



Rebuilding Higher Education in Syria:
Governance, Institutional Transformation and International Cooperation
 Universities as Drivers of Recovery and Societal Reconstruction

DATE	VENUE	AN INITIATIVE OF
24–26 November 2026	Amman, Jordan	The SyrIA Project

About ICSHET 2026

The International Conference on Syrian Higher Education Transformation (ICSHET 2026) is the concluding dissemination and strategic dialogue event of the first-year activities of the SyrIA Project (Syrian Innovation in Academia), supported by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), an evidence-based higher education reform initiative supporting the recovery, modernization and international reintegration of Syrian universities. The conference marks the completion of the first-year project's empirical assessment phase and provides the first international presentation of the National Report on Higher Education in Syria, based on the project's Fact-Finding Mission to Syrian universities, institutional interviews and a complementary quantitative survey.

Building on this empirical foundation, ICSHET 2026 examines higher education institutions as organizations and societal actors undergoing processes of recovery and transformation. The conference addresses questions of governance, institutional leadership, organizational capacity, quality assurance, curriculum reform, digital transformation, internationalization and research cooperation. Particular attention is given to the role of universities in rebuilding academic structures, developing human capital and contributing to social, economic and regional reconstruction.

Rather than serving solely as a conventional academic conference or a project closure event, ICSHET 2026 brings together Syrian universities, Jordanian academic partners, ministries, quality assurance bodies and the international higher education community. The central question is how evidence, institutional reform and international cooperation can contribute to the reconstruction and sustainable transformation of higher education in societies affected by prolonged conflict. Syria remains the central empirical focus, while comparative and theoretical contributions from other conflict-affected and post-conflict contexts place the Syrian experience within the wider international discussion of higher education governance, institutional resilience and societal reconstruction.

Peer-reviewed research papers submitted through this Call for Papers will form the academic foundation of the conference and will be presented alongside keynote lectures, policy dialogues, the presentation of the National Report and sessions dedicated to the development of sustainable academic partnerships.

Call for Papers – Conference Tracks

Researchers, practitioners, policymakers and institutional leaders are invited to submit original empirical, theoretical and comparative contributions addressing the governance, reconstruction and institutional transformation of higher education. The conference welcomes research on Syria as its central empirical focus, as well as comparative studies and international experiences from other conflict-affected and post-conflict higher education systems.

Contributions should examine higher education institutions not only as providers of teaching and research, but also as organizations and societal actors whose governance, institutional capacities and international cooperation are central to sustainable recovery and transformation. Papers may address one or several of the following six interconnected conference tracks.

Track 6 represents the conference's signature track. It reflects one of the central findings of the SyrIA Project's Fact-Finding Mission: universities are not only educational institutions, but can also become active contributors to societal reconstruction, human capital development and regional recovery.

Track 1: Governance, Leadership and Institutional Transformation

Theme: Strengthening governance structures, institutional leadership and organisational capacities to support resilient, accountable, autonomous and internationally engaged universities in contexts of recovery and transformation.

- University governance and institutional reform
- Higher education policy and regulatory frameworks
- Strategic planning and change management
- Leadership development and succession planning
- Institutional autonomy, accountability and transparency
- Evidence-based decision-making and university management
- Financing, resource allocation and sustainable institutional management
- Governance during conflict, recovery and transition
- Comparative governance models and their relevance to Syria
- Institutional capacities for project management and international funding
- Academic and administrative staff development, qualification and retention

Track 2: Quality Assurance, Accreditation and Academic Excellence

Theme: Developing sustainable quality cultures, accreditation systems and institutional capacities that support academic excellence, continuous improvement and international recognition in higher education systems undergoing recovery and transformation.

- Internal quality assurance systems and institutional quality cultures
- National and institutional accreditation frameworks and standards
- Outcome-based and competency-based education
- Programme evaluation and continuous improvement
- Quality assurance in conflict-affected and post-conflict systems
- Rebuilding institutional capacities for quality assurance
- International benchmarking and recognition of qualifications
- Data and evidence-based approaches to quality development
- Comparative accreditation models and their relevance to Syria

Track 3: Digital Transformation, Educational Technology and Research Infrastructure

Theme: Developing inclusive, resilient and institutionally embedded digital ecosystems that support teaching, research, university management and international academic cooperation in higher education systems undergoing recovery and transformation.

- Institutional strategies for digital transformation
- Digital infrastructure, connectivity and equitable access
- Digital and blended teaching and learning
- Artificial intelligence and emerging technologies in higher education
- Digital competencies of academic and administrative staff
- Organizational change and capacity development
- Rebuilding laboratories, libraries and research infrastructure
- Research data management, open science and access to academic knowledge
- Quality assurance, ethics and data protection in digital education
- Digital resilience during conflict and institutional disruption
- Digital administration and integrated university and campus management systems

Track 4: Internationalization, Research Collaboration and Academic Mobility

Theme: Rebuilding international academic networks and developing sustainable, equitable and institutionally embedded structures for research collaboration, academic mobility and the reintegration of universities into regional and global scientific communities.

- Institutional strategies for internationalization
- International research collaboration and sustainable networks

- Research funding, grant acquisition and institutional support
- Academic publishing, open access and research visibility
- International partnerships and models of equitable cooperation
- Academic mobility and exchange programmes
- Barriers to mobility and cooperation in conflict-affected systems
- Recognition of qualifications and academic achievements
- The role of academic diasporas and displaced scholars
- Reintegration into regional and global scientific communities

Track 5: Curriculum Innovation, Skills Development and Labour Market Integration

Theme: Developing curricula, study programmes and institutional approaches to teaching and learning in order to respond to the changing needs of students, society and the labour market, while strengthening the contribution of higher education to human capital development, economic recovery and societal reconstruction.

- Curriculum reform and modernization of academic programmes
- Outcome-based and competency-based education
- Graduate employability, future skills and professional requirements
- Alignment of programmes with societal needs and labour market developments
- University-industry cooperation and public-private partnerships
- Links with priority sectors (agriculture, health, engineering, education)
- Entrepreneurship, innovation education and university-based support
- Microcredentials, flexible learning pathways and lifelong learning
- Experiential, practice-based and project-based learning
- Contribution to human capital development and regional reconstruction
- Technical diplomas and vocationally oriented higher education pathways
- Regional labour-market needs and university cooperation with local employers

Track 6: Universities as Drivers of Recovery and Societal Reconstruction

Theme: Examining the roles, capacities and responsibilities of universities as institutional and societal actors contributing to social reconstruction, economic recovery, human capital development and regional transformation in conflict-affected and recovering societies.

- Universities as institutional and societal actors in recovery processes
- Contribution to social, economic and regional reconstruction
- Rebuilding human capital after prolonged conflict and displacement
- Higher education, social cohesion and the reconstruction of trust
- Universities as spaces for dialogue, reconciliation and civic participation
- Engagement with local communities, municipalities and civil society
- Community-based research, service learning and socially responsive education
- The role of academic diasporas in rebuilding universities
- Cooperation with government, international organizations and communities
- Comparative experiences from conflict-affected societies
- Gender, inclusion and equitable access in higher education recovery
- Regional inequalities and differing institutional conditions of recovery

Submission Guidelines

Authors are invited to submit an extended abstract of approximately 500–700 words. The abstract should clearly state the research question or objective, theoretical or conceptual framework, methodology, principal findings or argument, and relevance to one or more conference tracks.

Submissions should be original, written in English and not under consideration for publication elsewhere. Each submission should include:

- Title of the proposed paper
- Name, institutional affiliation and contact details of all authors
- Extended abstract of approximately 500–700 words
- Three to five keywords
- Indication of the most relevant conference track
- Brief statement explaining the contribution to the conference theme

Extended abstracts will be reviewed by members of the Scientific Committee and the relevant Track Chairs, considering scientific quality, originality, methodological or conceptual clarity, relevance to the selected track and contribution to the wider discussion of higher education reconstruction and institutional transformation.

Authors of accepted abstracts will be invited to present their papers at ICSHET 2026 and to submit a full paper of approximately 5,000–7,000 words, excluding references. Full papers should follow standard academic conventions and include a clearly defined research question, engagement with relevant literature, transparent methodology or conceptual approach, findings or central arguments, discussion and conclusions.

All abstracts and full papers must be submitted through the conference's online submission system. Detailed formatting requirements and a paper template will be made available on the conference website.

Disclosure of the Use of Artificial Intelligence Tools

Authors are required to disclose in the Acknowledgements section any use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools in preparing the paper. The disclosure must identify the tool used and clearly describe the purpose and extent of its use. Authors must comply with the [Springer Nature guidelines on AI use in manuscript preparation](#) and its [editorial policies](#).

Publication Perspective

The organizers intend to publish a selection of high-quality, peer-reviewed papers presented at ICSHET 2026 in an international conference proceedings volume. A proposal for publication in the series Springer Proceedings in Business and Economics, published by Springer Nature, is currently being prepared.

The planned proceedings will bring together empirical, theoretical and comparative contributions on higher education governance, institutional transformation, international cooperation and the role of universities in recovery and societal reconstruction. Syria will constitute the central empirical focus, while contributions from other conflict-affected and post-conflict contexts will provide comparative and international perspectives.

Publication in the planned proceedings is subject to the acceptance of the publication proposal by Springer Nature, the successful completion of the full-paper peer-review process and final editorial approval. Acceptance of an abstract for presentation at the conference does not guarantee publication.

The series is currently listed in major academic indexing services, including Scopus. However, the organizers cannot guarantee the indexing of the planned volume or of individual contributions, as indexing decisions remain the responsibility of the relevant indexing services and may be subject to change.

Further information concerning the publisher, manuscript requirements, review procedure and publication schedule will be communicated to authors once the publication arrangements have been formally confirmed.

Important Dates

Milestone	Date
Call for Papers published	23 August 2026
Extended abstract submission deadline	7 October 2026
Notification of extended abstract acceptance	14 October 2026
Full paper submission for conference presentation	1 November 2026
Conference	24–26 November 2026
Notification of invitation to proceedings volume	15 December 2026
Completion of full-paper peer review	31 January 2027
Submission of revised papers	15 March 2027
Final editorial decision	30 April 2027
Submission of complete proceedings manuscript to publisher	Subject to confirmation of publication agreement

Support for the Participation of Syrian Researchers

The Scientific Committee will select a limited number of outstanding papers submitted by Syrian researchers, based on their scholarly quality and relevance to the conference tracks. Authors of the selected papers will receive a registration-fee waiver, and the necessary travel and accommodation costs for attending the conference will be covered, subject to the applicable arrangements and available funding. Acceptance of a paper does not automatically guarantee this support.

How to Submit

1. Prepare your extended abstract using this template available in this link:
<https://syria.edu-all.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/08/ICSHET-2026-Extended-Abstract-Template.docx>
2. Select the track that best fits your paper (Tracks 1–6)
3. Submit your abstract via the online submission portal provided in the link below.
4. You will receive confirmation of receipt, followed by the outcome of peer review

ONLINE SUBMISSION PORTAL

<https://cmt3.research.microsoft.com/ICSHET2026>



Contact & Further Information

Da'ad Nazzal | Daad.Nazzal@gnu.edu.jo | <https://syria.edu-all.org>