

Guidelines:

Transnational Education

Alberta post-secondary institutions are increasingly engaging in transnational education activity. This activity is occurring within a global context of more demand, greater student mobility, expanding research collaborations, and increasing numbers of international partnerships.

Transnational education can constitute an entrepreneurial activity, as well as an academic enterprise and a globalization strategy. Specific motivations for institutions' engagement in transnational education are numerous and include: altruism, capacity building, fostering mobility and the international experience of students and staff, enrolment growth, revenue generation, internationalization of the curriculum, extending educational access, and as extensions of research collaborations.

These guidelines are intended to foster educational quality, while mitigating institutional risk, protecting students and promoting accountability.

Scope

In scope elements include:

- The delivery of ministry- approved programs (or significant portions of ministry- approved programs) in countries other than Canada and which require students to be present in a specific international location.
- The delivery of credit courses by Alberta post-secondary institutions in countries other than Canada leading to an Alberta credential or to joint/dual credentials with international partners.

Out of scope elements include:

- Circumstances in which Alberta students participate in academic study, research or work abroad to fulfill requirements of their Alberta programs in countries other than Canada.
- Circumstances in which non-resident or international students register in approved Alberta program courses delivered via online or other distance technologies.
- Brokering and collaborative arrangements that occur within Alberta or Canada.
- International articulation agreements (involving inter-institutional agreements allowing host country students who have completed a specified local curriculum) to apply to a Canadian sending institution and enrol with advanced standing, are considered primarily to constitute student mobility and recruitment strategies.

Guiding Principles

- Internationalization initiatives to increase capacity across borders and cultures should benefit all parties involved.
- Collegial, collaborative and mutually beneficial approaches contribute to high-quality international partnerships.
- Thoughtful review of transnational education initiatives should be undertaken to safeguard the interests of students, faculty and other stakeholders, to protect the reputation of institutions, to comply with foreign laws, and to mitigate risks.
- Academic oversight and program monitoring should support quality programming.
- Transnational education should be equivalent in standards of delivery and outcomes of courses within Alberta and transnationally.
- Delivery of transnational education should be cost neutral or revenue-generating to prevent subsidization by the publically funded Alberta post-secondary system.
- Delivery of transnational education should not disadvantage domestic learners with respect to access and admission into ministry approved Alberta programs.

Pre-Planning

Prior to offering a ministry-approved program off-shore, institutions should consider a variety of factors and questions. Examples include (but are not limited to):

- What is the purpose and potential benefits?
- How will risk assessment and mitigation plans be undertaken?
- If the program is likely to include work integrated learning components, how will sufficient numbers of placements be procured, & what will students' role in securing placements be?
- How does the opportunity align with strategic directions and institutional capacity?
- How will due diligence be carried out concerning partner(s) and infrastructure?
- What types of partnership and program delivery models will be explored?
- What decisions are required about governance, resource requirements, academic planning, equivalencies and credentials?
- What are the regulatory and legal requirements of the host country?
- What considerations need to be taken into account regarding federal and provincial regulations and relations with the host country?
- Is there an intention that graduates be eligible to work in Canada without barriers, if they immigrate or work on temporary visas after graduation?

Definitions

Transnational Education is the mobility of higher education programs and institutions across international borders, also called cross-border, off-shore or borderless education.

A **Joint Program** is designed and delivered by two or more partner institutions in different countries. A student receives a single credential. The Alberta institution retains responsibility for program governance, delivery, oversight and quality assurance.

A **Dual Program** is a program that is designed and delivered by two or more partner institutions in different countries. A student receives a credential from each partner institution. The Alberta institution retains responsibility for program governance, oversight and quality assurance.

International Branch Campus an offshore operation run by a post-secondary institution as a partner in a joint venture. A student typically receives a credential from the foreign institution, although sometimes a student receives joint or dual credentials.

Franchise Program is a ministry-approved program that an Alberta institution authorises an off-shore institution to deliver. The Alberta institution is responsible for program content, the teaching and assessment strategy, and quality assurance. Students normally have a direct contractual relationship with the franchise body, as well as with the credentialing institution.

Governance and Policy Considerations

Alberta institutions should:

- Develop and approve procedures for the negotiation, approval and oversight of transnational education, including risk assessment and mitigation.
- Assume responsibility for program governance, management, oversight and quality assurance, although responsibility may be shared with partners, subject to type of operation.
- Comprehensively assess the financial, legal, academic and reputational risks.
- Stipulate in institutional policies who is authorized to sign institutional agreements and contracts for transnational education.
- Apprise Board of Governors of transnational education initiatives, and monitor institutional compliance with board policies related to international educational matters.
- Ensure that legal requirements of the country in which the program is delivered are met.
- Consult with accreditation, regulatory and quality assurance bodies whose permission is required to offer approved program in another jurisdiction.
- Consult with the Director, International Education & Intergovernmental Coordination branch of Advanced Learning and Community Partnership, Government of Alberta when planning/administering agreements related to international branch campuses.
- Co-operate with associations and relevant government and non-government bodies to foster quality assurance principles and the exchange of information about recognition of credentials.

Strategic and Operational Planning Practice

Alberta post-secondary institutions should:

- Include Transnational Education activities in Comprehensive Institutional Plans and Annual Reports.
- Develop strategic and operational objectives for each transnational education initiative and have these approved by the designated authority in the institution.
- Investigate and develop awareness about federal and provincial regulations, practices and relations with host countries such as immigration and visa practices, treatment of host country credentials and international conventions.
- Obtain authorization of Director, Apprenticeship and Industry Training (AIT) before delivering apprenticeship training.
- Prepare business cases that assess the risks, benefits, costs and legal requirements, prior to program delivery.
- Assess progress towards meeting objectives and outcomes on a regular and pre-determined basis.
- Implement appropriate systems of internal controls, financial reporting and accountabilities.
- Establish credible and robust contract management practices to ensure risks are managed well.
- Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of specific staff, faculty, committees, and institutional units involved in the planning, delivery, evaluation and oversight of cross-border initiatives.

Contract Considerations

When negotiating or investigating agreements Alberta post-secondary institutions should:

- Clarify credentials to be awarded.
- Award ministry-approved credentials for only those programs that have received ministry approval.
- In the case of non-credit programs, comply with their home institution's credentials policy and, if issuing transcripts, use terminology to distinguish non-credit programming from ministry-approved programs.
- Recognize that Apprenticeship and Industry Training owns Alberta apprenticeship training, therefore, institutions may not deliver apprenticeship training off-shore without appropriate authorizations.
- Ensure that the academic standards of all its credentials and qualifications are met, regardless of geographic location or nature of collaborative arrangement.
- Demonstrate due diligence to ensure the good standing and legal status of prospective partners, and their capacity to fulfill their designated role in program delivery, recruitment and promotion activities.

When drafting agreements Alberta post-secondary institutions should:

- Ensure the agreement term is specified.
- Include provisions to enable all participating institutions to suspend or withdraw from the agreement if the other party fails to fulfill its obligations.
- Specify residual obligations of both parties to students on termination of the collaborative arrangement including the obligations of the program owner to enable students to complete their studies.
- Establish clear and measurable targets as well as planned outcomes.

When executing agreements Alberta post-secondary institutions should:

- Assess and manage risks.
- Use a cost-recovery or earned revenue budget model (preventing government subsidization).
- Employ intercultural communication skills in teaching and learning environments.

Contract Considerations

Alberta post-secondary institutions should:

- Submit Report of Transnational Education activity annually (as documented in Annual Report guidelines).
- Include relevant data in annual Learner and Enrolment Reporting System (LERS) reporting.
- Make current and accurate listings of transnational educational activity available to the public, as appropriate.

Delivery Practices

Alberta post-secondary institutions should:

- Clarify the delivery mechanisms that will be utilized in each agreement, and obtain appropriate approvals as needed (e.g. collaborative provision, joint or dual credentials, branch campuses).
- Develop effective measures to monitor and assure the proficiency of staff delivering and supporting the program or training.
- Ensure that managers and staff engaged in delivering off-shore programming are qualified and appropriately oriented/supervised.
- Monitor work integrated learning placements to ensure regulatory/legal requirements are met and that appropriate supervision and evaluation is occurring.
- Identify performance targets, as well as mechanisms and timelines to evaluate program delivery and student outcomes for the off-shore program or training.

Curriculum and Courses

Alberta post-secondary institutions should:

- Document curriculum expectations (aligned with ministry program approvals) and share curriculum materials with international partners, in order to support effective instruction and administration of the program.
- Avoid altering programs of study without ministry approval and oversight, in order to protect the integrity of Alberta credentials.
- Ensure that equivalency is maintained and that approved programs of study changes as recorded in Advanced Education are implemented expeditiously.
- Advise partners in a timely manner, of curriculum revisions and significant changes that may have an impact on program delivery.
- Assume ultimate responsible for the quality of the program and student experience. Unless otherwise stated in the agreement, this responsibility includes informing students about where and to whom to direct any concerns including, for example, providing information about student appeals and other relevant policies.
- Advise partners that they may not make any unilateral changes to the curriculum without prior consent of the program owner.
- Provide students appropriate opportunities to provide formal feedback on their experience in the program or training activity.
- Ensure the curriculum standards in transnational education are equivalent to Alberta standards.
- Undertake to provide curriculum that takes into account cultural and linguistic sensitivities of the country in which the program or training is delivered.
- Monitor and assess student learning based on program learning outcomes to assess effectiveness of delivery and to evaluate student achievement.

Admission Considerations

Alberta post-secondary institutions should:

- Determine and monitor admission criteria including language proficiency as applicable.
- Determine and clearly document partner roles in admission and student recruitment processes.
- Make information available to students regarding admission requirements and grading system conversion, when applicable.
- Provide students access to the relevant policies and procedures from all participating institutions.

Transcripts and Graduation/Convocation

Alberta post-secondary institutions should:

- Maintain official student records, issue student transcripts, determine that graduation requirements have been met and issue parchments.
- Record the language of instruction on transcripts in cases where the language of instruction is other than English.
- Document graduation requirements and convocation regulations.

Funding and Financial Arrangements

Alberta post-secondary institutions should:

- Fully cost and financially account for transnational education arrangements.
- Comply with internal institutional expense claim policies.
- Record the financial contributions of all parties, and document decisions and transactions concerning the collection of tuition and fees, invoicing procedures, allowable expenses, etc.
- Conduct internal audits of expenditures and revenues.

Copyright and Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy

Alberta post-secondary institutions should:

- Maintain full ownership of the curriculum and course material they have contributed to the transnational education initiative.
- Include copyright costs in budgets.
- Include appropriate references to freedom of information and protection of privacy legislation in agreements.
- Retain student and institutional records in compliance with the duration required by legislation in their respective countries and institutional policy/regulations respecting document retention.

Dispute Resolution

Alberta post-secondary institutions should:

- Specify policy and procedures for dispute resolution in agreements.
- Acknowledge that students at off-shore locations typically have the ultimate right of appeal to program owners once partner institution's complaints procedures have been exhausted.
- Refer disputes or unresolved issues concerning the collaboration agreement or the delivery of the collaborative program to the program owner's senior academic officer, who will consult with the host institution's senior academic officer to resolve the dispute.

Further Information and Assistance

For additional information contact:

Director, Program Design and System Innovation
Alberta Advanced Education
780-643-9472

Related Guidelines:

- Collaborative Programs
- Program Proposal Timelines
- Program Learning Outcomes
- Mitigating Risk
- Enrolment Planning
- Budget Planning

Other related documents:

- Annual Reporting Guidelines
- Adult Learning System Principles

To obtain a copy of other guideline documents, or to ensure that you have the most recent copy of this guideline, please send a request via email to ae.psp-paprs@gov.ab.ca.