

University Grants Commission (UGC), Nepal

Request for Proposals (RFP)

Student Outmigration from Nepal: Drivers and Policy Responses

Duration: Up to 5 months | Location: Nepal

Issue Date: December 16, 2025

1. Background and Rationale

The University Grants Commission (UGC), established in 1993, is an autonomous government body in Nepal responsible for financing, policy, regulation, and quality assurance in higher education. Despite ongoing reforms under the government's National Higher Education Program (NHEP 2021/22 - 2025/26), partly supported by the Nurturing Excellence in Higher Education Program (NEHEP), Nepal is currently experiencing a significant and escalating trend of student outmigration for tertiary education. UGC seeks to understand why students, mainly Grade 12 or equivalent level graduates as well as university dropouts, choosing foreign universities over domestic options and to identify actionable measures to address the issue including to retain students.

2. Objectives

- Diagnose drivers behind student decisions to study abroad versus enroll domestically and/or migrate for work, including intention after studying abroad.
- Quantify the relative importance of key factors (quality, relevance, digital facilities, career orientation, employability, research opportunities, cost of living and tuitions, scholarships, job opportunities while studying, mobility aspirations, social, parental/peer pressure, economic needs).
- Identify the perceived weaknesses of Nepal's higher education system responsible for the student drop-outs and outmigration.
- Identify heterogeneity across gender, income, province, and school type.
- Benchmark Nepal against neighboring countries.
- Recommend prioritized measures to increase enrollment of the students and completion of their academic programs that the Government, UGC and universities can implement.

3. Scope of Work

- **Diagnostic Review:** Analyze administrative data (No Objection Certificate (NOC) issuance,¹ enrollment trends, and scholarships), trends in South Asian countries.
- **Primary Research:**
 - Surveys of Grade 12 or equivalent graduates, and recent dropouts from universities and colleges,
 - Focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) with students, parents, universities, higher education institutions, employers, and agents².
 - Surveys of Nepal-based foreign embassies and consulates of destination countries.

¹ In Nepal, students intending to study abroad must obtain a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. This certificate confirms that the government has no objection to the student pursuing higher education overseas and is typically required for university admission, visa processing, and foreign currency approval. NOC issuance data will be a key source for estimating the scale and trends of student outmigration.

² Agents refer to education consultancy firms or individual facilitators who assist students in applying to foreign universities.

- Surveys of Nepal's embassies and consulates in destination countries.
- **Policy Analysis:** Review GoN policies, UGC regulations, financing mechanisms, quality assurance systems, academia-industry collaboration, student support services, and support to educated returnees with foreign degrees.
- **Validation:** Conduct stakeholder workshop and finalize recommendations.

4. Methodology

- Mixed-methods approach combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews.
- Stratified sampling across provinces and school & HEIs types.
- Ethical protocols for informed consent and data protection.

5. Deliverables

1. **Inception Report** (Week 2)
2. **Survey Instruments & Ethics Protocol** (Week 3)
3. **Cleaned Dataset & Codebook** (Week 12)
4. **Analytical Report** (Week 16)
5. **Policy Options Note** (Week 17)
6. **Validation Workshop** (Week 18)
7. **Presentation of Findings to UGC** (Week 19).
8. **Final Report & Executive Brief** (Week 20)

6. Duration

Up to **5 months** with indicative timeline:

- Weeks 1–2: Mobilization & inception
- Weeks 3–12: Fieldwork
- Weeks 13–16: Analysis
- Weeks 17–20: Validation & finalization

7. Team Qualifications

Relevant university research centers mobilizing research team with:

- **Team Leader:** 10+ years in higher education policy/ financing /QA/accreditation; strong research leadership.
- **Survey Methodologist/Data Analyst:** Expertise in sampling, econometrics, large-scale surveys.
- **Qualitative Researcher:** Skilled in FGDs/KIIs and thematic analysis.
- **Labor Market Specialist:** Knowledge of employer engagement and graduate employability.
- **Local Field Coordinators:** Nepali language fluency and fieldwork experience.
- **Research Assistants :** Master level students (interns eligible)

8. Proposal Submission Requirements

- **Technical Proposal**
 - Understanding of ToR and objectives
 - Detailed methodology and work plan
 - Team composition and CVs
 - Ethics and data protection plan
- **Financial Proposal**
 - Itemized budget including fieldwork, workshops, and dissemination costs

9. Evaluation Criteria

- **Technical Approach (50%)**: Methodology, feasibility, innovation
- **Relevant Experience (20%)**: Higher education policy, similar studies
- **Team Qualifications (20%)**: Expertise and roles
- **Financial Proposal (10%)**: Cost-effectiveness and clarity

10. Submission Details

- **Deadline**: January 16, 2026
- **Email for Submission**: research@ugcnepal.edu.np
- **Subject Line**: "Proposal – UGC Student Outmigration Study"