



**Karolinska  
Institutet**

**Strategy for the Internationalisation of  
Postgraduate Education**  
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Board of Postgraduate Education

## **Strategy for the Internationalisation of Postgraduate Education**

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<sup>1</sup> This is a translation of the original Swedish text. In the event of a dispute, the Swedish version shall be taken as authoritative.

## Summary of the Board of Postgraduate Education's internationalisation strategy

It is vital that the postgraduate education offered by KI is and remains internationally competitive. One of the key factors to achieving this is the internationalisation of postgraduate education, which raises the quality of the programmes by attracting a greater flux of ideas and collaboration opportunities between students and researchers. International collaboration creates unique opportunities for contacts with other elite environments and universities and gives access to unique projects, materials and methods. KI, by virtue of its prominence in the academic world, also has an important part to play in issues of global health, and takes active responsibility for health issues of global concern. The internationalisation of postgraduate education is thus an important quality issue, and one to which priority must be given. However, greater internationalisation is neither sufficient nor an end in itself. What is essential is that the process takes place in a way that promotes quality in all aspects of research and postgraduate education for each and every collaboration project.

International collaboration is based on the presence at KI of researchers proactive in the establishment of international partnerships in education and research. Most of these projects are initiated and maintained by individual researchers or research groups. Such researchers should be encouraged to continue initiating partnerships that help to develop postgraduate education, and given the tools and infrastructures necessary for ensuring the quality of the projects they help set up.

A collaboration might require a comprehensive cooperation agreement between KI and another university, but only when the agreement brings added value to both the project and KI. It is essential that KI *never* enters a comprehensive agreement if the project concerned would work well without an agreement, if the agreement is inadequately prepared, or if the basis of the agreement does not make satisfactory demands on quality. The agreements into which KI enters must be of a high quality as much as regards planning as implementation. Issues of a research ethical or moral nature must be examined closely before an agreement is entered into. Effective, long-term international collaborations must be pursued in the spirit of mutual respect for the similarities and dissimilarities of the parties, and with the benefits for all involved parties at different levels of both universities explicitly stated. The implementation of existing agreements must also be followed up regularly.

Agreements that add a new quality dimension to postgraduate research consume resources, so the FUS intends to find new funding sources for stimulating international collaboration.

## **Planning the Board of Postgraduate Education's international activities**

The overall planning of the FUS involves propelling the internationalisation of postgraduate education forwards by actively seeking to:

- \* ease international contacts, and encourage the international exchange of individual postgraduates.
- \* develop professional administrative and practical internationalisation procedures to remove obstacles and ease mobility.
- \* ensure that postgraduate education at KI supports practical collaboration in global health.
- \* help produce comprehensive agreements that concern postgraduate education.
- \* The FUS shall actively seek to ensure that comprehensive cooperation agreements comply with existing criteria and principles on ethics and morals.
- \* ensure that comprehensive cooperation agreements are driven by the mutual benefit of all parties concerned.
- \* ensure a restrictive approach towards entering comprehensive cooperation agreements on joint degrees.
- \* identify strategically important partners for comprehensive cooperation agreements on postgraduate education.
- \* ensure the transparency of comprehensive international cooperation agreements and their contents, and their accessibility to all of KI's researchers and students.
- \* ensure that procedures are put in place for the follow-up of the implementation of existing agreements.

## Criteria for entering or maintaining comprehensive international cooperation agreements in postgraduate education

Key criteria must be observed when entering or maintaining comprehensive international cooperation agreements in postgraduate education in order to ensure their quality and usefulness. The criteria have been produced and prioritised in line with the FUS's international strategy. The criteria are to be studied whenever other universities seek to enter into a comprehensive agreement with KI, or when KI/FUS seeks to enter into a comprehensive agreement with another party. A checklist of these criteria then provides a clearly comprehensible basis for any agreement under consideration. When international collaboration projects are under consideration, this list is useful in explaining the FUS's agreements strategy to other universities, departments, researchers, students and other interested parties.

An agreement that clearly meets all key criteria is worth KI/FUS entering into, and may even be a justification for separate financing. In cases where only a few of the criteria are met, no comprehensive agreement should be entered into.

The key criteria that must be observed when considering comprehensive cooperation agreements are as follows:

- Can KI's rules and ethical principles be fully complied with? (obligatory criterion)
- Will the agreement give postgraduates a better education than if it was not entered into?
- Will the agreement give KI access to unique expertise and/or technology?
- Will the agreement give KI access to unique research material?
- Will the agreement encourage new contacts between researchers and students?
- Will the agreement allow KI to play an important part in global health?
- Will the agreement strengthen the KI brand?
- Is there financing for the agreement?
- Can the agreement be easily implemented and followed up?

## KI's international postgraduate collaborations

### Background

KI is currently engaged in a large number of international postgraduate collaboration projects with different regions and countries, most of which take place between individual researchers or research groups without a comprehensive agreement. There are also a great many registered full-time equivalent students at KI with a first degree from an overseas university. Most of these students have arrived at KI as "Free Movers" without a formal exchange agreement. Many Swedish postgraduates travel abroad to gain international experience, and this too helps to raise the quality of KI's research training. These different forms of exchange on an individual level are likely to increase during the coming year in light of greater European integration (e.g. via the Bologna process) and globalisation.

KI currently uses three main forms of collaboration – personal, sandwich programmes, or joint degrees – to meet its postgraduate mobility goals, regardless of the content of agreements or funding models.

Postgraduate education pursued as personal collaboration usually means that the student is registered for the duration of the project with one university only, pursues his or her entire education there, and is awarded his/her degree there.

Sandwich collaborations mean that the postgraduate has a supervisor at both his/her home university *and* the partner university, and shares his/her education between the two. The extent of the exchange and other parameters for the programme are usually regulated through agreements. This guarantees exchanges between the participating departments at a junior and senior level, and creates a future platform for greater collaboration.

There are also comprehensive agreements that give the postgraduate the opportunity to take a joint degree. In such cases, two or more institutions develop and run a postgraduate programme that results in a joint degree that is awarded by both/all partner universities.

KI is also engaged with a number of universities and research institutions around the world in partnership agreements that concern more than just postgraduate education. These agreements are comprehensive and often contain an intention to cooperate towards improving conditions for research and/or postgraduate education for both parties. More specific agreements are also entered into on postgraduate education, a certain kind of research or research field. There are many reasons why KI has comprehensive agreements in such cases, the main one being that comprehensive agreements backed by the university management give unique opportunities for conducting research and education and provide access to unique research material.

Other reasons for entering into comprehensive agreements are that agreements with KI are often seen as a stamp of quality for other universities, and the same can apply for KI when it teams up with other highly esteemed universities and institutes. This generates goodwill and opens up additional contacts. Agreements are also sometimes necessary for partner universities seeking funding from their home governments; in such cases KI can assist them with an agreement on good intentions without any real commitment. In cases where the counterparty offers full financing, this is an important aspect *per se*.

The "New World, New University" bill (2004:162) lays down that each seat of learning should do everything it can to ensure that all postgraduates take a part of their education at a

foreign university, and incorporate an international dimension into its curriculum. The FUS strategy is therefore in line with the government's wishes as regards the internationalisation of postgraduate education.

KI's research strategy for 2005 – 2008 also establishes that international collaboration is important for maintaining and strengthening KI's competitiveness, and for bringing added value to individual competencies.

The FUS also actively seeks the continued harmonisation of European postgraduate education through the Bologna Process. This applies in particular to a modification of the syllabi in accordance with learning outcomes.

A determined strategy for the internationalisation of postgraduate education creates a solid basis from which to add another dimension to research of a higher quality. The goals of the international strategy are long-term and comprehensive, and should therefore be supplemented with tangible sub-goals for each individual international collaboration project.

## **KI's international postgraduate collaborations**

To make sure that its international activities contribute to the fulfilment of its goals, the FUS has identified a number of operational targets and strategies. The FUS's internationalisation strategy is thus based on the goals set up for its various activities. These can be summarised as follows:

### **Internationalisation of postgraduate education**

- **The internationalisation of postgraduate education is to raise the quality of our programmes and help to promote an understanding of and respect for other values and cultures.**
- **Obstacles to internationalisation are to be removed, and mobility encouraged.**
- **KI should take responsibility for and play an important part in issues relating to global health.**
- **KI shall present an attractive option for postgraduate education for Swedish and overseas students.**
- **Internationalisation is to be a self-evident part of postgraduate education and the experience KI's students gain from this will make them more attractive on the labour market.**

### **Comprehensive international cooperation agreements in postgraduate education**

- **Comprehensive cooperation agreements must be of obvious mutual benefit to both parties.**
- **Comprehensive agreements on postgraduate research are to be properly and thoroughly prepared, and entered into with strategically important partner institutions.**
- **The follow-up of KI's international activities is to be developed and the sound implementation of signed agreements safeguarded.**



## **Strategy**

### **Summary**

#### **Internationalisation of postgraduate education**

- **The FUS shall actively seek to facilitate international contacts, and encourage the international exchange of individual postgraduates.**
- **The FUS shall actively seek to develop professional administrative and practical internationalisation procedures to remove obstacles and ease mobility.**
- **The FUS shall actively seek to ensure that postgraduate education at KI supports practical collaboration in global health.**

#### **Comprehensive international cooperation agreements in postgraduate education**

- **The FUS shall become involved in the process surrounding comprehensive cooperation agreements that concern postgraduate education.**
- **The FUS shall actively seek to ensure that comprehensive cooperation agreements comply with existing criteria and principles on ethics and morals.**
- **The FUS shall actively seek to ensure that comprehensive cooperation agreements are driven by the mutual benefit of all parties concerned.**
- **The FUS shall actively seek to ensure a restrictive approach towards entering comprehensive cooperation agreements on joint degrees.**
- **The FUS shall actively seek to identify strategically important partners for comprehensive cooperation agreements on postgraduate education**
- **The FUS shall actively seek to ensure the transparency of comprehensive international cooperation agreements and their contents, and their accessibility to all of KI's researchers and students.**
- **The FUS shall actively seek to ensure that procedures are put in place for the follow-up of existing agreements.**

## **Strategy for the internationalisation of postgraduate education**

**The FUS shall actively seek to facilitate international contacts, and encourage the international exchange of individual postgraduates.**

Internationalisation is an important part of creating more attractive postgraduate education at KI. It also contributes to the quality of education by adding an extra dimension and helping to train KI's postgraduates to become culturally aware research scientists. The internationalisation of postgraduate education at home and through mobility helps to nurture an understanding of and respect for other values and cultures and to make students more attractive on the labour market, both at home and abroad. Students, postgraduates, researchers and teachers from other countries or with international experience are thus an asset to the development and quality of educational and scientific environments.

The aim of FUS's internationalisation work is to increase and stimulate the opportunities of each KI postgraduate to gain experience from a unique international research environment. The FUS shall strive as best it can to make it easier for researchers wishing to initiate collaboration projects that contain elements of postgraduate education, student exchange, courses or lab visits. International experience should be a self-evident component of postgraduate education.

**The FUS shall actively seek to find new funding for stimulating international collaboration.**

A new kind of approach is needed if international collaboration at postgraduate level is to be stimulated. Although travel allowances for brief visits abroad are already in place, more substantial support is now in demand.

Internationalisation requires resources, and the FUS intends to find and establish new forms of support for research groups seeking to enhance postgraduate internationalisation. Such support will be open to competition, and can be paid to courses or individual postgraduate or supervisor exchanges that are of manifest benefit to postgraduate education.

**The FUS shall actively seek EU financing initiatives for international collaboration with the framework of KI's programme fields**

The programme fields and postgraduate programmes prioritised by KI should seek to identify or initiate new EU initiatives. This is to be done with the help of efficient networks like LERU and Eurolife. The FUS encourages initiatives in each programme field to create pan-EU collaboration networks.

**The FUS shall actively seek to develop professional administrative and practical internationalisation procedures to remove obstacles and ease mobility**

A growing number of international agreements entail a greater influx of postgraduates from overseas. KI undertakes within the framework of existing and forthcoming agreements to deal with a number of issues relating to incoming students. In order to take care of issues raised by the comprehensive agreements on postgraduate education that KI enters into, the FUS will actively seek to set up a Programme Office. This office should provide an important instrument internally and externally, and should make quality-assurance easier for incoming postgraduates entering under comprehensive agreements. This includes the following activities:

- Assisting in the processing of visas and residence permits
- Ensuring that formalities of student registration and reporting are conducted in line with the prevailing rules and agreements
- Coordinating the visits and transfer of students and supervisors to and from Sweden.
- Supporting good communication between the home and partner university.
- Handling certain financial aspects of the agreements.
- Following up students.
- Reporting of the students' statuses to their home universities.

**The FUS shall actively seek to ensure that postgraduate education at KI supports practical collaboration in global health.**

KI has an important part to play in issues relating to global health, and exercises practical responsibility for global health issues through KIRT (the Karolinska International research and Training Committee). It is KIRT's charge to develop and administrate the research, postgraduate education and international collaboration projects at KI that are of concern to health issues of global interest by establishing long-lasting cooperation schemes with academic institutions in low and middle income countries. These collaborative programmes are to be of benefit to both parties and are to nurture research and postgraduate education in the home regions of the foreign universities.

Such schemes are looked upon favourably, and the FUS intends to actively seek their continuation; they should also eventually be expanded, if the financial resources exist.

## **Strategy for comprehensive international cooperation agreements in postgraduate education**

*No international agreements on postgraduate education may be entered into without the involvement of the FUS*

**The FUS shall actively seek to ensure that comprehensive cooperation agreements comply with existing criteria<sup>2</sup> and principles on ethics and morals**

Most collaboration projects are currently entered into on the initiative of individual researchers. The FUS sees this as a necessary form of internationalisation and one that should be encouraged.

For the FUS to support a comprehensive agreements, the joint project concerned must centre on issues relating to postgraduate education. If this is the case, the FUS is to be active in the process of drawing up and implementing the agreement, which much also be of clear benefit to all parties involved at the home and partner university (the institutions themselves, the supervisors and postgraduates, etc).

The laying down of criteria for the writing of agreements creates procedures to establish their benefit. The criteria must be firmly grounded and prioritised in accordance with KI's general internationalisation strategy and those of the other boards concerned. If a comprehensive agreement does not meet its criteria, it should be rejected and other collaborative solutions encouraged at more decentralised levels within a department or between individual researchers or research groups. Before agreements are entered into, they should be preceded by an analysis and discussion of their research-ethical, moral and environmental aspects.

When the partner university is willing to finance a joint project, this should be weighed against the quality of the proposal. It is important to consider the number of postgraduate places the funding will create, and what their real costs will be. On no account may such agreements compromise on KI's demands on quality or its rules governing postgraduate teaching.

**The FUS shall actively seek to ensure a restrictive approach towards entering comprehensive cooperation agreements on joint degrees**

The issue of the joint degree is being pursued very actively under the Bologna Process. A joint (or double) degree is awarded when two or more educational institutions develop and run a course or programme together. As far as Sweden is concerned, this can lead to two or more diplomas issued by the participating institutions and, if required, a joint degree.

The preparation of joint degrees involves an appraisal of the status of the partner university and its demands on postgraduate education. The conditions embodied in the agreement for the issuing of a joint degree are checked ahead of each individual degree, which means that joint degrees require much more administration than is normally the case. It is essential that the

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<sup>2</sup> See separate checklist

parties to such agreements with KI are described clearly; there should also be a well-defined profile that can only emerge through this specific collaboration.

When discussions with prospective partner universities result in an intention to embark on a joint degree scheme, an agreement regulating its content and its legal and practical aspects should be entered into before commencing. For a joint course or programme to be effective, it requires an administrator or a steering group with a well-defined mandate and a stipulated budget.

**The FUS shall actively seek to identify strategically important partners for comprehensive cooperation agreements on postgraduate education**

The regions and countries on which KI should concentrate are mainly decided by what they can offer KI and what KI can offer them. That a university falls into the “right” category can be because it is high-tech or has access to particularly interesting research projects. In this way, partnerships can give access to unique methods, research material or competence, or state-of-the-art technology; they also give exposure to the KI brand, which is strengthened if the foundations upon which they are built are of a high quality.

**The FUS shall actively seek to ensure the transparency of comprehensive international cooperation agreements and their contents, and their accessibility to all of KI’s researchers and students**

If the objective of a comprehensive agreement is to be fulfilled, its content and participatory opportunities must be broadly accessible. When researchers or students at or outside KI are able to benefit from the agreement, this should be facilitated and good access to agreements and their content should be checked. In these instances, information channels are of decisive importance in making details of KI’s international agreements generally available. Scientific and administrative coordinators for an agreement are responsible for disseminating news and details of events as they occur. In all other respects, the FUS shall actively seek to ensure that information on existing agreements is published and made available on request.

**The FUS shall actively seek to ensure that procedures are put in place for the follow-up of the implementation of existing agreements**

If the FUS is to meet the quality targets for its internationalisation activities, it must monitor the entire process in accordance with the international strategy. In this respect, an important part of the work involves creating secure procedures for following up agreement implementation. Good follow-ups ensure educational quality for individual postgraduates and for the internationalisation process as a whole.