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**THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES**

**TOWARDS A POLICY ON INTER-INSTITUTIONAL GRADUATE  
DEGREE PROGRAMMES AT THE  
UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES**

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## **1. Background**

Inter-institutional degree programmes are formally structured programmes offered in partnership by two or more degree-granting universities. There are significant potential benefits to such programmes. These include benefits to students through exposing them to different social and learning environments and by increasing their opportunities for future studies and employment; and benefits to institutions through a richer and more diverse campus environment, through increased possibilities for staff collaboration and development, and through the possibility of increased financial support, since many donor agencies are preferentially supporting collaboration in graduate education and research. Inter-institutional degree programmes are clearly consistent with the UWI's 2007-2012 Strategic Plan, which identifies international collaboration as a critical vehicle for developing graduate education and research.

There are also potential challenges posed by inter-institutional degree programmes. These include the significant effort required to harmonise academic aspects of the programme, considerable administrative challenges, risk to the University's reputation and to the acceptability of the student's qualifications if an inappropriate partner is chosen, and legal risks if any partner fails to deliver on its commitment to the collaborative agreement.

## **2. Types of Inter-Institutional Degree Programmes**

For the purposes of this Paper, three types of inter-institutional degree programmes are recognised.

### **Joint Degree Programmes**

These are programmes in which a student takes courses from more than one institution, but receives one degree and one certificate at graduation. The degree is awarded by one University, but the certificate makes reference to all partner institutions at which the student took courses.

### **Double (Multiple) Degree Programmes**

These are programmes in which a student takes courses from more than one institution and receives a separate degree and certificate from each participating institution, with little or no additional work needed beyond that required had the student taken an equivalent programme from a single institution.

## **Combined Degree Programmes**

These are programmes in which a student takes courses from more than one institution and receives a separate degree and certificate from each participating institution, but substantial additional work is needed for the student to meet the requirement for the award of the multiple degrees.

### **3. Guiding Principles**

Given the potential risks identified in Section 1, it is important that there be clear Guidelines to be followed by UWI entities wishing to participate in the development and delivery of inter-institutional degree programmes. A University of the West Indies Committee, chaired by Professor Barbara Bailey of the Institute for Gender and Development Studies, has developed such Guidelines, but these have never been reviewed or approved by the Board for Graduate Studies and Research. They are attached, with minor modifications, as Appendix 1 of this paper.

### **4. Regulatory Framework**

Students participating in inter-institutional degree programmes will likely have an institution of primary registration (see Appendix 1; 21), but will have to simultaneously register for courses in partner institutions providing components of the programme. The University of the West Indies Regulations for Graduate Degrees and Diplomas do allow for this, but it requires the approval of the Board for Graduate Studies and Research. Specifically, Regulation 30 states that ‘A candidate may not be registered for two or more programmes simultaneously, whether at UWI or at any other institution, unless the Board for Graduate Studies and Research in any particular case otherwise decides’. It may become necessary to revisit and elaborate on this Regulation as the number of situations requiring double or multiple simultaneous registration increases.

### **5. Purpose of this Paper**

This paper invites discussion on all aspects of its content, but at this time seeks approval from the Board of Graduate Studies and Research only of: (1) the Guiding Principles provided in Appendix 1, and (2) the right of UWI entities to participate in the development and delivery of Joint Degree programmes, as described in Section 2, provided that the Guideline Principles articulated in Appendix 1 are followed. Such programmes would of course have to come to the Board for Graduate Studies and Research for approval following their design and prior to their delivery.

# Appendix 1

## Inter-Institutional Arrangements between UWI and Partners for offering of Programmes through a Consortium Arrangement *UWI Guiding Principles*

### General Principles

1. A Consortium may be established between UWI and one or more institutions of equal status and standing (degree granting powers) for the offering of graduate programmes leading to an award approved by the UWI.
2. A Memorandum of Understanding which clearly stipulates the responsibility of each partner must be agreed on and signed by all partner institutions before start-up of the programme at UWI.
3. After a period of deliberation and planning, in the event that the standards of the proposed programme do not satisfy UWI quality assurance standards, the UWI should have the option to withdraw from the Consortium prior to the implementation of the programme and the signing of a MOU.
4. Consortia agreements should be subject to a full review after a three year period and the UWI should enter into all such agreements with an option to withdraw at the end of the pilot phase on condition that valid reasons can be identified.
5. Programmes offered at UWI through a Consortium arrangement should not replicate existing programmes and the demand for such a programme by UWI target audiences should be established to ensure cost effectiveness and sustainability.
6. In establishing a Consortium arrangement, UWI should ensure that the proper legal framework is in place to facilitate the partnership agreement.
7. When entering into a Consortium agreement, UWI should ensure that the learning resources and environment are appropriate to the delivery of the programme and that the competencies of academic staff are comparable across partner institutions.
8. When entering into a Consortium agreement, UWI should ensure that the financial and human resources are in place to meet the costs of programme development, delivery, assessment and quality assurance (monitoring and evaluation).

9. The conferring of a graduate degree by UWI under these arrangements shall be governed by UWI regulations for the award of a degree in the related discipline.

### **Programme Matters**

10. The development of the programme will be a joint undertaking and there must be agreement among all partners in terms of: credit value of courses/programme; mandatory core courses, range of electives, content of courses and assessment procedures.
11. Students from all partner institutions must have access to all courses, including core and elective courses, offered in the programme.
12. UWI procedures for course and programme approval have to be adhered to and such approval obtained prior to the start-up of the programme.
13. UWI may enter into a variety of arrangements with the partners in the Consortium for delivery of the programme:
  - a. Institution based face-to-face
  - b. Face-to-face with split site delivery
  - c. Distance by a variety of modes
  - d. Mixed mode including virtual and face-to-face
14. The delivery of courses may be shared through team teaching but the partner institution from which the course originates and an individual academic member of that institution must have overall responsibility for coordination of delivery and assessment of the course.
15. All students registered in a Consortium programme, regardless of the institution of primary registration (see 21), will be subject to the same assessment procedures (e.g. essays, projects, examinations) for a given course.
16. The first examiner for a course will be from the institution that has ownership of the course and primary responsibility for delivery, and a second examiner will be drawn from one of the other partner institutions.
17. Programmes offered through Consortia arrangements will be subject to all UWI Quality Assurance mechanisms and procedures.

## **Language Proficiency**

18. Where there are language differences among institutions in the Consortium there needs to be a clear language policy in relation to the medium of instruction and requirements in terms of language competencies for both staff and students.
19. UWI academic staff who deliver courses and are course examiners in a programme offered through a Consortium in which UWI is a partner must be linguistically competent in the language(s) of the partner institutions.
20. In instances where courses in the programme are offered in a language other than English, UWI students should have competencies in reading and comprehension in the language of instruction. Non-English speaking students registered for courses offered through UWI should have reading and comprehension competencies in English.

## **Student Matters**

21. Students will typically register at the institution from which they will be taking most of their courses within the programme. This institution will be termed the institution of primary registration.
22. All student matters will be the responsibility of the institution of primary registration (e.g. registration, student records, examination procedures, disciplinary matters, appeals) and at UWI will be dealt with through existing channels for such matters and in keeping with the regulatory frameworks.

## **Cost Structure – Fee Distribution**

23. Students will pay fees to their institution of primary registration (see 21).
24. Fees charged by UWI for a programme offered through a Consortium should be calculated in such a way to include both tuition costs related to courses owned by UWI and also costs related to courses owned by partner institutions. The fee for non-UWI courses will be paid over to the institution which owns a particular course to defray costs related to delivery and assessment of UWI students. UWI will levy similar costs on partner institutions in relation to courses owned and managed by the UWI.
25. The meeting of costs for travel to partner institutions and accommodation to other partner institutions will be as determined by partners in the Consortium.

## **Management Structure**

26. It is recommended that, in the case of each Consortium arrangement, UWI shall appoint an International Programme Advisor (IPA) who will be responsible for all programme matters and for assuring compliance with UWI procedures and

- regulations. Each partner institution is expected to make a similar appointment. The IPA should have experience in the field of study of the programme.
27. The IPAs from the partner institutions will form a virtual management team and an individual will be selected as Chair and overall Coordinator of the programme. This body should be established prior to the start-up of the programme and will have responsibility for decision-making related to the programme structure, course content, course delivery, quality assurance matters, and monitoring and evaluation of the programme.
28. IPAs from all partner institutions should have similar status and equal voice in decision-making.
29. Where a programme offered through a Consortium is open to students from two or more UWI participating countries, a 'local' committee chaired by the UWI-IPA should be established to ensure intra-institutional dialogue and a unified UWI position at meetings of the Management Team.

### **The Memorandum of Understanding**

30. The MOU should at the very least:
- establish and specify the partners and the designated address for communication among partners;
  - specify the relevant programme and the award that will result;
  - require all partners to contribute to the programme and clearly set out the lines of responsibility for each partner in the development, delivery and assessment of the programme;
  - specify the regulations that govern students entering the particular programme (entry requirements, access to the programme and admission to partner institutions, academic standards, requirements for award of degree, avenues for appeals, complaints etc.) and ensure that these are in keeping with UWI regulatory frameworks;
  - specify the rights and entitlements of students registered at each partner institution and access to human and material resources;
  - specify the requirements which need to be met by students, regardless of institution of registration, for the award of the degree;
  - specify the type of inter-institutional degree to be awarded;
  - state the ways in which staff from the partner institutions are expected to collaborate and the lines of responsibility among partners in all aspects of the programme;
  - set out the financial resources required to support the programme and the contribution each partner is expected to make in this regard;
  - set out the fee structure for the programme and how income generated from this source will be distributed among partners;
  - establish quality assurance mechanisms and the role of partners in the process ensuring that the procedures are in keeping with UWI standards;

- identify systems that will be in place to resolve disputes arising in respect of any aspect of the arrangement;
- make provision for the termination of the agreement on the part of any partner with due regard to timely completion by students already registered for the programme.

31. The MOU should be regularly reviewed and revised as necessary subsequent to quality assurance review reports and/or other developments at UWI that may have implications for the agreement.