

## Expression of interest to host the launch of the Global Matrix 4.0

**Institution name, address and description:** Qatar University (QU) Sport Science Program (SSP), with the support of Aspetar Orthopaedic and Sports Medicine Hospital

Qatar University, Al-Tarfa Street, P.O. Box 2713, Doha, Qatar (<http://www.qu.edu.qa/>); Aspetar Orthopaedic and Sports Medicine Hospital, Sport City Street, Near Khalifa Stadium, P.O. Box 29222, Doha, Qatar (<https://www.aspetar.com/index.aspx?lang=en>)

**Proposed dates:** 14<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> December 2021 (~20 degrees Celsius with very low precipitation)

**Country and city:** The State of Qatar is a peninsula located amid the western coast of the Arabian Gulf. Qatar has a population of 2.83 million, with the majority (85%) living within a 20 km radius of the capital, Doha. Qatar has a large expatriate community with over 100 different nationalities, and the geographical location of Qatar is ideal for international conferences. Qatar Airways (world's top-awarded airline) connects to all major cities around the world with direct flights (ideal given the target to host 75 countries for the Global Matrix 4.0)

**Venue:** Aspire Academy Football High Performance Center (Aspire Zone), which recently hosted the International Conference on Medicine and Science in Athletics, is part of the Doha Sports City complex, which also includes Khalifa Stadium (host of the current IAAF World Athletics Championships, and future FIFA World Cup 2022). Aspire Zone (<https://www.aspirezone.qa/facilities.aspx?lang=en>) is a 250-hectare sporting complex, home to some of the world's finest sports training facilities, international business and events (two world class on-site hotels), and Aspire Park (comprehensive facilities for the community including running and walking tracks, large green spaces, children's playgrounds, café's, and a lake)

**Institution:** QU (~20,500 students, > 1,000 faculty and 47,000 alumni), is the primary national institution of higher education in Qatar. QU was ranked number one in the International Outlook indicator in the overall Times Higher Education World University Rankings list for the fourth time in a row, and has maintained its position among the top 500 universities in the world in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2020. Dr. Hassan Al Derham, President of QU said: *'Research was and will continue to be the cornerstone of our efforts and we understand our role as Qatar's first national institution of higher education'*. The mission of QU is to *'teach and conduct research, which addresses relevant local and regional challenges, advances knowledge, and contributes actively to the needs and aspirations of society'*. The SSP was ranked first out of the Middle East and North Africa region for the Shanghai Ranking of Sport Science Schools and Departments in 2018. Aspetar (a main stakeholder of QU) is the world's leading specialized Orthopaedic and Sports Medicine Hospital, and the first in the Gulf region

**Rationale:** Qatar is engaged in an ambitious strategy to have sport as part of its development agenda. The country organizes around 50 international events on a yearly basis (e.g. 2015 World Handball Championship, 2019 IAAF World Championships), which is set to continue even after the FIFA World Cup 2022 (e.g. 2023 FINA World Championships). Part of the legacy of these events is to spread awareness of the importance of exercise and physical activity, and to encourage the next generation within Qatar. Indeed, the Qatar Olympic Committee vision is to become ‘*a leading nation in bringing the world together through sustainable sport development, by stimulating the interest of the people in Qatar in sport and physical education and recreation*’. Additionally, part of the Qatar National Research Strategy is to ‘*improve the health and social wellbeing of Qatar’s population*’. Furthermore, the Qatar 2030 vision of ‘Human Development’ is to ‘*develop a future that supports a healthy population, both physically and mentally*’. However, according to Qatar National Biobank (<https://www.qatarbiobank.org.qa/app/media/1730>), 16% of the population are diabetic, with 48% classified as obese, and 83% having no or very low physical activity. Subsequently, the government is focused on the promotion of physical activity [the Government indicator from the Qatar Active Healthy Kids Report Card (QAHK-RC) was a B grade in 2016, and B+ in 2018]. Annually, the second Tuesday of February is announced as a national holiday to celebrate ‘Sports Day’. Venues across the state of Qatar (including the Aspire Zone), see the whole nation participate in a wide variety of different sports and activities. Furthermore, the launch of the first edition of the National Physical Activity Guidelines for Qatar is further testament to the commitment of the state of Qatar to ensure physical activity is at the heart of public health agendas. For example, the Aspire Zone launched the national Step into Health community program, where individuals sign-up to receive a free pedometer to track and share their daily physical activity. Moreover, given the international focus of the Active Healthy Kids Global Alliance (AHKGA) hosting the Global Matrix within the Middle East (for the first time), will further encourage public health initiatives, government agendas, and increase awareness related to physical activity particularly for children and adolescents. This will evidently positively influence cultural, sporting and intellectual development within Qatar, the GCC and beyond

**Previous experience:** As aforementioned Aspire Academy Football High Performance Center recently hosted the International Conference on Medicine and Science in Athletics, and the SSP has hosted an international conference (2<sup>nd</sup> International Science And Football Association Conference; [www.qu.edu.qa/ISAF2016](http://www.qu.edu.qa/ISAF2016)), and regional conferences/workshops/symposia (<http://www.qu.edu.qa/artssciences/departments/sports-science/news>). Namely, in May 2019, the Sport, Physical Activity and Health (SPA) research unit (new leaders of the QAHK-RC) organized a symposium entitled “School Sport: An Interdisciplinary Perspective”, where the 2018 QAHK-RC findings were disseminated. The symposium received local media coverage and was attended by major stakeholders, and representatives from schools and Ministries. Additionally, the SSP has internationally recognized faculty with expertise in PA, and national/international networks within the sport science community

**Program proposal:** The three-day dedicated conference is anticipated to attract at least 250 attendees. We are flexible in terms of the allocated time and schedule needed by the

AHKGA. The registration fees will be calculated according to a detailed analysis with recommendation of the AHKGA, with the aim of not exceeding previous AHKGA events' fees (i.e., < 400 USD). Special rates will be given to students, early birds, and attendees from certain countries

**Support:** The space will be secured for no charges with our partners at Aspire Academy Football High Performance Center. Additionally, financial support will be requested from the College of Arts and Sciences at QU (~40,000 USD). The SSP can also directly contribute through the annual operational budget (~15,000-20,000 USD) to cover all catering and printing requirements. Creative materials (e.g. designs) will be handled internally by External Relations Departments at QU and Aspetar. The official event webpage will be created and managed by Aspetar. SSP undergraduate students and faculty will manage the daily organizational tasks during the three-day conference. External funding will also be requested through the Conference and Workshop Sponsorship Program (CWSP - <https://www.qnrf.org/en-us/Funding/Special-Programs/Conference-and-Workshop-Sponsorship-Program-CWSP>), a bi-yearly initiative of the Qatar National Research Fund (QNRF). The QNRF supports conferences and workshops in any health-related topic and can cover up to 50,000 USD. Finally, local sponsors will also be targeted for specific needs. For instance, Qatar Airways will be approached to sponsor airline tickets for keynote speakers and international organizers. Special rates will be requested for accommodation (e.g. hotels), social events (e.g. gala dinner), physical activities (e.g. Aspire Zone facilities) and touristic attractions (e.g. Qatar Tourism)

**Promotion of the event:** AHKGA webpage and networking support will be utilized. Within Qatar, the event will be advertised by QU and Aspetar via traditional media and social media (i.e. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn). Prior to, and during the event designated profiles and hashtags will be created. A press conference will be held prior to the conference and all local and international newspapers and broadcasting channels will be invited to attend (e.g. Aljazeera, BeIn Sport). The latter will also be invited during the conference, and a summary report will be published after the event. Personal invitation letters will be sent to all local and international stakeholders, and country leaders (with the help of the AHKGA)

**Bidding statement:** Qatar's world-class hospitality, facilities, rich cultural diversity, and ideal location (particularly given the target to host 75 countries) make it the ideal venue for the 2021 Global matrix 4.0, exactly one year prior to the FIFA World Cup 2022. Holding the event in Qatar would truly fulfill the mission of the AHKGA to *'power the global movement to get kids moving through thought leadership, knowledge translation and mobilization, capacity building, and advocacy. This is facilitated by sustainable partnerships and cross-sectoral collaborations that enable best-practice exchanges, networking and cross-fertilization'*

**Lead contact person:** Dr Bryna Christmas, Assistant Professor, QAHK-RC leader, Sport Science Program, Qatar University, +974 7056 7602, [bchristmas@qu.edu.qa](mailto:bchristmas@qu.edu.qa)