

# Uzbekistan rapidly internationalises its higher education sector

*Minister Kongratbay Sharipov outlines reforms to expand access, boost research and attract global partners*

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Uzbekistan's higher education sector is undergoing rapid transformation as expansion, accreditation reforms and international initiatives position the country as an emerging regional hub for students, researchers and faculty, Kongratbay Sharipov, Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, told [Oxford Business Group](#) in a recent [interview](#).



Sharipov said the past decade has seen a fundamental rebuilding of the system. The number of higher education institutions has risen from 77 to 207 and the gross enrolment rate has increased from 9% to 44%, bringing hundreds of thousands of young Uzbeks into tertiary education. “We have fundamentally rebuilt our higher education system over the past ten years,” he said.

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*Minister Kongratbay Sharipov*

All universities have adopted a credit-module system, more than 2,000 academic programmes have been updated to align with international curricula and 185 programmes have received international accreditation, Sharipov said. These reforms are intended to raise

academic quality and facilitate student and faculty mobility.

Uzbekistan is actively attracting foreign providers and partnerships. Thirty-two foreign higher education institutions now operate in the country and 441 joint academic programmes have been established with international partners, including 42 programmes delivered in cooperation

with universities ranked among the global top 500. “Our objective is not simply to increase the number of foreign university branches operating in the country but to integrate international academic expertise, modern teaching methodologies and globally recognised quality standards into our national higher education system,” Sharipov told OBG.



From the 2026/27 academic year international students can apply to Uzbek universities via the newly launched Study in Uzbekistan portal. The portal complements the New Uzbekistan Scholarship Programme and the Central Asia International Education Conference — initiatives aimed at raising the country’s visibility and competitiveness in the global education market.

Universities are being repositioned as engines of innovation. A competitive, grant-based research funding mechanism supports 586 active projects with combined funding of UZS 1.1 trillion (about \$90.2m), while public research funding rose 2.5-fold since 2018 to UZS 484.2 billion (around \$39.7m) in 2025. The higher education ecosystem now includes 68 university spin-offs, more than 300 commercialised research outputs and 17 engineering schools focused on green energy, artificial intelligence, mechanical engineering and industrial technologies.

As part of its in-country research, Oxford Business Group signed a cooperation agreement with the Tashkent-based Center for Higher Education Development and Global Cooperation, an institution tasked with attracting international students, researchers and faculty. Abduvali Xolijov, the centre’s director, said the aim is to “make Uzbekistan visible to the world as a place where serious academic work is happening, where institutions are genuinely open to international collaboration, and where researchers and students will find a dynamic and welcoming environment.”

Sharipov said the next phase of reform is focused on translating institutional growth into tangible outcomes: attracting international talent, increasing research commercialisation and building the human capital base to support Uzbekistan’s broader economic objectives.

Full interview is now available to view at: <https://oxfordbusinessgroup.com/articles-interviews/kongratbay-sharipov-minister-of-higher-education-science-and-innovation-how-uzbekistan-is-enhancing-access-to-higher-education-research-analysis-economic-viewpoint/>

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