UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM STAFF COLLEGE

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BLENDED

01 OCT 2026 - 28 JAN 2027

The Nelson Mandela Global Academy for Social Change Leadership

Governance and Human RightsLeadership
Sustainable development and the SDGs

LANGUAGE	DURATION	ENROLL BY	PRICE	LOCATION	TARGET
English	3 months	01 Oct 2026	2,000 USD	ONLINE (ZA)	Everyone

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The Nelson Mandela Global Academy for Social Change Leadership is a core initiative of the Nelson Mandela Project for Social Change, developed in partnership with globally renowned universities and the Nelson Mandela Foundation.

It aims to foster social change agency to mitigate heightened inequalities and polarization, with the ultimate goal of promoting peace and sustainable development. The global academy is grounded in Nelson Mandela's leadership values of resilience, humility, and commitment to unity.

The global academy's collaborating universities, which issue the programme's certificate of completion in partnership with UNSSC are:

1. American University of Beirut, Lebanon;
2. Austral University, Argentina;
3. Colin Powell School for Civil and Global Leadership at The City College of New York, USA;
4. IE University, Spain;
5. Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology, India;
6. Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore;
7. Nelson Mandela School of Public Governance, University of Cape Town, South Africa.

Introduction

Increasing inequalities and societal polarization threaten to hinder peace and development (UNDP). Aiming to reverse such a trend, the global academy will impart knowledge and skills to advance social change agency, oriented towards reducing inequalities and social polarization.

It will provide a cohort of carefully selected participants with an opportunity to:

- **Explore** key knowledge and practical tools in the field of social change;
- **Empower** themselves with key leadership capabilities needed to bridge divides and foster dialogue;
- **Expand** their networks' reach to support their efforts in driving sustainable social change within their communities and beyond.

The Nelson Mandela Global Academy for Social Change Leadership is a core initiative of the Nelson Mandela Project for Social Change, developed in partnership with a group of globally renowned universities and the Nelson Mandela Foundation. The academy is grounded in Nelson Mandela's approach to leadership, such as resilience, humility, and a capacity to bridge divides in a context of polarization and institutionalized racism.

Upon successful completion, participants will be issued a certificate by UNSSC and the Nelson Mandela Project's partner universities.

Objectives

By the end of the global academy, participants will be able to:

- Indicate the root causes of inequalities and increased polarization;
- Describe how inequality and polarization contribute to the demise of peace and development;
- Recall strategies to foster social change agency, aimed at reducing inequalities and polarization, as individuals and in the context of their professional activities. This is achieved, e.g., by learning and practicing critical leadership, communication, and consensus-building skills throughout the course;
- Refer to a global network of peers, committed to promoting social change, in favor of more equitable and cohesive societies.

Course methodology

The global academy will be delivered online via live, moderated, interactive webinars - totaling **100 hours of overall commitment**, including asynchronous activities.

It features a comprehensive curriculum covering **substantive** sessions, alternating with **leadership-related** and **networking** sessions, **competency labs,** and an **art project**.

In parallel, the programme will give participants the chance to **exchange and collaborate between sessions** using UNSSC's exclusive **UN Learn** online platform.

Contingent on participants' interest, **the UNSSC stands ready to offer an elective, complementary face-to-face immersion week in one of its locations**. The immersion week would focus on project design, networking and study visits to inspirational social change projects. As an elective activity, the immersion week is not covered by the standard US$ 2,000 registration fee.

Course contents

In addition to sessions for opening, closing, and post-programme action planning, the global academy will be offered in two phases:

Phase 1 - core:

In the core phase, over the course of approximately 2 months, participants will go through a weekly combination of self-paced online modules and live, interactive webinars, which comprise:

- Foundational substantive content:
  - Nelson Mandela: Life, Legacy and Leadership;
  - Social Change Essentials: What, How, Where, Who;
  - The Governance of Social Change in an Era of New Global Coalitions;
  - Understanding Contexts: Identity, Power and the Path Beyond Biases;
  - Bridging Divides in a Polarized World;
  - Development within Planetary Boundaries: Global Challenges, Sense-Making and Ways Forward.
- Key skills for fostering social change agency:
  - Consensus-building;
  - Conflict intelligence;
  - Leadership and peer coaching for social change.
- Networking sessions and culmination project on "The Power of Art for Social Change".

Phase 2 - advanced specialization tracks:

Specialization sessions are delivered concurrently over a month by the project's partner universities. **Participants may follow one or two of the following three tracks**:

- Localizing Social Change
- Social Change Justice
- Leveraging Innovation and Technology for Social Good

Target audience

Following a competitive selection process, **up to 40 highly motivated change-makers** will be chosen as participants.

Participants will be selected based on their **motivation statement** and **track record in promoting social change**, whether in the public, non-profit, or private sectors. They must be able to demonstrate how they envisage applying the knowledge and skills acquired through the programme to **increase the impact of their engagements in favour of social change**.

The selection will primarily target **young rising leaders** (30 years old as the median age, with **five or more years of relevant experience** in the field of social change).

Candidates must commit to **completing all online modules** and attending **at least 80% of the online sessions** to receive a **certificate of completion** at the end of the programme.

Cost of participation

US$2,000 per participant.