

## Evaluating Higher Education: Uzbekistan's National Framework in the Context of Global Benchmarks

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**Abstract** This article is devoted to a comparative analysis of the national model for assessing the higher education system in Uzbekistan and global standards. The study examines the main mechanisms, objectives, methods, and outcomes of the assessment methodology introduced in Uzbekistan. It compares this model with internationally recognized systems such as QS World University Rankings, Times Higher Education (THE), and Shanghai Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), highlighting the unique features of the national model and its adaptation to the local socio-economic context. Additionally, recommendations are provided for enhancing global integration and advancing scientific research.

**Keywords:** Assessment system, global standards, education quality, ranking, scientific activity, labor market, test assessments, surveys, academic reputation, innovations.

### INTRODUCTION

The higher education system is a critical factor in the socio-economic development of any nation. Evaluating its effectiveness and quality is essential not only for improving educational processes but also for preparing qualified personnel aligned with labor market demands. In Uzbekistan, a systematic approach to assessing the higher education system was introduced through Resolution No. 467 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated June 7, 2019. This process is grounded in principles of quality control, transparency, and fairness. The purpose of this article is to examine the primary mechanisms of higher education assessment in Uzbekistan, analyze its objectives, methods, and results, and present findings within the framework of a practical scientific project.

### Literature Review

The assessment of higher education systems holds significant importance in contemporary education, serving as a key tool for enhancing effectiveness and ensuring global competitiveness. Internationally, this process is conducted through various methodologies, with the QS World University Rankings, Times Higher Education (THE), and Shanghai Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) being prominent examples. These systems employ multifaceted criteria based on research activity, academic reputation, international collaboration, and education quality (Hazelkorn, 2015). For instance, the Shanghai ARWU places particular emphasis on research outputs, such as publications and citations in Web of Science (60-70% weight) and high-level achievements like Nobel Prizes (Liu & Cheng, 2005). The QS system prioritizes academic reputation (40%) and employer opinions (10%), while THE includes additional indicators such as "teaching environment"

(15%) and "industry income" (2.5%) (Marginson, 2014). A common feature of these systems is their focus on global integration and academic prestige.

In Uzbekistan, initial efforts to assess the higher education system began with Resolution No. 371 of the Cabinet of Ministers dated December 29, 2012. However, a new methodology was introduced in 2019 through Resolution No. 467, aiming to adapt international experiences to local conditions while improving education quality and fostering a competitive environment (Resolution, 2019). Research indicates that while international systems emphasize global standards and academic prestige, national systems often prioritize adaptation to local socio-economic contexts (Salmi, 2009).

### **Research Methodology**

The methodology for assessing the higher education system in Uzbekistan is based on the "Regulation on determining the ranking of higher educational institutions" and is implemented annually by the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Innovation in the form of a ranking. The assessment process consists of the following key stages:

**Data Collection and Analysis:** By February 1 each year, higher education institutions, ministries, and agencies submit data supported by relevant documentation. The data is analyzed by April 1 and approved by May 1.

**Quality Control:** From May to June, the proficiency of faculty in foreign languages and information technologies, as well as students' skills in specialized subjects, are evaluated through tests. Surveys on education quality are also conducted.

**Result Calculation:** Based on collected data and test results, the state of the higher education system is assessed. Scores for each institution are calculated relative to the highest performance benchmark.

**Result Presentation:** Assessment outcomes are published annually before the start of the next academic year and submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers with recommendations.

The evaluation is conducted on a 100-point scale across four main domains: scientific activity (40 points), teaching process quality (30 points), student and graduate outcomes (27 points), and physical education and sports (3 points).

### **Analysis and Discussion of Results**

The assessment process enables an annual evaluation of the higher education system's status. Results are published on the official website of the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Innovation and submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers with recommendations for improving education quality. For example, the 40 points allocated to scientific activity are distributed based on criteria such as citations in international publications (9 points), the number of dissertations (6 points), and

research funding (4 points). The 27 points for student and graduate outcomes are divided into test results (8 points), employment rates (8 points), and employer evaluations (8 points).

The testing system assesses faculty qualifications (foreign languages and ICT) and students' preparedness in their specialties.

**Table 1: Structure of Test Assessments**

Type	Purpose	Number of Questions	Time (Minutes)	Points per Question	Total Points
<b>Faculty Tests</b>					
Foreign Language	Assess proficiency	20	40	2.5	50
Information and Communication Technologies	Assess proficiency	20	40	2.5	50
<b>Student Tests</b>					
Specialized Subjects	Assess proficiency	40 (20 per subject)	80	2.5	100

*Source: Compiled by the author based on normative-legal documents.*

Faculty tests in foreign languages evaluate their ability to engage in international communication and research, while ICT tests assess skills in using digital technologies in modern education. Student tests in specialized subjects measure their knowledge in their fields of study. Equal time and point allocation per question ensure fairness and standardization. Test results serve as a key indicator of the higher education system's quality.

Surveys, conducted prior to tests, identify strengths and weaknesses in the educational process. They assess:

The quality of material-technical infrastructure, classroom equipment, and other facilities from students' perspectives.

The content, methods, and effectiveness of faculty-led classes.

The level of transparency and equity in evaluating student performance.

The overall atmosphere, student relationships, and moral education within the institution.

**Table 2: Structure of Surveys**

Survey Component	Purpose
Educational Conditions	Evaluate facility quality
Teaching Quality	Assess teaching effectiveness
Assessment Fairness	Determine evaluation equity
Social and Moral Environment	Assess institutional atmosphere

*Source: Compiled by the author based on normative-legal documents.*

Surveys enable a comprehensive evaluation of not only technical but also social and moral aspects of the education system. By collecting student feedback, they reflect the system's actual state and provide a basis for quality improvement proposals.

The assessment system aims to align higher education institutions with international standards and prepare highly skilled professionals for the real economy. Results indicate a strong focus on research and education quality. The methodology offers several advantages: it ensures systematic oversight and transparency, and it adapts international practices to local needs. For instance, indicators like graduate employment and employer feedback underscore its economic orientation.

The methodology introduced in Uzbekistan under Resolution No. 467 shares similarities with foreign systems but also exhibits distinct differences. Below is a comparison with global systems like QS, THE, and ARWU:

**Table 3: Differences Between Uzbekistan’s System and International Systems (QS, THE, ARWU)**

Criteria and Features	International Systems (QS, THE, ARWU)	Uzbekistan’s System
Employer Feedback	Small portion of total score (e.g., ~10% in QS)	Prioritizes alignment with local labor market
Governance	Private or independent, voluntary participation	State-managed, mandatory participation
Research and Scientific Activity	High emphasis (40-70%) on academic prestige	Important, but local context prioritized
Sports and Physical Education	Rarely a criterion or minor significance	Distinct criterion with notable weight
Student Feedback	Not directly included; focus on faculty/employers	Broad inclusion of student opinions
International Integration	Emphasis on global ratios (e.g., ~10%)	Focus on national education quality

*Source: Compiled by the author based on QS, THE, and ARWU methodologies.*

Unlike QS and THE, where employer feedback constitutes a minor portion, Uzbekistan’s system prioritizes local labor market needs. International systems are often managed by private entities with voluntary participation, while Uzbekistan’s process is centrally state-controlled. Research in global systems heavily weighs academic prestige, whereas Uzbekistan balances this with local priorities. Notably, sports and physical education are unique criteria in Uzbekistan, reflecting national policies on healthy lifestyles.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, the higher education assessment methodology in Uzbekistan is a vital tool for improving education quality and aligning with economic demands. Future enhancements could involve deeper integration of international practices and a review of criteria weighting. Based on Resolution No. 467 and global benchmarks, the following recommendations are proposed:

Increase the weight of international faculty and student ratios (currently 7 points) to 10-15 points.

Introduce a separate indicator (e.g., 5 points) for international exchange programs and joint research projects.

Establish partnerships with QS or THE through grants or programs.

Raise the research component from 40 to 50-60 points, increasing points for publications (currently 3) and citations (currently 9) to 15-20.

Provide financial incentives for faculty publications in Scopus or Web of Science.

Add a criterion (e.g., 5 points) for integrating research into industry.

Introduce surveys among international and local experts to assess academic reputation (10-15 points).

Reduce centralized control by involving independent experts, including international representatives.

Expand the survey component (currently 7 points) to 10-12 points.

Add indicators for student engagement and satisfaction.

Merge sports infrastructure (1 point) with general infrastructure, allocating 5-7 points.

Include a criterion (e.g., 5 points) for innovations like patents and startups.

Publish detailed results by indicator, not just overall rankings.

These recommendations aim to align Uzbekistan's system with global standards while addressing local needs, enhancing its institutions' global recognition and education quality.

### **Foydalanilgan adabiyotlar ro'yxati**

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