

GUIDELINES FOR INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY LINKAGES

While Linkage Agreements differ greatly, the following components should be discussed with the prospective partner institution and made explicit in linkage agreements. The campus approval process for the UTIA is review by the UTIA Director of International Programs and by signatories to the agreement.

1. The objectives of the linkage should be stated. They may be quite general—to facilitate faculty exchange, student exchange, collaborative research, and the distribution of materials—or quite specific in the detailing of goals. The objectives of each institution may differ according to its particular needs, but should be mutually compatible and clearly described. Further, linkages are agreements which facilitate, but are not contracts. Contracts for performance of services may be later negotiated under the terms of the facilitative linkage.

2. The linkage should be explicitly defined as a two-way endeavor. If only one institution is truly interested or able to participate, no meaningful exchange is likely to be achieved.

3. A linkage coordinator(s) at each institution should be named, and the coordinating office designated, at each institution.

4. All activities conducted under provision of the Linkage Agreement must carry the endorsement of the respective coordinators.

5. Ideally, linkages should pertain to academic units at comparable levels of hierarchy. Hence, linkages may be between entire universities [although this has not occurred in the case of the University of Tennessee], campuses, between colleges, or between individual departments or other academic units of similar rank or status. Linkage agreements are not made between two individual professors, for example.

6. If institutional financing is involved, some definite commitment of funds should be indicated; however, this is rarely the case. Normally, wording of agreement documents is something along the line of, “subject to available funding.” Financial realities should be recognized.

7. The fields or topics which the exchange will address should be listed. Generally speaking, however, it is better to be inclusive rather than tightly limiting the areas of exchange.

8. The faculty, departments, or participating disciplines to be involved should be listed.

9. The agreement must be in force for a specific period of time, ie., for five years, with provisions made for an orderly conclusion or renewal.

10. Procedures and an annual plan may be attached including activities to be conducted. For example, the anticipated number of persons to be exchanged in a given year may be indicated.

11. Provision must be made within the agreement for an amendment/termination process, in case unforeseen opportunities or problems arise.

12. A requirement should be included for reports to be prepared at least annually by the linkage coordinators. In the case of the UTIA, this may be accomplished in an annual report to the International Advisory Board.

APPROVAL PROCESS

Administrative approval and appropriate signatures for the Linkage Agreement are essential. The approval process at the UTIA is as follows: involved faculty members and heads of their units proposing linkages should meet with the UTIA Director of International Programs to discuss an outline of objectives and a proposed plan of activities. Costs and benefits of the linkage must be discussed as well as anticipated sources of funds to cover the costs of the linkage program. Following this meeting, a letter outlining the objectives and proposed plan of activities, along with background concerning the proposal should be submitted to the Director, who will review the proposal and make recommendations for revision or approval. Whether the actual linkage document is designed in the UTIA or in the partner institution is immaterial. However, all provisions of the linkage document must be acceptable to both parties and adequate time for review of the document must be given both parties prior to the document signing.

Approval by appropriate UTIA officials will include the Vice President for Agriculture and the appropriate Deans or Department Heads. This will be followed by their signing of the linkage document once the international linkage partner has concurred on the linkage document wording. In some cases, such as when student tuition and/or fees are being waived, approval must be obtained from the UT Board of Trustees or University-wide (system) staff, as appropriate. Linkage agreements are no longer jointly signed with the East Campus. The Vice President of Agriculture, as the chief academic officer of the UTIA, will approve and sign all linkages for the UTIA.