

Benchmark of Good Practices for Partnerships Management

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Our Participants

60% We sent the invitation to 25 universities out of which 15 of them participated. These are the continents they belong to:

8 Europe
6 America
1 Asia

All respondents participate in one way or another in the internationalization strategy and are part of the international affairs office

The size of the universities is medium-small.

Univerza v Ljubljani
Universidad Católica del Uruguay
Université de Namur
Universidad Antonio Ruiz de Montoya
Università degli Studi di Salerno
National College of Ireland
Politécnico di Torino
Kwantlen Polytechnic University
Politécnico di Milano
Lovely Professional University - LPU
University of Cincinnati
Tecnológico de Monterrey (TEC - ITESM)
University of Hradec Kralové

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Context

What International University Fairs/Conferences do you participate in to meet new potential partners?

Our partner universities mainly attend EAIE and in second place NAFSA. And most of them attend both of them, with an interesting number of 3 attending APAIE.

How many faculties/departments does your university have?

Our partners are mostly small universities with 1-6 faculties but closely followed by medium-sized universities with 7-13 faculties.

Do you see difficulties in your students to have an exchange in a different language than English? Why?

For most universities students prefer destinations that have enough English-taught courses or that have courses in their mother tongue, or in those languages that are close to their mother-tongue.

Strategy

Do you have an internationalization Strategy? Is it a centralized strategy?

Half of the universities are clear in stating that there is a centralized internationalisation strategy, based on the institutional strategy and aiming at helping the faculties within the university. Some make it for 3 years or 5 years. There are 4 more universities that also have a strategy but it is not centralized and its based only in the needs of the faculty, however, they also focus on the institutional strategy.

There are 3 universities that do not have a defined strategy but try to use indicators and base decisions on the institutional strategy.

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Strategy

If it is available online, could you please share it with us?

We can see several aims according to the needs of the universities. However, it is clear that having a target geographic zone to grow ties with is a must so that any effort is well channelled. In the strategies available for review there is a strong focus on Double Degree agreements with international partners, helping students feel welcomed, promoting more professor and staff mobility, promoting the country's culture, research and participation in international projects.

In case you do not have a centralized strategy, do you support faculties/departments to create an internationalisation strategy? How do you support the faculties/departments to get partners around the world?

Here, it is important to highlight that a person or a group of people focused on these partnerships will help both the external party and the faculty in widening their network. It is worth noting that an annual meeting with the faculties could certainly help direct the internationalization strategy whether it is centralised or not.

What type of collaboration makes a university a valuable partner?

These numbers show that Student mobility, Professor and staff mobility, Research, Number of research projects and Grants and fellowships are the top 5 items to consider a partner an important one. It could raise the question as to whether only one unit should manage all the agreements, including those that involve research and grants and fellowships. As this would give a better outlook of the actual cooperation between institutions.

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Strategy

What do you consider an important factor to sign an agreement with a new partner.

Our partner universities consider "Academic alignment and shared institutional values" as the two most important factors to sign a new agreement. Factors that ranked in second place are location, academic reputation, similar academic offer, participation in same networks and the possibility of expanding the agreements. There are other interesting factors such the availability to sign a double degree agreement, the interest expressed by a professor and the dedication of the international office with which this partnerships will get signed that come into the evaluation to consider a partner worthy or not. It leads us to reinforce the importance of a team focused on partnerships and taking care of our future and current partners.

How do you keep those partners without the imbalance affecting you?



It is wonderful to see that prior to cancelling the agreement, universities try to propose solutions to compensate the imbalance with summer courses, faculty mobility and COIL as some of the forms of collaboration proposed. There are two interesting takeaways. The first one encompasses promoting communication, intent and willingness to collaborate and engage, as this shows that it is a key component of our work in international relations and this can be done through online meetings or directly meeting the partner at International Education Fairs. The second one is more radical, but that is in clear alignment with their internationalisation strategy and that is that they will not sign agreements unless there is a clear interest for students to do mobility.

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Strategy

What makes you stand out for other universities and how do you share this a strong selling-point in these negotiations? (Scholarships, Summer-Programs, University Reputation, University Ranking) *Share as much as you feel comfortable

For this question, it is interesting to point out that academic level, ranking and reputation, infrastructure of the university, programmes in english and industry connections were common responses as it was the availability of scholarships. All of those account for the "business card" when our partners talk about their university. Of course, this is paramount to mention in any negotiation as this will let any potential partners know better our institutions. There are, of course, other factors such as adding value to whatever specific field of study they offer and being adaptable, location and summer programmes. But what caught our attention the most is that, as jesuit universities, staying true to core beliefs and university ethos, focus on the community, and friendliness are the pivotal ways in creating a new partnership, but most importantly, mantaining it through the years.



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Partnership managements

Do you have a monthly/quarterly/yearly report with the number and types of agreements that you have?

Our partner universities do have reports about the partnerships they have. Almost half do it annually, 3 did not specify the frequency, 3 have it online for up-to-date consultation, 1 has just one list and another one has quarterly reports. Out of all our partner universities, one that has an annual report makes around 4 meetings per year with the faculties to discuss the state of partnerships. Although it is a necessary thing to know the partnerships as soon as they are signed and have it available to the stakeholders, it is also necessary to talk about this with the faculties and see how everything is aligned.

Who are the targeted stakeholders of this report?

The stakeholders of these reports vary from internal to external. However, the ones that have this information available online are the ones that show this information to the public.

Do you have any system that helps you get those reports? (MoveON, Mobility Online, Salesforce, Excel, other...)

Our partner universities still mainly use Excel to manage information.

Do you have a system that also works as a repository of documents for consultation? What is it? Was it developed in-house?

Our partner universities use primarily One-Drive and then in-house-developed systems as a repository of documents and information to be able to manage their partnerships information.

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Partnership managements

How do you maintain the destination options information updated?

All of our partner universities consider this an important task and keep this information updated. Some do it through the system and some manually. This showcases the importance of keeping information updated to guarantee decision making.

Do you have template agreements?

All of our partner universities have a template for agreements, but they also work with templates of their partner universities.

How is the process to get an agreement signed?

Almost all of our partner universities start talks with the potential partner university (sought by Internatinal Affairs Office or staff), decide the template, send it to legal and get it signed. European ones have different processes for European partners and other for international partners.

What department promotes mainly the signign of agreements? The Internationalization Affairs Office or the Faculties/departments?

The International Affairs office and professors.

Who are the responsible parties?

For centralized universities, the International Affairs office plays a central role in promoting that the agreements are signed but they seek that faculties support them. For the decentralized universities, the faculties are responsible.

Is this process mainly done in the system or do you use email as the primary tool?

They manly communicate through email and some over the system.

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Main takeaways

About the context of our partner universities, they are in a similar position to us, specially in the attendance of events such as EAIE.

Referring to the strategy of our partnerships, it is clear that they mostly have a centralized internationalisation strategy, based on the institutional strategy and are currently aiming at helping the faculties within the university. It is also visible that having a target geographic zone is key to grow ties and that there is a strong focus on Double Degree agreements with international partners, helping students feel welcomed, promoting more professor and staff mobility, promoting the country's culture, research and participation in international projects.

Partner universities prioritize "academic alignment" and "shared institutional values" for signing agreements. Other important considerations include location, academic reputation, similar programs, network participation, and potential for expanding agreements. The ability to establish double degree programs and faculty interest are also factors.

The most valued partnerships involve student and faculty mobility, research projects, and grants. There's a suggestion that a single unit manage all agreements to improve oversight of institutional cooperation.

For the area of partnership managements, most partner universities produce reports on their partnerships, with nearly half doing so annually. Some use online platforms for real-time updates, while others maintain quarterly or single lists. Additionally, keeping destination options updated is a priority, with some universities using systems and others updating manually to ensure accurate decision-making. Lastly, stakeholders include both internal and external audiences, with some universities publicly sharing partnership information online.