



# ITU ACADEMY TRAINING CENTRES PROGRAMME

## Operational Guidelines

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# 1. Background and introduction

The ITU Academy Training Centres (ATC) programme is a leading component of the ITU's capacity development activity, implemented within the framework of the ITU Academy.

The programme was established by Resolution 73 of the World Telecommunication Development Conference held in Kigali in 2022. It is a new programme designed to meet the needs of the ICT sector today, particularly in developing countries. Its adoption within the Kigali Action Plan followed a comprehensive strategic review of previous ITU capacity development activity, in particular the Centres of Excellence (CoE) programme, implemented between 2001 and 2022, and of changing capacity development priorities and opportunities. The ATC programme thus succeeds the CoE programme, as stipulated in Resolution 73 (Rev. Kigali, 2022).

This document sets out arrangements for cooperation between ITU and participating ATCs to enable successful implementation of the programme. It takes into consideration the recommendations that were included in the report on the Strategic Review of the Centres of Excellence Programme (2022).<sup>1</sup>

After a programme overview, it includes guidelines concerning:

- the identification of priority themes;
- the application and selection processes for ATCs;
- business models for ATC activities;
- the planning, marketing and implementation of courses;
- quality assurance and performance assessment; and
- programme management and coordination.

The operational guidelines cover arrangements both for the initial establishment of the programme in 2022/2023 and for its ongoing management and implementation in later years.

**Note on ITU funded Activities:** Where ITU provides funds to an ATC Activity, the financial, reporting, procurement, audit, asset and closeout requirements are governed by the Cooperation Agreement's Annex 3 and the Activity specific FAID

## 1.1. Programme overview

The goal of the ATC programme is to develop the institutional and individual capacity of the ITU Membership and, thereby, of the wider telecommunications and ICT sector and those who work within it. It builds on ITU's strengths, capabilities and established partnerships in ways that will add value to ITU, its members and participating ATCs, and that will support ITU's broader responsibilities and priorities. This will be achieved by establishing and delivering a high-quality programme of capacity development activities for Member States and Sector Members.

The programme is implemented under the auspices of the ITU Academy, which is the ITU gateway to a wide range of general and specialised courses on all aspects of ICT, the majority of which are delivered online. ATC activities are offered through the ITU Academy and make full use of its resources. As well as the expertise of ATCs themselves, activities draw on the work and expertise of ITU's bureaux and

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<sup>1</sup> The report of the Strategic Review of the Centres of Excellence Programme is available at <https://academy.itu.int/itu-d/projects-activities/centres-excellence/coe-overview>.

divisions, study groups, thematic experts and regional offices, building synergies thereby with programmes and activities across ITU's broad mandate.

ITU Academy Training Centres (ATCs) are critical partners for ITU's work in delivering capacity development. ITU recognises that a strong partnership is crucial to delivering high-quality training and is committed to working closely with ATCs in order to achieve this.

Within this partnership, ATCs play the leading role in the delivery of training while ITU's Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) Capacity and Skills Development Division, in close collaboration with ITU's Regional Offices, provides programme management as well as instructional, technical and logistical support to ensure the best match between training offered by ATCs and the needs of the ITU membership. This relationship adds significant value to both ITU and ATCs:

- It enables ITU to offer a range of high-quality training opportunities to its members, particularly those in developing countries, on a range of priority themes identified through needs assessment.
- ATCs benefit from the opportunity to work in partnership with the UN's specialised agency for ICTs and from the opportunity to reach new potential markets. They also gain from working with the ITU Academy, ITU's online training platform, from the opportunity to work with ITU experts and make use of ITU resources, and from the opportunity to exchange ideas and cooperate with other ATCs and programme Partners.

An annual global meeting of ATCs addresses programme development and fosters community building and cooperation between participating Centres (see section 5).

## 1.2. Priority themes and needs assessment

The ATC programme focuses on issues:

- that are high priorities for ITU Member States, particularly those with limited resources for capacity development (such as Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS));
- that are within the ITU mandate and in which the ITU has special responsibilities or expertise; and
- in which there is limited supply of equivalent high-quality training available from alternative providers at a cost affordable to the Membership.

Up to six priority themes are identified for the programme as a whole by ITU at any one time, with the provision that, given the rapidly changing area of work of the organization, an implicit focus on emerging technologies is also present. These themes are consistent with the ITU Strategic Plan and with overall priorities established for ITU and its Development Sector (ITU-D) by the Plenipotentiary Conference and the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC). They are broadly defined and usually have global resonance or resonance in the majority of regions. However, one (or at most two) may focus more narrowly on priorities that are particularly relevant to certain regions or types of country (such as SIDS).

Within these broad themes, a number of priority sub-themes are also identified by ITU. For example, appropriate sub-themes within a main theme such as "cybersecurity" might include "network security" and "emergency response"; sub-themes within a main theme on "ICTs and the environment" might include "climate change" and "e-waste".

These themes and sub-themes are identified through a needs assessment process which draws on the views and experience of ITU staff, including thematic priority leads and regional personnel, Member

States, international organisations concerned with the development of ICTs, and current ATCs. The process considers both global priorities and the particular requirements of different regions and country categories (such as LDCs and SIDS).

A first needs assessment was conducted in 2022 and a second one in 2024.

Future needs assessments will be conducted periodically, in order to ensure that the programme continues to meet Members' priority needs. They will focus on the identification and selection of themes and sub-themes that are most appropriate for the programme's ongoing work. Current themes and sub-themes will be continued where they remain appropriate.

## 2. Selection of ATCs

There will be a total of between twelve and sixteen ATCs in the programme. Each Centre offers a focused programme of activities in one or more of the programme's thematic priorities.

ATCs are selected on a global basis. While it is desirable that there should be at least one Centre in each ITU region, this is not a requirement of the programme. However, the range of Centres selected also reflects the need to deliver capacity development for different regions, which have varying needs and priorities, and the need to enable training in diverse languages.

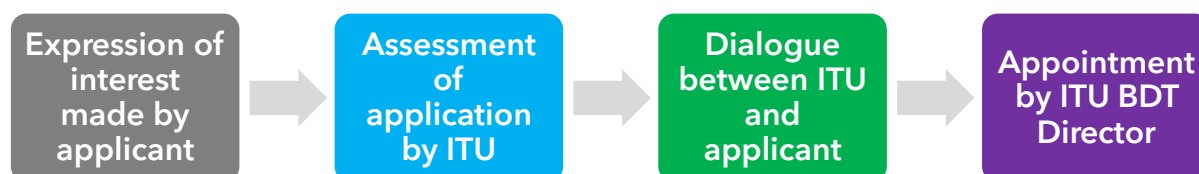
### 2.1. Application and selection process

ITU encourages applications to become ATCs from high-quality training and capacity development centres and institutions that would like to work with it to build the capacity of ITU members (primarily Government officials and professionals in the ICT sector) in priority themes.

The selection process for the first year of the programme differs from that in subsequent years.

- An initial selection of up to twelve Centres will be made for 2023, covering all priority themes and ensuring that each Centre is able to deliver a significant programme of work addressing the priority needs of ITU Members in different regions. The introduction of these Centres will be phased during the year.
- Additional candidates will be encouraged to express interest in joining the programme and may be added subsequently, though the total number of Centres in the programme at any time will not exceed sixteen. Additional Centres will therefore be approved for inclusion in the programme from 2024.

The selection process is set out in the following diagram.



Potential ATCs should submit an expression of interest and supporting documentation that demonstrates their expertise and competence in delivering high-quality capacity development in one or more of the priority themes identified by ITU. Applicants should describe, in broad terms, the kind of

courses and sub-themes they propose to provide within the programme, the types of participants / trainees and levels of expertise that they propose to attract, anticipated financial arrangements for courses (see section 3.2. on 'business models'), and their planned approach to marketing courses to potential students.

Applications should be accompanied by a written endorsement from the applicant institution's host government unless the applicant is part of or governed by a multilateral organisation.

ITU capacity development staff, thematic leads and regional offices will evaluate applications. The assessment process will include:

- review of application forms and written documentation submitted by applicants;
- assessment of potential Centres' capabilities and experience in delivering online courses (including review of examples of existing courses);
- discussion between the BDT and applicant about the programmes of activities to be delivered within the themes they have identified; and (in some cases);
- site visits by ITU personnel to assess potential Centres' facilities.

ITU may choose to conduct an initial pilot phase with potential partner institutions before they will be accepted in the programme.

## 2.2. Selection criteria

Centres will be selected according to criteria which are concerned with:

- commitment to working with the ITU and other Centres to develop and deliver a cohesive high-quality programme of activities;
- institutional quality and capacity, assessed from demonstrated excellence in delivering capacity development activity in telecommunications/ICTs; and
- expertise in the priority themes associated with the application, including expertise related to developing countries.

Applications will be assessed through a scoring system based on the following selection criteria:

<p><b>Commitment to programme development and working with the ITU and other Centres</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ability and willingness to work in partnership with ITU, focusing on ITU priority themes within the framework of the ITU Academy</li><li>• Ability to deliver to a global audience, including developing countries</li><li>• Proposed approach to the delivery of training courses under the ATC programme</li><li>• Robust and sustainable business model(s) for the delivery of ATC activities</li><li>• Proposed approach to marketing courses and attracting students</li><li>• Financial and human resources required to manage and implement ATC activities, including the collection of course fees where these are to be charged</li></ul>
<p><b>Institutional quality and capacity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Expertise and proven performance in the delivery of training courses concerned with telecommunications/ICTs to the target audience addressed by the ATC programme</li><li>• Experience in delivering training to international participants from diverse countries, including developing countries</li></ul>

- Expertise and capabilities to deliver a high standard of training, in one or more official UN languages
- Expertise and capabilities to deliver training over an online platform
- Quality of training materials
- Quality of instructors, including the ability to hire and work with international experts
- Quality of teaching methods

#### **Expertise in priority areas**

- Familiarity with and expertise in delivering training in the priority themes and sub-themes for which they are selected
- International recognition for work in the selected priority themes and sub-themes
- Availability of online training materials in the selected priority themes and sub-themes and/or the capacity to develop these to a high standard prior to course delivery
- Availability of trained instructors with expertise in the selected priority themes and sub-themes

While all of these criteria are important, applications will be considered from institutions that have experience in some but not all of them, for instance:

- training centres that have not previously undertaken extensive work in particular sub-themes but have the capacity to engage expert instructors and develop appropriate training materials to a high standard; and
- policy and research institutes with expertise in selected themes which have not previously undertaken extensive training work but are prepared and wish to develop this strand of work.

### **2.3. Cooperation Agreements**

Each selected Centre will sign a Cooperation Agreement with the ITU. ATC activities may only be implemented once the Agreement has been signed by both parties.

Cooperation agreements between ITU and ATCs are signed for an initial three-year period. They may be renewed for a further period subject to good performance and a Centre's relevance to the ongoing priorities identified by ITU. However, the performance of Centres will also be reviewed annually, with poor performing Centres liable to removal from the programme if they fail to meet key performance indicators (see section 4.2.).

If a selected Centre is not in a position to sign a Cooperation Agreement within six months of its appointment, the BDT Director may rescind its appointment and select an alternative Centre, from amongst former or current applicants, in its place.

## 3. Operations of ATCs

### 3.1. Courses and course delivery

The delivery process for ATC training courses is set out in the ITU Academy Guidelines available on the ITU Academy. ATCs are expected to follow the steps captured in these guidelines and use ITU templates, where indicated.

**Activities funded by ITU.** If a course or Activity is financed by ITU, the ATC must implement it in accordance with the approved FAID (scope, outputs, budget, workplan, deliverables, reporting schedule). Where these Guidelines mention timelines, templates or processes, they apply unless the FAID specifies otherwise.

#### 3.1.1. Planning of courses

Each ATC is expected to deliver a minimum of two and maximum of eight courses each year within the programme (the maximum number to be agreed upon after consultations with ITU). These courses will fall within the priority themes and sub-themes for which it has been appointed. The course content must be consistent with ITU policies and priorities. Courses should make use of ITU content where this is available as well as content developed by ATCs themselves.

The ATC programme will mostly deliver short online courses, though there will be scope within the programme for face-to-face or blended training courses to be offered where this would add substantial value to course experience and outcomes.

All courses must be advertised on the ITU Academy and registrations be done through the platform. All courses will be delivered exclusively through the ITU Academy platform.

ATCs will propose courses for delivery, through a rolling programme of activities. Programmes of work will be discussed by ITU and individual ATCs, each year, on a bilateral basis.

Proposed courses may address priority themes in broad terms or address sub-themes of importance. They may be directed to participants from all countries or focused on the priorities of particular regions or groups of countries, such as developing countries, LDCs or SIDS, or those of particular categories of staff such as regulatory personnel.

#### 3.1.2. Course delivery process

A substantial outline of the course content, following the ITU template, should be submitted for agreement with the ITU before the first delivery of any course is scheduled, including sample materials, proposed delivery methodology and arrangements/tools for assessment of participants' performance. Training course outlines must be submitted no later than four months before a course start date.

The course outline will be reviewed, within a month of submission, by ITU thematic priority leads and/or independent assessors before inclusion in the ITU Academy course catalogue. The aim of the review will be to maximise the value of the course to both the Centre and participants.

Once the course outline has been approved by ITU, ATCs will engage instructors and/or instructional designers, as appropriate, to develop, adapt and/or deliver the content. Coordinators, instructors and tutors delivering ATC courses will be expected to create an ITU Academy account and comply with the ITU Academy guidelines

ITU thematic priority experts will be available to support course development where required. New content which is developed jointly by a Centre and ITU may be supported financially by ITU.

ATCs are expected to finalize training materials no later than two months prior to the course start date for new courses (or exceptionally, according to a timeline commonly agreed with the ITU). Following the review of content, ITU will create the course on ITU Academy. ATCs will upload all content and set up assessments no later than two weeks prior to a course start date in order to allow sufficient time for testing.

In administering assessments during and at the end of the training, ATCs are expected to follow the assessment guidelines provided by ITU, including the development of assessment tools for each training course delivered under the programme. The tools should include the following (for a full list please see the provisions included in the ITU Academy guidelines):

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

Registrations / applications for courses will be open at least three months in advance for instructor-led courses and close no later than seven business days prior to a course start date. If a course registration includes a selection process, ATCs will be expected to communicate the list of selected participants to ITU no later than five business days prior to a course start date.

Standardized evaluation forms will be completed by course participants directly through the ITU Academy platform, providing an opportunity for participants to comment on course content, materials, delivery and learning outcomes.

Training outlines and materials remain subject to review per these Guidelines. For ITU-funded Activities, deliverable acceptance and any payment milestones are as set out in the FAID and take precedence. When procuring goods or services with ITU funds, procurement shall meet the minimum standards and thresholds set in Annex 3 and the FAID. ATC's internal rules may be used if they meet or exceed those standards.

### 3.1.3. Marketing of courses

Courses delivered through the programme are marketed directly by Centres, as well as through the ITU Academy platform, its newsletter, and ITU BDT official social media channels (*e.g.*, LinkedIn, X). Information about courses available through the programme will be circulated regularly by ITU to HR managers of relevant departments and organisations in the ITU Membership and communicated to national ITU focal points in governments and regulatory agencies. Courses are also promoted to their contact communities by ITU thematic priority leads, and information about the programme and courses will be distributed at ITU global and regional events.

Training courses are offered through a rolling catalogue on the ITU Academy website.

All course promotion will be supported by a single branding template created by ITU. ATCs should make use of this template to create promotional materials and disseminate them through their own channels.

## 3.2. Business models

Centres may choose between a number of different business models to enable the sustainability and maximise the value of courses that they offer to participants, according to their own characteristics, requirements and preferences. These models may include, for instance:

- free or subsidised training through corporate social responsibility programmes or other initiatives of Centres themselves;
- the payment of training fees by participants or their employers; and
- sponsorship by governments, international organisations or other third parties.

The approach intended by a prospective ATC must be clearly identified within its application, but the type of business model chosen will not affect eligibility or influence selection so long as it enables activities to be financially sustainable. An ATC may apply different business models to different courses within its portfolio.

### 3.2.1. Course fees

Where training course fees are charged, courses should offer participants and their employers/sponsors value for money at affordable fees.

Course fees can be set to enable Centres to recover costs including overheads (unless they are themselves sponsoring courses and participants), and to make a reasonable margin over costs where they so wish. They are subject to ITU agreement within maximum fee levels established by ITU for different types of courses and course duration.

Centres may, if they wish, charge lower fees to participants from Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States, in order to facilitate their participation in the programme. Other discounts may also be offered, subject to ITU agreement.

Where an Activity (or participant seats) is wholly funded by ITU, the ATC shall not levy participant fees unless explicitly authorized in the FAID. Where partially funded, any fee policy must align with the FAID budget and avoid double-charging.

### 3.2.2. Fee collection

Where fees are charged to course participants, these will be collected by ATCs according to terms and conditions, in agreement with ITU. In exceptional cases, for instance, where currency exchange controls prevent Centres from collecting fees, fees may, by agreement, be collected by ITU on behalf of an ATC. In such circumstances, the ITU administrative costs of collection will be borne by the ATC.

## 3.3. Awarding of certificates

### 3.3.1. Certificate template and conditions

Certificates will be issued by ITU using a standard certificate template, including ITU Academy branding alongside the branding of the ATC delivering the course.

All courses will require evaluation of participants' performance through formative and summative assessments undertaken during and at the end of courses. Certificates will only be given to participants who perform satisfactorily in the training course assessments, and whose successful completion has been reported through the ITU Academy. The certificates will be issued following submission of the

final evaluation form by the participant, correlated with the successful completion of the requirements for passing the training course, as specified in the Training Course Outline and agreed upon with the delivering ATC.

### 3.3.2. Use of logos on certificates

Certificates issued under the ATC programme will feature both the logo of the ITU and the logo of the respective ATC (unless otherwise agreed). When more than two partners are involved, the logo of the ITU shall appear at the centre.

### 3.3.3. Signatures

Certificates shall be signed by the Director of ITU/BDT and co-signed by a signatory of the ATC with a level equal to that of the ITU signatory. ATCs should forward digital copies of the signatures of their signatories and logo as soon as they sign the Cooperation Agreement with ITU. Where the ATC signatory is changed, the ATC shall forward the digital copy of the new signatory at the same time as it notifies ITU of this change.

Signatures and logos in the ITU certificate of completion indicate full accountability of the institutions, confirming that the institution made a significant contribution to the course/curricula and delivery process and can confirm that the individual being granted the certificate has met all the requirements to be granted the certificate. Featuring the logos and/or signatures of partners who only support the training logistically or financially will be done in accordance with the ITU current Academy provisions.

## 4. Quality assurance and performance assessment

### 4.1. Monitoring and evaluation

Quality assurance and performance assessment are essential to ensure the value of activities to participants and to the reputation of both ITU and ATCs. The programme aims to match the standards of high-quality alternative providers in course content, training methodology and quality of contact between training personnel and course participants. ITU will apply quality assurance processes at each step of the design and delivery of training courses under the programme.

Annual performance reviews will be undertaken of each ATC's performance, with the aim of ensuring the delivery of programme goals and supporting Centres in the delivery of their training portfolios. Performance assessment will include the scope and scale of course delivery during the previous year, as well as the development and presentation of course content, the delivery of training, and the overall inputs, satisfaction rates achieved by ATCs as captured in the end-of-training course evaluations by participants. Plans for the coming year will also be assessed.

Monitoring and audit access. In addition to routine quality assurance, ITU (or authorized representatives) may conduct monitoring visits, spot checks or audits. The ATC will facilitate site access, records review and stakeholder interviews, in line with the Agreement and Annex 3

### 4.2. Key performance indicators (KPIs)

The following key performance indicators (KPIs) will be used in making this assessment:

#### **Quantitative KPIs**

- Number of courses delivered within the programme
- Number and share of participants certified as qualifying on course completion
- Diversity of participation in courses (by country/region of origin and gender)

#### **Qualitative KPIs**

- Assessment of course content by ITU thematic leads
- Assessment of training delivery by participants
- Assessment of training facilities and online training capabilities by ITU and participants
- Overall level of course satisfaction identified through participant feedback forms
- Timely submission of all required documents to ITU

ITU will work with Centres that exhibit unsatisfactory performance to improve programme delivery and outcomes. Nevertheless, poor performance may result in the early termination of a Cooperation Agreement by ITU. Any decision to terminate an Agreement will be made by the BDT Director, with full reasons given to the Centre concerned.

## **5. Programme management and coordination**

The ATC programme will be managed by ITU as one of its core capacity development activities, under the umbrella of the ITU Academy. While the programme is structured globally, attention will be paid to regional differences and priorities. Its development and implementation will therefore be managed by the ITU capacity development team in conjunction with regional offices and thematic priority leads.

Partnership between ITU and ATCs and cooperation amongst ATCs are essential aspects of the programme. ITU encourages ATCs to share experience and, where appropriate, resources, in order to maximise the value of programme activities to participants and their employers. This may be particularly relevant in enabling the translation of materials for use across different languages.

ITU also encourages engagement with the ATC Programme, as Programme Partners, by intergovernmental and international organisations and ICT businesses, that wish to provide financial sponsorship or access to resources to enhance the programme's scope and value.

An annual global meeting of ATCs will be organised to facilitate the implementation of the programme and provide a framework for programme dialogue, share experience and foster cooperation amongst ATCs. It will include sessions concerned with thematic and regional priorities as well as reviewing experience in the programme overall and considering methodological issues. Presentations from organisations with global expertise, such as Programme Partners, and demand-side stakeholders from public and private sectors, will be included in order to diversify discussion and participation.

Each ATC is expected to participate actively in this meeting. The meeting may be held virtually or physically and will also provide an opportunity for ATCs to engage with ITU experts and consider new developments in the training of ICT professionals.

