



26 June 2026



Jeremy/Shutterstock.com

**Date and time:** 14:30 - 15:30 (UTC+7), 26 June 2026

**Format:** Zoom webinar. Prior registration is required via this link: [Webinar Registration](#)

**Target audience:** Policymakers and higher education stakeholders based in Asia and the Pacific

**Languages:** English

## Background

---

Rising access to higher education and cross-border student mobility are two of the defining features of the contemporary higher education landscape. The number of students enrolled in higher education worldwide has more than doubled over the past two decades, from about 100 million in 2000 to 269 million in 2024. Today, an average of 43% of the higher education-age population participate in tertiary education – the highest number ever recorded. The number of internationally mobile students in higher education more than tripled over the past two decades, to nearly 7 million in 2024.

However, this expansion in access has not translated into equitable opportunities. Student mobility still benefits less than 3% of the global student cohort, only 9% of refugees participate in higher education,

and learners from low-income and vulnerable groups continue to face barriers. Meanwhile, the use of artificial intelligence in higher education brings opportunities for more personalized learning, but also risks widening existing gaps in access, quality, inclusion and gender equalities. As we enter the final five years to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 on Quality Education, higher education needs to be transformed to meet increasing demands for quality, relevant and flexible learning, while addressing persistent inequalities and ensuring the right to higher education.

Robust student data and information systems enable policymakers and institutions to identify enrolment, completion, and mobility trends, as well as disparities affecting marginalized groups. When governed by ethical and equity-oriented frameworks, AI-enabled information systems support evidence-based decision-making, strengthen transparency and trust, and help ensure that digital transformation in higher education narrows, rather than widens, existing gaps in access, quality, and inclusion.

**UNESCO's [Global](#) and [Tokyo](#) Conventions concerning Higher Education** provide inclusive frameworks that support the recognition of qualifications, facilitate cross-border mobility, and promote the right to higher education. They encourage the provision of quality information to support fair, transparent and timely recognition, while the Global Convention also encourages the use of technology for easy access to information on assessment and recognition. UNESCO monitors latest trends in higher education and bridges the data gap in higher education through publications such as the [Higher Education Global Trends Report](#) and the [UNESCO Higher Education Policy Observatory](#).

### About the Asia-Pacific webinar series

---

The webinar series brings together policymakers and practitioners to explore how national systems can better support recognition of qualifications for lifelong learning, skills development, and employment to serve national development goals. In 2025, three webinars were organised in the lead up to the Sixth Session of the Tokyo Convention Committee and the Fifth APNNIC plenary, led respectively by New Zealand, Japan and Australia in coordination with the Secretariat of the Tokyo Convention at UNESCO Bangkok. It complements the capacity building webinars on the Global Convention on Higher Education. The recording and presentation of past webinars can be accessed via this [link](#).

### Objectives and agenda of the webinar

---

This webinar is the fourth in a series developed in cooperation with the Bureau of the Tokyo Convention and APNNIC, aimed at promoting cooperation on qualifications recognition within the Asia Pacific and increasing understanding of the Tokyo Convention and Global Convention on Higher Education in the region. This webinar aims to:

- share latest global trends in higher education data systems and the UNESCO toolkit for data system strengthening in higher education;
- highlight China's experience of applying AI in digital transformation of student data and information system;
- discuss how countries in the Asia-Pacific can collaborate to strengthen national higher education information systems and the provision of quality information to support qualifications recognition and mobility, including through the Asia-Pacific Network of National Information Centres (APNNIC).

Agenda	
14:30 – 14:35	<p><b>Opening and introduction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Representative of UNESCO Regional Office in Bangkok and Office for UN Coordination for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCO Bangkok), Secretariat of the Tokyo Convention and APNNIC</li> </ul>
14:35 – 14:50	<p><b>Presentation: Global and regional trends in higher education information systems – insights from the UNESCO Global Higher Education Trends Report and Higher Education Policy Observatory</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. Mathias Bouckaert, Policy Analyst, UNESCO Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNESCO-IESALC)</li> </ul>
14:50 – 15:05	<p><b>Presentation: Digitalization and AI Applications in Higher Education: The Case of China</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ms. Yangmei Han, Deputy Director of Degree Division, Centre for Student Services and Development (CSSD), Ministry of Education, P.R. China, President of the Tokyo Convention and APNNIC Bureau (2026 – 2027)</li> </ul>
15:05 – 15:25	<p><b>Discussion: how can Asia-Pacific countries collaborate to strengthen national higher education information systems?</b></p> <p>Moderator: Mr. Dean Chen, Associate Programme Specialist, Education Section, UNESCO Bangkok, Secretariat of the Tokyo Convention and APNNIC</p>
15:25 – 15:30	<p><b>Wrap up</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Representative of UNESCO Bangkok, Secretariat of the Tokyo Convention and APNNIC</li> </ul>

## Speakers

---

**Mr. Mathias Bouckaert** is Lead Policy Analyst at the UNESCO Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNESCO-IESALC), where he coordinates the Higher Education Policy Observatory and supports the development and implementation of UNESCO’s toolkit for assessing and strengthening data systems in higher education. Prior to joining UNESCO, he worked at the OECD Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, where he coordinated projects on skills for innovation. He holds a PhD in Economics from the University of Paris-Saclay.



**Ms. Yangmei Han** is Deputy Director of Degree Division, Centre for Student Services and Development (CSSD), Ministry of Education, P.R. China. She exercises the role of President of the Tokyo Convention and APNNIC Bureau, during China’s Presidency of the Tokyo Convention Committee and APNNIC in 2026 – 2027. Her career at CSSD started in 2018, where she mainly worked on the management of qualification certificates and degree certificates. She graduated from Peking University with a master’s degree.

