

RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE: ESG IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Monograph

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Chapter 12.

Maintaining academic quality at frontline universities in wartime

Iryna Murenets¹, Olena Parkhomenko², and Olena Iarmosh¹

Introduction

The ongoing war in Ukraine has severely impacted the educational landscape, particularly in conflict zones like Kharkiv. The city, a prominent educational hub, has long been home to some of the most prestigious universities in the country. However, with the onset of the war, Kharkiv's universities have faced significant disruptions to their operations. As bombs and artillery attacks have threatened the safety of students and faculty, the traditional classroom environment has become increasingly complex, if not impossible, to sustain. In response, Kharkiv's higher education institutions (HEIs) have rapidly adapted to remote education, leveraging digital tools and platforms to ensure academic continuity. This shift, while essential, has posed various challenges, from technological limitations to the need for new pedagogical approaches.

The transition to digital learning has been a critical response to the crisis, enabling students to continue their education from home or safer locations. Using online platforms, virtual lectures, and digital resources has ensured that education remains accessible even when physical attendance is not feasible. Universities have quickly embraced these new learning modes, but the shift has not been without its hurdles. Many students and faculty members face difficulties with unstable internet connections, a lack of proper technological equipment, and the emotional strain of living through a war. In this context, universities have had to rethink not only how they deliver education but also how they maintain the quality of learning and

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ensure that students remain engaged in a time of immense stress and uncertainty.

At the same time, universities in Kharkiv have faced the broader challenge of sustaining academic continuity amidst the realities of wartime. The interruption of normal educational processes, such as the cancellation of in-person exams, limited access to research facilities, and the disruption of the academic calendar, has made it difficult for universities to uphold the standards of education they had previously set. Faculty members are now tasked with finding new ways to evaluate student performance, ensure that curricula are still being followed, and support students whose personal lives have been deeply affected by the war. This situation raises important questions about what it means to maintain academic excellence in a crisis and how universities can adjust their expectations while ensuring that students receive a meaningful education.

The role of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) has been especially crucial in guiding Kharkiv's universities through this period of uncertainty (UN SDGs, 2024a). The UN SDGs provide a framework for institutions to navigate the complex challenges they face while ensuring they continue contributing to global educational, social, and environmental goals. SDG 4, which focuses on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all, has been central to the strategies adopted by Kharkiv's universities. Despite the war, universities have strived to make education accessible to all students, regardless of their circumstances, while promoting peace, justice, and strong institutions. By aligning their responses to the war with these global goals, Kharkiv's universities have not only preserved their educational mission but also strengthened their commitment to social responsibility and resilience.

This chapter will explore how Kharkiv's universities have adapted to digital learning and remote education challenges during wartime. It will examine the technological, pedagogical, and emotional hurdles universities have faced and their strategies to overcome them. Additionally, it will analyse the role of the UN SDGs in maintaining academic standards and promoting resilience in the face of crisis, highlighting the ongoing efforts of Kharkiv's educational institutions to ensure that their students continue to receive high-quality education despite the harsh realities of war.

Overview of the Challenges Faced by Frontline Universities in Wartime

During the ongoing war in Ukraine, the higher education (HE) sector has faced profound challenges but continues to persevere and adapt. In cities like Kharkiv, where the conflict is particularly intense, universities have suffered both physical destruction and massive displacement of students and faculty. Despite these hardships, Ukrainian universities, supported by international partners, have shifted to hybrid and remote learning models to maintain educational continuity.

The Russian Federation invasion has resulted in significant infrastructure damage, with many institutions forced to operate virtually or relocate to safer regions. For example, over 60 universities across Ukraine have been damaged or destroyed since February 2022. In the Kharkiv region, Simon Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics (S. Kuznets KhNUE, 2024a) and other institutions are similarly affected but are trying to continue offering education remotely despite the challenges.

International cooperation has been vital. Programs like the “Twinning” initiative, which pairs Ukrainian universities with those in Europe, have helped maintain academic services and support displaced students and faculty (Ukrainian Higher Education, 2024).

Additionally, global organizations, such as the United Nations and international academic consortia, are focused on providing financial aid, educational resources, and safe learning spaces for Ukrainian students.

Ukraine's Ministry of Education, along with international support, has worked to ensure that students can continue their education despite power outages and other difficulties (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2024). However, remote learning is not a perfect substitute for in-person education, especially in fields requiring practical, hands-on experience. It is worth noting that many foreign students study in Ukraine. Kharkiv, one of Ukraine's largest cities and a major educational hub, has a long-standing tradition of academic excellence. Home to many prestigious universities, the city plays a crucial role in Ukraine's HE system, offering a wide range of programs and research opportunities. However, the war has significantly impacted Kharkiv's educational institutions, leading to disruptions in their functioning.

Kharkiv is the second region after Kyiv in terms of the number of international students. In 2023, 11,693 foreign students were counted in

the Kharkiv region (Fig. 12.1). Despite the military actions in the Kharkiv region, students did not stop entering Kharkiv universities and continued their studies. This indicates a high level of education adaptation at universities to new conditions that arise in difficult times of military actions and coups.

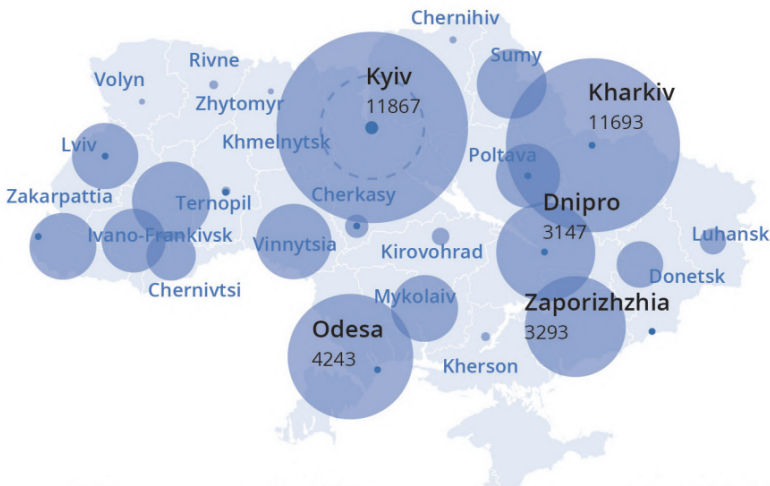


Fig. 12.1. Number of foreign students by regions in 2023

Source: Ukrainian State Centre for International Education, 2023

Analyzing the most popular universities among foreign students in 2023, Karazin Kharkiv National University is one of the most popular among foreign students (Fig. 12.2), it is the leader, and it had 3,389 foreign students in 2023 despite the war in Ukraine. The university offers a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate programs in English, covering various fields such as humanities, sciences, engineering, and social sciences. Known for its academic excellence and research output, Karazin University attracts students from around the world seeking high-quality education (V. N. Karazin KhNU, 2024b). Karazin University provides comprehensive support for international students, including assistance with visas, accommodation, and integration into

university life. Located in Kharkiv, a city known for its vibrant cultural scene and student-friendly atmosphere, the university offers a dynamic environment that appeals to international students.

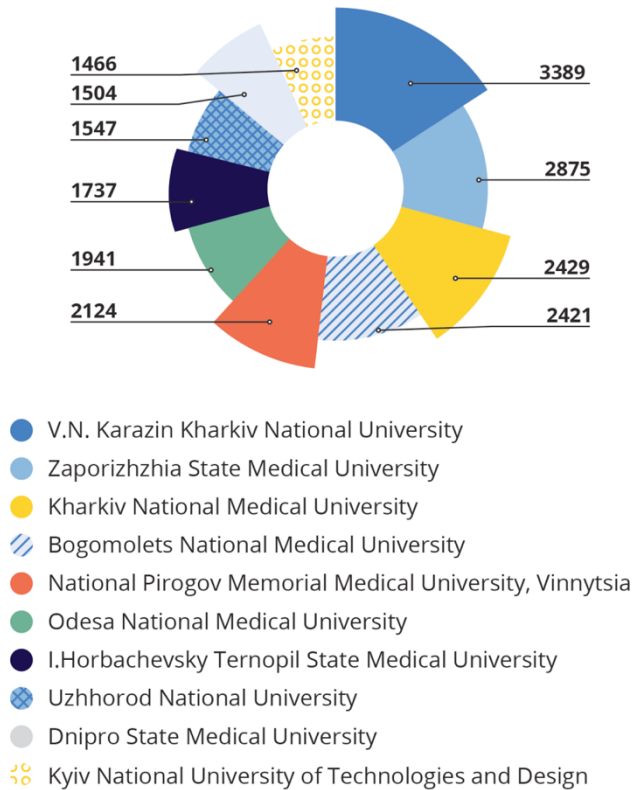


Fig. 12.2. Most popular universities among foreign students in 2023

Source: Ukrainian State Centre for International Education, 2023

During wartime, universities in the Kharkiv region, including Karazin Kharkiv National University, have responsibilities towards their international students (V. N. Karazin KhNU, 2024d). Universities need to ensure the safety and security of all students, including international ones. This involves

guiding safety measures, emergency procedures, and evacuation plans if necessary. Institutions must strive to maintain educational continuity, whether through online learning or temporary relocation of classes. This helps ensure that international students can continue their studies with minimal disruption. Clear and timely communication is crucial. Universities should keep international students informed about any changes or developments, including information on security, academic adjustments, and available support services. Wartime can be stressful and challenging. Universities should offer counselling and psychological support to help students cope with the emotional and mental impact of the situation. Providing support with visa issues, accommodation, and other administrative matters becomes even more critical during such times. Universities may need to assist students in navigating these challenges amidst the conflict. Universities often work with local and international authorities to ensure that student's needs are met and that they have access to necessary resources and assistance. Students from different countries study in Ukraine; the most popular ones are shown in the picture (Fig. 12.3).

Foreign students choose Ukrainian universities for various compelling reasons (Fig. 12.4). Firstly, the quality of education is a significant draw, as many Ukrainian universities are accredited and recognized internationally, offering high-quality programs in diverse fields (Ukrainian State Centre for International Education, 2023). The emphasis on research and development also provides students valuable opportunities to engage in cutting-edge projects.

Another significant factor is affordability. Compared to many Western countries, Ukrainian universities generally have lower tuition fees, making higher education more accessible. Additionally, the cost of living in Ukraine is relatively low, which is advantageous for students on a budget.

Another appeal is the wide range of academic programs available. Ukrainian universities offer diverse courses across disciplines such as medicine, engineering, humanities, and sciences, often with options for English-taught programs. This variety allows students to find specialized programs that may not be available elsewhere (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2024).

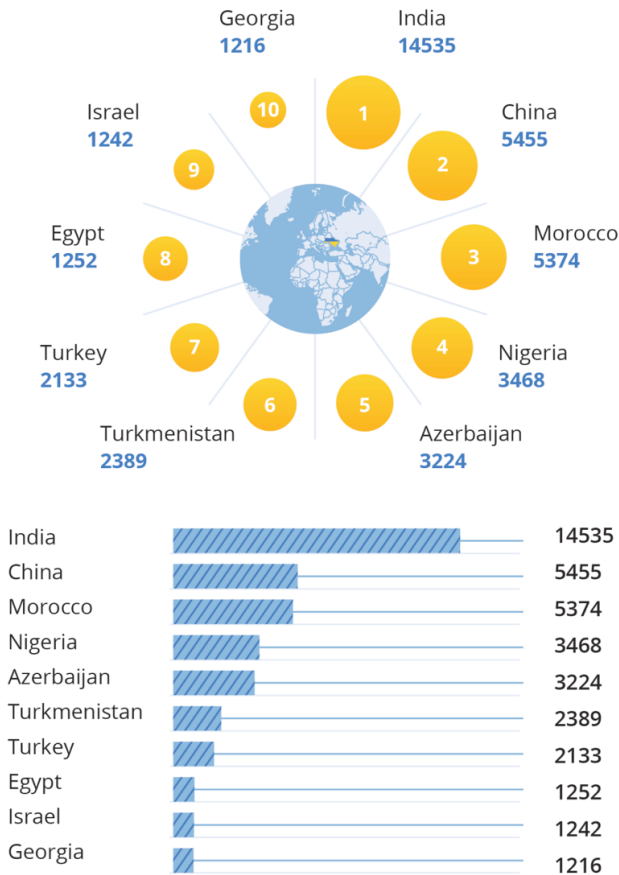


Fig. 12.3. The most popular countries from which students come to study in Ukraine

Source: Ukrainian State Centre for International Education, 2023

Students are also attracted by the rich cultural and academic experience Ukraine offers. The country's vibrant cultural heritage and active student life create a unique and enriching environment. Moreover, many Ukrainian universities have international partnerships and collaborations, enhancing the global recognition of their degrees.

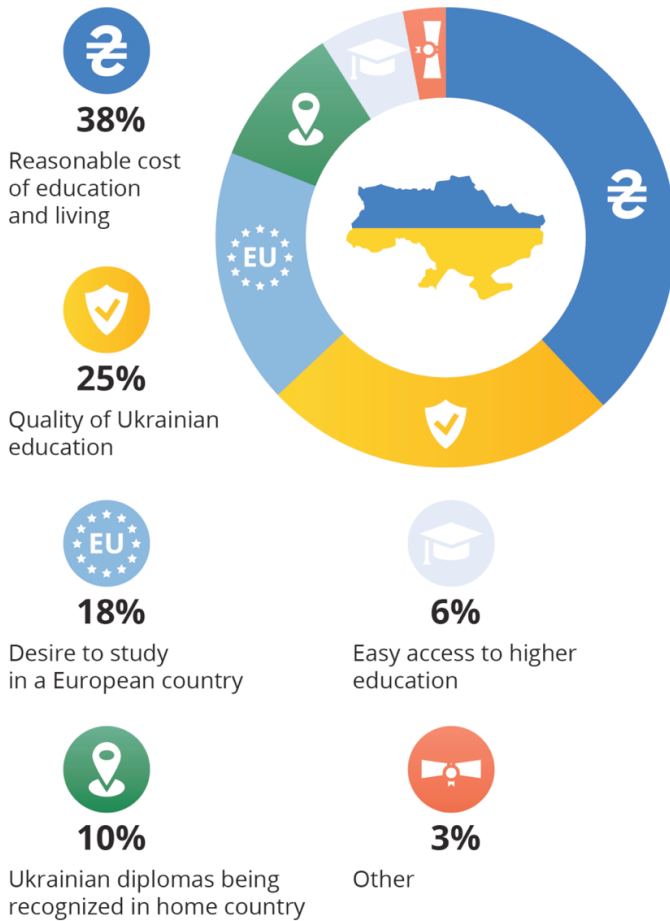


Fig. 12.4. Why foreign students choose Ukrainian universities

Source: Ukrainian State Centre for International Education, 2023

Language options are also important. Many Ukrainian universities offer programs in English, which makes it easier for non-Ukrainian speakers to study there. Additionally, students have the opportunity to learn Ukrainian, which can be beneficial for personal and professional growth (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2024).

Historical and political ties can influence students' decisions, especially for those from neighboring countries or those with familial connections to the region. Ukrainian universities are known for their advancements and specialized programs for students seeking education in emerging disciplines, such as IT and engineering.

Overall, the affordable tuition, high-quality education, rich cultural experiences, and diverse program offerings make Ukrainian universities an attractive option for international students.

When considering universities in the Kharkiv region, the situation that developed during military actions and how universities maintain the quality of the educational process, the largest in terms of the number of domestic and foreign students in the Kharkiv region is the V.N. Karazin University.

V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University

Established in 1804, V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University (V. N. Karazin KhNU) (Fig. 12.5). is one of Ukraine's oldest and most prestigious universities. It offers a wide range of programs in sciences, humanities, and professional fields and has a strong focus on research (V. N. Karazin KhNU, 2024a).

Due to Kharkiv's proximity to the Russian Federation's border, the city has been under heavy bombardment, leading to significant damage to infrastructure, including the university. Students and faculty have faced displacement, and the institution has struggled to maintain normal operations (Fig. 12.6).

V. N. Karazin KhNU has transitioned many of its programs online to ensure continuity in education. The university is also collaborating with international institutions to provide students with opportunities for exchange programs and access to remote learning resources.

Karazin University is 218 years of development, remarkable achievements in science and education, known not only far beyond the borders of Ukraine but also around the world.

In pre-war times, we collaborated with dozens of leading foreign universities, nurturing hopes and building grand plans for scientific achievements, breakthroughs, and discoveries. For a long time, Karazin University was the sole representative of our country among the top 500 most prestigious global universities in the authoritative QS ranking.



Fig. 12.5. V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University before the war

Source: V. N. Karazin KhNU, 2024a



Fig. 12.6. V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University. The destruction brought by the war to the Karazin Business School

Source: V. N. Karazin KhNU, 2024c

Already in the first month of the war, a rocket strike completely destroyed the building on Myronosytska Street. The sports complex “Karazinsky” was hit directly, and the central and northern buildings, the Institute of Physics and Technology, dormitories, the Nature Museum, and the old building of the central scientific library on Universytetska Street were damaged (V. N. Karazin KhNU, 2024c). The professors'

and staff's residences were located in areas of intense shelling, and as a result, they were destroyed and rendered uninhabitable due to low temperatures.

From the first days of the war, a humanitarian headquarters was established to assist students, faculty, staff, and their families quickly, organize evacuations, and relocate.

The Alumni Association was one of the first to respond and began supporting the Karazin community by collecting donations to help those affected by the Russian Federation shelling during the war. The initiative "Help Karazin University" was launched (V. N. Karazin KhNU, 2024e).

However, the university was supported not only by alumni but also by people from all over Ukraine and the world, who hold Karazin dear.

In particular, alumna and staff member of the Faculty of Sociology, Paralympic table tennis champion Marina Lytovchenko, initiated a charity auction, with her gold Paralympic medal being the auction item. As a result of the auction, 30 000 USD was raised (V. N. Karazin KhNU, 2024e).

Honorary Doctor of Karazin, poet, writer, musician, and public figure Serhiy Zhadan, during charity concerts in Ukraine and Germany, raised 500 000 UAH, which was directed to support the activities of the university's central library (V. N. Karazin KhNU, 2024e).

Karazin also supports the Slobozhansky Youth Academic Symphony Orchestra. After years of creative collaboration, the university became the home of the youth orchestra. Since February 2022, it has been based in one of Karazin's buildings. Over the course of several months, the musicians performed in Poland, and the funds raised from these concerts were, in part, directed to support Karazin University (V. N. Karazin KhNU, 2024e).

The assistance began to gain momentum and scale up even further. It was decided to create a charitable foundation to support the protection of the university's scientific, educational, and spiritual achievements, preserve Ukraine's intellectual potential, and bring the country closer to victory over aggressor – the Russian Federation.

The Kharkiv Karazin University Foundation was presented on November 3, 2022. The foundation's goal is to support the university and its community during the difficult wartime and post-war periods (V. N. Karazin KhNU, 2024e).

As of January 6, 2023, thanks to the generosity of donors, 2 000 000 UAH had been raised (V. N. Karazin KhNU, 2024e).

In the first weeks of the war, this included tons of humanitarian aid from Lviv, Ternopil, and Cherkasy, as well as from Poland and Germany, the “Ukrainians in the Netherlands” foundation, the National University “Ostroh Academy”, and Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice (Slovakia). With the support of the Ministry and the friendly assistance of the National University “Yuri Kondratyuk Poltava Polytechnic,” it was possible to establish a temporary coordination center for Karazin University in Poltava and expand logistics capabilities to receive those affected from Kharkiv.

The strong support from the university's partners and friends contributed to the university's continued operation and the restoration of the educational process by the end of March. Karazin University students gained free access to the “Research4Life” platform resources. In collaboration with the University of Macerata, Karazin launched the remote course “Introduction to Machine Learning.” The Board and Council of the European University Association waived membership fees for all universities in Ukraine for 2022.

Thanks to fruitful collaboration with partners, Karazin expanded educational opportunities for its students. With the support of the GOROD Cultural Centre, the university opened a representative office in Germany, allowing prospective students to begin their studies in Karazin's bachelor's programs in Munich (V. N. Karazin KhNU, 2024f).

Partner collaborations included:

- Igbenedion University, Edo State, Nigeria
- “NVP Ukrorgsintez” LLC in cooperation with “Enamine Ltd.” (Kyiv, Ukraine)
- The Institute of Chemistry, University of Côte d'Azur (Nice, France)
- Friedrich II University of Naples (Italy) ... and many more.

The “Aurora” European University Alliance was among the first to support Karazin after the war began. As a sign of solidarity, they provided a check for over 1.5 million UAH for the university's restoration (V. N. Karazin KhNU, 2024e).

In March 2022, Karazin joined the “Unity Initiative” program, launched by the “Cormack Consultancy Group” in partnership with “Universities

UK” and with the support of Ukraine's Ministry of Education and Science. This was in response to the threats to HE in Ukraine posed by the Russian Federation invasion. As part of this initiative, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University and the University of York (UK). Several key initiatives were developed and implemented, including a Summer School and online language courses for Karazin's students and faculty. To support the effective organization of the educational process, Karazin received 200 laptops for educators. “Begin Group”, organizers of international online education fairs, offered the opportunity to present Karazin's educational programs, faculties, and institutes to international students for free (V. N. Karazin KhNU, 2024e). As part of joint cooperation programs with Hanjou Normal University (China), 227 Chinese students were admitted to the university for academic mobility programs, enrolling in bachelor's degree programs in the Faculties of Chemistry, Physics, and the Faculty of Geology, Geography, Recreation, and Tourism. Additionally, 28 Chinese students were admitted to the master's programs in the Faculties of Chemistry, Biology, and the Faculty of Mathematics and Computer Science (V. N. Karazin KhNU, 2024d).

Karazin University on the Frontline

Together with all Ukrainians, Karazin's community took up arms to defend their land. They fight every day, both on the front lines and in the rear. The university community values the courage and bravery of university staff who are currently defending our country. They are already an integral part of our unforgettable history. Kharkiv National University named after V. N. Karazin has launched a new video project, *“Karazintsi. Learning Despite the War”* (V. N. Karazin KhNU, 2024g).

Digital Education Centre at Karazin University

On June 6, 2023, the Digital Education Centre was officially opened – a multifunctional space for children aged 6 to 17. The project was organized through the combined efforts of the Karazin Business School, AVSI Foundation, the Emmaus NGO, and partner organizations. This center aims to provide innovative educational opportunities, promoting digital skills development for young learners in a safe and supportive environment (V. N. Karazin KhNU, 2024b).

Karazin University Continues to Enroll International Students

The number of students at V.N. Karazin KhNU continued to grow in 2023. While around 3,000 students enrolled in the summer of 2022, in 2023, the number exceeded 5,000. “Before the war, we had over 22,000 students, including 5,000 international students. Now, more than 17,000 students are receiving education. This is a good number for a city on the frontlines,” said the university’s vice-rector, Anatoliy Babichev, with optimism (V. N. Karazin KhNU, 2024d).

Currently, there is no significant outflow of students, unlike in the first year of the war when many young people transferred to universities in western or central Ukraine, or even stopped studying altogether. Classes and exams, as in all Kharkiv universities and schools, are held online. This is primarily because many students are now outside the city or even the country. Additionally, while the university has shelters, there are not enough to relocate classrooms and laboratories and hold in-person classes for all students. However, despite these challenges, the knowledge and degrees offered by Karazin remain attractive not only to Ukrainians but also to international students. This year, about a thousand international students enrolled at the university (V. N. Karazin KhNU, 2024f).

Before the war, most international students enrolled in the medical or economic faculties. Now, they have started enrolling in online programs in mathematics, physics, and chemistry. Last year, we had a significant number of students from China, as the country officially recognized online education. We also have students from African and Arab countries. There were almost no students from India this year, but those who started their studies earlier remain (V. N. Karazin KhNU, 2024d). The Medical Faculty, which was significantly impacted by the outflow of foreign students, is now actively providing postgraduate education to Ukrainian doctors.

Simon Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics

Simon Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics (S. Kuznets KhNUE) is one of the leading economic and business education institutions in Ukraine (S. Kuznets KhNUE, 2024a). Founded in 1930, the university is named after the Nobel laureate economist Simon Kuznets, who was born in Kharkiv. S. Kuznets KhNUE is known for its strong emphasis on economics,

finance, business administration, and management studies. The university offers a range of undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs and is deeply involved in research related to economics and business, contributing significantly to Ukraine's economic policies and development (Fig. 12.7).



Fig. 12.7. Simon Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics before the war

Source: S. Kuznets KhNUE, 2024a

Kharkiv, being on the frontline of the conflict, has faced heavy shelling and destruction, and the university has not been immune to these challenges. Like other universities in the region, S. Kuznets KhNUE has faced significant disruptions due to the ongoing war (Fig. 12.8).

Many students and faculty members have been forced to leave the city, relocating to safer areas within Ukraine or abroad. This displacement has created logistical challenges for maintaining regular classes and academic activities.

While the university's physical infrastructure has been damaged in certain areas, S. Kuznets KhNUE's central facilities have managed to sustain some continuity. However, ongoing threats of conflict in the region have made it difficult to plan for the full resumption of in-person classes.

As an economic research hub, S. Kuznets KhNUE had numerous collaborations with international academic institutions and business partners. The war has disrupted many of these partnerships, although efforts are being made to maintain them through remote collaboration.

Adaptation and Response

Despite the challenges, S. Kuznets KhNUE has shown remarkable resilience by adopting various strategies to continue its academic operations during wartime.

Like many other universities, S. Kuznets KhNUE quickly transitioned to online learning platforms to ensure the continuation of academic programs. The university's strong focus on business and economics has made this transition relatively smooth for theoretical courses.



Fig. 12.8. Simon Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics. The destruction brought by the war (the picture was made by the author)

Faculty have adapted to delivering their content through digital platforms such as Zoom, Moodle, and Google Classroom. This has allowed the university to keep most of its coursework on schedule despite the challenging circumstances.

S. Kuznets KhNUE has sought to strengthen its international collaborations with universities and institutions outside Ukraine. Through partnerships with universities in Europe and beyond, the university has facilitated exchange programs, allowing students to continue their studies abroad temporarily or participate in joint degree programs (S. Kuznets KhNUE, 2024a).

International organizations have also provided financial support and scholarships to displaced students and those affected by the war, ensuring they can continue their education without interruptions. The university has adapted its research agenda to focus on the current economic challenges facing Ukraine due to the war. Topics such as the economic impact of the conflict, post-war reconstruction, and rebuilding Ukraine's economy have become central themes in the university's research efforts. Faculty members and students are involved in projects aimed at analyzing Ukraine's wartime economy, developing strategies for economic recovery, and studying global supply chain disruptions caused by the war.

Recognizing the critical role of entrepreneurship in times of crisis, S. Kuznets KhNUE has introduced new programs and courses related to crisis management, business continuity, and resilience during economic downturns. These programs aim to equip students with the skills needed to help businesses survive in the war-affected economy and to contribute to Ukraine's long-term economic recovery (S. Kuznets KhNUE, 2024c).

The university has implemented mental health support services, recognizing the psychological toll that the war is taking on students and staff. Virtual counseling services, peer support networks, and well-being workshops have been made available to help the university community cope with the trauma of war. Financial assistance and flexible learning options are also provided to students who are facing difficulties, whether through scholarships or through the provision of additional resources for those in need (S. Kuznets KhNUE, 2024a).

Looking ahead, Simon Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics is expected to play a significant role in Ukraine's post-war economic reconstruction. S. Kuznets KhNUE's expertise in economics will be critical in advising the government on economic policies for rebuilding the nation (S. Kuznets KhNUE, 2024a). The university's research into economic recovery

strategies will provide valuable insights for Ukraine’s policymakers. As the country rebuilds, entrepreneurship and innovation will be key drivers of economic recovery. The university is well-positioned to train the next generation of business leaders and entrepreneurs who will help restart and grow the war-damaged economy.

Post-war Ukraine will rely heavily on foreign investment and rebuilding its international trade networks. S. Kuznets KhNUE’s international relationships and focus on global economics will be instrumental in preparing students for the task of reintegrating Ukraine into the global economy. The university’s focus on economics and management makes it uniquely suited to study and contribute to the rebuilding of infrastructure, industries, and public services after the war. Programs related to public policy, finance, and development economics will help shape Ukraine’s post-war recovery plans.

S. Kuznets KhNUE offers a wide range of opportunities that enhance both local and international academic experiences for students (Table 12.1).

Table 12.1. Local and international academic experiences opportunities for students at S. Kuznets KhNUE

Opportunities	Description
Dual diploma programs	Students have the opportunity to earn dual diplomas through collaborative programs with international universities, allowing them to gain qualifications that are recognized both in Ukraine and abroad. The fruitful collaboration since 2005 with the University of Lyon-2, France, laid the foundation for the launch of dual-degree programs in “Business Informatics” and “Tourism.” An Italian-Ukrainian dual-degree program was also established in the fields of “International Business” (Simon Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics) and “Global Economy and Business” (UNICAS, Italy) in partnership with the University of Cassino and Southern Lazio (Italy).
Academic mobility programs	The university participates in various academic mobility initiatives, such as Erasmus+, which enable students to study at partner institutions in other countries for a semester or more, expanding their academic and cultural horizons. For example academic mobility for lecturers in 2024, Friedrich Alexander University (FAU) (Germany).

Opportunities	Description
International projects	Simon Kuznets University is actively involved in international research and educational projects, collaborating with foreign institutions to address global challenges and contribute to advancements in education, technology, and economics.
Centres of international cooperation	These centres, where students can get dual diplomas, foster relationships between the university and institutions worldwide, promoting joint research, student exchanges, and cultural partnerships that strengthen the university's global presence.
Internship programs	Students have access to internships both locally and internationally, helping them gain practical experience in their field of study and develop professional skills needed in a global workforce.
Lectures by foreign teachers	The university regularly invites professors and lecturers from leading international institutions to deliver guest lectures, exposing students to global perspectives and the latest developments in various academic disciplines.
The School of Robotics and Programming "IT-Dreams"	based at Simon Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics, is expanding and, alongside the IT-Kids project, is launching new initiatives under the IT-Sprint program. An open session was held at the school, featuring Alexander Voinov, a specialist from EPAM Ukraine. Under his guidance, participants explored the possibilities of Frontend development in just two hours.

Source: S. Kuznets KhNUE, 2024b, 2024c

These opportunities reflect S. Kuznets KhNUE's commitment to internationalization and academic excellence, aligning with global standards of HE. It is also worth noting that informal learning is very developed at the university.

The university offers a variety of informal education opportunities (S. Kuznets KhNUE, 2024b, 2024c), which complement formal academic programs and provide students with practical skills, global exposure, and personal development outside the traditional classroom setting (Table 12.2).

These informal educational experiences at S. Kuznets KhNUE help students broaden their learning beyond the academic curriculum and equip them with practical, applicable skills essential for their future careers.

Table 12.2. Informal learning opportunities of S. Kuznets KhNUE

Informal learning opportunities	Description
Workshops and Seminars	The university frequently organizes workshops on topics such as entrepreneurship, leadership, and digital skills. These events bring in professionals from different industries to offer insights into real-world challenges and opportunities.
Clubs and Student Organizations.	Students can participate in numerous clubs and societies, including economics and business clubs, cultural groups, and creative societies (The School of Robotics and Programming "IT-Dreams"). These provide opportunities for peer learning, teamwork, and project management, developing both personal and professional competencies. At the Kyiv cinema "Zhovten," the award ceremony for the winners of the international documentary and feature film festival <i>Kharkiv Meets Docs Eastern Ukrainian Film Festival</i> (KMDE UFF) and the 6th <i>Independent Ukrainian Short Film Festival "Bardak"</i> took place. Oleksii Yeroshenko, a student at Simon Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics, Faculty of International Relations and Journalism, specializing in 061 "Journalism," received the main prize from the Ukrainian Film Critics Association for his film <i>The Storyteller</i>. From July 25 to 29, 2024, Rodion Overko, a first-year student of the Faculty of International Relations and Journalism at Simon Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics, specializing in 052 "Political Science," participated in the All-Ukrainian Volunteer Youth Exchange <i>VidNOVA:UA</i>. As part of the initiative, 30 volunteers from across Ukraine contributed to the restoration of a youth veteran center in the village of Onykieve, Kirovohrad region.
Soft Skills Training.	Simon Kuznets emphasizes the development of soft skills such as communication, problem-solving, and critical thinking. These programs (career lab) are often offered through career services, student clubs, or extracurricular activities and aim to equip students for the modern job market. From the career lab "Soft & Hard Skills of an IT Manager" – Yulia Khalaberda, Interim DM at ITOMYCH STUDIO. Podcast: Soft and Hard Skills in Modern Business and Education – Vyacheslav Laptev and Yulia Sotnikova.
Hackathons and Case Competitions.	The university organizes and participates in various hackathons, business simulations, and case competitions that allow students to solve real-world problems in a collaborative environment, enhancing their analytical and creative skills. From June 3 to 7, 2024, a training session on best practices at the University of Alicante (UA) in Spain took place as part of the DigiUni project (" <i>The Digital University – Open Ukrainian Initiative</i> ").

Informal learning opportunities	Description
Public Lectures and Guest Speakers	Beyond formal lectures, the university hosts public lectures by industry experts, foreign educators, and entrepreneurs, offering students access to diverse perspectives and contemporary issues in economics, business, and technology.
International studying platforms	the university community can access thousands of courses across various disciplines, enhancing both teaching and learning (Coursera, the HURMA platform is one of the most popular HR management systems in Ukraine, functioning as an HRM system, CRM for recruitment, and HR processes etc).

Source: S. Kuznets KhNUE, 2024b, 2024c

S. Kuznets KhNUE has an agreement with Coursera that provides free access to all students and lecturers. Through this partnership, the university community can access thousands of courses across various disciplines, enhancing both teaching and learning. This initiative allows students and faculty to earn certificates in relevant fields without additional costs, supporting lifelong learning and continuous professional development.

By leveraging Coursera's extensive library, students can improve their knowledge in areas like economics, business, data science, and technology, while lecturers can access specialized training and instructional tools to enhance their teaching methodologies. This agreement aligns with the university's efforts to maintain high-quality education even in challenging circumstances, such as the ongoing conflict, by integrating digital and global resources into its curriculum.

So, S. Kuznets KhNUE continues to be a cornerstone of Ukraine's HE in economics, business, and management. Despite the immense challenges posed by the war, the university's adaptability and resilience are helping it continue to educate future leaders and contribute to vital economic research. Its role in post-war reconstruction, particularly in economic recovery and policy development, will be crucial in helping Ukraine rebuild and move forward.

National Technical University “Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute”

Founded in 1885, National Technical University “Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute” (NTU “KhPI”) is one of the leading technical universities in

Ukraine, specializing in engineering, IT, physics, and other technical disciplines (NTU “KhPI”, 2024). It has strong ties with industries and is known for its research and innovation.

The war has severely impacted the university’s infrastructure and research facilities. Many students and staff members have been displaced, while laboratories and research centres have faced interruptions. Despite the challenges, NTU “KhPI” has adapted by shifting to online learning platforms, particularly for theoretical courses. Efforts have been made to relocate some research activities to safer areas of Ukraine. Additionally, the university has established partnerships with international institutions to allow students to complete their education abroad if needed.

Kharkiv National Medical University

Kharkiv National Medical University (KNMU), established in 1805, is one of the premier medical institutions in Ukraine (KNMU, 2024). It trains thousands of medical professionals, including a large number of international students. The university focuses on medical, dental, and pharmaceutical studies and is renowned for its clinical research.

Medical education has been significantly disrupted by the war, with clinics and hospitals in Kharkiv facing immense pressure due to the influx of war casualties. The university has faced challenges in maintaining practical training for medical students. KNMU has shifted much of its coursework online, but practical training remains a challenge due to the need for hands-on experience in clinical settings. Some students have been relocated to other cities for practical placements, and the university has sought international partnerships to provide students with alternative clinical training options.

Kharkiv National University of Radioelectronics

Kharkiv National University of Radioelectronics (NURE), established in 1930, is a leading university specializing in IT, telecommunications, and electronic engineering (NURE, 2024). It is known for producing graduates skilled in cutting-edge technologies and for its strong research initiatives in electronics and cybernetics.

The conflict has significantly disrupted KNURE's operations, particularly its research activities in technology-related fields. Many students and faculty members have been displaced, and some facilities have suffered damage. KNURE has transitioned to remote learning, with many of its programs being offered online. The university has also fostered partnerships with tech companies and universities abroad to continue research and development projects. Additionally, KNURE has focused on cybersecurity and information technology projects that have become even more crucial during wartime.

Kharkiv National University of Internal Affairs

Kharkiv National University of Internal Affairs (KhNUIA) trains specialists in law enforcement, security, and public administration (KhNUIA, 2024). KhNUIA plays a crucial role in training Ukraine's future police officers, investigators, and public administrators. With law enforcement and public safety becoming more critical during the conflict, the university has faced pressure to train professionals to address wartime and post-war needs. However, security concerns and displacement of students and faculty have interrupted normal operations.

KhNUIA has introduced new curricula focused on crisis management, public safety in war zones, and legal frameworks for conflict situations. Online education has become a key tool, and the university is coordinating with international law enforcement agencies for training and support.

Thus, the above universities and many others in the Kharkiv region are subject to many challenges (Table 12.3), where solutions are also proposed. The challenges are immense, but Ukraine's HE system is showing resilience, with a strong push toward innovative solutions and international collaboration that is keeping the education system afloat during this difficult time.

The war in Ukraine has had a devastating impact on the country's education system, particularly in regions like Kharkiv, which has faced significant military action. Universities in the Kharkiv region are dealing with immense challenges ranging from infrastructural damage to displacement of students and faculty. Despite these challenges, institutions are striving to maintain the quality of education

by leveraging the framework of the UN SDG, particularly Goal 4: Quality Education. Despite these challenges, universities in the Kharkiv region are working to uphold the quality of education by aligning their strategies with the UN SDG framework, particularly Goal 4: Quality Education (UN SDGs, 2024b).

Having identified the key challenges and difficulties, it is necessary to provide recommendations that can support HE in the Kharkiv region.

Table 12.3. Major Challenges for universities during wartime

Infrastructural Damage	Displacement of Students and Faculty	Digital Divide and Limited Access to Technology	Mental Health Struggles
The war has resulted in extensive damage to university infrastructure in Kharkiv. Several institutions, including Simon Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics, have faced destruction of buildings, libraries, and laboratories. According to reports, more than 60 HEIs across Ukraine have suffered significant damage or destruction, with many universities in the Kharkiv region among the hardest hit (UNESCO, 2023).	A substantial number of students and academic staff have been displaced due to the conflict. According to a study by the Ministry of Education of Ukraine, more than 40 % of university students have had to flee their homes, significantly disrupting their academic progress. Many faculty members have relocated or have been unable to continue their teaching duties due to the direct impact of the war (UNICEF, 2023).	With many universities transitioning to online learning, challenges related to the digital divide have become more pronounced. In regions like Kharkiv, frequent power outages, poor internet connectivity, and limited access to digital devices have made it difficult for students and teachers to engage in remote education. A report from the Ukrainian Ministry of Education showed that 30 % of students in the region lack consistent access to the internet (UNESCO, 2023).	The psychological toll of the war is another significant challenge. Both students and staff are dealing with trauma, stress, and uncertainty, affecting their academic performance and engagement. Without adequate mental health support, it is difficult to sustain quality education in such an environment.

Infrastructural Damage	Displacement of Students and Faculty	Digital Divide and Limited Access to Technology	Mental Health Struggles
<i>Infrastructure Rehabilitation and Safe Learning Spaces (UN SDG 4.A)</i>	<i>Digital Transformation and Remote Learning (UN SDG 4.3)</i>	<i>International Collaboration and Student Mobility (UN SDG 4.B)</i>	<i>Psychosocial Support and Mental Health Services (UN SDG 4.7)</i>
Several universities have begun collaborating with international organizations like UNICEF and UNESCO to rebuild and upgrade educational facilities. Temporary structures and remote learning platforms have been established to ensure continuity of education. For example, Simon Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics has adopted digital learning platforms to offer online courses while simultaneously exploring options for safe, temporary physical classrooms.	To mitigate the disruption caused by war, universities in Kharkiv have expanded their digital learning capabilities. Through partnerships with international universities and organizations, institutions have adopted online platforms like Moodle and Zoom to provide remote education. This transition aligns with UN SDG 4.3, which advocates for equal access to affordable and quality technical, vocational, and tertiary education.	Many universities in Kharkiv have established partnerships with European institutions to support student mobility. Programs like the “Twinning” initiative, which pairs Ukrainian universities with international counterparts, have enabled students to continue their studies abroad or access joint programs, helping them achieve their academic goals despite the war (UNESCO, 2023).	Universities in Kharkiv have also focused on providing mental health support to students and staff. Online counseling services, peer support groups, and workshops focusing on emotional well-being are being offered. These efforts align with UN SDG 4.7, which emphasizes the importance of education that promotes emotional resilience and mental health.

Source: UN SDGs, 2024b

Recommendations for Supporting HE in the Kharkiv Region

Analysing the situation in the Kharkiv region and in Ukraine as a whole, recommendations are offered to support the quality of education in HEIs (Table 12.4).

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs), particularly Goal 4: Quality Education, can play a vital role in supporting education in Ukraine, especially in war-affected areas like the Kharkiv region. With the conflict severely disrupting educational systems, the UN SDG framework offers a roadmap for both immediate relief and long-term recovery (UN SDGs, 2024a, 2024b).

Table 12.4. Recommendations for Supporting HE in the Kharkiv Region

Recommendation	Description
Expand Digital Infrastructure	To address the digital divide, universities should seek more international assistance in expanding digital infrastructure. This includes the provision of laptops, tablets, and portable internet devices, particularly for students in rural and war-affected areas. Collaborating with technology firms to establish satellite internet in remote areas could help mitigate connectivity issues.
Increase Mental Health Support	Universities should strengthen partnerships with international mental health organizations to provide more robust psychological support to students and staff. Funding for counselling services, trauma-informed teaching practices, and peer support groups will help address the mental health crisis.
Establish International Scholarship Programs	More scholarship programs should be created to allow displaced students from Kharkiv to continue their education abroad. Additionally, universities could increase opportunities for virtual student exchanges, allowing Ukrainian students to access resources and courses from international institutions while remaining in the country.
Long-term Infrastructure Rebuilding	The government, with the help of international donors and organizations, should prioritize the rebuilding of damaged university facilities. These efforts should not only focus on physical infrastructure but also incorporate modern, disaster-resilient designs that cater to the evolving educational landscape.
Foster Global Academic Collaborations	Establish long-term collaborations with international universities to support research, faculty exchanges, and joint degree programs. This would ensure that Ukrainian universities, even in conflict zones, remain connected to the global academic community and continue producing world-class research and graduates.
Decentralized Learning Hubs	Establish a network of decentralized learning hubs in safer, rural areas around Kharkiv, where students can access technology, learning materials, and mentorship. These hubs could be mobile or temporary, allowing displaced students to continue their studies in a safe environment while being connected to university resources via remote platforms.

Recommendation	Description
War-Emergency Micro-Curriculum	Develop a “war-emergency micro-curriculum” focused on practical skills such as crisis management, conflict resolution, mental health first aid, and entrepreneurship in post-war recovery. This curriculum can be tailored to provide both short-term coping mechanisms for students and long-term skills that contribute to Ukraine’s post-war reconstruction efforts.
Hybrid International Joint Research Programs	Create hybrid international research programs that allow faculty and students from Kharkiv universities to collaborate on global issues with foreign universities. This would allow Kharkiv researchers to continue their work despite the war while integrating their unique perspectives and challenges into broader global academic discourse.
Blockchain for Credential Security	Implement and improve blockchain technology to secure and validate academic credentials and transcripts for students in conflict zones. This ensures that students who are displaced or whose universities are damaged can still verify their academic achievements, making it easier to transfer credits or continue education abroad.
Virtual Internships with Global Corporations	Partner with multinational companies to offer virtual internships for students from Kharkiv. These internships would allow students to gain real-world experience without needing to leave conflict zones, preparing them for the global job market while ensuring safety.
University-Led Psychosocial Support Networks	Establish a university-wide initiative to train students and faculty in basic psychosocial support, creating peer-led networks that offer emotional and mental health assistance to those affected by the war. This can foster resilience within the university community and offer scalable mental health support across the region.
Green Campus Rebuilding Post-War	Post-conflict, prioritize rebuilding university campuses with sustainable and disaster-resilient architecture, including green energy solutions and environmental sustainability measures. This could position Kharkiv universities as leaders in eco-friendly reconstruction efforts and set a global example for education in post-war recovery.
Crisis-Driven Innovation Labs	Launch “crisis-driven innovation labs” where students work on real-world problems related to conflict recovery, logistics, and rebuilding Ukraine. These labs can focus on practical solutions for local issues and tie into international funding for innovation projects, allowing students to contribute directly to Ukraine’s recovery while continuing their studies.

The UN SDGs, especially Goal 4, offer a comprehensive framework that can help Ukraine, and particularly the Kharkiv region, to overcome the challenges posed by the war. The UN SDG framework can support Ukraine's resilience and recovery by focusing on rebuilding infrastructure, enhancing digital learning, supporting displaced students and teachers, and ensuring inclusive, equitable, and quality education (UN SDGs, 2024b).

Through partnerships with international organizations, local governments, and educational institutions, the UN SDGs can help lay the foundation for a robust educational system that will not only survive the current crisis but emerge stronger and more adaptable in the future. Table 12.5 presents ways in which the UN SDGs can contribute to maintaining and improving the quality of education in Kharkiv during and after the war.

When analyzing university governance, integrated governance emerges. Integrated governance in HE represents a holistic approach to managing institutions by combining academic, business, and corporate governance into a unified framework. This approach ensures that all aspects of institutional management work harmoniously to achieve resilience, innovation, and sustainability, particularly in times of crisis.

Table 12.5. Ways in which the UN SDGs can contribute to maintaining and improving the quality of education in Kharkiv during and after the war

Indica-tors	Subgoals	Actions	Explanation of the actions
Emergency Support and Infrastructure Recovery	Goal 4.1: Ensure free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education. Goal 4.A: Build and upgrade educational facilities that are child-friendly, disability-sensitive, and safe for all.	Rebuilding Schools, universities, Temporary Learning Spaces, Provision of Educational Materials	Partnering with international organizations like UNICEF and UNESCO, the UN SDGs can help rebuild damaged schools and universities in Kharkiv, providing safe and inclusive learning environments. While permanent schools are being reconstructed, the UN SDG framework can promote the establishment of temporary learning spaces to ensure the continuation of education for displaced students. Donating textbooks, e-learning devices, and other essential learning materials to schools that have lost their resources due to the conflict.

Indica-tors	Subgoals	Actions	Explanation of the actions
Digital and Remote Learning Enhancement	Goal 4.3: Ensure equal access to affordable and quality technical, vocational, and tertiary education. Goal 4.4: Increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills for employment, decent jobs, and entrepreneurship.	Expansion of Online Learning Platforms, Infrastructure for Remote Learning, Teacher, Lecturer Training	Promote partnerships with tech companies and educational institutions to scale up digital learning platforms in Ukraine, ensuring that students in Kharkiv have access to quality online education. Support the enhancement of digital infrastructure such as internet access and electricity, particularly for students in rural or conflict-affected areas. Provide training for teachers on how to deliver effective online education and use digital tools to engage students remotely.
Support for Displaced Students and Teachers	Goal 4.5: Eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education for vulnerable populations.	Education for Displaced Populations, Scholarships and Financial Support, Mental Health and Well-being Support	Coordinate with humanitarian organizations to ensure that displaced children and youth in Kharkiv and neighboring regions continue their education, whether through local schools, temporary educational programs, or online platforms. Create scholarships or financial aid programs specifically for displaced students, allowing them to continue their education despite financial and logistical challenges. Integrate psychological support and trauma counseling into educational programs to help students and teachers cope with the mental health impacts of war.
Strengthening HE and Vocational Training	Goal 4.3: Ensure access to affordable and quality HE. Goal 4.4: Increase the number of people with relevant skills for decent work and entrepreneurship.	International Collaboration for Universities, Rebuilding Research Infrastructure, Vocational Training Programs	Foster partnerships between Kharkiv universities (e.g., V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University, Simon Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics) and global academic institutions to provide exchange programs, remote courses, and joint research projects. Through global academic and research networks, help rebuild the research capabilities of universities in Kharkiv, particularly in areas critical to Ukraine's recovery, such as economics, healthcare, and engineering. Introduce vocational and technical training programs for young people,

PART 4. GOVERNANCE ASPECT OF ESG IN UNIVERSITIES

Indica-tors	Subgoals	Actions	Explanation of the actions
			with a focus on skills that will be vital for post-war reconstruction, such as construction, healthcare, technology, and business.
Education for Peace and Civic Engagement	Goal 4.7: Ensure all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including human rights, peace, and non-violence.	Civic Education Programs, Entrepreneurship and Leadership Skills	Introduce civic education and peacebuilding courses in schools to foster a sense of unity and promote non-violent conflict resolution. This is especially crucial for rebuilding a war-torn society. Develop programs that teach leadership, entrepreneurship, and innovation, helping students become active participants in rebuilding Ukraine's economy and civil society after the war.
Inclusive and Equitable Education	Goal 4.5: Ensure equal access to education for vulnerable groups, including children with disabilities, minorities, and those affected by conflict.	Support for Vulnerable Groups, Gender Equality in Education	Ensure that children with disabilities, orphans, and those who have been directly affected by the war receive tailored educational support. This can include specialized learning materials, access to online resources, and targeted financial aid. Promote gender equality in education by encouraging equal participation of girls and young women, especially in fields where they are underrepresented, such as STEM.
Policy and Governance Support	Goal 4.C: Increase the supply of qualified teachers and improve the education policy framework.	Capacity Building for Education Authorities, Teacher Recruitment and Training, Monitoring and Evaluation Systems	Provide technical assistance to the Ukrainian government and local authorities in Kharkiv to help them design policies that address the unique educational challenges caused by the war. Encourage the recruitment of more teachers, particularly in conflict-affected areas, and support professional development programs to ensure they are equipped to handle the unique challenges of wartime education. Establish systems to monitor the quality of education in the Kharkiv region, ensuring that both in-person and remote learning maintain high standards.

Source: UN SDGs, 2024b

At its core, integrated governance prioritizes aligning the academic mission of an institution with its operational and strategic needs. It ensures that decisions about curriculum, research, and teaching methodologies are directly connected to financial and infrastructural realities. For example, introducing innovative learning methods such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Virtual Reality (VR), and Augmented Reality (AR) not only enhances academic quality but also demonstrates efficient resource utilization and forward-looking operational planning.

Integrated governance also emphasizes the interconnectedness of financial and infrastructural strategies with social responsibility. Institutions must balance income generation through grants, partnerships, and scholarships with investments in safe learning environments, psychological support systems, and inclusive policies for displaced students. By integrating these elements, HEIs can create a supportive and adaptable ecosystem that benefits both the academic community and society at large.

Furthermore, integrated governance includes strategic planning and risk management as central components. Institutions must develop flexible, short- and long-term plans that address current challenges, such as rebuilding after crises while positioning themselves to seize opportunities for innovation and global collaboration. This involves fostering international partnerships, enhancing faculty expertise, and promoting research that addresses urgent societal needs.

Ultimately, integrated governance enables HEIs to operate cohesively, ensuring that academic excellence, financial sustainability, and social responsibility reinforce one another (Fig. 12.10). This unified approach makes HEIs more resilient and capable of driving meaningful change, even in the face of complex and unpredictable challenges.

Under academic governance, the emphasis is on modernizing educational content and methods. This includes revising academic disciplines to meet current needs, balancing theoretical and practical education, and expanding research to contribute to the rebuilding of Kharkiv and Ukraine. It highlights adopting innovative approaches such as using AI, VR, and AR to replace destroyed laboratory facilities, improving foreign language education, and increasing access to global platforms like Coursera. The academic focus also includes developing retraining programs

for displaced workers, strengthening international exchange programs, and initiating projects with forced migrants.

Business governance addresses financial sustainability and operational efficiency. It stresses the importance of financial autonomy for HEIs, improving faculty salaries, expanding grants and scholarships, and forming partnerships with businesses for internships. Enhancing resource utilization is key, emphasizing cloud-based resources, digital document management, and flexibility in working and studying hours. HEIs are encouraged to open branches abroad and redefine resource management strategies to support displaced students further.

Corporate governance focuses on resilience and social responsibility. This includes developing strategic risk management plans, safeguarding infrastructure such as bomb shelters and safe learning spaces and ensuring the continuity of education through robust distance-learning systems. Psychological support is prioritized, with mental health resources, retreats, and the expansion of psychological support services for students and staff. HEIs are encouraged to foster social responsibility by involving the academic community in volunteer programs, supporting war victims, and recruiting faculty from other regions to maintain workforce balance and introduce new ideas. Overall, the strategy integrates these governance areas to create a resilient, innovative, and socially responsible education system adapted to the challenges of war and crisis.

Fig. 12.9 outlines a comprehensive strategy for managing and enhancing HEIs during crises, focusing on three interconnected governance areas: academic, business, and corporate governance. The outlined strategy highlights how HEIs can adapt to and address the challenges posed by crises such as war, focusing on resilience, innovation, and social responsibility. By integrating academic, business, and corporate governance, HEIs can ensure continuity and growth even in the most challenging circumstances.

On the academic front, modernization and innovation are essential. Updating curricula, introducing new teaching methods, and expanding research to meet contemporary needs allow HEIs to remain relevant and impactful. Leveraging digital tools like AI, VR, and AR helps maintain educational quality and practical training in environments where infrastructure is compromised. Strengthening international cooperation

through exchange programs, access to global platforms, and retraining opportunities ensures inclusivity and broad access to education.

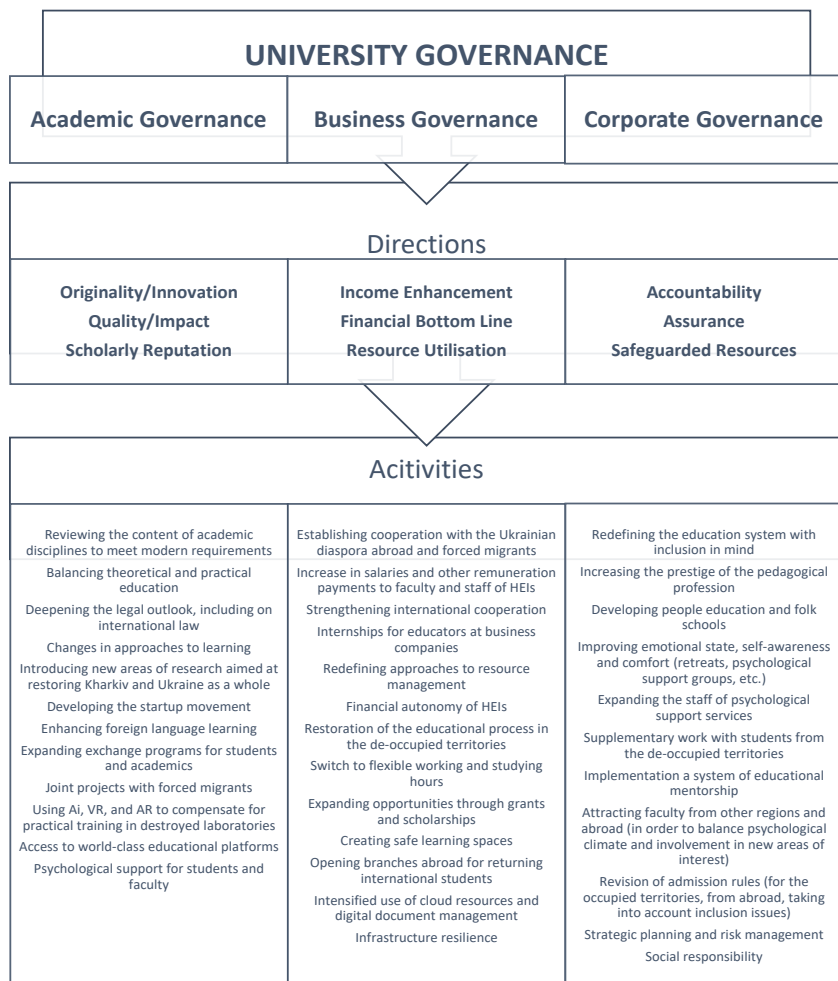


Fig. 12.9. Comprehensive strategy for managing and enhancing HEIs during crises

Source: Hundal, S., Eskola, A., Wahlgren, A., 2020

Financial sustainability and operational efficiency are equally critical. Achieving financial autonomy, optimizing resource utilization, and forging partnerships with businesses and international organizations help stabilize and grow HEIs. Expanding grants and scholarships promotes inclusivity, while opening branches abroad supports displaced students and sustains the educational process.

Resilience in infrastructure and a commitment to social responsibility are also paramount. Protecting and upgrading facilities, including creating safe learning spaces and robust distance-learning systems, fosters security and continuity. Psychological support for students and staff ensures mental well-being, while social responsibility initiatives – such as volunteer programs and partnerships with local communities – strengthen the role of HEIs in national recovery and rebuilding efforts.

Strategic planning and risk management are key to ensuring flexibility, innovation, and long-term stability. These governance strategies position HEIs as not only capable of overcoming crises but also as pivotal agents of societal resilience and recovery. By integrating the governance approach, HEIs can transform adversity into an opportunity for progress and development.

Conclusions

The war in Ukraine has profoundly impacted HEIs, particularly those in frontline regions like Kharkiv. Despite the immense challenges, including physical destruction, displacement, and interruptions to traditional educational processes, Kharkiv's universities have demonstrated remarkable resilience and adaptability. They have swiftly transitioned to digital and hybrid learning models, leveraging technology to ensure academic continuity while addressing the needs of students and faculty during a time of crisis.

A key conclusion is that maintaining academic quality in wartime requires a flexible and innovative approach to education. Universities in Kharkiv have adopted new pedagogical methods, utilized digital platforms, and redefined evaluation systems to adapt to the realities of remote learning. However, significant challenges remain, such as unstable internet connections, a lack of access to practical training facilities, and the emotional toll of war on students and faculty.

International cooperation has played a critical role in supporting Kharkiv's universities. Initiatives like the "Twinning" program and assistance from global organizations have provided essential resources, financial aid, and collaborative opportunities. These partnerships have been instrumental in sustaining educational services and supporting displaced students and staff.

The ongoing commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (quality education) has guided universities in maintaining their educational mission. By aligning their efforts with global goals, Kharkiv's HEIs have not only continued to deliver education but have also reinforced their dedication to social responsibility and resilience.

Kharkiv's universities have proven their ability to adapt to extreme circumstances and uphold their academic mission, even in wartime. Their efforts reflect the resilience and determination of Ukraine's higher education sector. However, continued support from the international community, further innovation in remote and hybrid education, and strategies to address practical training gaps will be crucial for ensuring that these institutions can continue to thrive and contribute to the recovery and rebuilding of the region.

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