

INTEGRATED SAFEGUARDS DATA SHEET

CONCEPT STAGE

Report No.: ISDSC2900

Date ISDS Prepared/Updated: 30-Jul-2015

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I. BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Project Data

Country:	Uzbekistan	Project ID:	P128516
Project Name:	Modernizing Higher Education Project (P128516)		
Task Team Leader(s):	Naveed Hassan Naqvi		
Estimated Appraisal Date:	23-Feb-2016	Estimated Board Date:	20-May-2016
Managing Unit:	GED03	Lending Instrument:	Specific Investment Loan
Sector(s):	Tertiary education (75%), Vocational training (25%)		
Theme(s):	Education for the knowledge economy (100%)		
Financing (In USD Million)			
Total Project Cost:	45.00	Total Bank Financing:	45.00
Financing Gap:	0.00		
Financing Source			Amount
BORROWER/RECIPIENT			0.00
International Development Association (IDA)			45.00
Total			45.00
Environmental Category:	B - Partial Assessment		
Is this a Repeater project?	No		

B. Project Objectives

The project development objective is to support improvement in quality and relevance of the higher education system to meet the needs of a rapidly modernizing economy.

C. Project Description

1. Description
 - a. The proposed project consists of three components: (i) modernizing the higher assurance system; (ii) improving laboratories and associated academic and research systems in priority areas;

(iii) project management and monitoring and evaluation. The summary description of the project components is as follows:

Component (1): Modernizing the Higher Education System

b. This component will support the government in modernizing the higher education sector by: (i) strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Higher and Specialized Secondary Education to manage the sector; (ii) supporting the State Testing Center to develop and implement the system of external quality assurance; (iii) facilitating the Higher Education Institutions to strengthen the system of internal quality assurance; and (iv) establishing a competitive fund for HEIs.

c. The Government of Uzbekistan's decision to launch a university ranking system, whose indicators are broadly in line with premier international ranking systems, is indicative of the Government's desire to reform its higher education system so that it may be recognized to be of high quality by its peers at the international level while also serving to improve both the quality and relevance of this system to needs of the economy. This component will assist the Government in achieving this objective.

Sub-component 1.1: Strengthening Higher Education Management

d. The centrally managed higher education system of Uzbekistan is critically dependent upon the quality of guidance, support and direction given by the Ministry of Higher and Specialized Secondary Education. This subcomponent will support:

- i. capacity building and training of the MHSSE and other agencies dealing with higher education on policy formulation and implementation;
- ii. the MHSSE in providing capacity building programs for HEIs in management and accountability;
- iii. the development of a HEMIS.

Sub-component 1.2: Improving the Quality Assurance System

e. A modern quality assurance system is key to ensuring the quality and relevance of academic programs and graduates in the higher education sector. In order to help strengthen the QA mechanisms in Uzbekistan this subcomponent will support:

- i. the STC to strengthen the Quality Assurance Process in conformance with Bologna Protocol requirements, establish partnerships with relevant EU QA organizations, and develop and implement the university ranking system;
- ii. the HEIs in development of internal quality assurance mechanism through the establishment of Quality Enhancement Cells (QECs) in HEIs. QECs are the focal offices for internal quality assurance and help inform campus decision-making by collecting, analyzing and reporting quantitative and qualitative data about their HEIs' students, faculty, staff, curriculum, course offerings, and learning outcomes. The project can finance a foreign partner (with MHSSE) to deliver a custom-tailored course to HEIs on establishing an office for Institutional Research/QEC in each university.

Sub-component 1.3: Establishing a Competitive Innovation Fund

f. The fund offers grant funding to competitively selected proposals from HEIs for designing and implementing innovative projects which contribute to enhancing the quality and market relevance of university activities and encourage creativity and innovation. This component will finance two pilot rounds of competition at 1 million USD per round. If they are deemed successful according to agreed performance indicators, the competitive grants program will be scaled up for two additional rounds with Bank financing and co-financing from the government. Individual grants will be restricted to a

maximum of 150,000 USD. The fund will support HEIs in:

- establishing partnerships with both domestic and foreign academic institutions (research partnerships, faculty exchange, training);
- establishing partnerships with domestic and foreign industry (modernizing curriculum, innovation, research, and joint business development);
- innovations in teaching and learning to expand access (e-education, MOOCS, etc.)

Component (2): Improving laboratories and associated academic and research systems in priority areas

g. Delivery of high quality higher education in areas of science, technology and engineering is critically dependent on the availability of requisite laboratories where students may carry out virtual or practical experiments that illustrate practical implementation of theoretical principles. These laboratories provide a forum for students to integrate knowledge in multiple areas and demonstrate their application to issues of practical concern. Successful implementation of this system ensures to establish close collaboration between academia and industry.

h. While the availability of high quality laboratories is a pre-requisite to the establishment of university – industry linkages, it does not represent the complete story since without the requisite curriculum and appropriately qualified and trained faculty good linkages cannot be established and sustained. GoU’s (Decree 1533) on Modernization of Material and Technical Base of the Higher Educational Institutions is directed towards the development of human and technical resources to have a significant impact on the universities’ ability to address needs of the priority economic sectors. To support this objective universities will be requested to develop comprehensive proposals that move significantly beyond the development of specialized laboratories and focus on economic development of the country in priority areas. The proposals will include the intended use of the equipment, the development and adoption of modern curriculum supporting the laboratories requested, mechanisms for linkage with industry, and a plan to develop and ensure availability of qualified faculty trained to optimize use of requested facilities.

International collaborative arrangements for curriculum development, student and faculty exchange and development of systems for enhancement of university – industry relations would be expected to constitute an essential part of the laboratory development proposals.

i. The proposed component will support:

- i. the establishment/upgrading of modern scientific and research laboratories in Uzbek HEIs in priority areas of the economy;
- ii. the development and implementation of a modern curriculum optimizing the use of the equipment provided;
- iii. the establishment of appropriate local and international partnerships and networks;
- iv. training of faculty and staff for optimal use of the equipment and, in collaboration with international academic and local industrial partners.

Component (3): Project Management, Monitoring and Evaluation and Capacity Building

j. The MHSSE, supported by the Project Management Team (PMT), will ensure overall management of the project, including monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the investment. The component will support:

- i. financing of a PMT with core staff from MHSSE supported by consultants from the market

as needed. The PMT will be responsible for overall project management and coordination, communication flow and dissemination of information;

- ii. implementation and management of the procurement process, financial management and disbursement, project monitoring and reporting, including training to PMT staff to enable them to discharge these functions;
- iii. systematic maintenance of M&E system with updates on key performance indicators;
- iv. provide technical assistance in carrying surveys, tracer studies, and other evaluations of system performance (as needed);
- v. information exchange and dissemination of results to stakeholders.

D. Project location and salient physical characteristics relevant to the safeguard analysis (if known)

The project will be implemented all over Uzbekistan. At this point no civil works are envisaged however the project is rated B to account for the possibility that some minor rehabilitation of labs and universities can be associated with the purchase of new equipment and also operations of the renewed labs involving processing of hazardous substances and using animals as test systems .

E. Borrowers Institutional Capacity for Safeguard Policies

The borrower has an institutional capacity to implement safeguards policies. There is a clear commitment to involve the faculty and staff from the the occupational health and safety and environment department of the technical university in Tashkent in terms of the managing environmental issues under the project.

F. Environmental and Social Safeguards Specialists on the Team

Nina Kolybashkina (GSU03)

II. SAFEGUARD POLICIES THAT MIGHT APPLY

Safeguard Policies	Triggered?	Explanation (Optional)
Environmental Assessment OP/BP 4.01	Yes	The Project Component 2 will include the establishment/ upgrading of modern scientific and research laboratories. The number and the location of laboratories will not be defined prior to appraisal. The scope of upgrading can not be defined at this stage as well. However, it is expected that this Component will require civil works (refurbishment of existing laboratories) and procurement of new equipment. The environmental issues associated with construction/ refurbishment are minor, shortlived, and primarily limited to the facility sites (except for movement of equipment and materials to/from the site). These issues are primarily: dust, noise, disposal of waste material and/or older equipment, possibly traffic disruption (depending upon specific location), worker safety etc. All these issues can be addressed with good engineering and construction practices. During operation of laboratories special consideration should be given to good house keeping

		and safe laboratory practices (handling of dangerous materials, using animals as test systems).
Natural Habitats OP/BP 4.04	No	
Forests OP/BP 4.36	No	
Pest Management OP 4.09	No	
Physical Cultural Resources OP/BP 4.11	No	
Indigenous Peoples OP/BP 4.10	No	
Involuntary Resettlement OP/BP 4.12	No	
Safety of Dams OP/BP 4.37	No	
Projects on International Waterways OP/BP 7.50	No	
Projects in Disputed Areas OP/BP 7.60	No	

III. SAFEGUARD PREPARATION PLAN

A. Tentative target date for preparing the PAD Stage ISDS: 01-Sep-2015

B. Time frame for launching and completing the safeguard-related studies that may be needed.

The specific studies and their timing¹ should be specified in the PAD-stage ISDS:

Safeguards analysis has been launched in February 2015 while the project design is being developed.

IV. APPROVALS

Task Team Leader(s):	Name: Naveed Hassan Naqvi	
Approved By:		
Safeguards Advisor:	Name: Agnes I. Kiss (SA)	Date: 08-Jan-2016
Practice Manager/ Manager:	Name: Andrea C. Guedes (PMGR)	Date: 08-Jan-2016

¹ Reminder: The Bank's Disclosure Policy requires that safeguard-related documents be disclosed before appraisal (i) at the InfoShop and (ii) in country, at publicly accessible locations and in a form and language that are accessible to potentially affected persons.