

UNESCO King Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa Prize for the Use of Information and Communication Technologies in Education

2026 Guidelines

Theme: Reimagining creativity and critical thinking with artificial intelligence

Deadline for nominations: 8 May 2026

Contents

2026 theme	1
Who can apply?	1
Eligibility criteria.....	1
Focus and scope	2
Selection criteria.....	2
For Candidates: How to submit an application and ask for a nomination?	3
For Nominating Entities - National Commissions for UNESCO and NGOs in official partnership with UNESCO: How to nominate?	5

2026 theme

The 2026 edition of the Prize focuses on the theme “**Reimagining creativity and critical thinking with artificial intelligence**”. It will recognize projects that demonstrate how teachers and learners in diverse contexts are engaging with artificial intelligence (AI) systems in ways that challenge the flattening effects of AI and encourage critical thinking, imagination and creativity with evidence-based practices. The Prize seeks to surface and spotlight best practices that resist creativity offload and instead examine how AI can expand the horizons of human ingenuity across all education levels and in both formal and non-formal learning environments.

Who can apply?

Individuals, institutions, non-governmental organizations or other entities.

Eligibility criteria

- ✓ The project is relevant to the theme of the year
- ✓ The project should have been implemented for at least 1 year with evidence of concrete activities

- ✓ The project and its organization should not be affiliated with, or receive any funding from UNESCO

Focus and scope

Submissions should capture the strategies and techniques used to cultivate critical thinking, creative inquiry and imagination with AI. Each submission should provide insight into the following:

- ✓ **Contexts of AI use and co-creation**
 - The contexts in which teachers and learners use AI to harness critical thinking and creativity
- ✓ **Teaching strategies that cultivate critical thinking and creativity**
 - How teachers integrate AI tools to encourage learners to engage critically and creatively with AI
- ✓ **Learning with AI**
 - How students use AI to question, interrogate, explore, write, problem-solve or create
 - How students grapple with difficult questions and resist the temptation to offload their thinking
 - How AI affects motivation, participation, collaboration and critical thinking
- ✓ **Assessment and evidence of critical thinking and creativity with AI**
 - How critical thinking and creativity with AI are assessed
 - Qualitative or quantitative evidence, such as student work samples, reflections and peer feedback

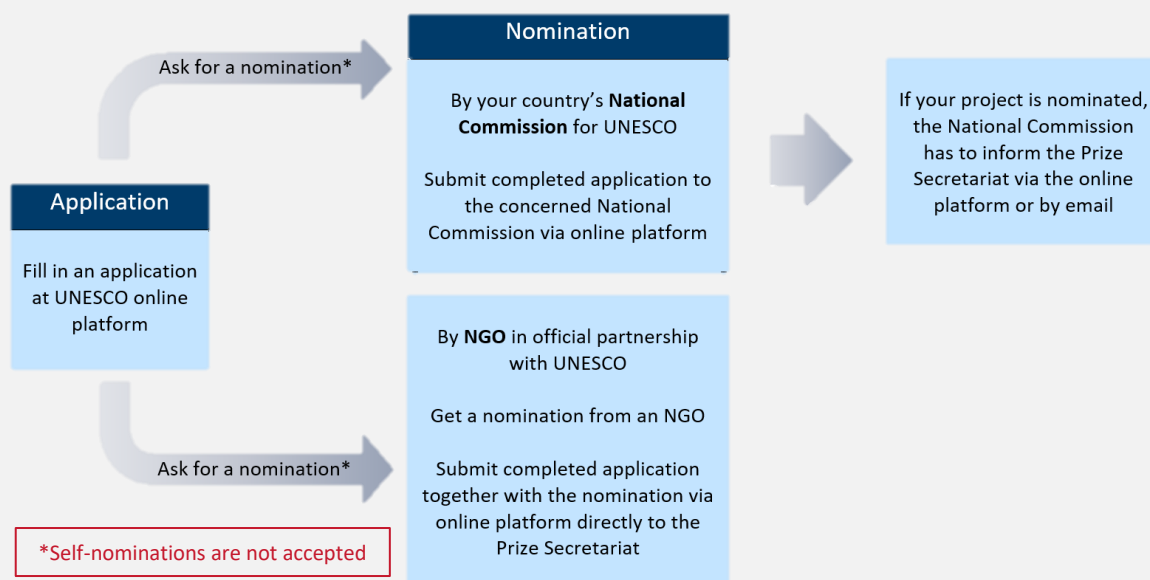
Selection criteria

- ✓ **Learning contexts:** The project should provide vivid descriptions of contexts and conditions under which AI is used to enable critical thinking and creativity.
- ✓ **Pedagogical innovation:** The project should demonstrate creative, contextually-relevant integration of AI in a manner that cultivates critical thinking and creativity.
- ✓ **Evidence of learning:** The project should provide clear qualitative or quantitative evidence of how students' critical thinking and creative capabilities are developed through the use of AI.
- ✓ **Inclusion and equity:** The project should reflect how AI has been used to reach learners who are excluded, marginalized or disengaged.
- ✓ **Agency and voice:** The project should highlight how learners exercise choice, curiosity and authorship in AI-supported learning.
- ✓ **Replicability:** The project should offer insight into how the initiative can be adapted by other teachers in diverse classroom contexts.

**If digital tools are used for the delivery of the project activities, the Prize prioritizes projects that deploy tools offering unrestricted access to their core features without imposing any fees for target users.*

**The Prize is not a grant scheme to support new projects or organizations. The Prize is aimed at recognizing already implemented projects and activities or individuals/institutions/organizations for the use of technologies in education, teaching, and learning.*

For Candidates: How to submit an application and ask for a nomination?



- Contact nominating entity:** If your project/programme meets the criteria, please get in contact as soon as possible with an appropriate nominating entity to inform about your interest in applying for the Prize.
 - [List of National Commissions for UNESCO](#)
 - [List of NGOs in official partnership with UNESCO](#)
- Create your account:** Request a user account and indicate through which entity you will apply at: www.unesco.org/ict-ed-prize/register
- Go to the online platform** accessible at www.unesco.org/ict-ed-prize and start filling in the online application form in **English** or **French**.
- Present your project** in a clear and structured way, following the instructions given in the form and respecting the indicated word limit. All supporting materials (e.g. publications, photos, videos) must be transmitted electronically through the online system.
- Ensure that your project is nominated**

If you want to be nominated by your country's National Commission

If you want to be nominated by an NGO in official partnership with UNESCO

➤ Fill in the application and submit it via UNESCO online platform for review and possible nomination of the concerned National Commission ➤ If selected, the National Commission will provide the nomination via UNESCO online platform and submit it to the Prize Secretariat ➤ Please note that a National Commission can nominate only up to 3 submissions We strongly recommend: * Contact your country's National Commission already while filling in the application * Some countries may have the national selection process and internal deadlines for submission. This is why it is essential to get in contact with the relevant National Commission from the very beginning of the application process in order to submit your application in line with the National Commission deadline and guidelines.	➤ Identify an NGO in official partnership with UNESCO ➤ Provide this NGO with information about your project and ask for a nomination ➤ Receive a nomination (in form of a letter) and attach it to your online application ➤ Submit the application to the Prize Secretariat via UNESCO online platform
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Please note that **self-nominations cannot be considered**. Any submission form **not nominated** by the National Commission or an NGO in official partnership with UNESCO will not be accepted by the Secretariat.

Difficulties in reaching an appropriate nominating entity: please contact the Prize Secretariat.

For Nominating Entities - National Commissions for UNESCO and NGOs in official partnership with UNESCO: How to nominate?

1. **Screen your candidates:** Inform all involved stakeholders and set up a selection committee or panel to screen the candidates.
2. **Nominate up to three candidates:** Select the three best candidates whose projects are in line with the theme. You are encouraged to work with the candidates to prepare their submission forms.

National Commission for UNESCO	NGOs in official partnership with UNESCO
➤ National Commissions can access the platform with their generic UNESCO accounts. To access the nomination form, the National Commission should: • Follow the link provided to the application or access the online platform here: www.unesco.org/ict-ed-prize • On the login page, enter the username (natcom.yourcountryname@natcom.unesco.org) • Enter the password associated with the UNESCO account of the National Commission. ➤ A National Commission can also initiate the process of nomination and submit an application on behalf of a candidate ➤ To nominate a candidate, the National Commission should edit the online form by entering a written recommendation in the appropriate fields, in English or French, and explain why the project of the candidate deserves the Prize (max 350 words). * If due to technical problems, the National Commission cannot access the online platform to provide the nomination, it can issue a nomination letter or inform the Prize Secretariat by email.	➤ If solicited by a candidate and wishing to submit the nomination, you should provide a nomination letter to be attached by the candidate to the online form ➤ An NGO can also submit an application on behalf of a candidate. To create and fill in the application, please see the guidelines for candidates.

Should you require any clarification regarding the application or nomination process, please directly contact the Secretariat of the UNESCO King Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa Prize for the Use of ICT in education at UNESCO: ictprize@unesco.org

We look forward to receiving your nominations!