and social media announcements.
- Sponsor logo and company profile featured in the dedicated Sponsors Section of the Awards website, with a direct link to the sponsor's website.
- Three dedicated social media posts on CLICKS platforms recognising the sponsor and its contribution.
- Two sponsor roll-up banners displayed at the event venue, one inside the main ballroom and one in the pre-function or networking area.
- Exhibition table with two chairs in the pre-function or networking area for displaying promotional materials and engaging with participants.
- Opportunity to distribute branded promotional materials or giveaways to participants.
- Prominent verbal acknowledgement as Gold Sponsor during both the symposium and Awards Ceremony Gala Dinner.
- Presentation of an official appreciation plaque.
- One sponsor representative invited on stage to present an award during the ceremony.
- Opportunity to nominate a representative as a speaker on one of the symposium panels, subject to programme relevance and approval by the organising committee.
- Five complimentary invitations covering the symposium and Awards Ceremony Gala Dinner.
- Priority logo placement on event backdrops and sponsor recognition slides.

Silver Sponsor
AED 20,000



- Sponsor logo featured on relevant symposium and Awards promotional materials, including invitations, electronic mailers, event slides and social media announcements.
- Sponsor logo and company profile featured in the dedicated Sponsors Section of the Awards website, with a direct link to the sponsor's website.
- Two dedicated social media posts on CLICKS platforms recognising the sponsor and its contribution.
- One sponsor roll-up banner displayed at the event venue.
- Exhibition table with two chairs in the pre-function or networking area for displaying promotional materials and engaging with participants.
- Opportunity to distribute branded promotional materials or giveaways.
- Verbal acknowledgement as Silver Sponsor during the symposium and Awards Ceremony Gala Dinner.
- Presentation of an official appreciation plaque.
- Three complimentary invitations covering the symposium and Awards Ceremony Gala Dinner.
- Sponsor logo included on event backdrops and sponsor recognition slides.

Bronze Sponsor
AED 15,000



- Sponsor logo featured on relevant symposium and Awards promotional materials, including invitations, electronic mailers, event slides and social media announcements.
- Sponsor logo and company profile featured in the dedicated Sponsors Section of the Awards website, with a direct link to the sponsor's website.
- One dedicated social media post on CLICKS platforms recognising the sponsor and its contribution.
- One sponsor roll-up banner displayed at the event venue.
- Opportunity to distribute branded promotional materials or giveaways.
- Verbal acknowledgement as Bronze Sponsor during the Awards Ceremony Gala Dinner.
- Presentation of an official appreciation plaque.
- Two complimentary invitations covering the symposium and Awards Ceremony Gala Dinner.
- Sponsor logo included on event sponsor recognition slides.

Sponsorship Form

Institution's Name:		Name of Contact Person:	
Institution's URL (website):		Designation of Contact:	
Institution's Mailing Address:		e-Mail of the Contact Person:	
Institution's Tel.:		Tel. No of the Contact Person:	
Institution's Fax:			

Awards to be sponsored

- ☐ Award of Excellence for Digital Transformation
- ☐ Award of Excellence for Research Impact
- ☐ Award of Excellence for Equity & Inclusion
- ☐ Award of Excellence for Outstanding Not-for-Profit Contribution to the Community
- ☐ Award of Excellence for Disruptive Education
- ☐ Award of Excellence for Internationalization

Sponsorship Type

Make your Choice

- ☐ Gold Sponsor — AED 30,000
- ☐ Silver Sponsor — AED 20,000
- ☐ Bronze Sponsor — AED 15,000

Approval and Authorizations

Name:	
Designation:	
Signature & Date:	

Kindly use an official stamp of your organization next to the signature. Upon receipt of the form, we shall contact you with details on payments and to collect your organization's information.

About CLICKS

CLICKS
Center for Learning Innovations & Customized Knowledge Solutions

Since its establishment in 2012, the Center for Learning Innovations and Customized Knowledge Solutions (CLICKS) has been working across the region and globally, supporting higher education institutions of all types in addressing key strategic priorities.

These include governance, quality assurance, teaching and learning, strategy development, and technology integration, among others.

In line with its six core areas of expertise:

1. Leadership Development and Governance

2. Strategy Development

3. Quality Assurance and Accreditation

4. Innovative Learning and Teaching

5. Research

6. Student Support and Academic Advising

CLICKS has worked with over 220 higher education institutions, delivering both training and consulting services. It has developed a comprehensive portfolio of professional development programs, ranging from webinars and short courses to workshops and certificate programs, in addition to offering tailored, fit-for-purpose consultancy and mentoring and coaching services aligned with institutional needs.

CLICKS collaborates with a range of international partners to design and deliver its programs and services. It is also actively engaged in creating dynamic platforms for dialogue and collaboration, bringing together higher education leaders and practitioners to address emerging challenges and opportunities in the sector.

These initiatives include the establishment of the MENA Higher Education Leadership Forum and the MENA Association of University Presidents in 2013, the launch of the “In Conversation with CLICKS” virtual panel series in 2020, and the initiation of the Zairi International Awards for Excellence in Higher Education in 2021, among others.

235+ Higher Education Institutions

25K+ Professionals Trained

45+ Countries

650+ Institutional Projects

300+ Workshops and Programs

14+ Years in Business

Zairi International Awards

FOR EXCELLENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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