

1st Australia-India Education and Skills Council Meeting (AIESC)

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

between

the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Skill Development and
Entrepreneurship of the Government of India

and

the Department of Education and the Department of Employment and
Workplace Relations of the Government of Australia

6th November 2023

Gandhinagar, India

1. Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, Minister of Education and Minister of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Government of India, the Honourable Jason Clare, Minister for Education, Government of Australia and the Honourable Brendan O'Connor, Minister for Skills and Training, the Government of Australia jointly chaired the inaugural meeting of the Australia India Education and Skills Council (AIESC) in Gandhinagar, India on 6 November 2023.
2. The Ministers acknowledged the work of the former **Australia India Education Council** which held six meetings and decided in the last meeting, held in Sydney in 2022, to include a focus on skills cooperation and rename the council as **Australia India Education and Skills Council** (AIESC). The Ministers affirmed that the AIESC will include a focus on skills cooperation to reflect national priorities and opportunities for collaboration. The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the AIESC as the primary bilateral dialogue between Australia and India on education, skills and research.
3. The Ministers reiterated the commitments made in the **G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration, 2023** towards inclusive, equitable, high-quality education and skills training

for all, including for those in vulnerable situations. The Ministers recognized the importance of investment in supporting human capital development and the need to encourage mobility of students, scholars, researchers, and scientists across research and higher education institutions, **especially academic collaboration in areas of Sustainability and Critical and Emerging Technologies.**

4. The Ministers welcomed the signing of the **Migration and Mobility Partnership Arrangement (MMPA)** between India and Australia in May 2023 which would facilitate greater mobility and exchange of students, academicians, skilled professionals between the two countries. The scope of MMPA includes mobility of skilled workers. India and Australia agreed to collaborate in programmes for enhancing cooperation on skilled mobility in identified sectors.
5. The Ministers reflected on the strengthening relationship between the two countries and progress made since their last meeting. They recognized that education is a key sector driving bilateral engagement between Australia and India and welcomed further strengthening of their respective education, skills and research agendas. To deliver this, the Ministers agreed to focus discussions on shaping future workforces, strengthening institutional partnerships in education, and driving research impact through internationalization.

SHAPING FUTURE WORKFORCES

6. The Ministers acknowledged the shared opportunities with respect to **workforce availability, skilling and mobility** and agreed to strengthen education and skills partnerships to deliver mutually beneficial solutions.
7. To maximize the effectiveness of skills collaboration, the Ministers agreed to focus their efforts on six priority sectors: health and care sectors, agriculture, renewable energy, digital, mining, and logistics. Ministers welcomed the agreement to hold a **Virtual Clean Energy Workforce Roundtable in 2024**, to discuss skills needs associated with transitioning to a clean energy economy.
8. Ministers agreed to explore opportunities for the internationalization of vocational education and training programs and models for delivery of skills training in India. Ministers welcomed the initiative to host an **India-Australia Skills Summit in 2024**. Further, Ministers noted the importance of understanding outcomes for international students to support future workforce development, and welcomed the study that Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) will undertake in the first half of 2024 on International Student Pathways and Outcomes.

9. The Ministers emphasized the **importance of skills** in building resilient, productive workforces that contribute to economic growth. Ministers agreed that identifying and promoting models for collaboration in delivery of vocational education and training (VET) was a priority and welcomed such engagement between Australian and Indian VET regulators, the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) and the National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET).
10. The Ministers welcomed the partnership between India's National Skills Development Corporation and Deakin University and, the imminent release of a **new cybersecurity course** under Australia's International Skills Training (IST) courses program, and planned development of an **IST course in aged care**. Ministers also noted the progress on the Australian Government funded **Developing Critical Skills Courses in India** project which is piloting a new model for Australian and Indian VET providers to collaborate on course development and delivery for India's agriculture sector.

STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS IN EDUCATION

11. The Ministers noted the regulatory and other changes taking place under **India's National Education Policy 2020** and expressed commitment to work towards availing opportunities in mutually beneficial partnerships in Education and Skilling.
12. The Ministers noted that the University Grants Commission (UGC) of India finalized regulations on Academic Collaboration between Indian and Foreign Higher Educational Institutions to offer **Twinning, Joint Degree and Dual Degree Programs** and welcomed the growing adoption of these programs by institutions in both countries. The Ministers also welcomed the establishment of the **Australia-India Education Collaboration Working Group** and tasked the Working Group to engage with institutions on taking its agenda forward.
13. The Ministers reaffirmed their ongoing commitment to implement qualification recognition arrangements under the **Mechanism for the Mutual Recognition of Qualifications** between Australia and India and noted that it is enriching and expanding institutional partnerships and education mobility between Australia and India. In this regard, the Ministers acknowledged the work done by the Australia-India Qualifications Recognition Steering Committee.
14. The Ministers welcomed the imminent opening of the campuses of **Deakin University** and the **University of Wollongong** at the **Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City)**. Inspired by their leadership, Ministers look forward to further campuses being established in the future.

15. Ministers welcomed the commitment by **six Australian universities, Flinders University, Griffith University, James Cook University, La Trobe University, University of Canberra and Western Sydney University** from the **Innovative Research Universities (IRU) Network of Australia** to further deepen their engagement in India. Inspired by India's growing global leadership and commitment to the SDGs (demonstrated by the G20 Education Minister's Outcome Statement), these top Australian universities, will work as a consortium with Indian institutions to develop innovative models of education and research cooperation in mutually beneficial areas.

16. The Ministers welcomed new partnerships, including those that leverage education technology such as the partnership between IIT Gandhinagar and Deakin University, Monash University with Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad and another one between Monash University and International Center of Excellence in Mining, Ahmedabad. Ministers noted the potential for Australia and India's education sectors to diversify education offerings and deliver benefits to students through collaboration.

17. India acknowledged the announcement of the **A Partnership for the Future: Australia's Education Strategy for India**. The Strategy reflects the commitment of the Australian Government to strengthening the relationship with India by enhancing mutual benefits through education, strengthening institutional partnerships, and research collaboration. Minister Clare announced that the Strategy aims to enhance **people-to-people links, mobility and employability** between Australia and India. Minister O'Connor announced the intention to also develop a **Skills Strategy for India**.

DRIVING RESEARCH IMPACT THROUGH INTERNATIONALISATION

18. Ministers agreed there is mutual benefit in Australian and Indian researchers working together in areas of national priority and asked the India-Australia Educational Collaboration Working Group to examine how further collaborative research could be done in the key areas of critical minerals, AI, logistics, healthcare, clean energy and sustainable agriculture.

19. The Ministers acknowledged the ongoing research collaboration between India and Australia through schemes and programmes like **Global Initiative of Academic Networks (GIAN)** and **Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration (SPARC)**. Ministers welcomed ongoing Institutional collaboration in research between top Indian Institutes like the **IITs with top Australian Universities**. As acknowledged in the G20 Education Ministers' Meeting 2023, the Ministers recognized the contributing role of digital transformations, advancing the empowerment of women and girls, and

supporting a sustainable transition to a green economy, as accelerators that can advance the progress towards achieving the SDGs.

20. Ministers welcomed the Indian Government's announcement of Phase III of the **Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration (SPARC)** Programme which will **provide funding of 2.5 million USD for joint Australia-India research projects** in critical minerals, rare earths, and other mutually agreed priority areas. The Ministers acknowledged the mutual benefits of our researchers collaborating in areas of national priority.
21. Ministers welcomed the launch of the **Maitri Scholars Program to further support the mobility of Indian students, researchers and academics.**

WAY FORWARD

22. The Ministers underlined the significant opportunity opened up by India's **National Education Policy 2020**, for increased engagement between policymakers and education institutions of both countries, to address their education, skills, and workforce needs.
23. The Ministers agreed that the Australia India Education and Skills Council (AIESC) will be a dynamic forum for engagement on both policy and program issues across education, skills and research. It will be a strong focal point for delivering a collaborative agenda for shaping future workforces, strengthening institutional partnerships in education, and driving research impact through internationalization.
24. The Ministers agreed that the next meeting of the Australia India Education and Skills Council be held in Australia in 2024.
