

# OPERATIONAL PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE ITU CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE NETWORK

**2018**





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## 1 BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

The Centres of Excellence project was established pursuant to Resolution 11 of the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference (Rev. Minneapolis, 1998) which resolves that a significant part of the TELECOM surplus funds should be used for specific telecommunication development projects, primarily in the least developed countries. The Centres of Excellence project was launched in 1997 as a worldwide initiative, through Council Document C97/59-E.

Centres of Excellence (CoEs) were conceived as a human and institutional capacity building partnership between ITU, private sector companies in the telecommunications industry, development institutions and training institutions in the recipient regions, who would be the delivery vehicles for the training as well as recipients of institutional support.

These CoEs were expected to operate as a network of high-quality training institutions with a recognized reputation. They were to be supported to achieve self-sustainability, relying on the revenues generated from the activities they run.

The CoE initiative started operating in 2000, and evolved over the years to become one of the ITU's key training delivery mechanisms. It grew into a global network providing training in all the six regions of the ITU, namely Africa, Americas, Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

However, notwithstanding the initial success and popularity of this project, it became necessary to review its strategy, in view of the changing ICT sector environment, which demanded new and different skills sets.

During the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC) 2010, in Hyderabad, India, the ITU Membership re-affirmed the need to continue with the Centres of Excellence activities, through Resolution 73. In this same Resolution, the ITU Membership requested the Director of the BDT to carry out a study to review the Centres of Excellence strategy. Accordingly, a new strategy for the Centres of Excellence network was developed in 2012 and presented to the Telecommunication Development Advisory Group (TDAG) and to the Group on Capacity Building Initiatives (GCBI).<sup>1</sup>

Core elements of the strategy were the following:

- Centres of Excellence shall be selected for a defined period of time aligned to the planning cycles of the World Telecommunication Development Conferences.
- Centres of Excellence shall be selected on the basis of their excellence in defined priority areas.
- There is need to maintain a manageable number of Centres of Excellence to ensure quality of the training and facilitate monitoring.
- Centres of Excellence need to operate on a self-sustainable basis.
- The future programme should be built on the basis of a partnership between ITU and other stakeholders to support the delivery of training programmes by Centres of Excellence.

While the strategy document provides the overall direction, main objectives and core features of the CoE programme, it does not deal with the specifics of how the strategy would be implemented.

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<sup>1</sup> This strategy document can be found at <http://academy.itu.int>.

Therefore, this document was produced, which provides detailed information and guidelines on operational processes and procedures for Centres of Excellence to follow in the implementation of the strategy. It covers areas such as the application and selection process for the Centres of Excellence, fees and funding, governance of the Centres of Excellence network, and the monitoring and evaluation of the centres. The purpose of this document is to ensure transparency and consistency in the implementation of CoE activities across the entire network.

The strategy first went into operation in January 2015, based on the outcomes of the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC) held in 2014. The first cycle of the new Centres of Excellence programme has been implemented over a period of four years (January 2015 to December 2018). At the World Telecommunication Development Conference 2017, ITU Member states adopted the Buenos Aires Action Plan, which outlines the priorities for the work of the Telecommunication Development Sector over the coming four years. The outcomes of WTDC 2017 will be reflected in the priority areas defined for the next cycle of the Centres of Excellence programme (January 2019 to December 2022).

With the first cycle of the Centres of Excellence coming to a close at the end of 2018, and in preparation for the new cycle beginning in 2019, it was necessary to undertake a review of the operational processes and procedures to take into account the experiences gained and lessons learnt during the first cycle. The review benefited from inputs provided by key stakeholders, such as the Centres of Excellence, as well as proposals made by all those involved in the management and implementation of the Centres of Excellence strategy. This document, which reflects the modifications resulting from this review process, will constitute the basis for operations of the new CoE cycle 2019-2022.

One of the key features of the Centres of Excellence programme is building a strong partnership between ITU, the selected Centres of Excellence, and other interested parties in delivering high-quality training to the ITU membership in the identified priority areas. Centres of Excellence are expected to play a leading role in the delivery of this quality training while ITU will provide the logistical support to the Centres to make sure that they remain the training delivery of choice for the ITU membership.

In this respect, Centres of Excellence are expected to be financially self-sustaining. Under the umbrella of the ITU Academy, ITU will provide in-kind support, such as making available the ITU Academy platform for the delivery of training, developing and providing standardized training materials where possible, promoting CoE training activities, and facilitating the establishment of regional and global partnerships.

## **2 APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The next cycle of the Centres of Excellence programme starts in January 2019. The current Centres of Excellence shall remain operational throughout 2018. The selection process for the new CoEs will take place during 2018 and the CoEs selected for the next cycle shall operate for a 4-year period, from 2019 to 2022.

Institutions interested in becoming an ITU CoE must submit an application form and demonstrate their competencies in delivering high-quality training to a national and international clientele in one or more ICT-related priority areas.

### **2.2 Selection criteria**

All institutions applying for an ITU CoE will be evaluated using the criteria outlined below. These criteria are related to the competencies of the institutions to deliver training and capacity building to both a

national and international audience, in particular in the priority areas identified for each respective WTDC cycle.

The first set of criteria looks at the capacity of the institutions to deliver training in the selected priority areas. The second set of criteria assesses the institutional quality related to the delivery of the training as well as the physical, administrative and logistical capabilities of the institution.

In the previous cycle, three sets of criteria were applied, i) expertise, recognition and competence in the priority areas, ii) institutional quality as a training institution in priority areas, and iii) proposal for implementation of CoE Activities. Due to the overlap of several criteria, sets ii) and iii) were merged and streamlined into a) and b) below for this cycle.

The criteria are the following:

- a) Expertise, recognition and competence in priority areas:
  - Familiarity with selected priority areas
  - Trained staff with expertise in priority areas
  - International recognition in the priority areas
  - Facilities related to priority areas
- b) Institutional quality and capacity to implement CoE activities:
  - Quality of training materials
  - Quality of delivery
  - Quality of instructors
  - Methods of delivery
  - Ability to work with international partners and agencies in the delivery of training
  - Experience of delivering training to international participants
  - Promotion of training activities (marketing and promotion plan, including digital marketing)
  - Financial and human resources available to implement CoE activities
  - Ability to collect and administer fees from national and international participants and to make international bank transfers
  - Sponsorships
  - Ability to hire international experts
  - Ability to conduct training activities outside the home country

All selection criteria encompass both quantitative and qualitative indicators related to the past and present performance of the institution.

**Interested institutions must submit evidence in support of all of the above criteria as part of their application materials.**

CoEs operating under the first cycle (2015-2018) may apply for consideration in the second cycle (2019-2022), in which case their performance during the first cycle shall be taken into account.

## 2.3 Selection of CoEs

The selection of CoEs shall involve the following processes:

- Application process
- Evaluation of the applications
- Selection process

### 2.3.1 Application process

- The application process for the next CoE cycle will be launched in the second quarter of 2018. In this respect, ITU shall inform Member States, Sector Members and Academia members and publish the call for applications on the ITU Academy website.
- Institutions wishing to be considered for selection as CoEs must complete an application form (Annex 1).
- Institutions submitting an application form have to state clearly the priority area/s for which they would like to be considered.
- A maximum of five priority areas may be selected per institution. Out of those, up to three priority areas may be granted to one institution.
- If an institution decides to select more than one priority area, it is requested to fill a separate sheet for each priority area for the first set of criteria, as indicated in the application form.
- The duly completed application form shall be submitted to the respective Government for signature and endorsement. Where the institution is a multilateral organization the application does not require endorsement and shall be submitted directly to ITU.
- The application form, signed and endorsed by the respective Government, shall be submitted to the Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau, ITU.
- The application form shall be submitted by email within the given deadline (details are provided in the application form), with the originals sent later by post.
- Any application form forwarded to ITU without the approval of the Government concerned will not be considered.
- No applications will be accepted after the deadline.
- ITU will ensure the confidentiality of the information provided by the institutions.

### 2.3.2 Evaluation of the applications

- All applying institutions will be notified upon receipt of applications.
- Each application will be evaluated by ITU based on a scoring framework. Only applications which score above a threshold determined by ITU will be considered eligible.
- There shall be a maximum of six centres per region selected.
- In cases where more applicants score above the cut-off point than CoE slots available, the selection will be based on the highest scores achieved.
- The evaluation will be done by ITU Headquarters in consultation with the Regional Offices.
- The process shall be completed within three months of closure of applications.

### 2.3.3 Selection process

- The final decision on the selected CoEs and their priority areas shall be made by the BDT Director.
- All applicants will be notified of the selection results. The results will also be published on the ITU Academy website.
- A Cooperation Agreement between ITU and the selected CoEs will be entered into by December 2018.
- If a selected CoE is not in a position to sign the Cooperation Agreement within six months following the deadline, i.e. by July 2019, the BDT Director may select another CoE for that region, based on the eligible applicants amongst those that applied and taking into consideration the priority areas.
- Each selected CoE will receive an official plaque from ITU. This plaque shall be returned to ITU at the end of the cycle or at an earlier time in case the institution ceases to be an ITU CoE.

## 3 OPERATIONS OF THE CoEs

The core operations of the ITU Centres of Excellence consist of delivering training activities to a national and international customer base in the priority areas for which they were chosen.

Each CoE is expected to prepare its training catalogue for the following year no later than December of the previous year. A draft training catalogue is presented to the regional Steering Committee meeting (see section 5.1). Each CoE is expected to implement a minimum of two training activities per priority area per year.

The training catalogue will be uploaded on the ITU Academy website at the beginning of each year.

### 3.1 Delivery of training

The Centres of Excellence are expected to deliver training in line with the training catalogue and list of courses approved by the regional CoE Steering Committee.

Courses that a CoE may wish to run during the course of the year which had not been initially approved by the Steering Committee should be sent through the Chair to members of the committee by email for approval.

If a CoE wishes to run a course on a topic that is outside the priority area(s) assigned to it, and provided the topic is not covered by another CoE in the region, the CoE should submit the course proposal as part of the list of courses to be approved by the regional CoE Steering Committee.

CoEs are expected to market and deliver training to a national and international audience.

The following guidelines shall be applied with respect to delivery of training.

#### 3.1.1 Advertisement of courses in the ITU Academy platform

- CoEs shall prepare supporting documents to be used to market their courses in the ITU Academy. The documentation will include the invitation letter, course outline, registration forms and information note. CoEs shall use templates provided by ITU to prepare the supporting documents.

- Supporting documents shall be sent to ITU at least two months before the intended start date of the course.

### 3.1.2 Training methods and assessment

- CoE courses are conducted through face-to-face, online or blended learning.
- CoEs could use training materials developed by ITU or their own training materials.
- The ITU Academy platform is available for CoEs to deliver courses online. There are no fees charged to CoEs for using the platform.
- In administering assessments during and at the end of the training, CoEs are expected to follow the assessment guidelines provided by ITU.

### 3.1.3 Evaluation of the training activity

- Evaluation of diverse elements involved in the training process and evaluation of the teaching staff shall be done by participants of the particular training. All participants will have to complete a standardized evaluation form at the end of each training course.
- For online courses the evaluation form shall be completed by the participants online.
- For face-to-face courses, every CoE shall ensure that the form is completed by each participant.
- A report consolidating all evaluation forms shall be prepared by the CoEs and submitted to the ITU Regional Offices together with the end of training report.

### 3.1.4 Training reports

Each CoE shall prepare a comprehensive training report at the end of each training, which has to be submitted to ITU together with the evaluation report. This report shall be compiled using the training report template provided to CoEs by ITU.

## 3.2 Fees and funding

The institutions hosting Centres of Excellence are expected to make budgetary provisions for the implementation of the CoE activities. These have to be clearly demonstrated in their applications.

The Centres of Excellence activities shall be driven by a self-sustained operational model. Possible sources of funding could be:

- Training fees
- Financial contribution from partners
- Donations from Governments or other organizations

### 3.2.1 Training fees

Where Centres charge training fees, the collected fees are shared between ITU and the CoE. The training fees to be charged are determined by the respective Steering Committees. Steering Committees shall determine a range of fees to be applied for face-to-face and e-learning courses.

### 3.2.2 Collection and distribution of training fees

Normally, all fees for each CoEs training activity shall be collected by ITU and deposited into an ITU account. ITU will transfer the CoE share of the collection fees to the respective CoE.

The distribution of training fees shall be decided by each respective Steering Committee, within the following broad guidelines:

- ITU shall retain between 20%-30% of fees collected per CoE training activity, to be used for purposes of supporting the CoE network activities, such as:
  - Content development
  - Quality assurance (appointment of experts for the content review)
  - General support to the CoEs
- The respective Steering Committees shall decide the actual percentage to be retained, within the prescribed range
- ITU shall transfer to the CoEs the balance of between 70%-80% of the collected fees within six months
- In exceptional cases to be determined by ITU, ITU reserves the right to make alternative arrangements with the CoE with regard to:
  - The CoE's contribution to the ITU under this Section in the event of a fully sponsored training;
  - The means of collecting training fees in cases where a collection through ITU is not possible or practicable.

### 3.3 Awarding of certificates

#### 3.3.1 Certificates

Centres of Excellence shall grant certificates of achievement based on assessment tests undertaken during, and at the end of, each training. In this regard, Centres of Excellence are required to develop assessment tools for each training they deliver under the programme. The tools should include the following:

- Regular assessments
- Practical exercises where applicable
- Quizzes and chats (in the case of e-learning courses)
- Final assessment

Certificates shall be issued by ITU under the banner of the ITU Academy using a standard certificate template and delivered by the respective CoE to participants in each course. The certificates shall be issued following submission by the CoE of the training report, together with the list of participants to whom a certificate should be awarded and the table of test results.

Where certificates require other signatures besides the ITU signature, digital copies of the other signatures shall be forwarded to ITU before the start of the course.

Certificates will be issued to successful participants upon submission of proof of payment, or some payment arrangements acceptable to ITU.

#### 3.3.2 Logos

In case where the ITU logo is the only one featured on the certificate, it shall appear in the centre and at the top of the certificate, above any text. In case a training programme involves another partner, the

partner's logo shall be placed on the top left hand corner of the certificate and horizontally aligned with the ITU logo. The ITU logo shall be placed on the top right hand corner.

In case where more than two partners are involved, the partners' logos shall be distributed horizontally aligned along the bottom of the certificate. In this case, the ITU logo shall appear in the centre and at the top of the certificate, above any text.

### 3.3.3 Signatures

Where the signatory of the certificate is ITU, the signature shall be on the bottom right hand corner.

Where there are other signatories to the certificate, the level of signatory of the other partners shall be equal to that of the ITU signatory. The signatures shall be horizontally aligned with their respective logo and horizontally aligned with the ITU signatory.

Where a credit accumulation system is introduced, partner institutions accepting accumulated credits shall adapt the programme to the requirements of their accrediting procedures. However, the institutions shall enter into an agreement with ITU for the award of diplomas or degrees in the respective areas and due recognition of ITU shall be made in the award of these diplomas.

## 4 PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

### 4.1 Introduction

ITU shall be responsible for undertaking the monitoring of the activities and functioning of the Centres of Excellence on a regular basis. The result of this monitoring will give inputs to the assessments of the Centres and their performance at the end of each year.

In order to ascertain that Centres deliver "excellence", clear criteria for assessing standards of excellence shall be applied based on a set of key performance indicators.

The monitoring and evaluation process shall include the following components:

- Collection of key performance indicators
- Monitoring and Evaluation:
  - evaluation by participants
  - monitoring and evaluation by ITU

### 4.2 Key performance indicators (KPIs)

The following indicators shall be monitored annually to evaluate the performance of individual Centres:

- Number of training activities implemented by the CoE
- Number of participants per course
- Number of international participants per course
- Level of satisfaction of trainees as indicated in the evaluation forms filled in after each training
- Timely submission of training reports by CoEs to ITU

The specific targets applied to each KPI will be set by ITU. The data will be collected/compiled from the

CoEs by the ITU focal points in each region.

### 4.3 Monitoring and evaluation process

The CoE status is conferred to an institution based on its current and potential capability to perform "excellence" in a specific domain. It is, therefore, important to ensure that all Centres perform up to the highest standards.

Based on the key performance indicators and associated targets, the performance of the CoEs shall be evaluated.

The evaluation will be carried out once a year and shall be made by the ITU focal points in the respective ITU Regional Office. The evaluation will be based on the analysis of the data collected/compiled from each CoE. A short report, together with relevant documents received from CoEs, shall be submitted to ITU Headquarters by the regional focal points at least one month before the Steering Committee meeting for that particular year. The report shall contain the observations and recommendations of the regional focal point with respect to the performance of the particular CoE.

The report shall be part of the agenda of the Steering Committee meeting. Recommendations concerning the performance of the CoEs shall be submitted to the BDT Director.

In case of low performance of a CoE as determined by the above annual evaluation process, the Director of the BDT, in consultation with the Steering Committee, will bring the matter to the attention of the respective CoE and request the CoE to provide explanations.

ITU shall make all efforts to support a CoE that is facing challenges with a view to ensuring an improvement in its performance.

However, if a CoE fails to improve despite all the support rendered, this may result in the termination of the CoE status for the institution.

## 5 GOVERNANCE

The Centres of Excellence network has a governance structure whose main role is to oversee the functioning of the CoEs. The governance structure is composed of regional Steering Committees supported by ITU.

### 5.1 Steering Committees

Before the start of the next cycle, a Steering Committee for each region shall be established. The main responsibility of Steering Committees is to provide recommendations to ITU concerning the CoE operations and ways of improving the CoE performance. To ensure continuity, Steering Committees shall operate during the entire four-year cycle.

#### 5.1.1 Composition of Steering Committees

Steering Committee members shall be composed of the following stakeholders:

- Member States: each Member State/Government that hosts a CoE will automatically become a member of the regional Steering Committee
- CoEs: each CoE will automatically become a member of the regional Steering Committee
- ITU

- ITU membership: additional SC members per region may be selected from the wider ITU membership, including Governments, sector members and academia members. The selection criteria include regional representation, institutional representation, and previous engagement with the CoE network.

### 5.1.2 Process of selecting Steering Committees

The selection of the Steering Committees consists of the following steps:

- Following the selection of the Centres of Excellence, ITU shall inform the Member States that host a CoE and therefore qualify as members of the Steering Committees
- The Member State notifies ITU of the Steering Committee representative
- ITU may invite other Member States, sector members and academia members to express interest in being on the regional Steering Committees
- The final composition of the Steering Committees will be announced
- An eligible Steering Committee member not willing to participate in Steering Committee activities or a member withdrawing, for whatever reason, shall be replaced by another member from amongst interested stakeholders

### 5.1.3 Functions of Steering Committees

The Steering Committees shall:

- Recommend and give advice to ITU on operations of the CoEs and on ways of improving the CoE programme, including strategic recommendations
- Discuss and assess the performance of the CoEs over the past year and make recommendation on how to improve it, if necessary
- Determine distribution of training fees within the parameters prescribed in section 3.2. above
- Discuss and decide on the annual training plan
- Recommend pricing policies and guidelines
- Facilitate cooperation between CoEs
- Induct new partners and assist in promoting the activities of the Centres of Excellence

ITU shall serve as Secretariat to the Steering Committees.

### 5.1.4 Convening of the Steering Committees meeting

- Steering Committee meeting shall be convened by ITU within the 4th quarter of the year.
- All members of the Steering Committees are expected to attend the annual meetings.
- The duration of the meeting shall be no more than two days.
- Stakeholders who are not selected members of the Steering Committees can attend Steering Committee meetings as part of the delegation of the Member States / Sector Members, or as observer.
- Although the meeting is open to other stakeholders, decisions and recommendations shall be taken by the Steering Committee members in attendance.
- During the first meeting of the newly selected Steering Committee, the confirmation of the

Steering Committee members shall be one of the main agenda items.

- Chairmanship of the Steering Committee shall rotate annually amongst the Steering Committee members.
- The host country of each first Steering Committee meeting shall automatically become the Chair of the Steering Committee for the coming year, and shall be confirmed as such at this meeting.
- The hosting of Steering Committee meetings shall rotate amongst the Steering Committee member countries, with the host country assuming the chairmanship for the coming year.
- In the event of a country hosting the meeting for more than once, the rule that the host assumes the chairmanship shall prevail.
- Where Steering Committee meetings are hosted by an organization that is not a member of the Steering Committee, the Secretariat shall, in consultation with Steering Committee members, propose a Chair for the meeting, who in turn shall become the Chair for the coming year.
- Members of the Steering Committees shall cover their own costs to attend all Steering Committee meetings.

#### **5.1.5 Agenda and conduct of the Steering Committee meetings**

- Notice of Steering Committee meetings shall be sent out by ITU to Steering Committee members at least two months before the meetings are convened;
- The notice shall contain the draft agenda of the meeting, which shall include:
  - Election of the Chairman
  - Report of the outgoing Chair (where applicable)
  - Minutes of the last Steering Committee meeting
  - Report by ITU on the performance of the CoE network for the previous year
  - Reports by CoEs on their performance
  - CoE training plans for the coming year
- Centres of Excellence are expected to make a presentation on their activities during the past year
- Members of the Steering Committee shall be invited to propose agenda items

#### **5.1.6 Role of the Chair of the Steering Committee**

The Chair of the Steering Committee shall be Chair for the year following his/her appointment.

The Chair shall relinquish the post at the next Steering Committee meeting at which the host for that Steering Committee assumes Chairmanship.

The change of chairmanship shall be the first order of business at this meeting, and the outgoing Chair will hand over the chairmanship to the incoming Chair, who will then conduct the business of the meeting.

Before handing over the chairmanship, the outgoing Chair shall present to the Steering Committee a short report regarding major issues relating to the performance of the network during the period under his/her chairmanship.

During the year, the Chair will be responsible for, among other things:

- Following up on the implementation of the decisions and recommendations made at the last Steering Committee meeting
- Submitting requests to ITU on behalf of the CoE network and following up on their implementation
- Facilitating and chairing online meetings of the Steering Committee during the year
- Liaising with ITU on convening the next Steering Committee meeting (in consultation with the host of the next meeting)
- Discussing and agreeing with the ITU Secretariat on the agenda and conduct of the next Steering Committee meeting
- Representing the Steering Committee in other meetings, as appropriate

During the Steering Committee meeting, the Chair shall be responsible for the smooth conduct of the meeting. He/she shall ensure that the report of the meeting be adopted at the end, and includes clear actionable recommendations and decisions for his/her follow up during the course of the year. The implementation of these issues shall be part of his/her outgoing report.