# Transforming our relationship with nature is key to a sustainable future

**Pr. Halima Mahjoubi, UTM, SDG 4 Ambassador**

The University of Tunis El Manar (UTM) is actively committed to contributing to Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which aims to ensure inclusive, equitable, and quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities. UTM's initiatives to address the imperatives of SDG 4 include:

## 1. Expanded and Equitable Access to Education

The University of Tunis El Manar (UTM) has made significant efforts in digital infrastructure and training to ensure equitable access to quality education for all students:

**Internet Access and Campus Wi-Fi Points**: UTM has established an extensive network of Wi-Fi access points across its campuses to provide stable and accessible internet connectivity for all students. This infrastructure aims to create a conducive environment for online research, access to digital resources, and online courses. In 2023, UTM reported that 60% of its classrooms and study spaces were equipped with high-performance Wi-Fi access points, a 20% increase from 2021, in response to the growing demand for digital resources in higher education.

**Distance Learning:** The university has developed an online course platform that allows students to access educational resources, attend courses remotely, and interact with instructors outside in-person classes. This initiative was particularly strengthened during the Covid-19 pandemic and has been maintained to enhance inclusivity and flexibility in learning. Currently, 15% of the core courses are available in hybrid or fully online formats, facilitating course access for those who cannot physically attend campus.

# Transforming our relationship with nature is key to a sustainable future

**Instructor Training:** UTM also invests in training its faculty to master digital educational technologies and distance teaching. In 2023, nearly 40% of instructors participated in at least one training session on online learning platforms and digital teaching tools, enabling them to deliver interactive and accessible courses, thereby promoting inclusive and quality teaching

## 2. Quality Assurance in Education

To meet SDG 4's quality education goals, UTM has developed several targeted initiatives, incorporating mechanisms such as joint supervision, international exchanges, and strategic partnerships to enhance higher education quality assurance.

**Joint Supervision**: UTM promotes joint PhD supervision to enrich doctoral students' guidance through internationally renowned professors. This allows PhD candidates to benefit from diverse perspectives and expertise, contributing to a high standard of research quality. Joint supervision also encourages in-depth collaboration with partner universities, facilitating access to international research networks and shared resources. The number of joint-supervised theses increases annually, reaching 15 in 2023.

**International Exchanges:** Through programs such as Erasmus+ and 140 bilateral agreements, UTM fosters academic and professional mobility. These exchanges offer students and faculty the opportunity to acquire new skills in an intercultural context, discover new teaching methods, and export Tunisian educational practices. This exchange strengthens the integration of global educational standards in UTM's curricula, boosting excellence and compliance with international quality standards.

**Strategic Partnerships:** UTM collaborates with higher education and research institutions, NGOs, and local companies such as API and international entities like GIZ to co-develop training, research, and development programs. These partnerships enrich program content, integrate training modules aligned with market needs and societal challenges, and ensure that programs meet international quality assurance standards. The number of conventions in this framework is 20.

**Interdisciplinarity and International Openness:** UTM diversifies its educational offerings through interdisciplinary programs like the ENIT-Faculty of Law Master's, courses in English, and dual degrees with foreign universities, such as the Advanced Technical Program (ENIT-ENSTA).

# Transforming our relationship with nature is key to a sustainable future

**STRENGTHENING UNIVERSITY STAFF SKILLS**

Three workshops have been organized, covering essential topics such as research center management and quality assurance, the ethical frameworks of scientific research, and the valorization of research results. These training sessions equipped participants with practical skills and in-depth knowledge in these key areas. https://dirasa.eu/formation-palerme-projets-eu-recherche/

**Scientific Research Ethics:**

Training on research ethics, held in Tabarka from November 22 to 24, 2023, aimed to popularize ethical frameworks and research activity standards, including codes of conduct and anti-plagiarism systems. The training was presented by experts from the University of Pavia and the University of Pisa and was attended by university leaders (vice-rectors for scientific research, deans, vice-deans), academic staff (faculty and researchers), and administrative leaders (research service directors and laboratory heads). Best practices acquired are perpetuated through cascade training for colleagues, with monitoring and potential audits conducted by European bodies.



**Training on European Projects:**

An intensive week-long training took place in Palermo, Italy, focused on European and international funding programs, particularly Horizon Europe. Participants learned to draft high-quality project proposals, set up budgets, and understand the proposal evaluation process. The training also emphasized Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) principles. https://dirasa.eu/formation-palerme-projets-eu-recherche

# Transforming our relationship with nature is key to a sustainable future

**4 QUALITY EDUCATION**

**Certifications and Accreditations:** UTM has implemented a rigorous quality monitoring system through the accreditation and certification of some of its institutions, ensuring education that meets international standards. (Six institutions certified ISO 21001, two institutions certified ISO 9001). The number of accredited institutions is increasing.

**Pedagogical Innovations:** The university integrates innovative teaching methods that promote active learning, the use of digital platforms, and distance education, complementing in-person classes to ensure flexible access to quality education. This includes training sessions on educational technologies and digital pedagogy for various university community members in Tunisia (decision-makers, technopedagogical support staff, faculty members).

https://appelsprojets.auf.org/appel-a-candidatures-2024-formations-technopedagogiques-de-lific/

**Tripartite Training: Tunisia - Japan - Africa**

This tripartite training, supervised by UTM, is part of a quality assurance approach in higher education, aimed at strengthening regional expertise in medical technologies. Under the Tunisia-Japan-Africa partnership, the second session of training for African trainers, completed on October 23, 2024, at the Cité des Sciences in Tunis, certified 18 participants.

from eight African countries. They benefited from a theoretical and practical program in medical technology management, delivered by professors from the Higher Institute of Medical Technologies of Tunis and experts from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). This initiative reflects UTM's commitment to promoting quality education and integrating advanced skills crucial to developing healthcare capacities in Africa.

**International Arab Conference on Quality Assurance in Higher Education**

The University of Tunis El Manar is honored to organize, in partnership with the Jordanian University of Ezzarka, the 11th Edition of the International Arab Conference on Quality Assurance in Higher Education, which will take place on November 8-9, 2023, at the Ramada Plaza Hotel in Gammarth. This conference will host a significant number of academic researchers from 16 Arab countries and aims to promote the culture of quality assurance and its practices within Arab universities. It is a peer-reviewed conference, with proceedings to be published in the Scopus database by an international publisher.



3. **Promoting Lifelong Learning**

**Continuing and Specialized Training**: UTM offers a wide range of continuing education programs for professionals, such as project management certifications (PRINCE2 and PMP), entrepreneurship training, and specialization courses in technology and innovation. An agreement with CNAM Paris supports this initiative.

# Transforming our relationship with nature is key to a sustainable future

**Entrepreneurship Support**: Initiatives like the student entrepreneur hub, innovation competitions, and entrepreneurship coaching encourage students to develop skills beyond the traditional academic framework (UTM INNOV competition held annually), and the establishment of a University Pole for Technological Innovation (PUIT).

**4. Initiatives for a Healthy and Inclusive Learning Environment**

**Health and Well-Being Awareness**: UTM has created video capsules to raise awareness about preventive measures and promote a safe return to campus after the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Taouhida Becheikh Health Center, located on UTM's campus, plays a central role in promoting a healthy and inclusive learning environment. This center is equipped to provide frontline health services to students, including medical consultations, psychological support, and emergency care. An annual survey is conducted to evaluate the quality of care and gather student feedback, which informs service adjustments to ensure high-quality care. The center also participates in awareness campaigns on mental health, disease prevention, and overall well-being, fostering a university environment focused on student health and safety.

# Transforming our relationship with nature is key to a sustainable future

**Cultural and Sports Activities:** Events such as the Badminton Championship in partnership with the national federation, Creative Theatre Day, and the Golden Company View Challenge (GCC) offer students opportunities to thrive in extracurricular settings, promoting holistic and balanced learning.
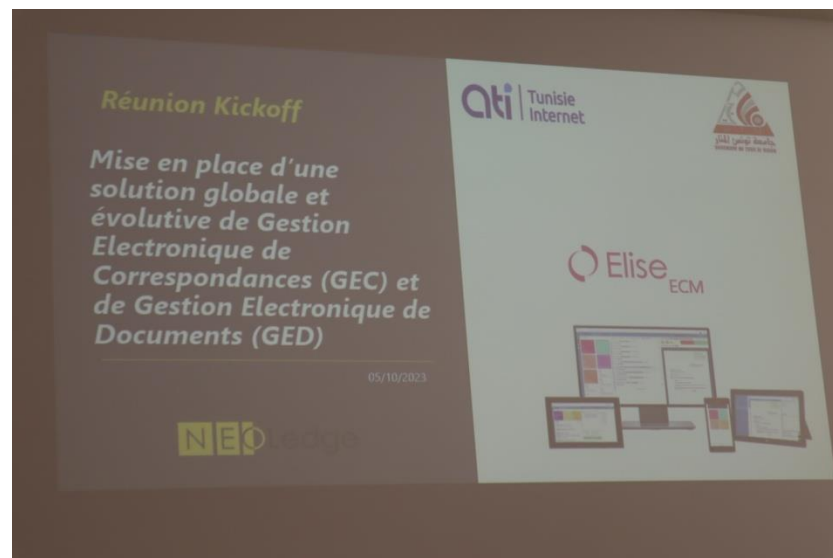
## 5. Information Systems for Modern Educational Management

Digital Platforms: UTM has implemented advanced digital tools for exam management, data analysis, electronic document management, and process digitization. These initiatives modernize university management and enhance the quality of the educational experience for everyone. (Acquisition of an electronic document management system and a correspondence management system.

## 6. In conclusion

The University of Tunis El Manar demonstrates a strong commitment to SDG 4 through a comprehensive and inclusive approach. By supporting initiatives focused on equity, quality, and lifelong learning, UTM significantly contributes to building a sustainable and resilient education system in Tunisia, aligned with international standards and responsive to socio-economic needs.