

UNI Hubs – Definition, requirements and roles

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This document intends to outline the definition and requirements of a UNI Hub, and is to be used together with the Hub Terms of Reference. New proposals for Hubs are to be evaluated in relation to the criteria below.

Definition

A Habitat Partner University Initiative (UNI) Hub is a consortium of universities that agree to work on the same thematic priority under the principles of mutual collaboration, exchange and learning, producing outputs which strengthen the role of universities in forwarding sustainable urban development. The Hubs established under the umbrella of the UNI are to link the ongoing related work of UN-Habitat to the work the Hub does on the subject. Through active collaborations UN-Habitat and these academic consortia are to forward research and action on the thematic target, promoting education, policy advice and professional development which are updated to current urban realities, and which have a strong focus on translating into direct impacts on the city level.

Requirements

In addition to the above definition a UNI Hub is required to meet the following criteria:

1. Thematic focus: The Hub should focus on global urban challenges in different scales and contexts, such as rapid urbanization, informal settlements, provision of basic urban services, adaptation to climate change, aging infrastructure, etc. The Hub should have a specific thematic priority, such as “slum upgrading”, “urban governance” or “public transport”
2. UN-Habitat synchronization: This thematic focus is to be in line with and relate to one or more of the main UN-Habitat areas of work:
 - Urban Legislation, Land and Governance
 - Urban Planning and Design
 - Urban Economy
 - Urban Basic Services
 - Housing and Slum Upgrading
 - Risk Reduction and Rehabilitation
 - Research and Capacity Building
3. UN-Habitat linkages: It is to link with one or more of ongoing UN-Habitat projects/programmes in the above areas of work.
4. Regional representation: It is to reflect the global nature of the UNI and have a well distributed confirmed representation of academia from:
 - Africa
 - Arab States
 - Asia-Pacific
 - Latin America
 - Caribbean
 - United States
 - Canada
 - Europe
5. Tangible outputs: It is to have well defined outputs so that the Hub will have a reasonable impact on sustainable urban policy and practice. The outcomes should be designed to support UN-Habitat and cities in education, research, professional development, policy advice and knowledge management. The Hub should develop well defined and tangible outputs such as research initiatives, training materials, publications, case studies, etc. Each output should be specified with a task, description of work, timeline, responsible personnel and the provided human and financial resources. A plan for project management and quality assurance should be provided. The activities related to these outputs are to be clearly linked to funding proposals.

Acceptance of a Hub

In order to be accepted as a Hub:

1. The above requirements need to have been clearly outlined in the concept note template “Establishment of a UNI Hub” found on <http://www.unhabitat.org/content.asp?typeid=19&catid=657&cid=10666>
2. The UNI Steering Committee needs to, post UN-Habitat’s initial screening process, evaluate the proposed Hub in relation to the requirements above, determine whether the proposal is solid and motivated, and based on this grant the formal approval of the Hub.
3. The hosting university needs to have an established partnership with UNI, primarily through an Exchange of Letters but, if a stronger legal framework is required, through a Memorandum of Understanding or Agreement of Cooperation.
4. After clearance through the Steering Committee the hosting university will receive a formal acceptance letter for the Hub from the UNI Office.

Roles

Hosting University

Each Hub is to be hosted within a UNI partner university/institution which will hold the main responsibility for implementing the activities and outcomes of the Hub as they are defined in the concept note.

The hosting university nominates a Hub Coordinator which is to be the main point of contact for UN-Habitat communications, and the main organizer of Hub activities and outcomes.

The hosting university has to fulfill the reporting requirements of the Hub based on the UNI Office and the UNI Steering Committee requirements.

The hosting university is expected to participate at the annual global meetings of UNI and the UN-Habitat World Urban Forum to present the outcomes of the Hub. UN-Habitat provides support for institutions from developing countries to attend meetings.

The Hosting university has to give due credit to UNI and UN-Habitat for the work done within the Hub.

Participating University

Universities participating in a Hub are expected to deliver outcomes according to the deliverables agreed in the Hub proposal. They should be willing to participate and present their outcomes at meetings of the Hub, UNI and UN-Habitat.

UN-Habitat

UN-Habitat will, through the UNI Office, facilitate the connectivity with UN-Habitat projects/programmes and material, in the final concept notes UN-Habitat will propose relevant contacts based on the case of each Hub, these contacts to be further developed after the initiation of the Hub.

UN-Habitat will lead the general activities which gather all Hubs (Global Meetings, WUF, Habitat 3 etc).

In relation to Hub establishment, UN-Habitat will provide a first screening of proposals before forwarding these to the Steering Committee, and post their approval send out the formal acceptance letters for the Hubs.

In relation to the funding of activities under the Hubs, UN-Habitat via the UNI Office will determine the level of financial support based on each case.

UNI Steering Committee (SC)

The UNI SC is to evaluate proposals for the Hubs according to the 5 criteria listed under “requirements” above and grant the UNI Office their formal approval. The main tasks of the SC include the following:

- The SC monitors the activities and the progress of the Hub by UNI providing an overview of the Hub reports, outputs and online activity.
- The SC evaluates whether the themes of the Hubs are addressing the major urban challenges, coordinates the themes of the Hubs and ensures that the Hubs address complementary aspects of a coherent thematic framework, this is to be considered in the process of the SC approving the Hubs.
- The SC develops an overall strategy of the thematic focus of the Hubs and proposes thematic focuses of each Hub.
- The SC provides support in organizing UNI workshops and meetings and in developing the thematic focus of the Hubs, through personal engagement and/or promotion of the Hubs within their institution.
- The SC organizes a peer review process in order to ensure the quality of the outcomes developed within the Hubs, this to be based on the mechanisms for continuous overview and quality control outlined below.

Post-establishment Evaluation

Once the Hub has been formally accepted, it will be annually evaluated by the SC based on the following criteria and recommended actions will be applied:

- *Connectivity and collaboration:* Each Hub is to create a profile on the online platform of the UNI, where all members of the Hub are to also register. This is to give the Hub members an overview of the other Hubs, their members and current work, in order to support inter- and cross-Hub discussions and collaborations.
- *Documentation:* The interactions on the online platform, such as discussions, and its uploaded material, such as reports, opportunities, events and news, intends to facilitate the documentation of the Hub's work as well as indicate the level of activity of the Hub.
- *Reporting:* In addition to the above progressive documentation each Hub is to annually report on its activities and outcomes as they are defined in its concept note. The template for this reporting is found under www.unhabitat.org/UNI