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IN2IT Project
Guidelines for International Cooperation

Prepared by:
Mr. Łukasz Wojdyga
In collaboration with:
Dr. Marek Polak
Dr. Roman Podraza

Warsaw University of Technology
The Centre for International Cooperation

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1. International Partnerships As a Key-important Activity in Academic Internationalization

In order to set up the scene for guidelines for international cooperation it is worthwhile to beginning with some theoretical assumptions. As international academic partnerships are playing a crucial role in internationalization of tertiary education, establishing and maintaining international partnerships have been the subject of many researches and investigations. Particularly interesting for our project activities are the results of IAU 4th Global Survey (2014) and EAIE Barometer: International Strategic Partnerships (2015).

Based on responses from 1336 HEIs in IAU 4th Global Survey:
- 53% of the respondents have an institutional policy/ strategy, 22% report that one is in preparation; 16% indicate that internationalization forms a part of the overall institutional strategy;
- 60% of the respondents have geographic priorities for their internationalization, with Europe as the main region of interest, followed by Asia and Pacific, North America and Africa with the smallest number of indications;
- The top-important internationalization activities are outgoing students mobility (29%), **international research collaboration (24%)** and international content of curriculum

(14%). For respondents from Africa, Asia and Pacific and the Middle East, **international research collaboration** was cited as the most important internationalization activity;
- The most frequently assessed areas of internationalization are international student enrollment, outbound student mobility and **partnerships;**
- Respondents from Africa and the Middle East consider national and international rankings as the most significant driver of internationalization, not government policy – which is the top driver for the rest of the world;
- 53% of the respondents report that the general institutional budget is the largest single source of internationalization funding, while 24% cite external public funds as the largest source. Majority of respondents report either stable or increased funding for internationalization. Increases in funding for the greatest number of internationalization activities are reported by respondents in the Middle East. Respondents from this region report funding increases in activities such as marketing and promotion of their institutions, international development and capacity building projects, as well as increased funding for strengthening the international content of curriculum.
- 51% of the respondents indicated that their policy referred to sharing of benefits, respect and fairness as the basis for international **partnerships.**

EAIE Barometer: International Strategic Partnerships based on opinions of 2093 respondent, representing more than 1500 European institutions.

- 75% of respondents reported that the number of international strategic **partnerships** at their institution has increased over the past three years.
- 19% of respondents admitted that all of their strategic **partnerships** were active, 47% reported that most of them were active, 24% reported that some of them were active and 1% reported that none of them were active.
- The geographic priority for European universities are EU countries (89%), Asia (56%), North America (44%), other European countries (32%) and Latin America (14%).
- The most important activities, within strategic **partnerships**, are: student exchange (89%), academic staff exchange (81%), research projects (61%), joint or double degree programs (56%) and curriculum development (48%).
- Publicly funded HEIs reported academic staff exchange (88%) and capacity building (21%) as a part of their strategic partnerships more often, while privately funded HEIs appear to focus on joint and double degrees (64%) and education to business cooperation (22%) more. The approval of strategic **partnerships** is often done by central management (52%), board (33%), dean/department chair (33%) or the head of international office (31%).

Both the IAU and EAIE surveys asked respondents to identify the priority internationalization activities undertaken at their institution. The results are quite similar. Between the two surveys, in the order of priority they are:
- outgoing mobility (first in both surveys)
- incoming student priority (second in EAIE)
- international research collaboration/innovation (second in IAU)
- strategic partnerships (third in EAIE)
- strengthening international/intercultural curriculum (third in IAU)

Hans de Wit, Fiona Hunter, Laura Howard, Eva Egron-Polak, Internationalization of Higher Education (2015)

Rules and guidelines for the establishment, development and assessment of international partnerships are also the subject of extensive scientific literature, especially in USA and UK. The most important and representative sources of information are presented in part 7.

2. The Rationales For International Partnerships

> *Partnerships can make a significant contribution to institutional internationalization objectives, but only if those objectives are articulated and understood within the institution and shared with the partners.*
>
> *Suzanne Alexander, Practical considerations for international partnerships (2013)*

There may exist hundreds of different rationales and reasons for establishing international partnerships. Steve Woodfield and Robin Middlehurst from Kingston University in their research report for Million Plus (UK Association for Modern Universities) proposed seven aggregated reasons for international cooperation:

1. to broaden and diversify the sources of faculty and students;
2. to create an international profile and reputation;
3. to strengthen research and knowledge capacity and production;
4. to promote curriculum development and innovation;
5. to increase student and faculty international knowledge and intercultural understanding;
6. to contribute to academic quality;
7. to diversify income generation.

Of course not all above mentioned rationales have the same importance and meaning for different universities. Each respective institution may have its own specific reasons and aims. It is important that our goals for international partnerships should result from adopted institutional strategies and missions, as well as from the local conditions.

> *The internationalization of a university is no longer 'optional'. It has practically become a parameter of quality sine qua non. (…) Any modern university will be measured and evaluated or ranked – among other things – by the degree of internationalization it has achieved and its success in term of students, faculty members, researchers and staff participating in international programs and benefiting from the experience in specific measurable ways.*
>
> *Alvaro Romo, Strategic international partnerships – The leader's role (2015)*

3. Establishing New Partnership

Establishing new international academic partnership should begin with an assessment of our own capacities and capabilities, as well as the development plans of our institution. It is also advisable to assess the existing partnerships and individual/personal links in all field of academic activities. In order to find the suitable partner institution, working relationships with other stakeholders, like embassies, national agencies, exchange agencies and professional organizations can be established. Participation in international conferences, workshops and research projects creates a lot of opportunities to find a suitable partner.

> *A key ingredient for successful partnership is personal relation between actors. Very often mutual trust and respect stand at the core of successful cooperation. It is crucial and instrumental to use your connections. However, one should not hesitate to approach an institution of one's choice without personal relations. In this case, it is helpful to send an outline of potential future fields of cooperation to raise the interest in a partnerships.*
>
> *Wedigo de Vivanco, Making Partnership Work (2009)*

The selection of partners is a very sensitive issue for both sides. The policy of establishing international partnerships and networks must be compliant with the University's Strategy/Internationalization Strategy. It makes sense only if it is evidently benefiting the universities in at least one of their international activities, for example: increasing students and academic staff exchange, initiating the new research possibilities, importing "good practices", etc. Potential partner's "value" and position on higher education market and/or in research must be relevant to the scope of planned collaboration. There should be no place for incidentally signed agreements with no practical chances for a fruitful cooperation. The most important issue is have a good knowledge about the potential partner – it is recommended to carry on a sort of 'due diligence' exercise of our counterpart. Before starting the whole process of selecting academic partners it is recommended to:

- investigate and understand educational system of the country of your academic partner;
- get acquainted with partner's institutional mission/strategy, organization and activities;
- estimate its position on the local education market and previous experiences in international cooperation;
- specify reasons for our interest in the partner, as well as reasons for partner's interest in our HEI;

- identify similarities or complementarities, and overlapping areas of international activity;
- look for already existing links and contacts;
- estimate the organizational and financial capabilities for development of the academic partnership;
- begin with the small steps and try to develop it gradually.

It is also highly recommended to visit the potential partner to get the general impression of the institution, their activity and people we are going to work with directly.

> *Partnerships work best with partners who are 'like us'*
>
> *Suzanne Alexander, Practical considerations for international partnerships (2013)*

At this early stage it is important to reflect on the sources of finance for the future collaboration. Usually it is expected that partners will finance the cooperation equally (balanced financial input). There is a need to estimate the potential costs of collaboration and determine what can be covered from the budgets already allocated for international cooperation. Some of international activities require really small expenditures, which must be still covered by cooperating institutions, like joint scientific publications, preparing joint curricula, etc. On the other hand some international activities require significant funds or even external funding, like student and academic staff exchange, joint research, etc. However, currently when the internationalization is one of the key factor of the development of the universities there are many external sources of funding international partnerships. International Relation Office (IRO) has to be aware of the existing financial opportunities - on the local, national and transnational/international level, from the both public and private sources.

> *It should be quite clear that university cannot achieve internationalization with zero budget and/or with minimal commitment*
>
> *Wedigo de Vivanco, Making Partnership Work (2009)*

The next stage, after successful selection of the academic partner, is to define jointly the scope of cooperation. Areas of collaboration will result, of course, from the arrangements and objectives of both parties. They should be clearly identified and well understood by the partners. Usually,

each international partnership has its own initiators, placed at the departmental level or in IRO, being responsible for negotiation and, then coordination of the international partnership. Negotiations have to be run by the **strong** leaders – academic or administrator - with the sufficient power of attorney from their university authorities. Before signing a cooperation agreement, it is necessary to decide and to agree with the partner on the following issues:
• scope and areas of practical cooperation;
• duration (time-schedule) of the cooperation agreement;
• approach to coordination of the signed agreement and appointment of local coordinators;
• estimated costs of cooperation activities (for both parties) and sources of funding;
• detailed description of rights and obligations;
• progress indicators to be jointly monitored as the measure of success.

If the agreement implicates any financial obligations it should be the subject to decision of the appropriate approval body set up by the university authorities, according to the internal procedure of the contracting party. The role of such the body is to check if proposal of the new agreement meets the basic criteria specified above and if it is feasible and acceptable in financial terms. The types of agreements signed to initiate the cooperation and free of any financial obligations might be exempted from these approval rules. A Simplified model of managing international agreements is presented below:

Many types of partnerships can be distinguished depending on the level of cooperation, scope of activities and legal form,. Of course, it is necessary to operate within a written agreement, which should be accepted according to university's internal procedure and signed only by university leaders or s authorized employee.

Level of cooperation
• one to one (individual) partnership;
• faculty/departmental partnership;
• university (central level) partnership.

There might be also a special kind of partnership, which is cooperation within consortia. Consortia are, usually created

for joint participation of HEIs in projects, both educational and research, or other multilateral activities.

Institutions have very different approaches to the management of partnerships. Some institutions insist on all agreement receiving high-level, central approval. Other institutions may devolve the power to set up agreements to faculties, departments or even individuals. In all cases it is important to know who are the institution's signatories, and to provide clear guidance about approval processes, together with standard agreement templates, in order to safeguard the institution from unnecessary risk.

Suzanne Alexander, Practical considerations for international partnerships (2013)

Scope of activities
- general/framework partnership (agreement containing a general intention to establish cooperation without specific financial or organizational commitments);
- student/academic staff exchange (short/long- term programs, summer schools, joint students activities and projects, cultural exchanges, etc.);

- educational collaboration (curricula development, collaborative teaching, etc.);
- joint/double degree programs (joint studies, recognition of degree, etc.);
- research collaboration (joint research, publications, workshops, conferences, etc.);
- strategic partnerships (multi-dimensional agreement, containing all or some of the activities specified above).

In most cases HEIs conclude the general partnerships first, and then, depending on the development of cooperation, they add another modules, expanding their cooperation. It is highly recommended to start with the small steps and work together with the partners gradually.

Legal forms
- Letter of Intent (partners express their overall intention to start collaboration);
- Memorandum of Understanding (higher then LoI level of collaboration, containing commitment to cooperation in specific areas);
- Agreement on Cooperation (agreement on the specific scope of cooperation, containing the financial and organizational obligations);
- Consortia Agreement (multilateral agreement concluded

between all partners of the consortium, specifying mutual rights and obligations).

A very interesting set of agreement and templates of MoUs were added to the article "Making a Partnership Work" by Wedigo de Vivanco, 2009 (see the Source Literature – part 7), which would be useful for IN2IT Project partners:
• Model Agreement of Cooperation (General – short);
• Model Memorandum of Understanding (General – extended);
• Model Memorandum on Student Exchange;
• Model Agreement of Cotutelle de thèse (in French);
• Model Consortium Agreement;
• Model Euro-masters in Contemporary European Political Cultures.

As we are dealing with the legal documents, all their provisions should be analyzed and determined in advance. They should be clearly identified and well understood by the partners. Consequences of misconceptions and lack of full understanding may affect students, academic staff and worsen the relations with partner's institution. In particular, a special attention should be paid to distribution of costs of travels and accommodation, insurances, tuition exemption policy, balance in the number exchanges, national and

internal legal rules for joint/double degree, degree recognition, preventing the 'brain drain' effect, etc. At the stage of concluding and signing the agreement it is also advisable to prepare a detailed work plan for the cooperation for specified period of time.

4. Maintaining International Partnerships

After new academic partnership has been successfully established we proceed to its implementation. Depending on the particular agreed scope of cooperation it will require involvement of various units of the university – it is necessary to gain institutional commitment and support for the partnership.

> *The partnership continued because a core group of faculty became its memory-keepers and fervent champions.*
>
> *Leslie P. Hitch, The role of faculty in strategic partnerships (2015)*

Of course, the involvement and commitment of the academic staff (faculties) is crucial in this regard - cooperation is based on their involvement. IRO, Research Office, etc. are only the supportive units, which can be very helpful but cannot substitute the academic teachers or researchers. The key of partnership success is to find academic leaders on the both sides. In principle, the university's top management should not be involved in the management of the particular partnership. Their role should be strategic, limited only to emergencies and critical situations. Their tasks should also include assessment of the partnership progress, guiding development, taking the decision of extending collaboration or ending the partnership.

> *Each Staff member should be encouraged to cultivate his/her own connections, be they of an administrative or scientific nature. This implies that the senior management and decision-making bodies in a university should create an environment that encourages contacts and exchanges beyond the institution's own boundaries. Networking should become an institutional culture. Experience shows that regular correspondence is one way to keep a relationship such as a network alive, but arranging meetings at professional conferences or during visits to the partner's institutions is just as important in fostering meaningful contacts. Most academics do this anyway, but it should be encouraged by the university.*
>
> *Wedigo de Vivanco, Making Partnership Work (2009)*

The key to the success of a partnership and its sustainability is also well organized and qualified IRO. Its role is to monitor the whole process of cooperation, coordinate it, and support the academic coordinator to ensure the sustainability of the partnership. What is particularly important for maintaining relations with foreign HEIs, are information services provided by IRO to the partnership coordinators on opportunities

arising in transnational/international education and research projects (calls for proposals, application, guidelines, etc.), international conferences, seminars. It is also crucial to maintain personal relations with partner units from the cooperating institutions. Both sides need to know their counterparts and work with them systematically.

In particular areas of international activities, IRO shall have also some administrative obligations. It is well known that researchers are not really willing to be involved with administrative and organizational issues of research. Any kind of support in this regard is largely appreciated by them. Internationalization of teaching is a very demanding, challenging and multidirectional process. In case of advanced universities it comprises a number of sub-processes, activities and functionalities.

In most cases, the leadership and responsibility are allocated to Faculties. However, some of them need an effective support from IRO and also from the University Administration. The model of institutional support for partnership management depends largely on two main factors: the size of the university and the progress in implementation of internationalization process. The common opinion is that the centralized model is proved best for universities which are at the initial stage of implementation of internationalization process, while a de-centralized model is adequate for those who are really matured and advanced in this regard. It is not necessarily always true as there are also other factors influencing the institutional approach of a given university (for instance: volume of foreign students, volume of exchanges, the approach to funding internationalization activities, the level of university commercialization, the number of international projects in research and educational areas, etc.). We should also remember about dissemination of the results of the partnerships, in order to promote international activities of the university. The international visibility/popularity, position in domestic and international rankings and international research reputation are key-importance factors for each and every university having ambition and potential to exist on international scene. All promotional and marketing activities have to be efficiently arranged at university level. Individual actions undertaken by particular faculties or other university departments must comply with the agreed and approved university standards.

Easy and fast access to information is the basis of efficient management. It is recommended to create a database of existing partnerships and agreements, which should be continuously updated. Depending on institutional needs, it should contain information about active agreements, academic coordinators form both sides, the scope of this cooperation, the number of exchange students/staff, participation in joint projects, etc. The datebase should

be also available for all university units via intranet.
Below please find an example of partnerships datebase,
maintained by WUT Centre for International Cooperation:

The establishment of an academic partnership can be compared with a marriage: one needs to know (more or less) what one wants and expects, to invest time to find and choose the right partner, to get to know partner, and last but not least, to be prepared for challenges. Healthy academic partnerships operate on a basis of equality and mutual recognition. The parties should be both compatible (equal enough) and complementary (different enough). And throughout the partnership, all those involved need to be willing to work and make it last.

> *Nico Evers, Jenneke Lokhoff, 4 steps for creating sustainable academic partnerships (2012)*

5. Quality Assessment of International Partnerships

The management of international partnerships must be properly monitored and systematically analyzed by the university management or other dedicated bodies. It is not an easy task in case of a large university and developed internationalization activities. The best and most efficient solution is to use a special agreement database and periodic reviewing system, based on key performance indicators. All selected indicators have to comply with so-called SMART Principle. It means that they have to be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-based.

- Specific i.e. well defined and clear to anyone that has a basic knowledge of the process. Should include measure assumptions and definitions and be easily interpreted
- Measurable i.e. can be quantified and compared to other data. It should allow for meaningful statistical analysis
- Achievable i.e. doable under given conditions at the university
- Realistic i.e. within the availability of resources and knowledge. Fits into the university's constraints and is cost-effective
- Time-based i.e. doable within the realistic time frame

The selected indicators must be relevant to strategic and operational objectives and expected outcomes of the agreement and full compliant with the approved work plan adopted by both parties. Planned outcomes/strategic goals are decisive for practical approach and implemented activities (top-bottom approach). The selected indicators must be adequate to the measured areas of internationalization process i.e. to teaching or research or institutional support. Examples of indicators are as follows:
- number of exchange students/staff;
- number of joint research or education projects;
- number of joint publications and scientific papers;

In most cases, the measuring system is spread over all these areas to provide a complex picture of internationalization status. The performance measurement is close to pointless if done only once. Only systematic measurements (e.g. one per academic year) make it possible to analyze trends, identify weak points and evaluate the progress.

It is important to know:
- if and how the university is benefiting from respective partnership;
- if all inputs, activities and outputs are contributing to university strategy/ internationalization strategy;

• if there is a place for renewing or even expanding
  partnership.

All aspects should be taken into account in this regard
(number of incoming/outgoing students, quality of
internationalized teaching, quality and effectiveness
of international research, social and cultural benefits
of partnership, economic benefits, effectiveness of
recruitment, etc.). The achieved results should be compared
with original assumptions. The database of partnership
agreements also must be periodically evaluated in terms of
collaboration results. All "nominal" agreements should be
terminated or not renewed. The database of collaboration
agreements must be maintained properly and kept in
"healthy" condition.

6. Recommendations for Israeli Colleges

- Collect the information about the current partnerships of your college - existing links between individual professors, between departments and partnerships on the central level. Evaluate the results of existing partnerships and the possibility for expansion.
- Assess the needs for the new partnerships, resulting from your institutional strategy/ internationalization strategy.
- Partner search should be preceded by the diagnosis of current status of international orientation of institution, your needs and expectations. For that purpose such a simple tool like SWOT analysis might be very useful.
- Search for prospective partners using the already existing links with international partners. Establishing the working relations with other stakeholders like embassies, national agencies, exchange agencies and professional organizations should be highly beneficial.
- Make a detailed diligence of your potential partners. Estimate their position, achievements and experiences in international cooperation. Try to identify similarities or complementarities, and overlapping areas of international activity.
- Talk openly with your prospective partner institution about your goals and expectations. Try to understand each other and determine mutually interesting areas of cooperation.
- Conclude the written agreement in accordance with an agreed level of cooperation, scope of activities and legal form. It is needed to accept the local differences and legal requirements.
- Secure funding for partnership. The most secure and healthy solution is to combine different methods of funding (e.g. part of university internal sources plus performance-based funding).
- Establish solid and competent structure to maintain international partnerships. Remember that the active and efficient academic coordinators - 'owners of the partnership' - as well as the commitment of the whole institution are the keys to success.
- Create the system of monitoring and evaluation of results of partnership. It is highly recommended to create indicators describing achievements of your partnerships and include them in to Assessment Tool for Internationalization.
- Begin with the small steps and try to act gradually. Try to ensure the sustainability and durability of your partnerships.

7. Source Literature

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אורט בראודה
המכללה האקדמית להנדסה
ORT Braude College

http://www.braude.ac.il/in2it/

Dr. Vered Holzmann, veredhz@braude.ac.il
Dr. Dvora Toledano-Kitai, dvora@braude.ac.il
Ms. Shani Alchek, shani@braude.ac.il