



Towards international standards in higher  
education and research (HER)  
ឆ្ពោះទៅរកស្តង់ដារអន្តរជាតិក្នុងការអប់រំខ្ពស់សិក្សា  
និងការស្រាវជ្រាវ

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Improvement Projects  
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# The outline of the presentation

## The rationale for international standards

### Components of international standards

- Principles of good governance and internal legitimacy

- A multi-level governance structure

- Quality assessment (QA)

- Financial support and autonomy

- Attract and develop talents in education and research

- Commitment to academic research

- Support and coordination at the national level

# Outline

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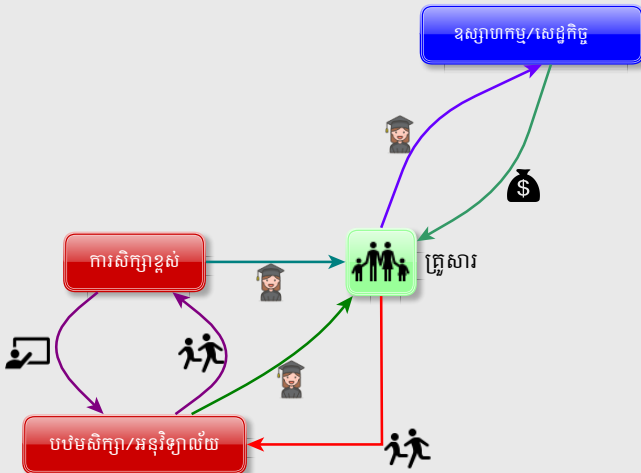
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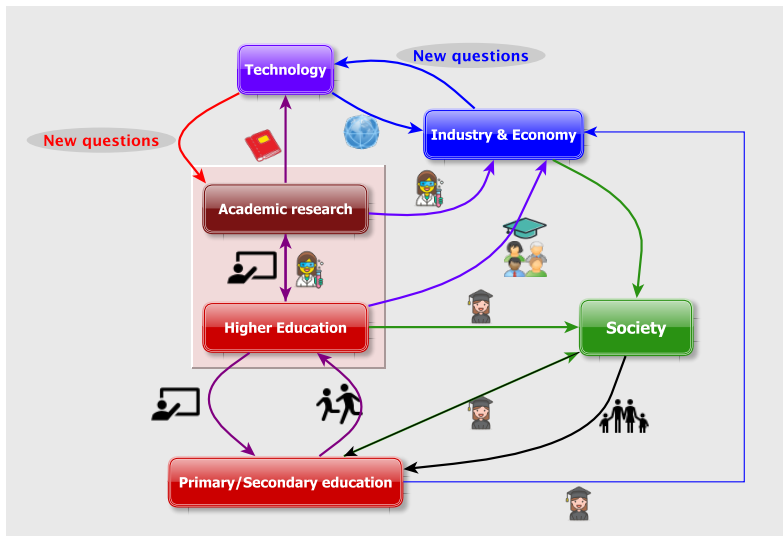
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# ការអប់រំ សេវាឯកជន?



# The central role of HER in economic and social development



# Social role of HER

- ▶ Society expects a lot from HER!
- ▶ Train competent citizens with a sufficient general education level
- ▶ Train specialists with cutting-edge skills for technological, economic, and social development
- ▶ Build a research capacity in order to ensure technological and scientific autonomy at the national level
- ▶ Train future educators for all educational institutions

# Emergence of international standards

- ▶ Over the time, countries developed different higher education systems for answering these needs
- ▶ Sometimes even in the same country (MIT and Harvard University are separated by a few kilometers but initially correspond to different conceptions of university)
- ▶ But a strong **convergence** emerged in the last century on the main characteristics of a beneficial HER
- ▶ → International standards for HER

# Aims of international standards?

These standards aim to ensure:

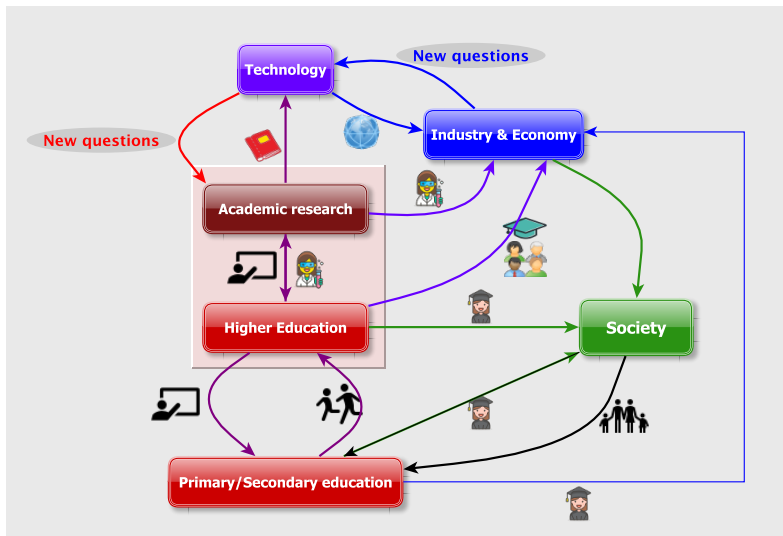
- ▶ **Legitimacy** and efficiency of decision making processes, at all levels
- ▶ **Adherence** of all members of the institution to its objectives
- ▶ Full engagement of faculty in **training** students (knowledge diffusion)
- ▶ Full engagement of faculty in academic **research** (knowledge creation)
- ▶ Ability to attract **new talents** and to allow their emergence in the institution, at all levels and in all academic functions
- ▶ Good connection with local and national needs and development strategies



# Global characteristics of international standards

- ▶ A transparent, participative and efficient **governance** system  
→ Legitimacy
- ▶ A transparent and fair **hiring** system → Attracting talents
- ▶ A transparent, fair and progressive academic **career path** system
- ▶ → Aligning individual incentives with the objectives of the institution → Efficiency
- ▶ **Facilities** for students, teachers and research → Attracting talents + Education/Research quality
- ▶ A performant **University–Industry–Society** network → Connections with global objectives and needs
- ▶ → The HER system can fully participate to economic and social development

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## Governance structures

- ▶ Governance structures  $\leftrightarrow$  internal legitimacy of decision processes and strategy choices
- ▶ Legitimacy  $\rightarrow$  the adherence to decisions and strategies in the institution
- ▶ Adherence  $\rightarrow$  operational efficacy  $\rightarrow$  attaining the strategic targets
- ▶ Current international standards  $\leftarrow$  transparent, participative and effective governance structures
- ▶  $\rightarrow$  Strategic autonomy through continuous monitoring and periodic self-assessment

## Autonomy and complexity...

- ▶ Academic activities  $\leftrightarrow$  creativity  $\leftarrow$  **autonomy**
- ▶ Autonomy  $\rightarrow$  incompatible with a strictly hierarchical organization
- ▶ But, universities are also **complex** organisms,
- ▶  $\leftarrow$  many scientific areas and activities
- ▶ *Paris University*, 12th Century: twelve disciplines (starting with canonical law, theology and health sciences), in four *facultés*

# Complexity today

A typical mid-sized French university today

- ▶ 20-30 departments (or UFRs)
- ▶ several engineering schools
- ▶ several vocational schools at a bachelor level
- ▶ many research laboratories
- ▶ a mesh of administrative levels and functional divisions

# Requirements of good governance

- ▶ Governance of complexity and creativity →
  - ▶ autonomy at different levels
  - ▶ flexibility
  - ▶ internal legitimacy
  - ▶ accountability
  - ▶ coordination
- ▶ → to attract, impulse and mobilize all talents, new vocations, and initiatives
- ▶ How can we ensure these abilities?



## Tools for good academic governance?

- ▶ **Autonomy and flexibility:** By *decentralization/delegation* of information collection and decision-making through a multi-level organization
- ▶ **Legitimacy:** By ensuring *representativeness* in decision-making bodies/councils at all levels, generally through a transparent election process
- ▶ **Accountability:** By creating a *functional set of collective assessment routines and indicators* at all levels, periodically monitored by an independent internal audit bureau
- ▶ **Coordination:** By ensuring *open and continuous communication* between all fields and organizational levels, as well as during the periodical meetings of different relevant councils
- ▶ **Efficiency:** Making *decisions at the most relevant operational level*. Top governance team being in charge of the most global and strategic decisions/arbitrations, delegating day-to-day governance to lower levels

## Good governance and strategic autonomy

This governance model allowed universities to progressively obtain **full strategic autonomy** in:

- ▶ Recruitment of students
- ▶ Conception and evolution of teaching programs, at bachelor and master levels
- ▶ Organization of research activities and facilities
- ▶ Development of professional network
- ▶ Development of international academic network
- ▶ Management of existing financial resources and of activities to attract supplementary resources
- ▶ Recruitment of faculty at different positions and departments

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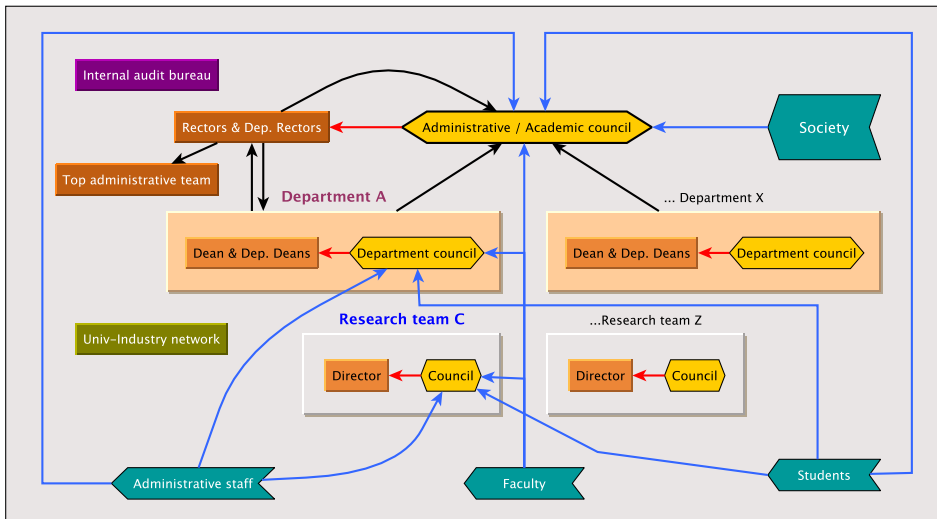
# Multi-level structure: main components

- ▶ Top governance team → The rector and deputy rectors and administrative directors in different major fields of autonomy
  - ▶ Administrative divisions and departments
  - ▶ Department deans
  - ▶ Research team directors
  - ▶ University councils:
    - ▶ Academic council
    - ▶ Department councils
    - ▶ Research team councils

# Councils

- ▶ They elect, advise and check (accountability) the executive teams at all levels
- ▶ They guide and monitor their activities
- ▶ Councils are composed of elected members of faculty, administrative operators and students
- ▶ Executive teams and academic councils are re-elected periodically (typically every 5 years).
- ▶ The number of terms are in general limited (two terms of five years at most, for example).

# A multi-level organizational structure



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# Quality assessment (QA)

- ▶ Strategic autonomy requires periodic monitoring for its implementation
- ▶ Steering the university can not be done with closed eyes, hence the importance of **continuous internal monitoring** at all levels
- ▶ → **Self-assessment**
- ▶ It cannot be done without a map of the landscape, hence the necessity of a periodic **external point of view**
- ▶ → **External QA**



## *Internal monitoring and QA*

- ▶ Steering the university and the implementation of the strategy need continuous (yearly at least) assessment and monitoring
- ▶ Again, the main governance principles play an important role: Transparency, decentralization, openness and efficiency (parsimonious) through
  - ▶ A compact set of indicators at all levels
  - ▶ Data collection and assessment at each local level (department, laboratory, administrative level)
  - ▶ Evaluation by an independent Internal Audit Bureau

# External quality assessment

- ▶ A **periodic external point of view** on the university is necessary for
  - ▶ avoiding **blind-points** during the steering process and
  - ▶ checking the performance of the internal strategy in **comparison** with the evolution of the national and international academic landscapes
- ▶ Such assessments are generally done by a national institution (the ACC in Cambodia, Hcéres in France, CCA in Germany), or regional ones (AUN-QA)

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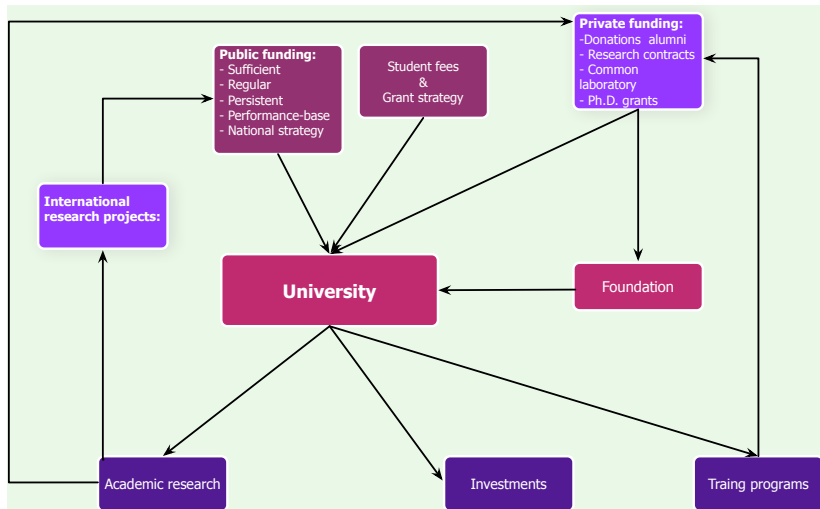
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## Financial support and autonomy

- ▶ Strategic autonomy is only a burden in the absence of necessary financial resources
- ▶ The development and modernization of the HE system necessitate mobilization of resources from public and private financing sources
- ▶ More specifically developing countries spend much less resources by student, and the faculty wages, and their quality of life, are generally quite lower than in industrialized countries
- ▶ Given the high share of low income families, tuition fees cannot be a real source of financial autonomy, at least not without increasing the already strong inequality generally observed in these countries
- ▶ And public funding of universities is sub-optimal in many countries

# Potential financial resources



- ▶ Financial autonomy in deploying these resources is necessary for the implementation of the strategy
- ▶ Public budgeting systems in many countries had to evolve in this direction:
  - ▶ flexible budgeting,
  - ▶ decentralizing spending decisions,
  - ▶ multi-year rolling budgets,
  - ▶ analytical and functional accounting, etc.

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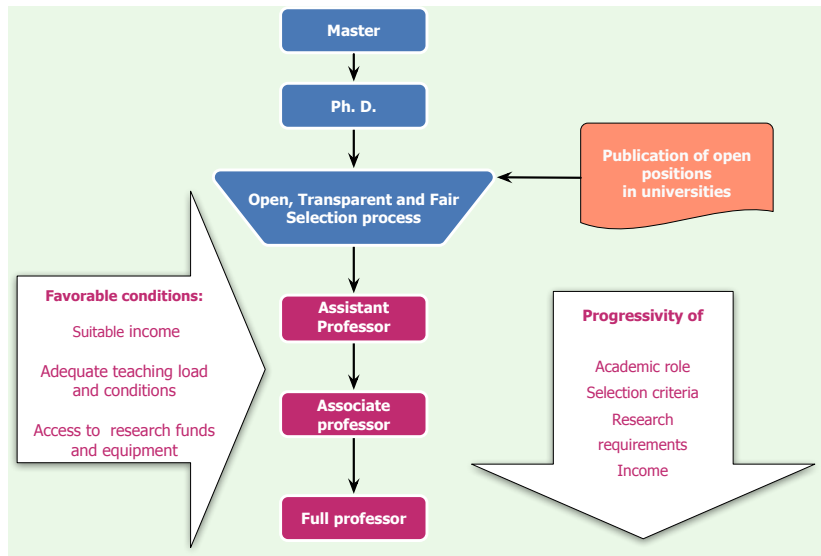
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# Attract and develop talents





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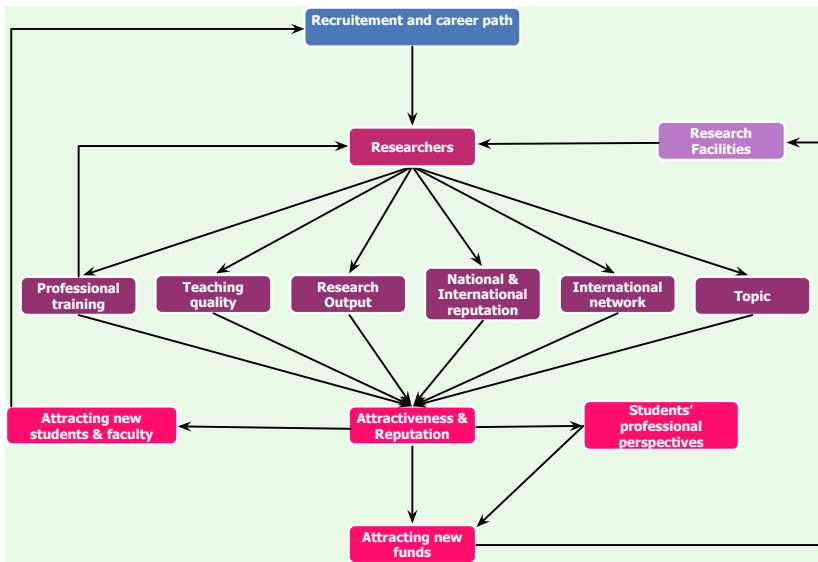
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# Central role of academic research

- ▶ Modern universities → a *research-friendly* environment
- ▶ + a significant valorization of research efforts by faculty
- ▶ → Important motivation for academic research
- ▶ because of it's central role in university's social role and development



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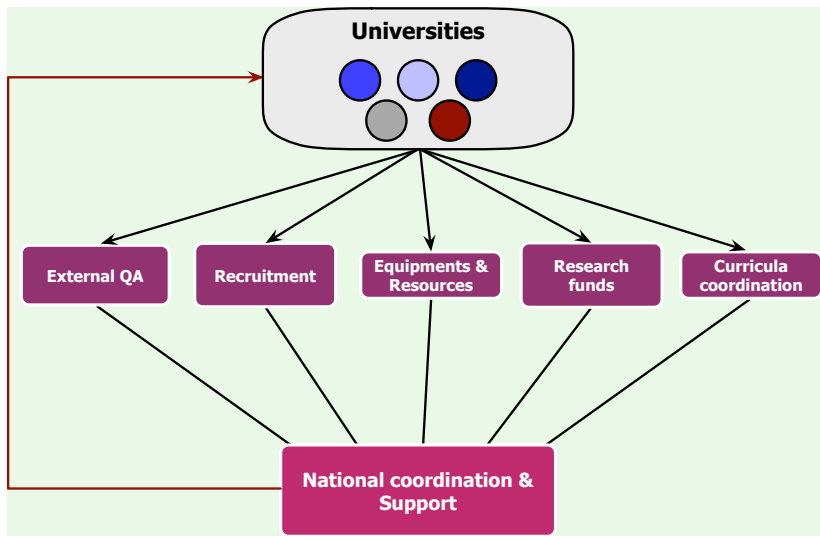
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## National level

- ▶ Many important dimensions of the HER requires coordination and support at the national level
- ▶ External quality assessment of course
- ▶ Coordination of recruitment demands by different universities
- ▶ Acquisition of expensive equipments and resources (like access to journals)
- ▶ Allocation of funds for research
- ▶ Pedagogical coordination of curricula between universities



Thank you for your attention!

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