Terms of Reference for the Advisory Group of the World Health Organization Academy

1. Background

The World Health Organization (WHO) Academy is a priority special initiative of the WHO transformation Agenda and will support accelerated learning towards achievement of the health Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Academy will support the competency development needs of public health stakeholders and WHO staff to progress the WHO’s strategic plan (the 13th General Programme of Work 2019 – 2023) and “triple billion” goal: ensuring that by 2023, an additional 1 billion people benefit from universal health coverage; 1 billion more are afforded better protection in health emergencies, and 1 billion more enjoy improved health and wellbeing.

The Academy aims to reach 10 million people by 2023 with innovative digital and state-of-the-art in-person learning experiences. Academy courses will be accessible through its digital learning experience platform and via a campus network, with the flagship campus in Lyon and spokes embedded across six WHO regions. The Academy’s Lyon hub will feature high-tech learning environments, a world-class health emergency simulation centre and collaboration spaces for learning co-design, research and innovation for health impact.

The Academy’s learning design approach will bring together adult learning science, behavioural science and cutting-edge learning technologies such as artificial intelligence and virtual reality. The Academy will combine this approach with WHO’s norms, standards and evidence to deliver high-impact quality, immersive and tailored multilingual learning to meet diverse needs. The Academy will be open to a wide range of multisectoral stakeholders that can influence health, including leaders, educators, researchers, health workers, WHO workforce and the broader public. It will be run as an internal WHO Division headed by a Chief Learning Officer.

The Academy will be established through a set-up phase between 2019 and 2021 before its official launch in May 2021.

2. Purpose

The Academy Advisory Group (AAG) will provide advice on:

a. the Academy’s establishment and strategic direction to ensure achievement of its objectives to advance WHO’s priorities with sustainability, quality and impact at scale; and
b. the latest developments and opportunities to maximize impact of the Academy in lifelong learning in health.

c. the progress, strategic direction, positioning and approach of the WHO Academy in alignment with WHO targets and priorities;
d. best practices and manners to identify, catalyze, support and mobilize strategic multi-
stakeholder support, collaboration and outreach across Member States, inter-governmental organizations, and non-state actors; and

e. major trends, advancements and lessons learned in lifelong-learning and learning technologies that could influence the Academy’s approach and strategic roadmap.

3. Membership

The AAG Members will:

a. Be internationally renowned experts with an outstanding record of achievement, credibility and be recognized as global thought leaders in their field relevant to the AAG;
b. Have diverse experience and expertise in one or more of the following areas: adult learning, workplace learning and learning transformation and impact; capacity building at the individual, community, institutional, national or global levels; frontier learning technologies; artificial intelligence and ethics; social enterprise, social marketing and social impact investing; education and lifelong learning policy, strategy and governance.
c. Have proven experience of operating at the highest strategic level in the public, private or other sectors;
d. Have excellent interpersonal and communication skills to support effective discussion with a range of stakeholders;
e. Subscribe to the values and ethical code of WHO

4. Composition

a. The AAG shall have up to 12 members, who shall serve in their personal capacities to represent the broad range of disciplines relevant to the work of the WHO Academy. In the selection of the AAG Members, consideration shall be given to attaining an adequate distribution of technical expertise, geographical representation and gender balance.
b. Members of the AAG, including the Chairperson, shall be selected and appointed by WHO following an open call for experts.
c. In appointing a Chairperson, consideration shall be given to gender and geographical representation. The Chairperson’s functions include the following:
   - to chair the meeting of the AAG;
   - to liaise with the WHO Secretariat between meetings.
d. Members of the AAG shall be appointed to serve for a period of 2 years and shall be eligible for reappointment subject to the needs of the WHO Academy. A Chairperson is eligible for reappointment as a member of the AAG but is only permitted to serve as Chairperson for one term. Their appointment and/or designation as Chairperson may be terminated at any time by WHO if WHO’s interest so requires or, as otherwise specified in these terms of reference or
letters of appointment. Where a member’s appointment is terminated or a member may wish to step down from her/his function, WHO may decide to appoint a replacement member.

e. AAG members must respect the impartiality and independence required of WHO. In performing their work, members may not seek or accept instructions from any Government or from any authority external to the Organization. They must be free of any real, potential or perceived conflicts of interest. To this end, proposed members/members shall be required to complete a declaration of interests form and their appointment, or continuation of their appointment, shall be subject to the evaluation of completed forms by the WHO Secretariat, determining that their participation would not give rise to a real, potential or perceived conflict of interest.

f. Following a determination that a proposed member’s participation in the AAG would not give rise to a real, potential or apparent conflict of interest, the proposed member will be sent a letter inviting them to be a member of the AAG. Their appointment to the AAG is subject to WHO receiving the countersigned invitation letter and letter of Agreement. Notwithstanding the requirement to complete the WHO declaration of interest form, AAG members have an ongoing obligation to inform the WHO of any interests real or perceived that may give raise to a real, potential or apparent conflict of interest.

g. As contemplated in paragraph 4(e) above, WHO may, from time to time, request AAG members to complete a new declaration of interest form. This may be before an AAG meeting or any other AAG-related activity or engagement, as decided by WHO. Where WHO has made such a request, the AAG member’s participation in the AAG activity or engagement is subject to a determination that their participation would not give rise to a real, potential or apparent conflict of interest.

h. Where an AAG member is invited by WHO to travel to an in-person AAG meeting, WHO shall, subject to any conflict of interest determination as set out in paragraph 4(e) above, issue a letter of appointment as a temporary adviser and accompanying memorandum of Agreement (together ‘Temporary Adviser Letter). WHO shall not authorize travel by an AAG member, until it receives a countersigned Temporary Adviser Letter.

i. AAG members do not receive any remuneration from WHO for any work related to the AAG. However, when attending in-person meetings at the invitation of WHO, their travel cost and per diem shall be covered by WHO in accordance with the applicable WHO rules and policies.

5. Operation

a. The AAG shall normally meet three times each year. However, WHO may convene additional meetings. AAG meetings may be held in person (at WHO headquarters in Geneva or another location, as determined by WHO) or virtually, via video or teleconference.
AAG meetings may be held in open and/or closed session, as decided by the Chairperson in consultation with WHO.

i. Open sessions: Open sessions shall be convened for the sole purpose of the exchange of non-confidential information and views and may be attended by Observers (as defined in paragraph 5(c) below).

ii. Closed sessions: The sessions dealing with the formulation of recommendations and/or advice to WHO shall be restricted to the members of the AAG and essential WHO Secretariat staff.

b. The quorum for AAG meetings shall be two-thirds of the Members.

c. WHO, in its sole discretion and subject to internal due diligence and conflict of interest considerations, may from time to time invite external individuals, representatives from intergovernmental organizations and from non-state actors to attend the open sessions of the AAG, or parts thereof. For the purposes of these terms of reference, such invitees will be referred to as “observers”. WHO may request observers to complete a confidentiality undertaking prior to attending a session of the AAG. Observers shall attend meetings of the AAG at their own expense and be responsible for making all arrangements in that regard.

At the invitation of the Chairperson, Observers may be asked to present the views and policies of their organization. Observers will not participate in the process of adopting decisions and recommendations of the AAG.

d. The AAG may decide to establish smaller working groups (sub-groups of the AAG) to work on specific issues. Their deliberations shall take place via teleconference or video-conference. For these sub-groups, no quorum requirement will apply; the outcome of their deliberations will be submitted to the AAG for review at one of its meetings.

e. AAG members are expected to attend meetings. If a member misses two consecutive meetings, WHO may end his/her appointment as a member of the AAG.

f. Reports of each meeting shall be submitted by the AAG to WHO. All recommendations from the AAG are advisory to WHO, who retains full control over any subsequent decisions or actions regarding any proposals, policy issues or other matters considered by the AAG.

g. The AAG shall normally make recommendations by consensus. If, in exceptional circumstances, a consensus on a particular issue cannot be reached, minority opinions will be reflected in the meeting report.

h. Active participation is expected from all AAG members, including in working groups, teleconferences, and interaction over email. AAG members may, in advance of AAG meetings,
be requested to review meeting documentation and to provide their views for consideration by the AAG.

i. WHO shall determine the modes of communication by the AAG, including between WHO and the AAG members, and the AAG members among themselves.

j. AAG members shall not speak on behalf of, or represent, the AAG or WHO to any third party.

6. Secretariat

a. WHO shall provide the secretariat for the AAG, including necessary scientific, technical, administrative and other support. In this regard, the WHO Secretariat shall provide the members in advance of each meeting with the agenda, working documents and discussion papers. Distribution of the aforesaid documents to Observers will be determined by the WHO Secretariat. The meeting agenda shall include details such as: whether a meeting, or part thereof, is closed or open; and whether Observers are permitted to attend.

7. Information and documentation

a. Information and documentation to which members may gain access in performing AAG related activities shall be considered as confidential and proprietary to WHO and/or parties collaborating with WHO. In addition, by counter signing the letter of appointment and the accompanying terms and conditions referred to in paragraph 4(f) above, AAG members undertake to abide by the confidentiality obligations contained therein and also confirm that any and all rights in the work performed by them in connection with, or as a result of their AAG-related activities shall be exclusively vested in WHO.

b. AAG members and Observers shall not quote from, circulate or use AAG documents for any purpose other than in a manner consistent with their responsibilities under these Terms of Reference.

c. WHO retains full control over the publication of the reports of the AAG, including deciding whether or not to publish them.