



International partnerships and collaborations – the governors' role

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The Agenda

- Why are governors involved?
- University roles offshore
- Types of partnership by motive and structure
- Partner selection and options
- Managing and measuring success
- Agreeing roles
- Staffing issues in offshore activity

Why are governors involved?

- Returns and rewards – the evidence
- Risks – partner selection, politics,
- Reputation – University of Wales lesson
- Strategic fit

Seeing the tip of the iceberg

- Thousands of international links
- Hundreds of staff and student movements
- Hundreds of signed MOUs
- Tens of operational MOUs
- 4 or 5 Strategic Partnerships
- 1 or 2 offshore presences??

- Level One
 - A small number of select, deep partnerships, centrally directed (T+R)
- Level Two
 - Faculty partnerships, both T and R
 - One to one personal links, T and R
- Level Three

Overseas partnerships by structure

- Wholly owned operation with a commercial partner that provides finance.
- Activity operated with government, academic or financial partners.
- JV with another academic institution usually on their premises.
- Government sponsored institution with academic and management autonomy.

Overseas partnerships by motive

- Research focus (possibly in a consortium like WUN). Reputational motive.
- Teaching focus – Ranging from franchise, validation, collab Teaching, joint degree. May have a financial motive (two varieties).
- Comprehensive. Strategic partnerships as in Level One. Mutual benefit. Not usually a financial motive.

Some partnership objectives

- A base for mutually beneficial exchanges of staff and students in selected areas.
- Collaboration in joint research interests with a critical mass of expertise.
- Capacity building in the partner institution.
- Securing the supply chain with flows of students.
- Delivering a UK experience to another segment of the student market.

Selecting the right partner

- What are the criteria for selection? Size, shared values, reputation, subject mix, location, personal chemistry or contacts?
- How can we get an objective assessment of the partner (particularly if it is private or commercial)?
- Do we have the proper tools for a thorough due diligence?
- Do existing links with the partner work?

Cautious
friendship?

Hang on to your
sword?





Agreeing roles between the partners

- Is there agreement on who does what in operational terms? Who signs off on these?
- What does the partner want and expect to get from the arrangement? For how long?
- How can the partner best help with national regulations, QA and legalities?
- Is the sharing of costs and income agreed at the outset?
- Does the partner agree with the management structure for the operations?

Managing the partnership

- In the UK who is responsible for the partnership?
- Are SMT and central support services involved, if it is Levels One or Two?
- Is there regular reporting and monitoring of performance? Is the partner part of the process?
- How does the local governance of the venture relate to UK structures?
- Is there an exit strategy if things go wrong?



Financial implications

- If upfront investment is needed, has a rigorous business plan been completed?
- Are the partner's facilities (academic, sporting, residential) fit for purpose?
- If not, is there a Plan B?
- Are the respective shares of tuition income, costs and surpluses/losses agreed?
- Can funds be repatriated?



Measuring success

- Were any targets or indicators of success agreed at the start?
- From whose perspective is success judged – students, staff, overseas government, the partner or UK management?
- Are these viewpoints compatible?
- Is there a framework for regular reviews (and follow-up action) with the partner?

Recent Study of Offshore Activities

- Glasgow Caledonian University (Oman, China)
- University of Liverpool (Suzhou, China)
- University of Newcastle (Iskandar, Malaysia)
- University of Nottingham (Ningbo, China and Malaysia)
- RMIT University Vietnam
- University of Surrey (Dalian, China)
- Texas A&M in Qatar
- UCL (Adelaide and Astana in Kazakhstan)
- University of Wollongong Dubai

The study's findings on staffing

- Only 8% of staff in our case studies are from the home campus. They are usually at senior management levels.
- Reliance on internationally recruited staff.
- Staff quality is not seen as an issue.
- Some HEIs leave HR and staff policies to local Board, some decide them at home.
- HR departments may not know the details of flying faculty numbers or their T&C.

University	Project/country	Full-time staff originally from the home campus	Locally recruited staff	Internationally recruited staff
University of Nottingham	Ningbo China	10	220 staff (split not given)	
Newcastle University	NuMed, Malaysia (planned figures)	14	104	-
University of Liverpool	XJTLU, Suzhou	10	50	50
UCL	Adelaide, Australia.	2	5	4
	Astana, Kazakhstan	5	2	40
Texas A&M	Qatar	16	-	54
RMIT	Vietnam	0	19	156
University of Wollongong	Dubai	0	0	35
Totals		57	739	

Main messages re offshore staffing

1. Have an agreed staffing strategy and plan for 5 years at least.
2. Decide where HR policies on people, pay and conditions are to be made.
3. Develop HR policies for short and long term staff before your staff go offshore.
4. Develop a joint strategy for integrating domestic and overseas QA policies.
5. Be realistic about offshore R potential.

The governors' role in international partnerships

- Agree the role of international activities in the overall strategy.
- Agree guidelines on partner selection and due diligence.
- Set and review the risk parameters.
- Review feasibility studies and business case.
- Agree a monitoring framework and KPIs.

Further reading

- LFHE (2011). Leadership and management of international partnerships.
- LFHE/Int'l Unit (2011). A Guide to offshore staffing strategies for UK universities.
- Int'l Unit (2009). International partnerships: a legal guide for UK universities.
- Int'l Unit (2008). The Practice of internationalisation: managing international activities in UK universities.