

**GLOBAL
EDUCATION
POLICY
NETWORK**



Meeting the challenges for education in a post-coronavirus world

Welcome

Welcome to this short introduction to the Global Education Policy Network (GEPN), an initiative sponsored by Prince Sultan University in Saudi Arabia (PSU) and The State University of New York at Buffalo in the US (SUNY Buffalo).

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating effect on young people's education, wherever they live. At the end of 2020, 1.64 billion of the world's learners across 173 countries had their schools closed or partially closed. One year on, 1.1 billion learners are still facing severe disruption - nearly half of the world's total - and schools in 33 countries remain fully closed. On average, children and young people have lost two-thirds of a year's learning.¹

The effects are wide-ranging - not only on academic outcomes but also on young people's mental health and socio-psychological wellbeing. We urgently need to capture and understand these effects now to mitigate their impact in the long term. And, because the pandemic, educational institutions, and student bodies are globally interconnected, our analysis and recommendations must be global too.

GEPN brings together a wealth of global expertise to meet the exceptional challenges faced by students in the pandemic and its aftermath. We will create and promote collaborative research programs and provide policy guidance across primary, secondary and tertiary educational institutions, governments and international organizations.

We hope you enjoy reading this short brochure introducing you to GEPN and that you will join us in this urgent opportunity to shape the lives of a uniquely impacted generation of young people.

¹ <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse>

Our founding and strategic partners



GEPN brings together a wealth of global expertise to meet the exceptional challenges faced by students in the pandemic and its aftermath.

Our research agendas align with six of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.



GPEN research agendas

Our network of international experts will provide, develop and oversee cross-cultural perspectives, theories and methodologies for policymakers around the world. Initially, our work is structured around three core research agendas in the tertiary sector:

1

Virtual learning experience

The rapid and widespread shift from classroom to virtual learning experiences has presented enormous challenges and opportunities for the sector. We are focusing specifically on digital literacy, school capacity and instructor training programs to ensure learnings are captured and acted upon in educational policy for future generations.

2

Financial impact

Many Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have been devastated by the manifold economic consequences of the pandemic. Recessions and financial hardship in countries worldwide have negatively impacted institutions' ability to recruit and retain students - especially international students, due to travel restrictions. Economic and workplace insecurity also threatens the school-to-employment pipeline, further impacting students' decisions to take up places.

Government policymaking is critical to mitigating these effects. GEPN is committed to funding and overseeing policy-driven research designed to strengthen and secure the continued financial viability of HEIs.

3

Socio-psychological and wellbeing impact

A crisis around student mental health had been looming long before the pandemic. Now, anxieties around travel, lockdown living, personal finances, and access to healthcare have exacerbated students' underlying academic and socio-psychological concerns.

GEPN is actively involved in sponsoring expert guidance on action plans for HEIs to monitor and safeguard students' mental wellbeing.

Turn the page to see what we are doing to understand and take action on students' wellbeing.

The Annual Global Index for Health and Wellbeing of Students in Higher Education

GEPN is conducting an annual international survey of students in higher education and compiling an Annual Global Index (AGI), which will monitor cohorts and mine data to inform thinking and policy in education. It forms part of our vital work understanding how socio-psychological and wellbeing issues relating to the pandemic affect students' personal and learning outcomes.



63%

of students indicated that their wellbeing and mental health had worsened since the start of the autumn 2020 term.²

Learners affected by the pandemic as of 30 April 2021:

174,24m

affected learners

10%

of total enrolled learners

27

country-wide closures³

We want to collaborate with regional and national governments alongside international organizations concerned with educational, social and economic development to ensure the AGI's findings inform learning, skills and career development initiatives around the world.

Coronavirus and student mental health

Wellbeing and struggles with mental health challenges were already significant concerns for students in early 2020. Building up debts, balancing study with part-time work, and adjusting to student life in a new city or country while living away from home for the first time, have each contributed to a range of personal and social issues for young people - alongside the routine pressures to succeed in exams and deal with deadlines.

When the World Health Organisation declared Covid-19 a pandemic in March last year, many Higher Education Institutions closed campuses and switched to distanced and virtual teaching online. University social life was torn apart, and campuses were forced to abandon much of their cultural life. In September, at the beginning of a new academic year like no other, a new cohort began their studies, isolated from the peer-group communities that are normally so intrinsic to students' experiences.

Individual institutions, researchers and governments conducted research into the effects of lockdown restrictions on students' already precarious health and wellbeing with concerning results. However, more work remains to be done to understand the long-term impacts of coronavirus on students' mental health from a global perspective.

Understanding the global picture and taking action

According to Frontiers in Education, understanding how student wellbeing may operate during the global pandemic and post-COVID-19 is imperative to implementing new and adjusted measures to better support students' academic journeys.⁴ And with the number of students in Higher Education globally expected to reach almost 380 million by 2030, such understandings are critical for us to build a picture of the next generation of professional workers.⁵

Our Annual Global Index

The Annual Global Index for Health and Wellbeing of Students in Higher Education will begin to find answers to some of these pressing questions. In a comprehensive and rounded approach, we're seeking responses from students around the world in six key areas: background; mental, physical and economic wellbeing; wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic; university environment safety and wellbeing.

Our survey results will provide invaluable data on the long-term effects of the pandemic on students' mental health and wellbeing. The information we gather will influence educational institutions, employers and governments in their approaches and policy-making - ultimately generating positive outcomes for this uniquely affected generation of students.



2. UK Office for National Statistics - Student COVID-19 Insights Survey - 8-18 Jan 2021. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandwellbeing/bulletins/coronavirusandhighereducationstudents/8januaryto18january2021>

3. Figures correspond to number of learners enrolled at pre-primary, primary, lower-secondary, and upper-secondary levels of education [ISCED levels 0 to 3], as well as at tertiary education levels [ISCED levels 5 to 8]. Enrolment figures based on latest UNESCO Institute for Statistics data.

4. Calderon, UNESCO.

5. <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/feduc.2020.582882/full>

GEPN and United Nations Sustainability Development Goals

Our research agendas align with six of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals:



Sustainability Development Goal 3

Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages



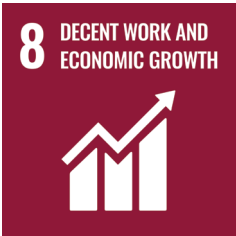
Sustainability Development Goal 4

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all



Sustainability Development Goal 5

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls



Sustainability Development Goal 8

Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all



Sustainability Development Goal 10

Reduce inequalities within and among countries



Sustainability Development Goal 17

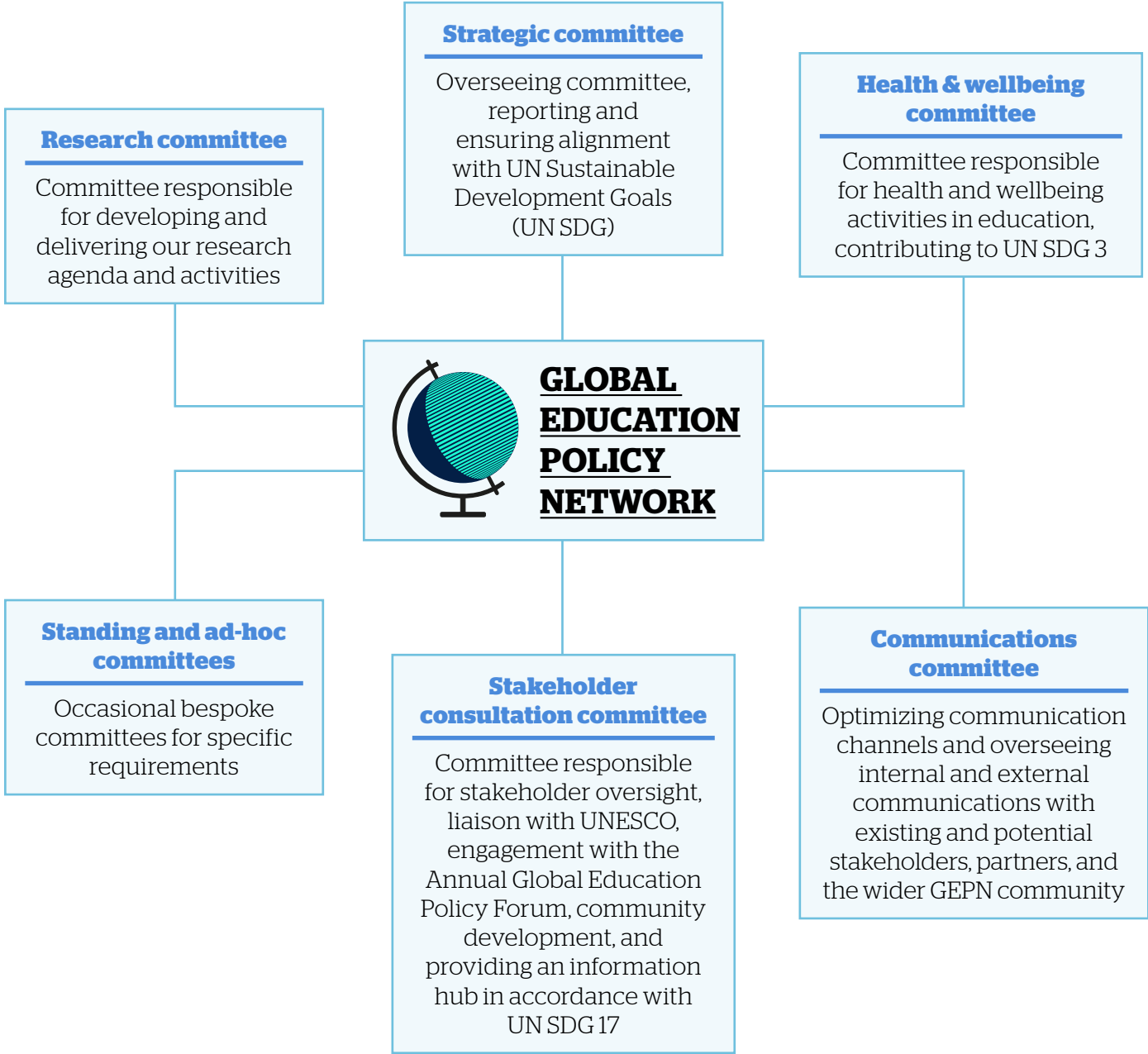
Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

About us

The GEPN comprises global distinguished experts, educational institutions at all levels across the private and public sector, sponsors, partners, and people developing, influencing, and delivering educational policies around the world. Membership is structured by country, with local ambassadors providing focal points for engagement and delivery.



Our structure

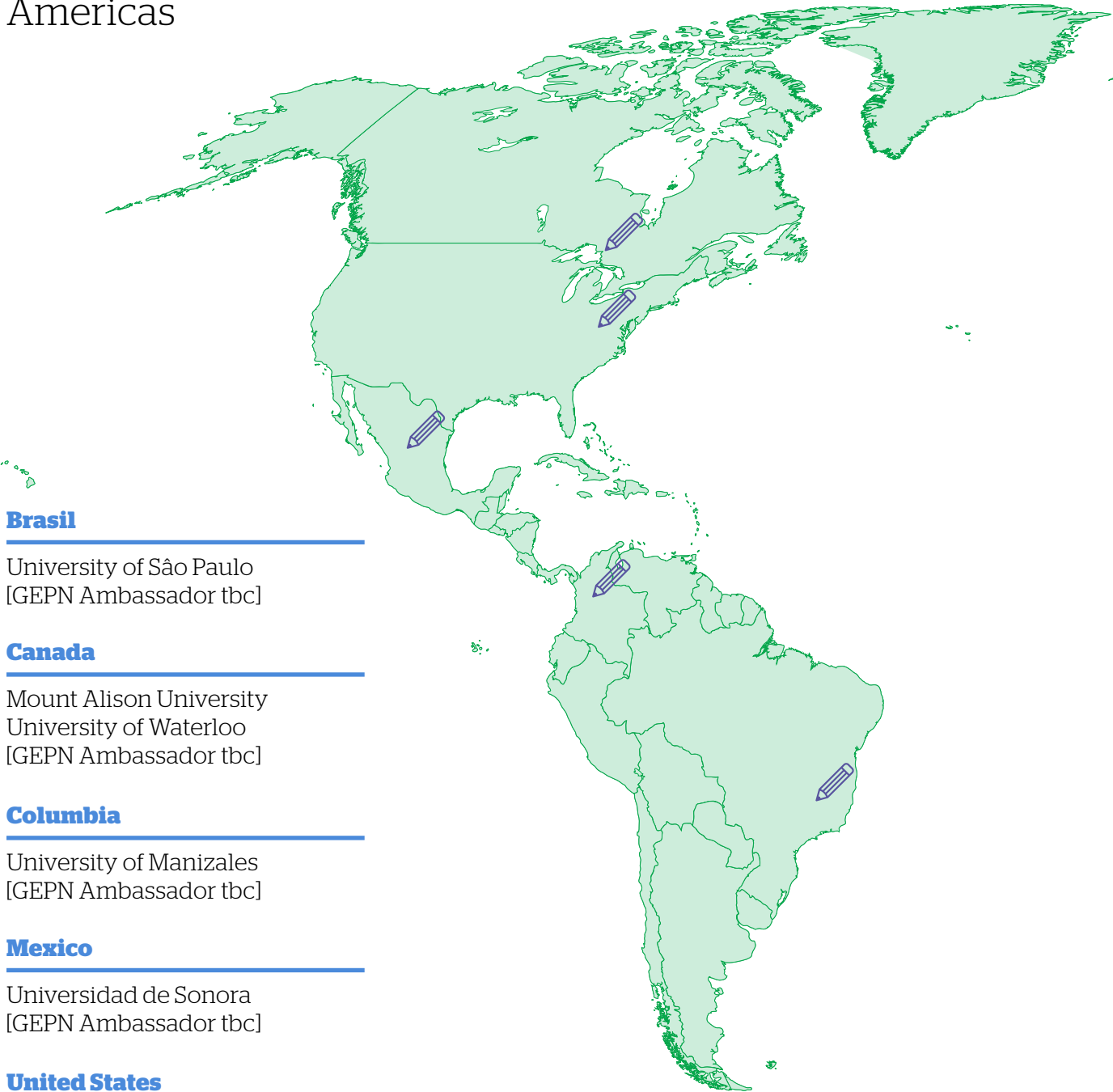


Our network of international experts will provide, develop and oversee cross-cultural perspectives, theories and methodologies for policymakers around the world.



GEPN global network and ambassadors

Americas



Brasil
University of São Paulo
[GEPN Ambassador tbc]

Canada
Mount Alison University
University of Waterloo
[GEPN Ambassador tbc]

Columbia
University of Manizales
[GEPN Ambassador tbc]

Mexico
Universidad de Sonora
[GEPN Ambassador tbc]

United States
Chippewa Technical College
State University of New York
at Buffalo
Texas Tech University

GEPN Ambassador
Professor Janina Brutt-Griffler, Ph.D.
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Europe

Denmark
Aalborg University
[GEPN Ambassador tbc]

France
IESEG School of Management
[GEPN Ambassador tbc]

Finland
LUT University
[GEPN Ambassador tbc]

Greece
The American College of Greece
[GEPN Ambassador tbc]

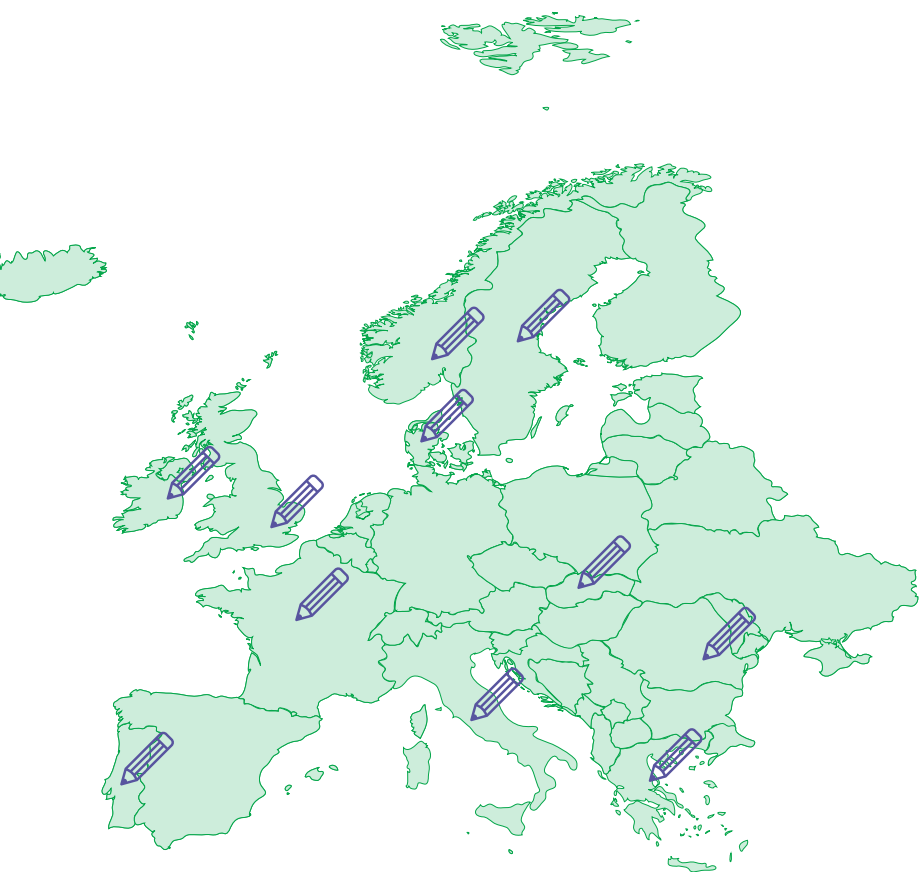
Ireland
Dublin City University
QED Accreditation Experts
University of Limerick
[GEPN Ambassador tbc]

Italy
University of Milan
University of Salerno
[GEPN Ambassador tbc]

Norway
Nord University
University of Agder
[GEPN Ambassador tbc]

Portugal
University of Coimbra
[GEPN Ambassador tbc]

Romania
Babes Bolyai University
University of Arad
University of Oradea
University of Ploiesti
West University of Timisoara
[GEPN Ambassador tbc]



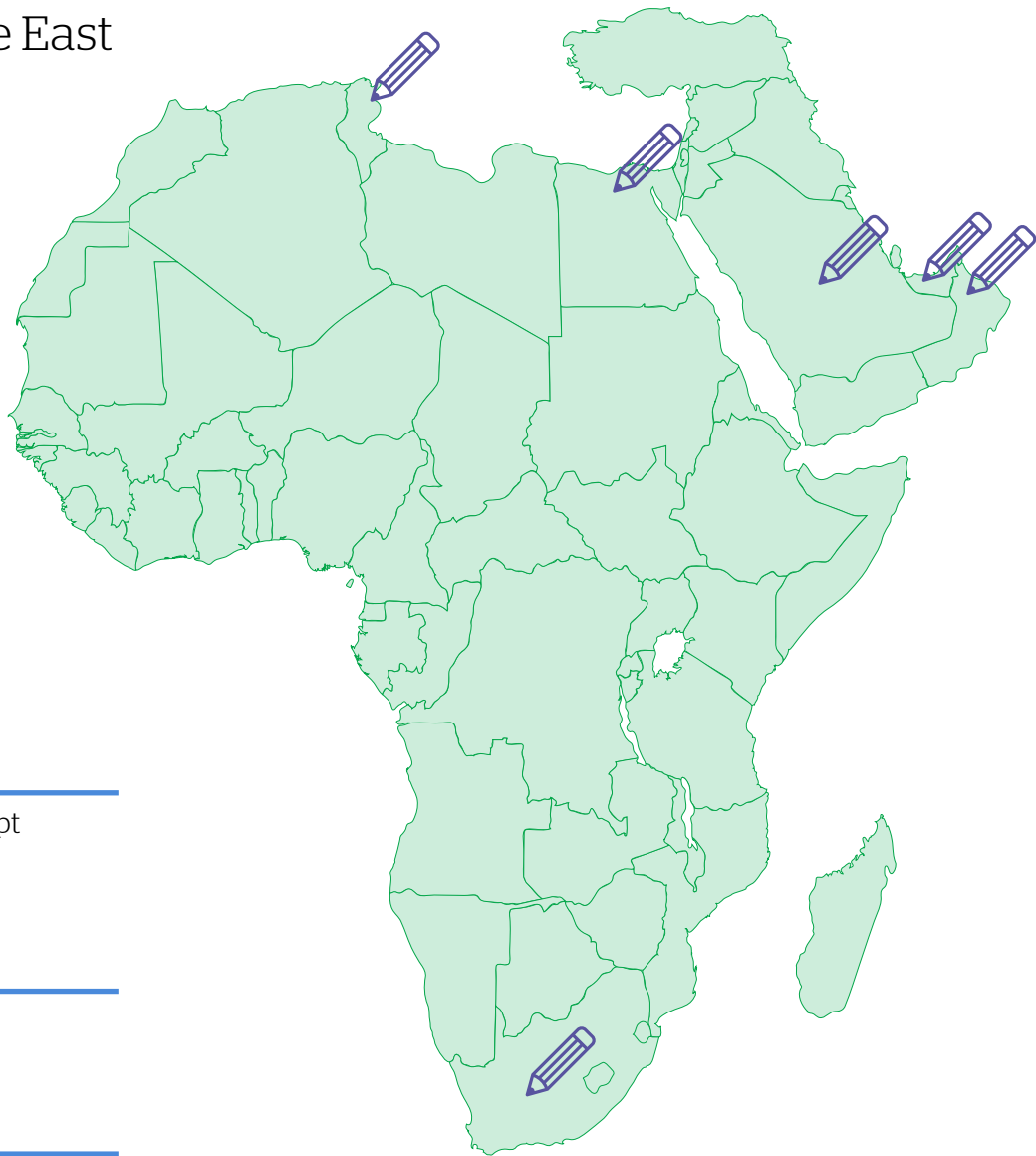
Slovakia
Comenius University in Bratislava
[GEPN Ambassador tbc]

Sweden
University of Gavle
[GEPN Ambassador tbc]

United Kingdom
Chartered Society of Designers
Coventry University
Middlesex University
Minerva Project
QS Quacquarelli Symonds
Times Higher Education -
World University Rankings
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Egypt

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Suez Canal University
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Oman

Muscat University
[GEPN Ambassador tbc]

Saudi Arabia

Education & Training Evaluation
Commission (ETEC)
Institute of Public Administration
Ministry of Economy
and Planning
Prince Sultan University
Princess Nourah bint
Abdulrahman University
Saudi Electronic University
University for Health
Sciences Upskillable

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Cape Peninsula University of
technology
University of Pretoria
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Tunisia

University of Carthage
[GEPN Ambassador tbc]

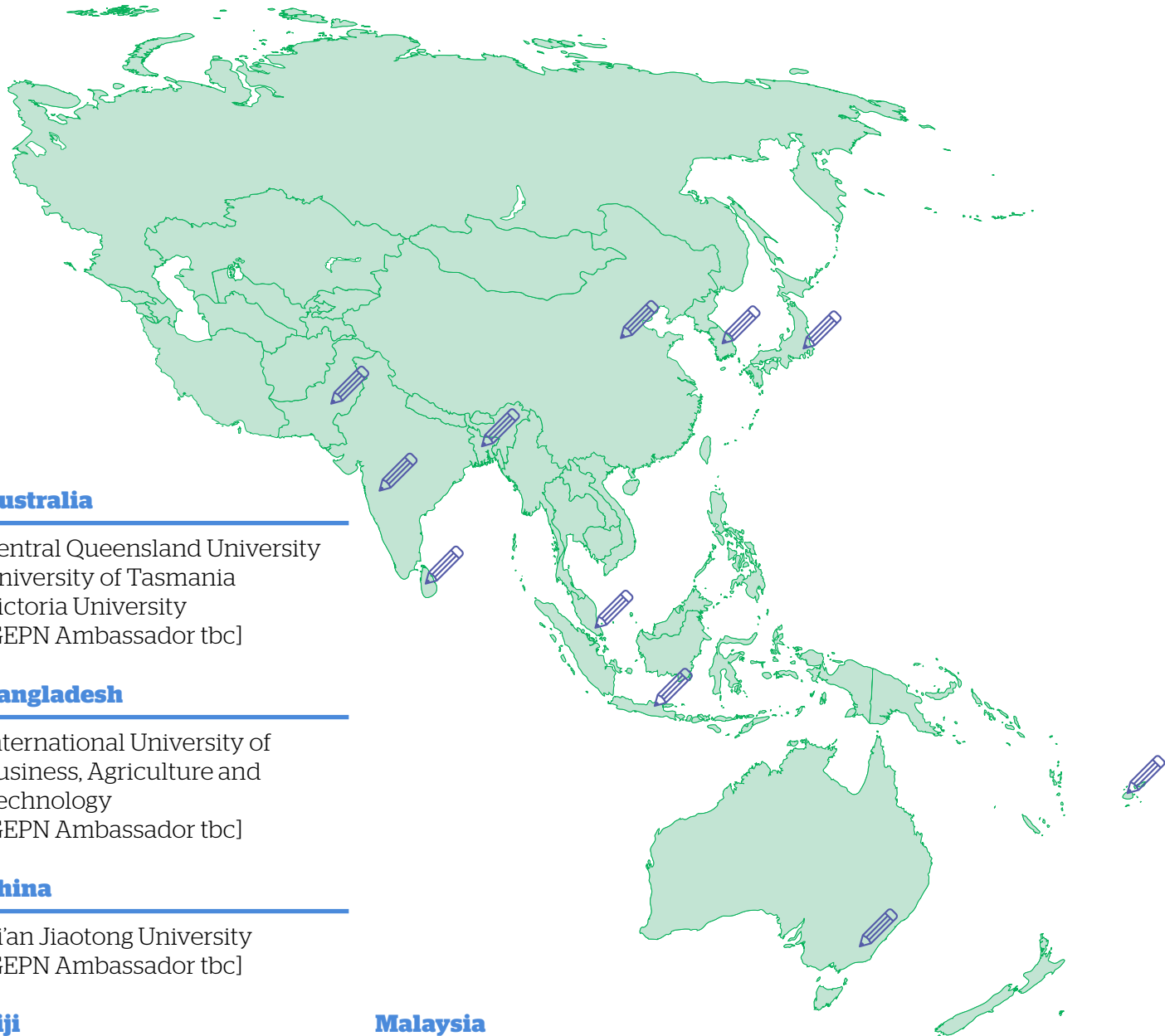
Turkey

Anadolu University
Okan University
[GEPN Ambassador tbc]

United Arab Emirates

Association of International
Certified Professional
Accountants
Centre for Learning, Innovations
& Customized Knowledge
Solutions
Research & Development
Industry
University of Sharjah
Zayed University
[GEPN Ambassador tbc]

Asia



Australia

Central Queensland University
University of Tasmania
Victoria University
[GEPN Ambassador tbc]

Bangladesh

International University of
Business, Agriculture and
Technology
[GEPN Ambassador tbc]

China

Xi'an Jiaotong University
[GEPN Ambassador tbc]

Fiji

University of Fiji
[GEPN Ambassador tbc]

India

ACT
College of Engineering
Sandip University Nasik
VIT University
[GEPN Ambassador tbc]

Indonesia

Universitas Indonesia
[GEPN Ambassador tbc]

Japan

Ritsumeikan Asia pacific
University
[GEPN Ambassador tbc]

Malaysia

Curtin University
Taylor's University
[GEPN Ambassador tbc]

Pakistan

University of the Punjab
[GEPN Ambassador tbc]

South Korea

National University Daegu
[GEPN Ambassador tbc]

Sri Lanka

Rajarata University of Sri Lanka
[GEPN Ambassador tbc]

Our founding partners and strategic sponsor



Prince Sultan University (PSU)

PSU was founded in 1999 as 'Prince Sultan Private College'. Due to its success, the Ministry of Higher Education granted it university status in 2003, when it was inaugurated by HRH Crown Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud, the Deputy Premier, Minister of Defence and Aviation, and Inspector-General.

PSU is a non-profit institution established in Riyadh by the Al-Riyadh Philanthropic Society for Science and licensed by the Ministry of Higher Education. It is the first private university in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

PSU offers more than 20 programmes across business, engineering, computer sciences, humanities, and law across five colleges.



State University of New York at Buffalo (SUNY Buffalo)

The State University of New York at Buffalo (commonly referred to as University at Buffalo, UB or SUNY Buffalo) is a public research university with campuses in Buffalo and Amherst, New York. The university was founded in 1846 as a private medical college and merged with the State University of New York system in 1962.

Since its founding by United States President Millard Fillmore, the university has evolved from a small medical school to a large research university. Today, in addition to the College of Arts and Sciences, the university houses the largest state-operated medical school, dental school, education school, business school, engineering school, and pharmacy school. It is also home to New York's only state-operated Law School.

The University at Buffalo is classified as an R1 University, meaning that it engages in a very high level of research activity.



Chartered Society of Designers

The Society (CSD) is a professional body founded in 1930 and incorporated by Royal Charter granted by HM Queen Elizabeth II with an international remit to promote the profession of design across all disciplines.

CSD is a UK Registered Charity, recognised by the UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) as a Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB). It accredits tertiary educational providers internationally in design and design related sectors.

As well as operating an international membership programme, CSD also maintains the Register of Chartered Designers, which grants it powers to licence international bodies to award chartered status.



Coursera

Coursera was founded in 2012 by two Stanford University professors, Andrew NG and Daphne Koller to deliver open and online education. It is now one of the largest global players in online learning, through which some 150 universities offer more than 4,000 courses of varying duration in a variety of subjects, including degree and masters' programmes.

Workforce development is a key focus for Coursera, working with employers and governments to identify and develop employee skills. Its 'Global Skills Index' regularly charts skills needs, development and proficiency in business, technology and data science. Coursera allows for the exploration of trending skills, reviews industry benchmarks and offers insights around skills performance in various markets.



Hofstede Insights

Hofstede Insights comprises a core team of data technicians, communication professionals and expert facilitators in 60 countries. Established for more than 30 years, with nine country offices, it provides data-driven consultancy, training, analytics and other tools focused on organizational cultures.

Hofstede Insights utilizes its background and expertise in academic theory, consulting, software technology and human insight to support companies through cultural change, often enabling them to become global.

Strategic sponsor

Futures of Education

LEARNING TO BECOME

UNESCO - Futures of Education

GEPN is partnering with UNESCO's Futures of Education initiative to call for a global debate on how we might reimagine knowledge, education and learning in a complex, uncertain and financially precarious world.

Be part of the Global Education Policy Network

We're looking for more leading educational institutions and organizations to join our initiative.

To find out more, please contact Dr. Mohammad Nurunnabi (mnurunnabi@psu.edu.sa) or your country's GEPN Ambassador

