

Sharing Quality Higher Education Across Borders: A Checklist for Good Practice

In 2004, the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), the American Council on Education (ACE), the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), and the International Association of Universities (IAU) issued a statement, *Sharing Quality Higher Education Across Borders: A Statement on Behalf of Higher Education Institutions Worldwide*, outlining a set of principles (in the box below) that should guide the provision of cross-border education.¹ (See www.unesco.org/iau/p_statements/index.html for the full statement.) The statement also set forth a series of recommendations to higher education institutions and other providers and governments. The impetus for the statement was the growth of market-driven cross-border education, fueled by increased demand for higher education worldwide, declining public funding in many national contexts, the diversification of higher education providers, and new methods of delivery. In 2005–06, more than 30 higher education associations worldwide endorsed the statement.

Key elements of the statement included the need to safeguard the broader cultural, social, and economic contributions of higher education and research; protect the interests of students

and facilitate their mobility; and strengthen the capacity of developing countries to improve accessibility to high-quality higher education.

This Checklist for Good Practice is derived from the joint statement with reference to other relevant documents on this topic.² It provides a series of questions to assist institutions in designing and assessing their cross-border educational initiatives, and to guide them in putting the principles outlined in the statement into practice. (Those principles are included for reference in the sidebar below.) This checklist also will be useful to institutions in discussing with governments and other stakeholders quality expectations for cross-border education.

The following Checklist for Good Practice, formulated as a set of questions, is organized under headings that correspond to the principles articulated in the joint statement. Some questions relate to broad institutional efforts to set the appropriate strategic context for cross-border educational initiatives. Others are more relevant to the institution's operational considerations in designing and implementing its cross-border activities.

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¹ We use here the same definition of cross-border education as in the 2004 statement: "Higher education across borders is a multifaceted phenomenon which includes the movement of people (students and faculty), providers (higher education institutions with a physical and/or virtual presence in a host country), and academic content (such as the development of joint curricula). These activities take place in the context of international development cooperation, academic exchanges and linkages, as well as commercial initiatives."

² See www.unesco.org/iau/internationalization/i_declarations.html for a list of related declarations and codes of good practice.

Principles for Cross-Border Higher Education

- ✓ Cross-border higher education should strive to contribute to the broader economic, social, and cultural well-being of communities.
- ✓ While cross-border education can flow in many different directions in a variety of contexts, it should strengthen developing countries' higher education capacity in order to promote global equity.
- ✓ In addition to providing disciplinary and professional expertise, cross-border higher education should strive to instill in learners the critical thinking that underpins responsible citizenship at the local, national, and global levels.
- ✓ Cross-border higher education should be accessible not only to students who can afford to pay, but also to qualified students with financial need.
- ✓ Cross-border higher education should meet the same high standards of academic and organizational quality no matter where it is delivered.
- ✓ Cross-border higher education should be accountable to the public, students, and governments.
- ✓ Cross-border higher education should expand the opportunities for international mobility of faculty, researchers, and students.
- ✓ Higher education institutions and other providers of cross-border education should provide clear and full information to students and external stakeholders about the education they provide.

From *Sharing Quality Higher Education Across Borders: A Statement on Behalf of Higher Education Institutions Worldwide*. Statement prepared by ACE, AUCC, CHEA, and IAU. See www.unesco.org/iau/p_statements/index.html.

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Institutions are urged to consider in the self-assessment process what evidence they can identify to substantiate their answers.

Contribution to Broader Public Good

- Does the institution's statement of mission and goals include a commitment to the social, cultural, and economic well-being of communities?
- Does the institution's statement of mission and goals include a commitment to international education, outreach, and linguistic and cultural diversity?
- Are the institution's cross-border programs culturally sensitive in approach and content? How does the institution evaluate this?

Capacity Building

- In designing its cross-border educational initiatives, has the institution consulted with local institutions regarding how its programs might enhance the overall capacity of higher education? For example, is there an opportunity to cooperate, when appropriate, with local institutions?
- Do the institution's cross-border programs encourage collaboration with the host country institutions and expand the opportunities for international mobility of faculty, researchers, and students?

Relevance

- Do the institution's mission, goals, or assessment measures for student learning include a commitment to the importance of critical thinking that underpins responsible citizenship at the local, national, and global levels? Has this commitment been integrated into the institution's cross-border initiative?
- Are the degrees and other credentials granted by the institution in its cross-border programs recognized for purposes of employment in the countries in which the students are enrolled?

Accessibility

- Does the institution enhance access to its programs and courses by offering support to qualified students with financial need from the host country or other countries?

Quality

- Does the institution have in place a process of ongoing quality review, feedback, and improvement that relies on faculty expertise and incorporates the views of students? Has the institution taken steps to promote the application of this process to its educational initiatives abroad?
- Does the institution apply the same quality assurance principles, policies, and practices—and standards of academic and organizational quality—no matter where its programs are delivered?

- Does the institution employ the same standards and procedures in appointing and evaluating faculty members, wherever the instruction is offered?
- When instruction is provided primarily or entirely over the internet or by other electronic means to students in the host country, does the institution also provide appropriate technical support for students and faculty, access to library resources, advising, and other student services?
- Does the institution provide advising and orientation support for students, wherever they are enrolled?
- Does the institution provide adequate administrative support for its programs and activities, wherever they are offered?

Accountability

- Has the institution obtained the proper authorization to operate and offer programs as a higher education institution from government or other competent bodies in the home and host countries?
- Does the institution engage and cooperate with its associations and governmental and nongovernmental bodies to develop effective quality assurance principles and practices for cross-border educational initiatives and to improve the international exchange of information and cooperation on quality assurance and recognition issues?

Transparency

- Does the institution provide accurate and user-friendly information to the public, students, and governments in a proactive manner, particularly with respect to the institution's legal status, award-granting authority, course/program offerings, quality assurance mechanisms, and other relevant facts as suggested by codes of good practice?
- Does the institution have clearly stated policies and criteria for the admission of students, expectations of student performance, total cost of enrollment, and availability of financial aid?
- Does the institution maintain adequate, appropriate, and clearly stated procedures for student appeals of grades and other academic policies and decisions?

Commitment to High-Quality Higher Education Across Borders

- Has the declaration, *Sharing Quality Higher Education Across Borders: A Statement on Behalf of Higher Education Institutions Worldwide*, or other codes of good practice in international education and cross-border education provision been disseminated to interested faculty, staff, and students in the institution?
- Does the institution adhere to specifically identified codes of good practice in higher education and cross-border education provision?