

Quality Charter Relating to International Partnership Degrees

The University of Tours (UT) :

- eager to promote international partnership degrees in compliance with national and European higher education policies,
- wishing to provide the growing internationalization of its courses with an institutional framework, as well as to strengthen its international appeal in accordance with guidelines set in its four-year contract,

Submitted to the consideration of the Studies and University Life Committee on July 1st, 2010, and adopted, during its October 4th, 2010 Board of Regents meeting, this Quality Charter relating to International Partnership Degrees.

International Partnership Degrees (IPDs) include:

- dual degrees,
- joint degrees,
- offshore degrees.

In order to guarantee sustainable and quality IPDs, the UT is committed to:

1. Monitoring the Implementation of International Partnership Degrees

It is the UT's responsibility to meet the following quality requirements:

1.1 Administrative and Financial Aspects

1.1.1. Partnership proposals emanate from UT's departments together with one or several foreign higher education institutions recognized by their home authorities.

1.1.2. The implementation of a partnership is subject to the signing of an agreement negotiated between the UT and its partner(s).

This agreement must comply with the provisions of French Decree 2005-450 dated May 11th, 2005, relating to the issue of International Partnership Degrees (appendix 1), and must be drawn up following one of the models annexed to this charter (appendix 2). Furthermore, the agreement must be based on the "Practical Guide to Help in Setting up Dual or Joint Degrees" from the International Relations Office (Appendix 3). It must more particularly specify mobility periods when they are mandatory.

Therefore, the file is managed by UT's International Relations Office and must meet the following procedure:

- The partnership agreement will come into effect provided it is submitted to the consideration of the Department Committee;
- The person in charge of IR within the Department presents, on behalf of his/her department, the partnership project to the International Relations Office to be approved;
- The agreement is submitted to the consideration of the Studies and University Life Committee and/or Scientific Board;
- A forecast budget must be attached to the partnership agreement and presented to the Finance Committee to be approved.

The partnership agreement is then put to the vote of the Board of Regents. It will come into effect once it has been signed by each partner.

1.2. Educational Aspects

1.2.1. A teaching committee must be set up. It is made up of at least 6 members, including 4 UT staff members at least. It is in charge of implementing courses. Partners must see to its sustainability in order to guarantee the quality of the IPD.

1.2.2. Among the teaching committee, an academic coordinator will be nominated in each partner institution. As soon as the partnership has been set up, this person will make sure the course is properly conducted. Therefore, he/she will be the key contact for teaching staff and partner(s), and will act as a liaison should any changes in the teaching team occur.

1.3. Legitimacy and Recognition of Courses

The UT along with its partner(s) must make sure that the IPD meets the following criteria:

1.3.1. The existence of a joint genuine teaching program. The IPD therefore needs to offer the following features:

- institutional support ;
- genuine added value ;
- synergies between UT courses and those offered by partner(s) in the case of dual or joint degrees.

1.3.2. Well-thought-out and coherent choice of partner(s). The UT must make sure that:

- the partner institution is recognized by national authorities in its own country. The project promoter may therefore contact the French Embassy in the country concerned. The partner must be reliable, sustainable and committed to the setting up of international programs and research. It must also have some experience in the IPD field;
- courses in the partner institution are compatible with those given at UT and of similar quality.

1.3.3. Type of degrees granted. The degree involved in international partnership must:

- comply with European standards;
- be recognized/accredited by national authorities of the country concerned for the whole duration of the IPD;
- have an equivalent standard to the one issued by the UT within the partnership;
- enable students to find a job and/or pursue their studies.

2. Guaranteeing Transparency and Equity in the Selection and Assessment Procedures of Students

The UT and its partner(s) are committed to ensuring quality courses through proper management.

2.1 Selection Process

2.1.1. Partners need to work together to select students.

In order to join the course, applicants must have a minimum standard equivalent to that of the UT degree directly below the one issued at the end of the partnership course. Exceptionally, they may obtain an accreditation of prior learning, according to French Decree 85-906 dated August 23rd, 1985, which sets the terms of accreditation of studies, work experience or personal experience in order to access higher education.

In the case of offshore degrees, the final selection of students is carried out by UT teaching staff members.

2.1.2. Applicants' language skills in French were set by the UT during its December 12th, 2005, Board of Regents meeting. They must at least correspond to a completed Level B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), i.e. 399 points (level 3 of the TCF – test de Connaissance du Français) / 540 points (level 3 of TEF – Test d'Evaluation du Français) / completed units A3 and A4 for the DELF Level 1 (Diplôme d'Etudes en Langue Française).

Some departments require a higher minimum level than that set by the UT. It must then be clearly stipulated in the partnership agreement.

2.1.3. If other teaching languages are to be included, the minimum required standard must be mentioned in the agreement.

2.2. Course Contents

2.2.1. Course contents must comply with European standards and correspond in particular to the European Credit and Transfer System (ECTS) according to which one academic semester amounts to 30 credits and one academic year to 60.

2.2.2. For dual or joint degrees:

Licence level (180 credits, 3 years) and Master level (120 credits, 2 years): at least one third of ECTS credits must be given by UT teaching staff members, either on its premises, or on the partner(s)'(s) premises.

2.2.3. For offshore degrees:

Whether it be in Licence or Master, at least one third of ECTS credits (internships not included) must be given by UT teaching staff members in each year of the offshore program.

2.2.4. Whatever the IPD, more than half of the course given by UT teaching staff members must be given by permanent teaching staff members.

2.2.5. Other teachers must be qualified in the field concerned, incumbent or on contract of one of the partner institutions. They need to be approved by other members of the teaching committee in the IPD program who will thus review their degrees, qualifications and publications, as well as their course program, according to UT regulations, in particular for offshore partnerships.

2.2.6. The UT and its partner(s) undertake to provide resources in terms of people, equipment and teaching aids required for the courses to proceed smoothly. Moreover they endeavour to carry out cooperation actions in order to promote experience exchanges and skills transfer.

2.3 Assessment of Students

2.3.1 Testing skills and assessing students must be strictly prepared and continuously monitored. Partners must therefore be extremely careful particularly in choosing exam subjects and how exams are graded, in reporting grades and in the composition of examining boards or dissertation committees.

In particular:

2.3.2. As regards dual or joint degrees:

The UT and its partner(s) together define the course project, assessment terms of students, degree and diploma supplement granting terms. They undertake to forward to the other any relevant information as regards students' assessment.

2.3.3. As regards offshore degrees:

The UT creates and/or reviews the different exam subjects and provides staff to supervise as well as to grade exams. Only dissertations, theses and other academic work may be granted without the physical presence of students using video conferencing systems. The person in charge of the UT course will chair the examining board/dissertation committee. Finally, the UT defines the terms on which the degree and diploma supplement are granted.

3. Conducting Reliable and Effective IPD Assessment Procedures

3.1 Steering Committee

When a partnership is created, a steering committee is set up. It includes, for each partner institution, at least three members and meets at least once a year to examine cooperation results, draw up a report for each partner and suggest decisions required to any improvement or extension of the cooperation program. It is also in charge of determining the following year's budget.

3.2. IPD Assessment

3.2.1. Each IPD is assessed yearly by the Studies and University Life Committee:

Yearly assessments conducted by the UT aim at guaranteeing and improving qualities required for IPDs to succeed, and in particular:

- quality of courses;
- recognition of degrees granted;

- quality of equipment and infrastructures implemented;
- availability of funding required to operate IPDs in a sustainable way.

Based on their recommendations and course assessment carried out by students, teaching committees and institutions involved in the partnership develop their project or their cooperation and, upon expiry of agreements, consider renewal terms.

Notably:

3.2.2. Regarding dual or joint degrees:

The UT and its partner(s) jointly carry out course assessment: course contents and teaching staff are thus assessed and adjustments/corrective measures may be suggested.

3.2.3. Regarding offshore degrees:

The UT undertakes to carry out an assessment of courses given by its own teaching staff members, as well as by teaching staff members of the partner institution, and more particularly, it provides for course assessment performed by students. Partners forward all required information to the UT so as to enable the UT to assess course contents. They also host and inform steering committee representatives.

4. Providing Long-Term Funding Fitted to IPD's Needs and Ensuring its Viable Management

4.1. Funding

4.1.1. While setting up the IPD and prior to the start of each academic year, the UT and its partner(s) will strive to find the financial means required to implement and sustain the IPD

4.1.2. Raising funds may be carried out jointly or separately. Partners may thus turn to their own funding channels or to outside funding (national, European, international).

4.2. Budget and Financial Resource Management

4.2.1. The partnership agreement must explicitly state the budget cost breakdown as regards the IPD between the UT and its partner(s).

4.2.2. A balanced budget will need to be defined yearly and distinctly show teaching and equipment costs.

4.2.3. The budget needs to take into account charges paid by the French State, in particular teaching staff members' salaries, instructional design implemented for the IPD, university overheads to set up the partnership course.

4.2.4. A financial appendix must be drawn up each year and presented to the Finance Committee prior to the start of the following academic year. It must show all UT and partner institution(s) expenses and incomes.

4.2.5. Costs and fees incurred by one of the partners and payable by another - according to the partnership agreement – must be paid within 45 days upon invoice presentation.