

Draft Letter to Rectors

Subject: Invitation to submit an Expression of Interest for the ATLAS initiative

Dear Rector,

The Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, together with the Ministry of Digital Technologies and the World Bank, invites your university to express its interest in participating in the ATLAS initiative.

ATLAS is a two-year World Bank program that supports universities in Uzbekistan and the wider Central Asia region in strengthening capacity in Artificial Intelligence. The initiative connects selected universities with Zhejiang University in China through structured knowledge exchange, institutional partnership, and applied collaboration.

The goal is to help universities develop the curricula, faculty expertise, industry connections, and partnerships needed to advance toward national Center of Excellence status in AI and better prepare graduates for a labour market increasingly shaped by AI.

Participation is free of charge for selected universities. Program costs, including travel to China, training, and conference participation, are covered by the initiative.

Selected universities will have access to the following opportunities:

- Immersive learning programs in China at Zhejiang University on AI curriculum design, Center of Excellence management, university industry linkages, and AI governance.
- Institutional twinning with Zhejiang University, including potential curriculum collaboration, faculty mentoring, and joint applied research.
- Joint development of AI curricula aligned with international standards and Uzbekistan's labour market needs.
- Regional conferences and networking with ministries, universities, employers, EdTech firms, and development partners.

Universities will be expected to participate in structured learning programs, virtual exchanges, collaboration frameworks such as Memorandum of Understanding, and follow up activities on curriculum development, applied research, and partnership building.

The selection process will consider institutional readiness, baseline AI capacity, leadership commitment, alignment with national priorities, feasibility of proposed outputs, labour market relevance, and potential for broader impact. Universities are also asked to take into account the program objective that women represent at least 30 percent of nominated participants for relevant activities.

Universities interested in participating should complete the online application survey by July 15, 2026 using the following link: <https://forms.office.com/r/BkgD6yinnhk>.

The completed survey should be authorized by the Rector or a delegated senior institutional representative. The application form is the only channel for submissions.

Submitted applications will be reviewed using agreed scoring criteria to ensure a transparent and consistent assessment process. Based on the review, ten priority universities will be identified for participation in ATLAS activities. One university will be invited to participate in a study visit to China, while the other

selected universities will be invited to participate in capacity building and networking activities in Uzbekistan.

For questions regarding the survey or submission process, please contact Natalya Shermetova at nshermetova@worldbank.org.

We encourage your university to review the opportunity internally and submit the application before the deadline.

Sincerely,

The ATLAS Team
The World Bank

In partnership with the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation and Zhejiang University