



Activating the recommendations for higher education

What is the Panel?

The High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession was convened by the United Nations Secretary General and brought together academics, ministers of education and labour, former presidents, employers' organisations, teachers and students and their unions. Drawing on this expertise, the Panel set out a clear plan of action "to transform the teaching profession into a high-status, highly qualified, well-supported, properly remunerated and highly respected profession, which is capable of guiding and promoting inclusive, effective and relevant learning".

The Panel identified [59 recommendations](#) that cover a broad range of topics, including pay, employment conditions and job security; professional practice; gender, equity and diversity; social dialogue and collective bargaining; technology and the future of work in education; and education financing.

These broad and progressive recommendations are a unique opportunity to effect real change for millions of teachers and students around the world.

Do the recommendations apply to higher education?

Affirming that education is a human right and a public good and that teachers play a central role in achieving SDG 4 on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all, **the Panel underscores that all of its recommendations apply, as relevant, to all levels of education** (UNESCO/ILO, 2023, p.3), from early childhood through tertiary education. The recommendations refer to "teachers" throughout – this term should be understood broadly to apply to teachers, professors, teaching faculty and other education personnel in higher education.

Recalling the continued relevance of the 1997 UNESCO Recommendation concerning the status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel and the importance of international standards on education, human rights and labour for the teaching profession (UNESCO/ILO 2023, p.3), the Panel urges the United Nations to adopt a more up-to-date instrument on the teaching profession, such as a convention or a revision of existing instruments, building on existing recommendations including the 1966 and 1997 Recommendations (Recommendation 53).

This brief summarises the content of the Recommendations, in relation to the thematic areas that are particularly relevant to higher education.



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What does the Panel say about academic freedom?

Recommendation 2 → **Implement enabling rights including academic freedom**

From the outset, the Panel recognises and reaffirms the enabling rights necessary to facilitate transformation of the teaching profession. Included in these are freedom of expression, freedom of thought and academic freedom.

- 2. Governments should fully implement enabling rights for education and decent work for teachers, in line with international standards, including freedom of association and collective bargaining, freedom of expression, freedom of thought, and academic freedom.*

Recommendation 18 → **Education should be free from interference**

The Panel emphasizes that governments must take concrete steps to protect teachers from any type of intimidation or interference.

- 18. Violence, harassment, and intimidation or threats from whatever source undermine the status and dignity of teachers and their educational functions. Adequate resources must be provided to ensure security and freedom from intimidation or outside interference for teachers and schools. Governments should develop policies that deter future threats by holding perpetrators accountable.*

This recommendation is crucial in light of recent and increasing attacks on academic freedom of higher education staff.



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What does the Panel say about social dialogue and collective bargaining?

Recommendations 15 & 48 → Education and teacher policies should be adopted and revised through social dialogue and collective bargaining with representative teacher organisations

The Panel affirms that education policy and all matters affecting the teaching profession should be developed through social dialogue in support of policy relevance and responsiveness.

15. ... Governments should also ensure that teachers and their organizations can engage in social dialogue, including collective bargaining, and policy dialogue on all matters affecting the profession.
48. Coordinated and institutionalized social dialogue between governments (at the appropriate level), representative teachers' organizations and relevant employers' organizations should be the principal means for developing policies on education, teaching and the teaching profession. ... Collective bargaining should be used to determine conditions affecting teachers.

Recommendations 48 & 51 → Wider education policy issues should be addressed through social dialogue

The Panel also recognizes that, alongside policies regarding employment and working conditions, wider educational issues including educational technology, the just transition, the transformation of education and the regulation of private education providers should be developed through social dialogue.

48. In addition to issues related directly to employment and working conditions, social dialogue should also cover wider education policy issues, in particular in relation to technology and the transformation of education, just transitions and teaching for entry into the world of work.
51. Employers' organizations should engage in active social dialogue with representative teachers' organizations and ensure decent



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work in private education establishments. They should also engage in wider policy dialogue on education matters, particularly in relation to technology, the regulation of private education providers, and the transformation of education and teaching for entry into the world of work.

What does the Panel say about employment and working conditions?

Recommendation 35 → Social dialogue and collective bargaining are essential for securing employment and ensuring decent working conditions

Reaffirming the necessity of ensuring decent working conditions and secure employment for teachers working in all education levels, the Panel emphasizes the crucial role of meaningful social dialogue and collective bargaining for safeguarding these rights.

35. Secure employment and decent working conditions for teachers are foundational for recruitment and retention in the profession. Employment conditions should be determined through social dialogue, including collective bargaining. Teacher unions must be able to take industrial action as a last resort to ensure decent working conditions.

Recommendation 37 → Decent working conditions must be ensured for all teachers

The Panel reaffirms the need for decent working conditions for teachers, recalling and reinforcing many provisions of the 1997 Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel.

37. Working conditions should also provide for stable contractual forms; a safe and healthy workplace; ... ; balanced workloads; safe, affordable and adequate housing; relevant, quality and accessible training and professional development opportunities; equitable access to technology and other resources; adequate social protection and pensions; and working-time arrangements (...) that allow for adequate rest and work-life balance.



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Recommendation 38 → Teachers' mental health and holistic well-being should be ensured through systemic policies

Recognising the need to support the teaching profession, The Panel sets out a path for safeguarding teachers' well-being.

38. *Working conditions should promote teachers' mental health and holistic well-being. Educational jurisdictions, in collaboration with teachers and their organizations, should develop systemic teacher well-being policies that are reflected in teachers' conditions of service.*

What does the Panel say about digital technologies?

Recommendations 43, 44, 45 & 46 → Teachers must have support and autonomy to ensure that technology improves learning

The Panel recognises the necessity of professional autonomy in relation to the use of technology in education and stresses that technology and AI should be supporting and empowering teachers.

43. *Technology is a transformative force in education. The digital revolution and artificial intelligence must be pedagogically harnessed by teachers and integrated through active and human-centred teaching and learning methods and practices. Such tools should not become a substitute for teachers, but rather should empower teachers to guide their learners' quest for inquisitive, critical, creative and lifelong learning.*
44. *Teachers need autonomy and pedagogical choice in how they use technology to ensure that a given technology improves learning. Where technology is used, teacher and student data and privacy protections should be safeguarded.*
45. *Teacher training and practice should ensure that teachers and learners can be both creators and autonomous users of technology, not just passive consumers.*
46. *Governments should develop policies through social dialogue around the use of education technology. Such policies should ensure sustainable and equitable procurement and deployment of technology; autonomy with respect to content; and the*



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involvement of the teaching profession and student organizations in the design, piloting and evaluation of artificial intelligence tools considered for use in education. The development of such tools should be informed by pedagogical practice, curricula and context considerations, and should respond to the needs of teachers and learners. At no point should technology replace the human relationship with the teacher.

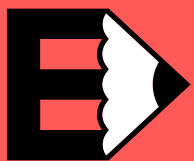
This is highly relevant for higher education, where the COVID-19 pandemic led to many universities integrating the use of technology in new ways and changing teaching and learning modalities. Unions have been clear that teachers must have both support and control on the use of technology in education.

Recommendation 28 → Support teachers with collaboration opportunities and open educational resources

Moreover, the Panel recognises that teachers' professional expertise should be nurtured through collaboration and sharing opportunities and the provision of open source, online resources. The public good is best served by the widest and most accessible dissemination of knowledge and open educational resources are key to the provision of equitable and quality education for all.

28. To strengthen collaboration further, governments should ... develop repositories of open digital educational resources, create exchange programmes for teachers and research collaboration, and develop and maintain digital platforms that connect teachers, researchers, policymakers, and organizations.

Investing in concrete policy reforms such as developing repositories of open digital educational resources can foster teacher self-efficacy and agency and support high quality teaching at all levels of education, including higher education. Furthermore, making research publicly available can accelerate scientific research efforts and allow authors to reach a larger number of readers.



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