

EQUIS Guidelines for defining the International Dimension of Higher Education Institutions in Management and Business Administration

I. The Purposes and effects of Internationalisation

A key question that schools must be able to answer is “Why internationalise the institution?” Unless top management of a School is aware of the precise objectives being pursued and hopefully achieved by internationalising its School, it will not become effectively international and, of course even less, internationally effective. Top management needs to know clearly why and how internationalisation makes the School a higher quality institution. The purposes usually pursued in internationalisation or, if you prefer, the effects of internationalisation are presented below. They are certainly complementary and often linked to quite separate results. The first purpose or effect is strictly qualitative, the next two are strategic and linked to the competitive positioning, and the fourth one is especially commercial.

1. Quality aspects of management education

It concerns the adaptation of education and research to the evolution of an increasingly global managerial world. Companies want business schools to prepare managers that are able to offer integral and adapting approaches to cope with the international challenges faced. In the pursuit of this qualitative objective, some essential vehicles for success are:

- ◆ The international content of business education in all areas
- ◆ A pedagogy that contemplates and celebrates diversity
- ◆ Close contact with corporations that are internationally active and able to provide information about the challenges that they face in a globally competitive environment
- ◆ Research that explores the relevant international challenges mentioned above
- ◆ The international exposure and mobility of students, professors, staff and very particularly that of the top management of the Institution.
- ◆ The proactive openness of the Institution to foreign cultures shown by:
 - Effectively helping foreign visitors to gradually learn about and smoothly adapt to the domestic cultural features, and
 - Persuasively encouraging its domestic students, professors and staff to actively take advantage of the presence of foreign visitors in order to learn about and experience other cultures and value systems and to appreciate the enrichment that diversity provides.

Every management education institution aiming for EQUIS accreditation must integrate these dimensions.

2. Positioning on the national market

Internationalisation can also be used as a competitive factor on the national market. The principal success factors are:

- ◆ The quality perceived in the international offers of flagship programmes: courses taught in other languages, individual study-abroad possibilities (involving or not student-exchanges), class study trips abroad, internships abroad, international field business and research projects, international multi-campus programs, dual- and joint-degrees with other foreign institutions, etc.
- ◆ The reputation and actual quality of the academic partnership networks on which these programmes rely.
- ◆ The actual integration and coordination of the domestic and foreign (or in other language) activities experienced by the students and participants to optimise their overall learning in a coherent manner. This implicitly requires a degree of control of the quality of the activities abroad.

Frequently, the MBA is the key program where these developments take place and national recognition is provided to the School for its exposure to international learning experiences. However, in some Schools other flagship programs may be important too.

These success factors are more and more often present, to different extents, in the EQUIS accredited institutions.

3. Positioning on the international market

Internationalisation can also help a School to reach a better level of recognition abroad which allows it to be "liberated" partially and gradually from the dependence upon the national market. In some cases, the School may end up considering its market to be the world-market with nationals representing a spontaneous or purposefully restricted minority. The essential vehicles for success are:

- ◆ Internationally recognised programmes, often MBA programmes, which are able to attract international recruiters.
- ◆ Joint programmes and alliance-based activities, where the weight is usually evenly divided among the partner institutions, which attract students from many nationalities on the basis that the program or alliance is not identified with a single nationality.
- ◆ International recognition of a significant number of professors of the School based on their research and publications, which often have made them also well known to both domestic and international companies.

In this respect there is some 'fixation' of the media on the MBA which creates a situation where the reputation of this programme usually dominates the international recognition of the institutions. In any case, very rarely is this recognition achieved by means of undergraduate programs. For some institutions, Executive Education activity is also a key contributor to this reputation, sometimes the main one, in this context.

Success in attracting students, participants and companies from international markets to enrol in the programs of the Institution often requires a high level of recognition coupled with international marketing effectiveness. In turn these are frequently based on a balanced mixture of:

- ◆ international levels of quality in most EQUIS criteria; in other words, quality levels that are clearly above those found on most domestic institutions and similar to or better than those of the leading institutions in the foreign markets being tapped, and
- ◆ continued and effective communication and public relations in the international arena (international media, international peer institutions, international associations, etc).

The factors above apply to EQUIS accredited institutions to different extents. Very rarely could an Institution receive EQUIS accreditation without showing at least some recognition in international markets through at least one of its activities or programmes. Obvious success in international markets often is a conspicuous indicator of the existence of the international quality levels demanded by EQUIS in most criteria.

4. Commercial exploitation of the international markets

Here the primary concern is to export education abroad in order to generate additional revenues. The success indicators among others are the control of off-shore or multi-campus activities, the control of distance learning and e-learning techniques; the ability to propose and deliver programmes in English, the support of good commercial teams. Most of the European countries are not well equipped to succeed in the pursuit of this objective.

Often the only contributions to the quality of a School from off-shore or franchised activities are the international exposure, some times very narrow, of professors participating in this activity and the indirect impact on the overall School quality of the additional funds provided by these activities.

Generally, the extent to which off-shore or franchised activities replicate the quality factors that characterise its main campus will be a clear signal of the quality of these activities.

Actions in this area are not necessarily expected or required from EQUIS accredited institutions. Often success is more an indicator of the existence of a very significant unsatisfied demand for management education in the targeted countries than an indicator of the quality of the provider institution. In fact, with conspicuous exceptions, often institutions, even sometimes prestigious institutions in their domestic environments, operate with low-cost schemes that are not acceptable under the EQUIS quality criteria and that certainly increase the chances of a School not being EQUIS accredited or seeing its off-shore or franchised activities excluded from the scope of its EQUIS accreditation.

II. Dimensions of Internationalisation

Considering the effects of internationalisation described in Section 1, we can easily distinguish three dimensions or sources of relevance when we talk about the international qualities of an institution.

1. International General Quality Standards

The issue is not the level of internationalisation but simply the level of observed quality in the different areas of evaluation. Are the general quality factors in the Institution at the level of good institutions across the world? For example, are the physical resources of the institution or its faculty favourably comparable with the resources or the faculty of good institutions in other countries? In other words, will a foreign student find a comparable quality in education (which does not mean identical) to what he/she would have found in a very good institution in his/her own country or in other countries he/she might have alternatively considered?

2. International Recognition

This relates to the reputation of the institution with the different markets outside its own country. It is only when reaching this level that an Institution will have access to international educational markets. The first step is the recognition by the community of other management education institutions. The next steps of recognition by students, companies and media are more difficult to reach as the institution will need to build a brand and get it accepted (recognised). It should also be noted that there is a geographical factor of influence. Some institutions are very well-known in their area (for example, in Europe or in Asia) without it being on a world level. In any case, the number of institutions having a high level of world recognition with all these markets is extremely limited and it is probably this group which is designed by the term 'World Class'.

3. International cultural exposure, exchange and integration

This relates to the international dimension measured by the qualitative and quantitative indicators such as the number of foreign students registered on the programmes, the mix of nationalities of the professorial body, the international content of the curriculum, the exchange volume with foreign partners, etc. However, a high degree of internationalisation following these criteria does not guarantee in any case a high level of recognition on the international market nor does it necessarily guarantee a high level of quality.

III. The EQUIS description of an international school

EQUIS believes that an international school needs to show fulfilment on each of the three dimensions indicated in Section 2. As stated above, the ability to show achievement in some of the indicators mentioned in relation to the third dimension described above is not sufficient to satisfy the EQUIS quality criterion of internationalisation. An indication of how these indicators are the consequence of an internationalisation strategy should also be provided.

In addition, it is expected that an EQUIS Accredited School specifically shows clear success in at least one of this three aspects and, desirably in all of them:

1. Attract students and participants from other countries and be proactively prepared for them.
2. Produce a significant number of graduates that end up working in different countries.
3. Contribute knowledge to solve managerial and business problems of international interest, relevance and/or scope.

IV. Specific Indicators of Internationalisation

The above considerations cause a number of indicators to become relevant when assessing the internationalisation of a School. Some of these indicators are shown below grouped under headings corresponding to the 11 EQUIS Quality Criteria.

1. Context/Mission/Governance/Strategy

- ◆ Summary of evidence that international dimension is reflected in every aspect of the School sense of mission, strategic planning and current operations.
- ◆ Description and evaluation of international performance over the past 5 years
 - Evaluate of the achievement of own international objectives.
 - Describe key changes in the international operation of the School that have occurred in the last 5 years
 - Current position of the School in the international market for management education
- ◆ Description of the objectives and plans for the next five-year period.
 - Current statement of international policy for the School.
 - Target position of the School in the international market for management education
- ◆ Key processes used to manage the School's international policy and relationships.
 - Policy and processes for adding international dimension to the School activities
 - Processes to integrate the international dimension within the normal structures and processes governing the activities of the school
- ◆ International alliances and partnerships
 - Key strategic relationships with other international institutions
 - Rationale for the selection of organisations targeted for special or key relationships
 - Policy for international cooperation
 - Reflection in the mission
 - Consortial alliances
- ◆ Role of international campuses, off-shore activities and franchised programmes in the strategy of the School
- ◆ Allocation of staff responsibilities for international relations
- ◆ Dean/Director and top management participation in international associations and visits to other international Schools
- ◆ Intercultural management teams

2. Student and Participants

- ◆ Foreign students and participants
 - Relative number (global and per program)
 - Living or working in the country vs coming from abroad
 - Marketing and recruitment processes, resources and effectiveness
 - Selection processes
 - Quality

- ◆ Foreign work experience of domestic students
 - Number of students
 - Average duration
- ◆ Student exchange programmes
 - Number of institutions involved
 - Quality and reputation of institutions involved
 - Criteria for selection of institutions
 - Number of countries involved
 - Number of students involved in both directions
 - Criteria for selection of participating students
- ◆ Practical indications of concern for intercultural exchange
 - In the classroom
 - Outside the classroom
 - For foreign students
 - For domestic students
- ◆ International Office or Officer: role and effectiveness
- ◆ International internships: number, characteristics and quality
- ◆ Project work across borders: number, characteristics and quality
- ◆ International placement of graduates
 - Specific results in last years per programme, country, student nationality, industry, etc
 - Specific resources devoted
- ◆ Language ability of graduates
 - Requirements
 - Training
- ◆ Alumni association
 - International chapters
 - International activity
 - Contribution to enhance internationalisation and international reputation of the School

3. Programme Quality

- ◆ Course content that focuses in international business environments.
- ◆ Courses taught in foreign languages.
- ◆ International perspective in all the main fields of knowledge or areas.
- ◆ Courses jointly designed and taught with partner institutions abroad.
- ◆ Internships and study abroad as an integral part of programmes.
- ◆ International learning materials
 - Translated, customised
- ◆ Exchange visits
- ◆ Joint programmes with foreign schools

- ◆ International programmes
- ◆ International Programme modules
- ◆ Curriculum content
- ◆ Contracts and franchise arrangements with foreign organisations

4. Personal Development

- ◆ Business language skills development
- ◆ Educational development of multicultural skills
- ◆ International extracurricular activities

5. Research, Development and Innovation

- ◆ International joint research projects, programmes and centres
- ◆ Sponsorship by foreign organisations
- ◆ Hosting and organisation of international academic conferences and congresses
- ◆ Publishing of international journals
- ◆ Involvement in international networks.
- ◆ Participation in international conferences.
- ◆ Research and publication of an international nature
 - Issues of international interest
 - Issues of international scope
 - Issues related to international business and management
 - Publication in foreign journals
 - Publication of books in foreign languages
 - Translation of faculty books originally published in the domestic language

6. Contribution to the Community

- ◆ Participation in international academic and professional networks
- ◆ Links to the international community
 - List of key relationships with international organisations
 - Impact of existing relationships on the development of the school and its programmes
 - Use of the School membership of international organisations to support its own quality improvement processes
 - Commitment given by Dean/Director to involvement with international associations
- ◆ Social projects in other countries

7. Faculty

- ◆ Faculty composition
 - Foreign vs domestic
 - Recruited abroad vs recruited domestically
 - Processes for recruitment of non-nationals
 - Mechanisms for retention of foreigners
- ◆ International experience of faculty
- ◆ Foreign language skills of faculty
 - Ability to speak in foreign languages
 - Ability to teach in foreign languages
- ◆ Visiting professors
 - Number
 - Duration of stay
 - Quality and reputation
 - Mechanisms of integration and cultural exchange with own faculty
 - Facilitation of integration in the local environment
- ◆ Faculty serving as visiting professors abroad
 - Sabbaticals

8. Resources and Administration

- ◆ Number of foreigners in administrative positions
- ◆ Language tuition for staff and facilities
- ◆ Incentives to learn foreign languages
- ◆ Staff international exchange programs
- ◆ Participation of administrators in international conferences
- ◆ Foreign journals, magazines, newspapers and books in the library
- ◆ Brochures, websites, manuals, notices and signals in foreign languages

9. Connections to the Corporate World

- ◆ International Advisory Board
- ◆ International companies involved in or contributing to the different activities
- ◆ International companies providing jobs and internships abroad
- ◆ International companies sponsoring activities and/or research

10. Internationalisation

- ◆ Internationalisation strategy
 - Clearly articulated
 - Objectives established
 - Actively committed
- ◆ International dimension in all its activities
- ◆ Passion for diversity

11. Executive Education

- ◆ International companies as clients
- ◆ Participants from other countries
- ◆ Effectiveness in training for international management
- ◆ Programmes and courses with international focus
- ◆ Specific resources for international executive education activity
- ◆ Foreigners in the staff



EFMD
rue Gachard 88 - box 3
B- 1050 Brussels
Tel: 32-2-629.08.10
Fax: 32-2-629.08.11
www.efmd.org

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