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Ministry for Foreign  
Affairs of Finland

# Higher Education Partnership HEP Programme 2024–2026 Administrative Handbook

Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland and Finnish  
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## 1. Introduction

This Administrative Handbook is targeted for higher education institution practitioners in Finland and in partner countries receiving Higher Education Partnership (HEP) Programme funding during the project implementation period 2024-2026. The Handbook is a complementary document to the Decision on State Aid by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA), the [General conditions and project conditions for HEP](#) and the [HEP Programme Document 2023-2026](#).

Chapter 2 covers different aspects of project implementation while Chapter 3 concentrates on the financial management of HEP projects. Chapter 4 summarises the monitoring procedures and Chapter 5 covers project oversight. Chapter 6 lists relevant links and documentation for project implementation. From the annexes the reader can find the change request template, further information on the reporting and auditing guidelines.

As this Handbook is a complementary guideline for projects, MFA and EDUFI reserve the right to update the document. Updated versions will be available online on the [HEP website](#) and coordinating HEIs will be informed when updates occur. In case of uncertainty regarding the interpretation of the rules of the Programme, you are always advised to contact the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI) at [HEP@oph.fi](mailto:HEP@oph.fi).

The MFA of Finland is responsible for financing decisions and payments. The HEP team at EDUFI is the responsible authority in providing expert services in administrating the programme. The team provides all necessary instructions to implement the HEP projects and offers support services. The team, for example, organises reporting webinars and coordinator meetings. The administration also conducts monitoring visits both in Finland and in partner countries during the programme period. The programme administration team reports the progress of the HEP projects to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

The content of this document is based on the previous HEI ICI programmes and on the experiences and good practices the previous project coordinators have shared with us. We would like to thank them and their contribution towards this programme. Their role has been significant in developing the HEP programme. Thank you!

The Programme administration welcomes any feedback and observations from the project staff also in the future – do not hesitate to contact us.

The HEP Team

## 2. Project Implementation

Once the Ministry for Foreign Affairs has made the *Government Discretionary Transfer Decision* (= state aid decision) and the recipient (coordinating Finnish HEI) has signed the Letter of Commitment, the recipient enters a legal relationship governed by public law with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. In short, this means that the Finnish coordinating HEI and the MFA are legally committed to the *Government Discretionary Transfer Decision* and that the Finnish Coordinating HEI is fully responsible for the use of funds in the project.

### Partnership agreement

As the state aid decision legally commits only the coordinating HEI, it is strongly recommended to create an additional partnership agreement between the coordinating HEI and each of the project partners. Agreements are prepared **in consultation with the legal departments of each partner**. It is advisable to begin the process promptly after a positive funding decision to avoid delays to project implementation.

The internal partnership agreement typically includes the following information:

- Names of the partners
- Short project description and project-specific details
- Obligation of each partner to provide necessary information for state aid officials to follow the use of funds

- Roles and responsibilities, division of labour and tasks, special obligations concerning allocation of working time
- Financial management procedures including timetables of reporting and payments
- Term of the partnership agreement
- Necessary signatures by the legal representatives of the partner institutions

It is also recommended to agree on the following details:

- Liability
- Resolution of disputes
- Confidentiality
- Procedure for modifying the partner agreement
- Termination of the partner agreement

Finally, it is necessary that the agreement refers to at least the following documents:

- Government Discretionary Transfer Decision (Valtionavustuspäätös)
- Terms and conditions for the use of discretionary government transfers granted by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and additional terms and conditions for project support
- HEP Programme Document 2023-2026
- HEP Project Document

The recipient of the grant is responsible for all the legal and financial commitments of the whole project even when a partnership agreement has been signed.

## Partnership management

The success of a project is largely determined by the quality of the cooperation between project partners. Past experience highlights the importance of the following elements in partnership management:

**The quality of communication** makes up the foundation for mutual understanding and the flow of information in a project. It is advisable to invest time in establishing trust and a shared understanding of the project's goals and activities early on. Effort will also be required to learn how to engage in dialogue, negotiation and decision-making in the cross-cultural context of your

partnership. Allocating time for discussion throughout the project can help mitigate risks related to insufficient communication.

A sense of **ownership** on an individual as well as organisational level is crucial for the partners' sustained motivation and commitment towards the project. To this end, it is strongly recommended to involve both senior staff and junior experts, as well as students in the implementation of the project. Involving a larger pool of individuals also helps mitigate the risk of staff changes. It is further advised that projects establish a wider stakeholder cooperation structure and engage both internal and external stakeholders actively in all stages of the project cycle (design, planning, implementation, evaluation and dissemination of results).

Making the sense of ownership requires practices which advance mutually acknowledged and mutually rewarding cooperation. In Finnish values this includes honest and open discussion even on difficult or sensitive matters. Ethical guidelines<sup>1</sup> for cooperation between universities tend to provide good ideas on how to advance a shared sense of ownership.

The **inception phase** covers the first four months of the programme. The purpose of the inception phase is to increase trust between the partners and nurture and develop local ownership within the southern partners.

During the inception phase the projects should review and update the results objectives and agree on the final work plan including the scheduling of activities. One person should be assigned to coordinate the monitoring activities in each participating HEI. The detailed roles and responsibilities related to the decision-making, financial management and implementation are clarified. Supportive internal documents and rules are agreed.

During the inception phase, also the monitoring arrangements and data collection procedures are defined and the indicators in the results framework will be updated accordingly.

In case of potential mobility activities, the projects are expected to make a detailed plan for the mobility scheme together with the HEIs supporting services for internationalisation (e.g., transparent selection procedure, credit transfer, visa arrangements, supporting services for practical arrangements).

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<sup>1</sup> See for example [Ethical Guidelines for Responsible Academic Partnerships with the Global South by UniPID](#)

During inception phase HEP projects have the opportunity to update their project document, including the project level Results Framework Matrix and Final Work Plan. At the end of the inception phase the HEP projects provide the updated project documents to EDUFI for approval. If there are major changes (as described in the financing decision, see also page 9 below) the MFA approval using the Change Request Form is needed.

**Steering and formal decision-making takes place in the Project Board** and if desired, in an additional Steering or Advisory Group. Projects are free to compose these groups to best serve their goals. You may consider the benefits of including, for instance, senior/junior, internal/external, implementing/non-implementing and academic/non-academic members. The HEP programme document states that the project board is chaired by developing country HEI. Considering environmental sustainability, projects are encouraged to explore the possibility of remote board/steering group meetings whenever possible.

Finally, **practical issues** related to daily administration, travel arrangements and ICT connections are very common and may end up consuming more working hours than projects initially expect. Ensure enough time and administrative resources for tasks such as: agreements, reporting, visas, residence permits, travel insurance, travel permits (e.g. high-risk areas), medical and safety precautions, transport, and accommodation. Familiarise yourself with the details of financial management as well (See [Financial management](#)). Regarding ICT tools, previous HEI ICI projects have found email and cloud services useful for document sharing with daily communication often taking place both on email and on social media channels. Online meetings are usually arranged via video call services, but if necessary, even via chat.

## Results orientation in HEP projects

The MFA emphasises achieving concrete results in the project. The updated guidance results orientation is available [here](#).

The results framework is used during the project to visualise and analyse the set of expected results, and the means to achieve these results. The MFA encourages the projects to make practical adjustments along the way of the project.

Risk assessment is a crucial element in results monitoring. Risk assessment can be supplemented with internal evaluation or a workshop-type discussion.

If the project is phasing major risks, these should be communicated immediately to EDUFI, cc MFA. EDUFI also carries out major annual risk assessments independently to the MFA.

If adjustments are major they shall be approved through the use of change request form. More details on the use of form is given in the financing decision and its attachments.

Annual reports and final reports of the partners are the main tools for communicating on the results orientation and actual results. Reporting is described in section 4 below. Some aspects of financial reporting are also described in section 3 below.

### Risk management in HEP projects

Risk is an uncertainty about development result (output, outcome or impact) that may negatively affect achieving the results and difficult to control. The purpose of risk management is to identify, analyze and react to various categories of risks at all stages of project implementation. The aim is to avoid most apparent risk and less apparent by identifying them and reacting upon them. In addition to identifying risks, it is important to estimate the likelihood of the risk, impact level of the risk and risk response and mitigation measures. The mitigation measures should include concrete tasks within the project activities. If the risk has high likelihood and impact, the mitigation measures should be strong and include even reallocating resources and defining new activities.

Risk management plan is prepared already when planning a project and it is submitted with the project proposal. However, it is important to update the risk management plan during the whole project implementation period as part of the internal quality assurances and monitoring processes. The annually updated risk management table can be perceived as a means to communicate issues between partners. It can be used to highlight new risks and possible mitigations measures.

For general information about risk categories and mitigation as part of project management, please consult also the HEP Programme Document 2023-2026, chapter 3.4. For further guidance, see the Ministry for Foreign affairs website: <https://um.fi/development-cooperation-risk-management-policy>

The following risks have been identified in the higher education partnerships working in developing countries and funded through the HEP programme, with some mitigation measures attached.

**Changes in the political environment** have occurred in several projects. In some cases, elections have caused negative consequences, causing unrest, strikes or interruptions in the academic year.



On the other hand, the consequences of the elections could also be positive and offer new legislation with e.g. more academic freedom and new collaboration opportunities for HEIs.

In many countries, the formal **accreditation process** of newly designed or revised courses and study programmes can be a very time-consuming, lengthy and complicated procedure. It is strongly advised to start the process at an early stage, and possibly check whether new courses can be accommodated as part of the institutional autonomy, without external accreditation.

When the HEP project plans **procurements, that even can be a prerequisite for the implementation** of other project activities, it is of great importance to start the procurement discussions immediately after the decision of state aid, as the procurement processes can often be more time-consuming than planned.

When **introducing new technology, e-learning, ODL and online platforms**, it is good practice to appoint **local “focus groups” or individuals, who can act as mentors** in encouraging colleagues to start using the new methodology. In many projects, it has been noticed that a few training sessions offered by external trainers is not enough to fully integrate a new form of teaching and learning among teaching staff. Many times, also the students can act as “agents of change” and influence teaching staff, it is advisable to include them in the project implementation.

In some unstable regions, **restricted physical mobility** caused major changes in the project implementation. However, through online trainings and videoconferencing facilities, the activities were carried out in an efficient manner and results were achieved.

At times, there have been **epidemics or climate-related events influencing travel recommendations** to the partner country regions. Finnish HEIs have their own travel-related institutional guidelines, please consult them and also check the recommendations given by the Finnish MFA for the particular region. Finnish personnel are encouraged to conduct contact information procedure ([um.fi/matkustusilmoitus](https://um.fi/matkustusilmoitus)) prior to their travels.

In relation to **Training of Trainers** and capacity building, remember to **involve enough people from the start** to mitigate the challenges in changing staff.

Sometimes, the HEP project management in partner HEIs can be cumbersome due to leading partner country academics over-burdened with teaching, administrative and research duties, in

addition to coordinating international projects. It is worth mentioning, that the partner HEI can hire part-time project management assistance through their HEP budget.

## Changes in project implementation

The project partners are committed to implement the project according to the project proposal approved by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in the state aid decision. However, unforeseen changes that require adjusting the project plan, budget or key personnel may occur in almost every project.

All changes must be brought to the recognition of the Project Board and discussed at a Project Board meeting. **Minor changes** can be made by the project partners flexibly as long as the decision-making is collective (e.g. email between all project coordinators).

**Major changes** require also an approval by EDUFI/MFA through a formal Change Request.

Major changes include:

- Changes to the Result Framework's outputs, output indicators or activities (please note that the project's impact or outcome statement cannot be changed)
- Reallocation of cost items which together count for more or 15 percent of the amount of total budget (main) cost item
- Changes in staff or key experts, e.g. several key expert leave in the middle of the project. Each key expert (who will provide an input of more than 20 days during project implementation) must fill in and signed the key expert form and those must be delivered to EDUFI
- Major changes to the Work Plan's schedule
- Procurement of fixed assets that were unforeseen in the project document.

The implementation of major changes is not allowed prior to MFAs approval. To seek approval with a formal Change Request, please take the following steps:

1. The Project Board recommends the change with clear supporting arguments
2. The coordinating HEI submits a Change Request form (Annex 2) to MFA and EDUFI via email ([keo-tutkimus@gov.fi](mailto:keo-tutkimus@gov.fi); [HEP@oph.fi](mailto:HEP@oph.fi) )
3. EDUFI provides expert opinion to MFA within two weeks.
4. MFA returns the Change Request Form and, if changes so require, makes an updated financing decision.

Sometimes major changes might be approved with certain conditions, depending on the nature of the change. If you are uncertain whether a Change Request is required for the planned change, please contact EDUFI. Approved changes are reported in the annual and final reports with reference to the MFA decision.

## Communication and dissemination

HEP projects are expected to actively communicate their objectives, progress and results to stakeholders outside of the core project staff. The projects are encouraged to establish websites and share information on their activities and results publicly. It is also recommendable to write articles and blogs which highlight achievements and best practices. Communication and dissemination should occur regularly throughout the project period, strategically expanding and deepening the project's results whenever possible. This is useful for maintaining profile within Finnish HEI, wider Finnish audience, partner country HEI and partner country wider audience.

To this end, a communication plan may be created to support the implementation of communication and dissemination activities. A communication plan answers questions such as:

- What are the intended target groups of the communication? (E.g. students and academics, local communities, CSOs, public administration, media, private sector)
- What information is relevant to each target group?
- How would the information best reach them? (E.g. project website or a blog, social media, academic or popular articles, brochures or other printed materials, events)
- How, when and in which format will information be communicated to them? Are adaptations needed to ensure access to information for all (e.g. language, disability considerations)?
- Who will take care of the communication?

- How and by whom will dissemination and communication be monitored?

To enhance the impact of communication and dissemination activities, projects are strongly encouraged to contact Finnish embassies in the partner countries. Embassies have information on past and ongoing projects being funded in the same region or country, and have many times had a crucial role in creating wider synergies and coordinating dissemination events.

The MFA is interested in sharing the results information and best practices also through its own communication channels. Be aware that there are also journalists who have a special interest towards developing countries. Their contact information can be reached by contacting the

[Communication Unit at the MFA.](#)

#### **Practical communication guidelines:**

- All publications should be accessible to the wider public
- On social media, the use of the official hashtag *#HEP* is recommended.
- The MFA logo is to be used in all visual communications to clearly indicate that the project is funded with Finnish Development Cooperation Funds. Download MFA and EDUFI logos [here](#)
- Written permission to publish a photograph / video of an individual should always be asked. The projects ask the permissions and archives them. The projects should also make sure that the permission to publish is given not only to the project itself or coordinating HEI, but also to the MFA and EDUFI.
- Please note, that the expenses covering only the general presentation of the partner institutions cannot be covered by state aid.

In general, you can always take photos in public places, including people, unless the owner of the premises has forbidden it. People must also be presented in an appropriate light. However, please note that practices may vary from country to country.

[Download](#) example template that can be modified as needed.

- The projects should also include the following explanatory text in all their HEP project related materials:

“The Higher Education Partnership (HEP) Programme supports cooperation projects between higher education institutions in Finland and the developing world. The projects support the HEIs as they develop their subject-specific, methodological, educational and administrative capacity. The programme is funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland and administered by the Finnish National Agency for Education. “

In addition to the above guidelines, HEP projects are warmly welcome to create their own logos and visual identities for communication purposes. To maximize your project’s reach, **kindly inform EDUFI of important project visibility** by contacting [hep@oph.fi](mailto:hep@oph.fi). EDUFI and MFA may share the news on their communication channels.

On Intellectual Property Rights, the [General conditions of state aid](#) outline the following:

The government grant recipient must ensure that it has an unlimited right to use all materials or results, produced in connection with activities financed by discretionary government grants.

All materials or results, produced in connection with activities financed by discretionary government grants must be publicly and widely available and exploitable for purposes of public interest.

The MFA is entitled to make results or materials, produced in connection with activities financed by discretionary government grants, publicly available, for example on the Ministry’s website.

In addition to the above-mentioned statement, it is advised that all project partners have access to project results, documents and materials both during and after the project.

### 3. Financial management

The coordinating Finnish HEI is responsible for the financial management of the project and makes funds available to the partner HEIs for the implementation of the project. It is useful to share the names and contact addresses for persons responsible on financial management, so that swift and practical work arrangements can be created.

Project bookkeeping must be organized so that the project is an individual cost object in the HEI’s accounting and that all project costs are transparent and easily verifiable at all times. All costs must be acceptable as defined in the Programme Document and the General conditions and project conditions for HEP and caused by the carrying out of the project activities. In the beginning of

project implementation partners must familiarise themselves with the programme-level documents guiding the financial management of HEP projects.

It is important to note that financial management, the transfer of funds, the opening of accounts, budget monitoring, etc. are all questions that are to be agreed upon by partner HEIs at the initial stage of the project and based on the financial mechanisms and procedures of the HEIs involved. The financial management practices vary from one country and HEI to another.

At least the following aspects are recommended to be discussed and agreed upon by the partners at the initial stage of the project:

- Fund transfers:
  - Do the partner HEIs need to open a separate bank account for the HEP project? Is the account to be in USD, EUR or local currency? Are there effects of possible inflation to be considered?
  - Are funds transferred in advance and/or against invoices?
- The processes for internal budget monitoring (ongoing) and financial reporting (annual)
- The process and authority for approving payments from a project account
- Travel practicalities: Read more on Cost Items - [Travel cost](#). In addition, share the higher education institutions' travel documents, regulations and processes
- Procurement processes, considering esp. national and/or institutional regulations
- Arrangements for audits

It is recommendable to involve the partner institutions' financial and/or administrative departments in all countries when planning the project's budget and financial management. Financial management requires professional staff and may be time-consuming as the administrative procedures differ from one country to another. It is advisable to reserve enough resources and working time for the administration and financial management of the project.

## Budget and invoicing

State aid can be used between 1 January 2024 and 31 August 2026. Only costs incurred during this period are eligible, except for the costs pertaining to the required audit at the end of project implementation.

The projects plan their budget according to the needs of the project but can only invoice **the maximum of the annual available percentage** of the state aid. Unused funds can be transferred to the following annual budget.

The coordinating Finnish HEI invoices the MFA annually (HEP project partners cannot directly invoice the MFA). The first payment is available in January 2024 after the coordinating HEI has submitted the declaration to accept the state aid (The Letter of Commitment). The following invoices are available in each year after the annual report has been approved.

The last 15% will be available for invoicing after approved final report. Possible unused funds must be returned to the MFA after the final reporting.

The amount of state aid paid each year varies based on the available financing budget of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs as follows:

| HEP Programme year | Available state aid for invoicing (% of state aid) | Financing available for invoicing   |
|--------------------|--|---|
| 2024               | 30%  | Available in January 2024 (After the project has submitted the signed Letter of commitment) |
| 2025               | 40%  | Available in April 2025 (The annual report 2024 must be approved)                           |
| 2026               | 15%  | Available in April 2026 (The annual report 2025 must be approved)                           |
| 2026               | 15%  | After approved final report   |

Payment can only be applied for those types of costs that have been approved in the budget of the state aid and that are based on the actual costs incurred in implementing the project, where the invoices have been paid either from the account or in cash against a receipt. The costs must be

clearly related to the implementation of the project and must be appropriate and necessary in terms of the activities and objectives of the project.

Detailed instructions for invoicing are attached to the state aid decision.

### Flat rate

Flat rate is a simplified percentage-based cost model, where the project's cost structure consists of direct and indirect costs. The purpose of the model is to simplify project management reporting.

Direct costs are the project's budgeted costs incurred from the implementation of the content, which include the project's actual personnel costs with statutory side costs, project personnel's travel costs, purchases of services and procurement of assets (southern partners).

All other costs are indirect costs that are compensated with a flat rate amount that is 30% of the project's personnel costs. Indirect costs are, for example, the general costs of the project management, such as office costs, costs due to machinery and equipment, and steering group costs.

The beneficiary does not have to report indirect costs, but **the accounting obligation remains also for indirect costs (flat rate)**. Direct and indirect (flat rate) costs must be recorded separately in the beneficiary's accounting, so costs can be easily separated from each other in audit.

### Cost items

Information on the cost items is also available in the [Programme Document attachements 1-5](#) (p. 9-11).

In general, costs directly benefitting the project results are eligible. However, for example hospitality costs, gifts and alcohol are non-eligible costs that cannot be reported under project costs. Only moderate costs arising from meeting arrangements are eligible. If you are not sure whether a cost is eligible, contact EDUFI. Non-eligible costs cannot be included in financial reporting and in the project bookkeeping.



The project budget template and the financial report template both use the cost items below. Items of expenditure are reported in the financial report under the same cost items as previously approved in the budget. The list of the cost items below presents examples of which costs should be allocated under which cost item. Reallocation of cost items which together count for more than 15 percent of the total amount of the main budget headline requires an approval by MFA through a formal Change Request.

### Salaries (only project personnel)

Salary costs are broken down in three cost items: The salaries and fees of the coordinating HEI (Cost item 1), The salaries and fees of the southern partner (Cost item 2) and the salaries and fees of the Finnish partner HEIs (Cost Item 3).

All HEIs must use permanent staff for carrying out the core project activities but it is possible to recruit assisting staff for administration, organising events, dissemination activities etc. Each project staff member, in Finland and in the partner countries, must keep record on their working time by an hourly basis. Working time records/time sheets of the staff must be approved according to the procedures of each HEI. Time sheets must include the name of the employee, date, hours reported to the project, tasks and signatures by the employer and employee. The salaries and working time records of all HEIs are monitored against outputs and activities. Time sheets are not attached to the annual reports, but are stored at the HEIs, and will be checked in the audit and during monitoring visits by EDUFI. Please indicate the total working hours of each staff member in the financial report. Also contracts of the staff working for the projects will be checked during the monitoring visits by EDUFI.

During the planning and inception phase, the number of personnel working for the project, job descriptions and the working hours must be defined. The names of the project personnel with task descriptions are set in Key Expert Forms that will be sent to EDUFI. Only project staff salaries are eligible (for example, leader's participation to project management is included in indirect overheads). Salary costs must be reasonable and must not include additional fees. **In Flat Rate projects, the personnel costs cannot include fees paid to non-project personnel, even if they were paid through the salary system.**

Salary costs with statutory side costs are eligible, allocated to the cost of the project in accordance with the time sheet. Contributions to the employee from e.g. insurance and taxes are not eligible

for support. Only the vacation costs incurred during the implementation of the project, can be allocated to the cost of the project.

Bonuses and benefits, such as telephone, car, housing and lunch allowance are not acceptable expenses. Also, other supplements (e.g. evening and weekend supplements) can not be included in the project.

Salaries must be reasonable and follow the level that would be paid for similar tasks.

### Travel costs

Travel costs (cost item 4) include travel and accommodation costs and per diems for the Coordinating, Southern and Finnish Partner HEIs.

In Finland, the Finnish regulations [of the Finnish State Travel Regulation](#)<sup>2</sup> apply. When travelling between Southern partner countries, partner country experts are paid according to their own country specific regulations, however in such a way that the costs do not exceed the amounts in the Finnish State Travel Regulation. Per diem allowances for work and travel to Finland will be paid in accordance with the Finnish State Travel Regulations.

It is advisable to discuss the travel regulations between all partners and agree on common procedures (i.e. per diem rates and travel reimbursements) to follow during the entire project period to avoid misunderstandings.

Only the travel expenses of the project staff are accepted as eligible if sufficient reasons for them have been presented in the project plan. The trips of non-project personnel are indirect costs.

Project staff travels and participation fees to trainings and seminars are indirect costs, unless they are directly related to the implementation of the project (e.g. project presentation at a conference).

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<sup>2</sup> The Finnish Travel regulations are updated annually. Please check the latest version from the webpage of the Ministry of Finance.

## Mobility

Part of the total project budget can be allocated to the exchange of students, trainees, and teachers between the participating HEIs. Additionally, staff exchange is supported. During the project inception phase, the project is expected to make a detailed plan for the mobility scheme together with the HEIs supporting services for internationalisation (e.g., transparent selection procedure, credit transfer, visa arrangements, supporting services for practical arrangements).

It is suggested that the mobility should be organised on a reciprocal principle: all participating HEIs are expected to send and host teachers, students and staff. The short implementation period of the project needs to be taken into account.

Student mobilities from partner countries to Finland or to other partner countries can be supported on bachelor, master, and doctoral levels. Student mobilities from Finland to partner countries can be supported on bachelor and master levels.

If the funding is used for scholarships for individual dissertation students, the subjects of the thesis must be related to the objectives of the project. If the term for visit to Finland extends beyond the project period, the financing arrangement for the remaining period needs to be clarified in advance.

A mobility grant can only be awarded to a registered degree student of a higher education institution participating in the project. Physical mobility periods should preferably be combined with virtual cooperation. Credits taken in the host institution need to be fully credited towards a degree in the home institution.

The programme does not support mobility that aims at completing a degree in the host country, be it at bachelor's, master's or PhD level. The maximum duration of each exchange is one year. However, it is preferable that student exchanges last over 2 months.

The suggested monthly scholarship is 700 euros for outgoing students from Finland and 850 euros for incoming students to Finland plus travel and accommodation expenses. HEIs may often have annual fees for participation in education. Mobility can be supported only when these short-time students are exempted from annual fees.

The staff and teacher exchanges can be budgeted on the basis of actual living expenses (travel costs, accommodation, daily allowance or scholarship if the duration is long). The maximum duration is 1 month.

## Procurement of Services

Costs pertaining to services provided by non-academic partners and subcontractors are budgeted under services and subcontracting (cost item 6). As non-academic partners can be allocated resources only through sub-contracting, [The Act on Public Procurement and Concession Contracts \(1397/2016\)](#) or partner country procurement act and HEI-specific procurement processes are to be followed when subcontracting. Examples of services and subcontracting costs include:

- Interpretation and translation
- Dissemination of results
- License fees
- Technical services
- Catering costs and rents (only the rents of external premises) for workshops, trainings and seminars
- The mandatory audit(s) conducted by an external, authorized auditor (see [Financial audit](#))
- Other outsourced services or activities

However, in basic functions of the projects, outsourcing or subcontracting is not preferred as generating sustainable results can best be made by using permanent staff. In principle, consultants may not be used. The main assignments or activities of the project may not be passed further to external agencies unless deemed necessary for the achievement of the project objectives. These types of assignments must be planned to directly support the institutional development of partner country HEIs.

Direct costs related to workshop, trainings and seminar arrangements can be accepted as eligible costs, these can include catering costs. Concerning catering costs, a list of participants must be available for auditing purposes. Funds cannot be used for gifts or alcohol.

## Procurement of assets for southern partners

Fixed assets (cost item 7) can be procured for the Southern HEIs only. Procurements must be made according to national and/or institutional procurement regulations. As a generic rule,

procurements are done in the partner country. Explanations must be provided if any fixed asset has been procured from Finland due to difficulties to make the procurement in the partner country. Even if procurement was conducted in Finland, the fixed assets must be registered as the partner institution's property. The procurement offices in the partner HEI are a good place to begin any procurement processes.

Equipment purchased for the use of the project staff for the administration of the project, incl. rental and leasing (e.g. computers, mobile phones, etc.) is covered by the Flat Rate.

At the end of the project, fixed assets will remain the property of the southern institution for which they have primarily been procured for and which has used them. The Coordinating Finnish HEI must ensure that fixed assets are formally recorded as the partner HEI's property and that there is a plan for their maintenance after the project funding has ended. In the final project report, a list of all procured fixed assets is required for the purposes of programme-level evaluation.

Please note the rules relating to subcontracting: Act on Discretionary Government Transfers (Act on Discretionary Government Transfers (Valtionavustuslaki 688/2001) and Act on Public Contracts (2016/1397).

### Contingency costs

Contingency costs (cost item 8) can be at most 10% of the total costs of the project. The Project Board must approve any use of the contingency budget, but project does not have to submit a change request form to the MFA. Contingency budget can be reallocated to other cost items. The reallocated costs are still to be reported under Contingency cost item in the financial report. Kindly note that possible accessibility costs for people with special needs are to be covered from the contingency costs.

### Transfer of funds

The coordinating Finnish HEI invoices the state aid from MFA and makes funds available for the partners through money transfers. Funds can be transferred as advances to the partner HEIs or against payment requests. It is advisable to discuss the possible options with the partners in advance and include the protocol already in the partnership agreement (see [Partnership agreement](#)). Money transfers are converted into local currency **at the bank statement exchange rate on the day of the transfer.**

The payments are made through the official accounts of the partner HEI based on time sheets and receipts translated in English. If receipts are translated, the translations must be signed by the person who had made the translation. Payments to the accounts of individuals is not allowed.

The coordinating Finnish HEI check the partners' receipts and accounting when sending payments. The coordinator is responsible for the correctness of payments. It is recommended that the coordinating HEI regularly check the receipts and accounting of the partners.

### Self-financing

The HEP projects have a minimum of 10% self-financing and the state aid can thus amount to a maximum of 90% of the total project budget. Self-financing needs to be auditable expenses.

In the financial report, the shares of the state aid and self-financing are calculated on the basis of the total sum. Thus, projects do not need to report which costs are covered with MFA funding and which is self-financing. However, all costs, including costs covered with self-financing, must be verifiable in the bookkeeping.

Self-financing is not compulsory for Southern partners but even a small contribution signals institutional commitment.

### Tips for Financial management

Based on the most common issues and best practices from previous HEI ICI programmes, we have gathered some tips for financial management. The tips have been collected from previous HEI ICI projects' coordinators and staff. Please note that these are only general tips and may not be applied in all partner countries and/or projects as such.

| COMMON CHALLENGES   | TIPS TO OVERCOME THEM  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>HEP admin rules do not fit with Southern HEIs' procedures, for example:</b></p> | <p>Go through the financial management practices and HEP programme rules in the beginning of the project between all partners.</p> |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>different bookkeeping procedures</b></li> <li>• <b>per diem practices</b></li> </ul> | <p>Involve HEIs' financial administration staff already in the planning phase and during the whole project period.</p> <p>Should there be contradicting practices, try to find a compromise or contact EDUFI.</p>  |
| <p><b>The different fiscal years and practices cause delays in financial reporting between the partners</b></p>                  | <p>Discuss and agree on the financial reporting timetable and on reporting practices in the beginning of the project</p> <p>To send receipts, time sheets, etc. for the coordinator, some projects have used file sending programmes (i.e. Funet) or they take picture of the receipts and send them as soon as possible to the Finnish coordinator.</p> <p>The receipt/time sheets must be stored and available for the monitoring and auditing purposes.</p> |
| <p><b>Financial administration is time-consuming and requires resources</b></p>  | <p>Allocate enough resources and working time for the financial management in all partner countries, for example a separate administrative coordinator is worth considering.</p>   |
| <p><b>Slow bank services when transferring money, expensive bank services and exchange course rate losses</b></p>                | <p>Reserve enough time when transferring money to the partners especially if there are no previous experiences of the bank used.</p>   |
| <p><b>Issues with procurements</b></p>   | <p>Always start the procurement process by contacting the procurement offices at the coordinating and the partner HEIs.</p>  |

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <p>Reserve enough time for the procurement process and do not leave the process till the end of the project period.</p> <p>If for some exceptional reason, e.g. the procurement process is not successful in the partner country, the procurement can be made in Finland. Explanations must be provided for any possible procurement made in Finland.</p> <p>Even if procurement was conducted in Finland, the fixed assets must be registered as the partner institution's property.</p>  |
| <p><b>Unsure whether a cost is eligible or not</b></p> | <p>Generally, all costs that directly benefit achieving the results of the project are eligible.</p> <p>Direct costs related to workshop, trainings and seminar arrangements can be accepted as eligible costs, these can include catering costs. Funds cannot be used for hospitality costs (e.g. gifts or alcohol).</p> <p>Other examples of non-eligible costs are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• costs incurred before the start of the project period or after the end of the project period (excl. audit costs).</li> <li>• value added tax, if it does not remain as the beneficiary's final expense.</li> <li>• interest on late payment, currency exchange fees, exchange rate losses, etc.</li> </ul> <p>Familiarise yourself with the HEP programme document, General terms and conditions of state aid</p> |



|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <p>and The Finnish Travel regulations. In cases of uncertainty, please contact EDUFI.</p> <p>HEP funding is Official Development Aid, so the rules for eligible costs in some cases may be stricter compared to other funding sources.</p> |
|--|--|

#### 4. Monitoring and self-evaluation

##### Regular monitoring and data collection

The HEP project is expected to organise its **data collection for monitoring purposes during the inception phase**. Monitoring needs to be organised so that it feeds relevant and timely information to the decision-makers. Direct feedback from stakeholders in seminars and training sessions should be collected and the key observations discussed jointly. Use of qualitative and process indicators is recommended especially for locating changes in working methods, attitudes and commitment.

It is necessary to define the responsible persons for collecting various pieces of monitoring data. The timing of the data collections should also be defined in advance.

##### Annual reports and final report

Regular reporting provides HEP projects with a valuable overview of project progress and the use of funds and indicate where steering will most be needed in the future. They are also formally required by MFA and EDUFI.

Reporting focuses strongly on linking the projects to the overarching Programme level Results Framework and its outlined impact, outcome and indicators. All reports include a financial section on the use of the budget, as well as a qualitative part, to monitor the progress of the activities and the achievement of the planned results. An online system is used to submit reports.

In addition to the written reporting, interview might be arranged between EDUFI and the HEP projects to follow-up and discuss unclear issues.

For administrative procedure related to reporting, see annex 3.

## Reporting Schedule

The coordinating HEI will in collaboration with partners prepare and submit **three reports during the project implementation period 2024-2026**. Reports are submitted to EDUFI according to the following schedule:

- 1) Inception phase: updated documents by 30 April 2024
- 2) Annual Progress Report I by 10 March 2025
- 3) Annual Progress Report II by 10 March 2026
- 4) A Final Report by 31 October 2026

The reports should be prepared and compiled jointly by the project partners. **All reports are also to be discussed and approved by the Project Board before submission.** The minutes of project board meetings will be sent to EDUFI in connection to the annual reporting as an attachment.

EDUFI will check the annual reports and provide approval/response to the HEP project. EDUFI will inform the projects when they can invoice the MFA. The invoice will be sent electronically to MFA invoicing address (see Invoicing).

EDUFI will analyse results information from reports and the websites of the projects and prepare a compiled programme level report. EDUFI also provides independent comments on the potential and actual risks annually to the MFA.

## Inception phase

HEP projects start their implementation with an inception phase of four months.

At the end of the inception phase the HEP projects provide the updated project documents to EDUFI for approval.

## Annual Reporting

The aim of the annual reports is to follow the progress in project implementation and gain important input on project results so far. Annual report is a major communication tool between the project partners. Therefore, it is essential that the annual reports are prepared jointly with the project partners using the draft versions before filling in the online report.

**The Annual Progress Reports cover all activities up until the end of the previous year. Annual reports should specify significant changes** made in the project implementation plans. Which activities were not realized? Which challenges were met and how were they were solved? Possible updated versions of work plan or budget should be attached to the report, together with a Change Request Form if needed.

The Annual Report is sent first to EDUFI using its **online tool for reporting** with the **following attachments:**

- Narrative report in word format
- Financial report in Excel format
- Accounts extract; bookkeeping printout with project number from coordinating HEI, preferable in Excel format
- Audit report
- Updated Risk Matrix
- Minutes of Project Board meetings
- Project level results, including two surveys following the programme level indicators: Annual standard leadership feedback survey and Annual standard student feedback survey (student feedback survey required from second year of implementation onwards)

The EDUFI online tool functions as a repository of the project advancement. Therefore, the projects should also provide relevant documentation to EDUFI so that the archive shall include

- Project reports with annexes
- Final report with annexes
- Change request forms
- Reports of the self-monitoring workshops
- Monitoring reports of EDUFI

- Major publications

**The annual report shall also be sent to MFA as an attachment to the financing request.**

## Reporting content

The following elements are covered in the narrative reporting: overview of project implementation, achievement of results, consistency with the Finnish development policy and visibility. In addition, during the first annual reports the reporting includes questions related to project management. After the first reporting, these questions will be covered during the monitoring visits.

Please find a list of reporting elements in Annex 3, HEP Online Reporting Content 2024-2026.

## Results Based Management as a methodology

Results Based Management (RBM) is a specific methodology with a special rationale. The guideline has been updated in October 2023. More information on the RBM can be obtained from the [publication](#). This guidance is supported by guidelines on [Human Rights Based Approach](#), [Crosscutting Objectives](#), [the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), [Risk Management](#), [Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment](#), [Anti-Corruption](#) and other relevant MFA guidelines which are available through [MFA web page](#).

## Results reporting and linkage to HEP Programme level

### **a) Reporting against the programme level impact and outcome indicators (see Annex 4)**

Four HEP Programme level indicators are followed to describe the advancement of a single HEP project towards wider goals of the HEP programme.

In addition, each HEP project has a project-level results framework with indicators relevant to their expected impact, outcomes and outputs.

Indicators are explained in more detail in Annex 4.

## Final Reporting

In the final report projects report on their progress during the last reporting period and reflect on the results and impact of the project as a whole. The aim of the Final Report is to analyse the final impact and results of the project activities that have been implemented.

The final report summarizes the achievements of the project, describes the progress made in the project towards the project objectives and discusses both the expected results and the actual results of the project. The final report should reflect on the achieved results, good practices, sustainability and possible challenges during the whole project period; in short how well the project targets have been reached and if not why.

Attachments for final report:

- Financial report (covering the entire project period, in Excel format)
- Bookkeeping report (printout from the accounting system covering the last reporting period, in Excel format)
- Audit report(s)
- List of procurements in HEI's register
- Possible external evaluation reports
- Minutes of Project Board meetings
- Two surveys following the programme level indicators: Annual standard leadership feedback survey and Annual standard student feedback survey

## Financial reporting

**The annual reports and the final report always include a financial report.** Financial reporting consists of an Excel document (template available on the HEP website) and the coordinating HEI's bookkeeping report. Every year, an external audit report is also required (see [Financial Audit](#)).

Financial reporting compiles the costs incurred during a reporting period. Items of expenditure are reported in the financial report under the same cost items as approved in the budget. The coordinating HEI has the overall responsibility of the expenditure according to the approved budget. However, the report should be prepared in close collaboration with all partners.

The financing by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (90%) and the amount of self-financing (10%) are automatically calculated in the Excel template on the basis of the total annual expenditure. There is no separate space for cost item-specific reporting of the self-financing part.

The template contains separate sheets for each reporting period, and the same document is to be used throughout the whole project implementation period. The data inserted in the annual reports automatically show in the summary sheet. If you add rows, double-check that the formulas remain functional and that the amounts add up. Use the commenting function to present additional details on the use of funds.

Only costs that occur between the HEP contract period 1 January 2024-31 August 2026 and that are directly linked to the project activities can be charged to the project. Costs must be actual, accrued costs that are verifiable from the project bookkeeping.

EDUFI will, if needed, request further information or clarification on financial reporting from the coordinating HEI. A delay in reporting or neglecting to report may lead to the MFA refusing to pay the granted aid and/or recovering aid already paid.

Please ensure that the project's bookkeeping report includes direct salaries, indirect personnel costs -as well as transfers from EDUFI and transfers to the partner universities.

A cost is to be reported in the year that it is shown on the accounts extract, regardless of when the actual activity happened.

Keep the following project-related documentation for auditing purposes:

- Time sheets of the key experts
- employment contracts
- Fixed assets register
- All documentation related to possible subcontracting, audits and procurements made in the project

## Financial audit

An external financial audit is required every year from all HEP projects. The auditor must be independent from the audited organization. Audits shall be carried out in accordance with international auditing standards.

The external audit report(s) is also delivered with the final project report at the end of the implementation period. The audit report should be as comprehensive as possible in order to clarify for project partners and possible evaluators the financial standing of the project. The audit report(s) must be available in English.

An audit report is requested from all project partners. The Finnish HEI is responsible for auditing the entire project. However, if local expenses are recorded as part of the project partner's accounting in their country, these expenses must be audited locally. The local auditor must meet the statutory qualification requirements in their country. The Finnish auditor issues an opinion concerning the project partners' audit report(s).

The Annex 7 of the Admin Handbook can be used for compiling the terms of reference for the audit. Also, [The General conditions and HEP project conditions](#) include instructions for the audit. Instructions will be updated in 2024.

### How to Submit a Report

HEP reports are submitted through the EDUFI online reporting system (Valtionavustusjärjestelmä = VA-system). The system provides an online form for basic information and an attachment feature for uploading required reporting documents.

**For easy circulation, compilation and Project Board approval of the narrative report, projects are advised to use a Report Template in Word format.** The template is available on the HEP website and is identical to the online reporting form.

EDUFI may arrange reporting webinars before annual reporting deadlines to give directions and guidelines on how to fill in the online form.

## How to submit a report

1

### Enter the online reporting system via a personal link

A personal link will be sent to the Finnish HEI's coordinator from the address [no-reply@valtionavustukset.oph.fi](mailto:no-reply@valtionavustukset.oph.fi). Clicking the link will take you to the electronic reporting form. If you have not received the link, please check your junk mail folder. A new link is sent for each report annually



2

**Fill in the basic information of the project in the system** The report contains only a few basic questions in the online form itself, otherwise the different parts of the report are placed as attachments.



3

### Upload attachments

Attachments are uploaded at the bottom of the online form in the VA-system. Only one file can be uploaded in each of the attachment slots, so please combine files into one as necessary.



4

### Submit the report by pressing the "Lähetä käsiteltäväksi" button

Please submit your report on time as the online form cannot be accessed after the deadline. Should EDUFI request changes to your report, the reporting system will be re-opened and changes submitted online.



EDUFI will initially approve the quality of report. After that the report will be sent to the MFA enclosed to the invoice. MFA is fully responsible on the use of funds and retains the rights to approve or disapprove the report.

MFA and EDUFI reserve the right to change the reporting format in case there are policy or legal requirements to do so.

## 5. Project Oversight

Project oversight means here the activities which are conducted to ensure that the overall project is on track. It includes mechanisms for self-learning as well as for external interventions.

If Change Request is needed, the need should be usually detected within the normal annual planning and reporting cycle.

### Self-evaluation workshop

Self-evaluation workshop using participatory methods should be organised within the second year of the project implementation. This is usually a one-day discussion with focus on concrete and acute issues which may influence reaching the expected results of the project. If needed, an external facilitator may be employed to guide the discussion.

### EDUFI and MFA monitoring visits in partner country and Finland

EDUFI and MFA reserve right to make monitoring visits to the projects. They also reserve right to make project or programme level evaluations.

HEP projects are subject to ongoing supervision and monitoring by EDUFI. The objectives of monitoring are:

- to stay up to date on project implementation and progress
- to review the use of the funds and discuss the funding rules
- to provide assistance, if needed, during implementation and ensure that projects are achieving their objectives in accordance with their Work Plan

Monitoring is divided in two parts: desk monitoring and field monitoring. **Desk monitoring** refers to day-to-day monitoring of the project's progress by e.g. analysing the mandatory reports (annual

and final reports), processing Change Request forms and assisting projects in their implementation process.

**Field monitoring** refers to meetings between representatives of the project and EDUFI either in Finland or in partner countries. In addition to EDUFI, representatives from MFA may join the field monitoring visits. EDUFI strives to visit all projects at least once during the programme period either in Finland or a partner country. EDUFI pays their own monitoring travel costs.

The purpose of the field monitoring visits is to assess the implementation and impact of the HEP programme in Finland and in the southern higher education institutions. Typically, the visit entails analytical discussions on the project's progress and its relevance, ownership and impact with the project staff and representatives of the university. Before the monitoring visit, EDUFI sends the hosting HEI a Monitoring Visit Guideline with more information on how to prepare for the monitoring visit.

Monitoring visits may also include a **financial review** which aims to ensure that funds are used appropriately, and that the financial management of the project adheres to the programme rules. Financial coordination and the related procedures, the project budget (incl. self-financing) and the eligibility of project costs are all subject to monitoring as part of the review. The financial review is typically conducted in cooperation with the project staff and the university's financial services.

Observations from the monitoring visits are communicated with the project staff both during the visits and in a separate monitoring feedback sent by email to the project coordinator after the monitoring has taken place. For the format of the monitoring report, see annex 8.

The monitoring report is also shared with the MFA. EDUFI monitoring reports and EDUFI comments on annual reports are two avenues which form the direct risk analysis feedback mechanism to the MFA and the responsible HEIs. EDUFI is also open for early problem solving exercises whenever potential major risks are emerging.

## Audit

Financial reports are subject to annual audit organized by Finnish HEI. The MFA standard audit guidance is available in 2024.

The MFA reserves the rights to conduct additional audits whenever necessary. Any misconduct or misuse is subject to an official procedure managed by the MFA.

## Evaluation

A HEP project or the whole HEP programme may be subject to external evaluation by the MFA. Such evaluations relate to the overall MFA policy guidance. The evaluations are not expected to cause changes in the implementation of the current projects.

### 6. Useful links and documents

Below there are listed relevant MFA links and documents that can be useful in the implementation of the HEP project. Links include documents provided by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs concerning various aspects of implementing a development cooperation project.

[HEP Programme web page](#)

[HEP box communication material](#)

[Goals and principles of Finland's development policy](#)

[Theories of Change and Aggregate Indicators for Finland's Development Policy 2020](#)

[Human Rights Based Approach in Finland's Development Cooperation](#)

[Crosscutting objectives](#)

[Results Based Management \(RBM\) in Finland's Development Cooperation 2023](#)

[Risk management in Finnish development cooperation](#)

[The Finnish Approach to Addressing the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Development Cooperation and Policy](#)

[Anti-Corruption Handbook](#)

## Annexes

### Annex 1: Administrative steps in annual cycle

| Item           | Tasks  | Responsible     | Schedule |
|----------------|--|-----------------|----------|
| Annual plan    |  |                 |          |
|                | Drafting AP                                  | Partners        | Nov-Dec  |
|                | Risk assessment and need for adjustments     | Partners        | Nov-Dec  |
| Annual report  | Drafting AR                                  | Partners        | Dec-Jan  |
|                | Possible change requests                     | Finnish partner | Dec-Jan  |
|                | Audit  | Finnish partner |          |
|                | Final report to EDUFI checking               | Finnish partner | 10 March |
|                | EDUFI comments/ok                            | EDUFI           |          |
|                | Report and financing request to MFA          | Finnish partner |          |
|                | MFA payment                                  | MFA             |          |
|                | Risk assessment and results reporting to MFA | EDUFI           |          |
| Change request | Request to MFA and EDUFI                     | Finnish partner |          |
|                | EDUFI comments to MFA                        | EDUFI           |          |
|                | MFA decision                                 | MFA             |          |

## Annex 2: Change Request Form

(Available also on HEP web page)

|   |
|---|
| <b>CHANGE REQUEST FORM: HIGHER EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP 2023-26</b><br>Return a signed copy (scanned) as well as word-version via email to <a href="mailto:keo-tutkimus@gov.fi">keo-tutkimus@gov.fi</a> , cc <a href="mailto:hep@oph.fi">hep@oph.fi</a> . Subject field: “change request – HEP project NN”. The change request shall be commented to MFA by EDUFI before decision is made.                       |
| <b>Date (dd/mm/yyyy):</b> Click or tap to enter a date.   |
| <b>project acronym:</b> Click or tap here to enter text.  |
| <b>project name:</b> Click or tap here to enter text.   |
| <b>Category of planned change (check all that apply)</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> Budget <input type="checkbox"/> Fixed assets <input type="checkbox"/> Results Framework <input type="checkbox"/> Staff or Key Experts<br><input type="checkbox"/> Work Plan <input type="checkbox"/> Other, what: Click or tap here to enter text.   |
| <b>Does the request change the issues defined in the decision on the state grant?</b><br>Yes or no. “Yes” includes issues like payment schedule, the duration of the project and the overall aims of the project. If yes, this form will be always filled. The decision for change shall be made in the same manner/level as the original decision. If no, the decision shall be made by returning this form. |
| <b>Does the request change the issues defined in the general terms, section 2.6?</b><br>Yes or no. If yes, this form will be always filled. If no, the issue is subject to the potential impact.  |
| <b>Description and arguments for the change</b><br>Click or tap here to enter text.   |
| <b>Consequences or risks to be considered for the change</b><br>Click or tap here to enter text.  |
| <b>Description of internal decision-making process</b> Describe how the project partners, including the Project Board, have agreed on the change.<br>Click or tap here to enter text.   |

|   |
|---|
| <p><b>Attachments</b> Provide a numbered list of documents you wish to attach to your request. For budget reallocations exceeding 15% of a budget item, include a revised budget.</p> <p>Click or tap here to enter text.</p> |
| <p><b>Signature and name clarification</b> Signature of the Project Coordinator or other project representative.<br/>Electronic signatures accepted.</p>  |
| <b>For MFA use only</b>   |
| <p><b>Decision:</b>    <input type="checkbox"/> Reject    <input type="checkbox"/> Approve    <input type="checkbox"/> Approve with Conditions</p>  |
| <p><b>Justification of Rejection or Approval (incl. possible conditions):</b></p>   |
| <p><b>On behalf of MFA</b></p>  |

### Annex 3: HEP Online reporting templates 2024-2026

Reporting templates are available on HEP web page

- 1) Inception phase: updated documents by 30 April 2024
- 2) Annual Progress Report I by 10 March 2025
- 3) Annual Progress Report II by 10 March 2026
- 4) A Final Report by 31 October 2026

## Annex 4: HEP programme level indicators- methodology and rationale

### HEP PROGRAMME-LEVEL INDICATORS

#### Rationale

**HEP Programme level indicators** describe the advancement of a single HEP *project* towards wider goals of the HEP *programme*. The programme-level indicators 1-4 emanate from the Programme Document. Similar data as Indicator 3 is counted from all educational projects (i.e. beyond HEP) financed by the MFA of Finland. This indicator is so called 'aggregate indicator' also relevant for the SDG reporting. Programme level indicators are followed with two annual satisfaction surveys. Survey results will be submitted in connection to annual reporting.

In addition, each HEP project has a **project-level results framework with indicators** relevant to their expected impact, outcomes and outputs. Indicator data is collected annually in annual reporting. When data is presented in the annual report, the projects are asked to provide a narrative description (what does the indicator tell us; how reliable is the data; is the indicator cumulative or not; etc.).

#### IMPACT:

HEIs in the partner countries contribute to sustainable development by providing high-quality, inclusive and working-life relevant higher education

#### Indicators:

**(Programme level indicator 1)** Satisfaction of the leadership of the partner HEIs on the impacts of the projects

#### Sources of verification:

Annual standard leadership feedback survey

#### Outcome 1:

Strengthened educational and institutional capacities of partner HEIs in providing working-life relevant higher education

#### Indicators:



**(Programme level indicator 2)** Number of staff engaged in capacity development, including exchange programmes

**(Programme level indicator 3)** Number of educational institutions, incl. higher education, reached through measures aimed to increase their capacity

**Sources of verification:**

Project reports

**Output 1:** Strengthened educational capacity, including/in particular renewed degree programmes and individual courses

**Output 2:** Strengthened capacity of teachers and experts in teaching and administration (professional development)

**Outcome 2:**

Improved quality of the partner HEIs' education, including digitalized and blended education

**Indicator:**

**(Programme level indicator 4)** Student satisfaction on new and/or revised courses

**Sources of verification:**

Annual standard student feedback survey

**Output 3:** Improved pedagogical methods and new innovative solutions created for teaching and learning

**Output 4:** Improved access to higher education for students with vulnerable backgrounds

## Annex 5: Annual standard leadership feedback survey

### **Satisfaction of the leadership of the partner HEIs on the impacts of the projects.**

Minimum 4 leaders (=n) of Southern partner institutions of the HEP project should reply to the survey annually. Leaders answer by name because their answers provide direct feedback for project implementation.

1. Name, position and institution:
2. How well has the project supported your Higher Education Institution in strengthening the overall institutional and educational capacities?  
(please provide a score and justification for the scoring as narrative answer; scale 1-6, with 6 as top score)

Score (1-6):

Justification:

3. How well has the project supported your Higher Education Institution in terms of improved pedagogical methods, including using innovative methods and covering students with vulnerable backgrounds?  
(please provide a score and justification for the scoring as narrative answer; scale 1-6, with 6 as top score)

Score (1-6):

Justification:

Scoring  $(\sum a+b)/2n$ . Arithmetic average. Each score provided by the leaders for questions a and b above are counted together. This sum is divided by the number of answering leaders times two. Since the leaders answer by name, the data can be disaggregated by sex

## Annex 6: Annual standard student feedback survey

### Students' satisfaction on new and/or revised courses

Minimum 10 students (=m) should reply to the survey annually. The answers of the anonymous students but they are asked to indicate their sex.

1. Sex: Male, female, prefer not to answer
2. Have you seen any positive changes in the educational methods related to X courses during the past year?

(please provide a score and justification for the scoring as narrative answer; scale 1-6, with 6 as top score)

Score (1-6):

Justification:

3. Have you seen positive changes in the contents of the education related to X courses during the past year?

(please provide a score and justification for the scoring as narrative answer; scale 1-6, with 6 as top score)

Score (1-6):

Justification:

Scoring: similar method as above for leaders:  $(\sum a+b)/2m$ . Since students are asked to provide information on their sex, the scoring can be counted also separately for men and women

## Annex 7: Auditing guidelines

Auditing guidelines for the auditor in partner country Higher Education Institutions will be updated in 2024. Until updated, the format is as below.

HEP 2024-2026 programme

### SCOPE

We ask you to conduct a Special Purpose Audit concerning the Development Co-operation HEP Programme Project [Name of project] of [Organisation].

According to the HEP programme of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland's the receiving organisation must observe principles related to good governance and anticorruption activities. State support shall be used only to cover expenses considered to be necessary and reasonable in carrying out the project activities. In accounting, the support receiving organisation shall follow the generally accepted national accounting principles (GAAP). An audit must be carried out in accordance with the International Standards on Auditing as applicable and relevant with respect to the national legislation and standards.

The nature of a Development Co-operation Project is as follows:

- A project is not a legal entity but an accounting subject.
- It can include transactions in more than one legal entity (e.g. in Finnish HEI and partner HEIs).
- It does not prepare statutory Financial Statements.

### REPORTING

We ask you to further send the Auditor's Report to the coordinating HEI in Finland. The report has to be in English and include the following items:

- Project Identification and name
- Implementing organisation
- Date of the co-operation agreement
- Reporting period and currency
- Exchange rate used in the Financial Project Report
- Total amount of budgeted income and expenditures (including balance from previous year)

- Total amount of actual income and expenditures (including balance from previous year)
- Closing balance (including cash, bank and other assets like advance payments and outstanding checks)
- Auditor's name, position, address, phone and e-mail
- Date, auditor's signature and authorization
- Opinion on the issues below

## OPINION

The Auditor's Report offers an opinion on the following areas:

- Do the financial reports match with the Bookkeeping?
- Do the financial reports correspond with the co-operation agreement (MoU)?
- Does the received funding match with the Bookkeeping?
- Does the Bookkeeping match with the Vouchers?
- Are there proper Vouchers for the transactions?
- Is there an adequate Bookkeeping, including Journal and General Ledger?
- Do the changes in the List of Fixed Assets match with the Vouchers?
- Does the Bookkeeping match with the Official Bank Account Statements and Cash Book?
- Does the opening balance of funds correspond with the bookkeeping from previous years and with the audit report if conducted?
- Are the approved financial reports free of material misstatement?
- Are the received, unused funds properly recorded as a liability in the balance sheet and included in the ending balance of the financial reports?
- Are the recorded expenses in the financial reports in line with the approved original budget and activity plan?
- Is the internal Control system of the organisation in place? Are there any material weaknesses that the organisation should improve?
- Do the salaries of the project personnel match with existing properly signed employment contracts and does time recording exist?
- Have social Security expenses including pensions and taxes been recorded and paid to relevant authorities in accordance with the national legislation?

- Does the organisation have copies of all valid essential contracts (government, trading, rental, lease, Service agreement)?

## Annex 8: HEP project field monitoring guidelines

*Guidelines for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) hosting a field monitoring visit by EDUFI, Finland*

**The purpose** of the monitoring visit is to assess the implementation and impact of the HEP programme in the southern higher education institutions. During the visit, project progress will be discussed, the relevance, ownership and impact will be analyzed, and the appropriate use of funds will be monitored.

The visits also feeds experiences of the HEP cooperation to EDUFI, for recommendations for further improvement of the programme.

The meetings with the project coordinators are organized in order to gather information on the implementation and quality of the cooperation, result, good practices and possible challenges. During the visits the monitoring team interviews students and teachers, who took part in project activities. They are asked to share and evaluate their experiences regarding the practical arrangements and reflect on the academic, personal and professional outcome of the exchanges.

The monitoring discussion is guided by the Project Document, the Results Framework, the Annual progress reports submitted to date, as well as the individual feed-back and experiences of the participants.

**The hosting HEI prepares a draft programme, and sends it to EDUFI for confirmation. During the monitoring visit, the Finnish team wishes to meet with the following persons:**

- the HEI leadership (Vice-rector / Dean / Head of Department, responsible for internationalization)
- the project Coordinator or contact persons
- students, teachers or other staff, who participated in the project activities (incl. Key Experts)
- the financial administration

During the monitoring visit, the EDUFI representatives are chairing the discussions, in line with the aims and objectives outlined above. The monitoring visit is divided into three components: a content-related component, discussion on financial administration (in some cases also financial check) financial check and an interview component.

In case of financial check the financial planning officer from EDUFI conducts the check, jointly with the representatives of the financial administration at the hosting HEI. During the financial check, the EDUFI financial planning officer should have access to the project accounts, the ledgers, and time-sheets of individual project Key Experts.

After the field monitoring visit, the EDUFI team prepares a **report, gathering the most important findings, the recommendations and possible actions to take**. The draft version of the report is sent for comments to the hosting HEI. The report covers the content-related discussion, as well as the outcome of the financial check. After receiving the comments EDUFI sends the monitoring report to MFA and Finnish embassy in the partner country.

**Proposal for the Monitoring visit programme (5-6 hours)**

The hosting HEI proposes the timetable for the three components, based on availability of staff.

The financial check/discussion on financial issues and the interview component can be arranged simultaneously.

In partner countries the programme can be divided into several days and the meetings are suggested to be longer.

|           |  |   |
|-----------|--|---|
| 1-2 hours | <p><b>Introduction</b></p> <p><b>Project progress and results, relevance, ownership</b> (based on Results Frame and Reporting)</p> <p><i>The EDUFI monitoring team and the project Coordinators.</i></p> <p><i>Presence of the HEI leadership in the beginning of the discussion.</i></p> <p><i>A short presentation of the status of the project by the Coordinator (10-15 min)</i></p> |   |
| 1 hour    | <p><b>Project administration</b></p> <p>Meetings, reporting, internal communication, partner agreements, incl. the Project Board</p>   |   |
| 2 hours   | <p><b>Financial check and discussion</b></p>   | 1-2 h <b>Student and staff interviews</b> |



|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><i>EDUFI financial planning officer and the representative of the financial administration at the hosting HEI.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-payments from the Finnish coordinator / invoicing</li> <li>-time sheets</li> <li>-procurements</li> <li>-cost acceptance practice and process /signatures</li> <li>-check of receipts</li> </ul> | <p><i>Individual interviews of 15-20 min each. The interviewees are chosen to cover the various project activities as broadly as possible.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-experiences, impact, selection process, benefits, recognition of studies taken abroad etc.</li> </ul>   |
| <p>30 min</p> <p>30 min-1 h</p>  | <p><b>Break</b>, for internal discussions within the monitoring team</p> <p><b>Final discussion</b><br/> <i>Monitoring team and the project coordinators.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-summary of the findings of the monitoring visit and feed-back</li> <li>-recommendations for the project and for EDUFI on improvements</li> </ul> |