

MEMORANDUM

To: Vice Presidents, Vice Provosts, and Deans
From: Nojin Kwak, Vice Provost for International Education
Date: 17 February 2026
Subject: Collaborative Degree Programs with International Partners

The Office of Vice Provost for International Education (VPIE) serves as the central administrative clearinghouse for the review and approval of new collaborative or dual degree programs with international partners, and works closely with the host academic units, Undergraduate Education, the Graduate School, and other administrative units to facilitate this process. In cases where UB course instruction is to be offered overseas as part of a collaborative degree program, VPIE coordinates necessary approvals with SUNY System Administration and the Office of Finance and Administration at UB.

In recent years, UB schools and departments have been approached more frequently by prospective partners overseas to collaborate on degree programs that involve a portion of the curricular requirements being completed at the partner institution and a portion at UB, leading to the conferral of degrees from both institutions.

For example, dual-degree undergraduate partnerships often follow a “2+2” model, with the first two years of the program completed at the partner university and the last two at UB. Dual-degree programs at the master’s level typically follow a 1+1 model, with a year of study at each institution. Some models involve a combination of an undergraduate and a graduate degree, as in the 3+2 model, with three years of undergraduate coursework at the partner followed by two years at UB culminating in the partner’s bachelor’s degree and a UB master’s degree.

However, the approval of such collaborative or dual degree programs requires extensive due diligence with respect to assessing the proposed partner for overall fitness and capacity to collaborate with UB, facilitating a good curricular match, determining enrollment projections and a business plan, and providing for overall quality assurance, among others.

In order for collaborative degree proposals to be approved, a careful and thorough curricular mapping process is necessary to ensure that all degree requirements for each partner are achieved within the time allotted for the degree program, while complying with SUNY policy mandating that more than 50 percent of the UB degree requirements be delivered by UB. This process is complex and time consuming and depends on close collaboration with the partner institution. Key to its success from the start is the advocacy and engagement of faculty champion(s) in the host unit and the concurrence of both the department and school.

Office of International Education

411 Capen Hall, Buffalo, NY 14260-1604 USA
716.645.2368 (F) 716.645.2528
vpinted@buffalo.edu

www.buffalo.edu/internationaleducation

In most cases, VPIE becomes involved at an early stage, when an international university approaches UB, or is approached by UB, to consider an institutional partnership. Most of the university's partnerships are formalized through a general MOU reviewed and approved by VPIE that clarifies the nature and purpose of institutional cooperation. From this initial affiliation may develop a mutual interest in educational cooperation such as a collaborative or dual degree program.

Once there is an approved institutional agreement or MOU with the international partner, a proposal for a collaborative/dual degree program may be entertained by the host school and VPIE in consultation with the partner university in order to confirm that the program will benefit both parties and that relevant UB and SUNY policy requirements will be met. Important academic support units and stakeholders must be consulted in developing a proposal, including as appropriate: Undergraduate Education or the Graduate School, Enrollment Management, Institutional Analysis and the HUB Leadership Team.

A jointly developed collaborative degree proposal should include the rationale for the partnership in terms of university and unit mission and goals; the curricular mapping and integration; enrollment management plan; a business and implementation plan; provisions for student tracking, support and advisement; and quality assurance measures to meet accreditation standards, as appropriate.

As part of due diligence, VPIE evaluates the proposed partner and consults relevant units in the central administration—Undergraduate Education, the Graduate School, Enrollment Management, Finance and Administration, among others—to confirm the viability and advisability of the proposed program. Based on this review, VPIE submits a recommendation to the Provost regarding approval.

Once a program is approved, VPIE convenes a *Program Implementation Team* comprising representatives from VPIE, the host school, Undergraduate Education or the Graduate School, Enrollment Management, Office of the Registrar, HUB Leadership Team and Institutional Analysis to finalize terms of a detailed collaborative degree agreement with the international partner and to oversee the process for launching the new program.

Given the increasing demand for collaborative degree programs with international partners, VPIE stands ready to assist academic units interested in considering such programs with current and/or prospective partners.

Please share this guidance with your chairs, faculty, and staff, as appropriate.

cc: President Tripathi
Provost Weber