

การริเริ่มความร่วมมือระหว่างประเทศผ่านบันทึกความเข้าใจในระดับมหาวิทยาลัย The Initiation of International Collaborations through MOUs at University's level

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Received: 26 April 2022, Revised: 17 October 2022, Accepted: 21 October 2022

บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาว่าในการเริ่มต้นความร่วมมือผ่าน MOU มหาวิทยาลัยต้องคำนึงถึง ขอบเขตใดบ้างการศึกษานี้แสดงให้เห็นข้อควรพิจารณา 5 ประการในการจัดทำ MOU ได้แก่ ประการที่ 1) คือ องค์ประกอบของ MOU ซึ่งต้องมีข้อมูลที่จำเป็น เช่น ด้านความร่วมมือ ขอบเขตของกิจกรรม ระยะเวลา และอื่น ๆ ประการที่ 2) คือ MOU ควรระบุประเด็นความร่วมมืออย่างชัดเจน เช่น การแลกเปลี่ยนนักศึกษา การแลกเปลี่ยนบุคลากรการตีพิมพ์และอื่น ๆ ประการที่ 3) คือ MOU ควรให้คุณูปการสำคัญแก่ทุกฝ่าย ที่เกี่ยวข้อง (โอกาส รายได้ ชื่อเสียง และอันดับมหาวิทยาลัย) ประการที่ 4) คือ ขั้นตอนการจัดทำ MOU ต้องมีความชัดเจน โดยเริ่มจากการร่างข้อมูล การขออนุมัติ และการลงนามโดยผู้มีอำนาจ และประการ ที่ 5) คือ การร่าง MOU จะต้องเป็นไปตามกฎ ระเบียบ และกฎหมายของฝ่ายที่เกี่ยวข้อง ตลอดจนหน่วยงาน ภายในโดยคำนึงถึงผลประโยชน์ร่วมกัน การศึกษานี้มุ่งเสนอขั้นตอนเบื้องต้นในการกำหนดนโยบายสำหรับ มหาวิทยาลัยเกิดใหม่ในการดำเนินความร่วมมือระหว่างประเทศผ่านบันทึกความเข้าใจ

คำสำคัญ: บันทึกความเข้าใจ, ความร่วมมือระหว่างประเทศ, การจัดทำบันทึกความเข้าใจ, ระดับมหาวิทยาลัย

Abstract

Initiating MOUs with international organizations can be mutually beneficial for all parties involved. This article aims to study to what extent Universities have to take into consideration when initiating collaborations through MOUs. The study illustrated five considerations in initiating MOUs. 1) MOU components must include essential information such as areas of cooperation, scope of activities, duration, and so on.2) The MOUs should indicate aspects of cooperation clearly, such as exchange of students, staff, publications, etc.



3) MOUs should provide significant benefits to all parties involved (opportunity, income, reputation, and University ranking).4) The steps of making MOUs need to be clear, starting with drafting, getting approval, and getting signed by authorized people. 5) The MOU drafts must adhere to the parties' rules, regulations, and laws, as well as internal divisions with mutual benefits. This study suggests an initial step for policymaking in new-born Universities to perform international collaborations through MOUs.

Keywords: MOUs, International Collaboration, Initiating MOUs, University Level

1. Introduction

Previously, university collaborations were verbally and easily bondable. However, as society has changed, University collaborations now require a written form in order to provide a better understanding among the universities themselves. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) as a form of document was then established, underlying the change of rules, regulations, and laws of each University's country. Hence, the written form of the collaboration makes the conditions and the guidance clearer and more official.

An MOU is a fundamental tool for two institutions to officially perform activities. The importance of the MOU is to promote internationalization by cooperating with international institutions as a process of upgrading its institutional status to be widely accepted among the international networks. It requires deliberate consideration when engaging in an MOU with an international partner since it deals with sensitive matters regarding financial responsibility, laws, accountability, and the pros and cons of the MOU itself. Some organizations have created their own MOU templates to be used inside their organizations, to be safe and somehow protect the organization from future problems. For example, in order to avoid the potential problems, if any disputes occur under the agreement, a Thai court must take into account that the organizational MOU templates would rather benefit the organization than a court of a foreign state.

The memorandum of understanding, or MOU, is defined differently. Boontaeng (2013) defined the terms MOU and MOA, in which MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) means a written contract whereby two parties voluntarily perform some certain activities. Likewise, a MOA (Memorandum of Agreement) is a document mentioning the rules, regulations, principles, and practices of each activity in their written form. It can be seen that an MOU is like a big umbrella, whereas a number of MOAs are underneath. Similarly, the Young Ambassadors of Virtue Foundation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2013) defined MOU as a document in which two parties are mutually bonded in performing some activities, without distinguishing MOUs from MOAs. Hence, a number of Universities generally call this kind of



document an MOU. This current study defines MOU as a document that requires the two parties to mutually agree on certain matters, with the latter being effective with authorized persons' signatures as if it were a legal contract. The staff members or relevant people must rely on the guidance indicated in the MOU.

There are plenty of advantages to having MOUs, such as opportunities, income, reputation, and the University's ranking. To sign the MOUs, there are steps to follow as well as internal relevant organizations involved in double-checking the mutual benefits between the parties. Thus, the aim of the current article was to study to what extent Universities have to take into consideration in initiating international collaborations through MOUs. The findings will suggest the starting point in generating MOUs and activities underneath, which will be significantly important for the new-born Universities in Thailand as well as institutions in partnership with international institutions.

2. Objective

The aim of this article was to study to what extent universities have to take into consideration in initiating international collaborations through MOUs.

3. Content Scope

The content focuses on the following aspects:

- 3.1 The initiation of international collaborations
- 3.2 The aspects of international collaborations through MOUs

4. Definitions

- **4.1 MOUs or Memorandum of Understanding**: A document that requires the two parties to mutually agree on certain matters, with the latter being effective with authorized persons' signatures as if it were a legal contract. The staff members or relevant people must rely on the guidance indicated in the MOU.
- **4.2 Parties**: International, national, and internal organizations that are mutually beneficial from the MOUs.
- **4.3** International Collaborations: International partners in performing collaborative academic activities such as the exchange of student, staff, publications, etc.
 - **4.4 Initiating MOUs**: The starting point in generating MOUs and activities underneath



5. Content

5.1 Components of MOU

Figure 1 The Example of MOU Draft in Faculty's Level (The International Affairs Division, KhonKaen University, 2020)

| 1 | | -Faculty level tem | olate- | | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | MEMORANDUM OF UNDE | RSTANDING | | | | | | |
| | 0 1 | between | | Seal | | | | | |
| | Seal | [NAME OF INSTITUTION], | [COUNTRY] | Seal | | | | | |
| and | | | | | | | | | |
| l | | FACULTY OF, KHON KAEN | UNIVERSITY, THAILAND | | | | | | |
| [Name of Institution] [(Institution abbreviation)], [Country] and Faculty of | | | | | | | | | |
| agree to enter into a formal collaborative arrangement based on a foundation of trust for the mutual benefit of the two | | | | | | | | | |
| institutions. | | | | | | | | | |
| 1. | [Institution abbreviation] andKKU will jointly develop some or all of the following activities based on their | | | | | | | | |
| | respective | academic and educational needs: | | | | | | | |
| | a. | exchange of students, staff and non-academic staf | f; | | | | | | |
| | b. | organization of joint research programs; | | | | | | | |
| | C. | exchange of research materials, publications and in | nformation; | | | | | | |
| | d. other (please specify)[Please note that when other activities are stipulated, approval from the higher | | | | | | | | |
| | | authorities of both institutions is needed.] | | | | | | | |
| 2. | The impler | The implementation of further activities using the authority of this Memorandum of Understanding shall be separately | | | | | | | |
| | negotiated and determined by both institutions. | | | | | | | | |
| 3. | Further act | Further activity to be developed using the authority of this MOU shall be articulated in a form of agreement (MOA or | | | | | | | |
| | other types of instrument) which shall articulate the scope of the intended activity and outcomes, financial asp | | | | | | | | |
| | and specific person designate to be responsible for the undertaking. | | | | | | | | |
| 4. | Financial a | Financial aspect of this MOU and further undertaking shall be subject to the approval of each party's authorized | | | | | | | |
| | agents. | agents. | | | | | | | |
| 5. | Use of the | Use of the name or logo of either institution must be approved by the other institution. | | | | | | | |
| 6. | This Memo | This Memorandum of Understanding can be revised and renewed by mutual written agreement. It is also understood | | | | | | | |
| | that either institution may terminate the agreement at any time, with prior notice of months. | | | | | | | | |
| 7. | The Memo | randum of Understanding will be valid for <three <="" td=""><td>five> years and become effective when the</td><td></td></three> | five> years and become effective when the | | | | | | |
| | representa: | ives of both institutions have signed and dated th | e document. | | | | | | |
| This MC | U is not a form | nal agreement and shall not be legally binding eit | her party. It should be construed as the state | ement of | | | | | |
| intend f | or both partie | s to establish future legal relationship when terms | and conditions are met by both parties. | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| | zed to sign a | | Authorized to sign and | | | | | | |
| on beh | alf of [Name | of Institution] | on behalf of Faculty of, | | | | | | |
| | | | KhonKaen University | | | | | | |
| [Name of authorized person] | | | [Name of authorized person] | | | | | | |
| [Position of authorized person] | | | | | | | | | |
| Date: | | | Date: | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |

As regards to Figure 1, there are several components in the MOU template:

- 1. The University's logos
- 2. The names of both institutions are provided at the top of the page.



- 3. The areas of cooperation, in which it can be amended as appropriate, are found in item 1.
- 4. Item 8 describes the scope of activities, the outcomes, the financial aspects, and the people in charge.
- 5. The further agreements in the form of Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) need to be in compliance with the MOU, and each party keeps one copy.
- 6. All documents must be mutually agreed upon and specify how to terminate the agreement in Item 11.
 - 7. The duration of the MOU in item 12:
 - 8. Signature of the authorized person and the effective date.

Moreover, the state of funding should be clearly indicated to avoid future problems. If additional aspects of collaboration are required, it needs approval from both institutions, by which it requires more consideration in terms of rules, regulations, and laws of both institutions.

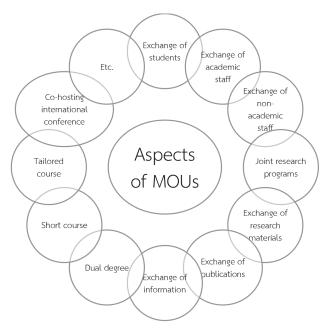
5.2 Aspects of MOUs

Figure 1 elaborates the aspects of MOUs at the faculty level (The International Affairs Division, KhonKaen University, 2020), whereas a number of MOU aspects were obviously indicated. The first aspect is the exchange of students, staff, and non-academic staff a). Due to the nature of teaching and learning, it includes two main major stakeholders: teachers and students. As an international policy, teachers and students must be associated with an international atmosphere. The exchange of students and staff then becomes familiar with all institutions in promoting international teaching and learning contexts. The second aspect is the organization of joint research programs b). Research has been more focused as research has been the country's policy, and it is believed that new knowledge from research can help develop education. Recently, the nation's strategic plan for the year 2021 has focused on research studies. (Patamawadee, 2020). The research is then emphasized and included in the university's policy as well. Furthermore, the second aspect has entailed a third aspect, which is the exchange of research materials, publications, and information c). When joint research has been initiated, it is automatically followed by the exchange of research materials and publications, so that real research exchange has been successfully established. Finally, the good MOU template must provide an opportunity to identify the additional cooperation as found in an aspect d) other (please specify), such as dual degree, short course, tailored course, etc. Thus, aspects of the MOU can be customized as needed, in which case the details are changed and mutually agreed upon, thereby underlying the scope without



conflicting with the main articles of the agreement. As shown in Figure 2 below, the aspects of the MOUs can be recited and rearranged for better understanding, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Aspects of MOUs



5.3 Benefits of MOUs

There are several advantages to having MOUs with international organizations. The current study reviewed four main benefits of bonding agreements with the international partner: opportunity, income, reputation, and university ranking.

5.3.1 Opportunity

MOUs provide a golden opportunity for students, academic staff, and non-academic staff. Students will benefit from aspects such as dual degree, short course study, tailored courses, student exchange, and so on. According to Francisco (2022), exchange students in Asia showed five strands of their improvements, such as increasing their macro skills, decreasing affective filters, enlightening nationalism, obtaining digital literacy, and nurturing 21st century skills. Another study suggests that exchange students will have more opportunities to learn about cultures, enhance language skills, promote learning motivation, and generate a learning community (Luo andYang, 2022). They will have plenty of opportunities to meet, work, and learn with their international friends, which can be their



further connection, in which they can share their mutual interests, strengthen personal friendships, and share common knowledge, leading to a greater bond in particular activities and/or future businesses after graduation. They will not only have more opportunities to work or do projects, but it will also lead to more opportunities for their future career choices, both domestically and internationally.

Likewise, the academic and non-academic staff will have the opportunity to benefit themselves in terms of their professional development through aspects such as staff exchanges, joint research programs, exchange of research materials, co-hosting international conferences, etc. During the current COVID-19 pandemic, the virtual exchange in teacher education has become a popular channel for performing potential aspects underlying the MOUs. Previous studies indicate that the virtual exchange provides a productive strategy for teaching staff in developing their knowledge, pedagogical practices, and teaching and learning innovations since teachers have an opportunity to develop their professional through new partnerships, academic initiatives, online collaboration skills, and innovative approaches for their teaching implications (Hilliker andYol, 2022; O'Dowd, andDooly, 2022). Academic staff's perspectives will be widened as well as their academic profiles will be rightfully entailed.

5.3.2 Income

Since most Universities shifted from being public Universities to being half-private Universities or autonomous Universities, they have received no more fully funded support from the government. Consequently, universities need to earn money by themselves autonomously. As shown in the study by Jarern siripornkul and Pandey (2018), whenever the government gave autonomy status to Thai independent universities, they were in various stages of preparation. Universities can designate their own governance patterns, leadership recruiting, revenue management, budgeting, and staff management in accordance with their Acts. Anyhow, the use of MOUs can be one way of helping Universities earn money on their own.

For instance, there are several aspects of MOUs that can earn revenue, for instance, short courses, tailored courses, field trip studies, etc. It is admitted that Thais have several traditional resources that we can sell through the eyes of international platforms. Highlighting our Thai ways of living, we can initiate Thai language and cultural courses or programs and ask international students to apply and join the field trip study, where we can present our language, culture, and tradition while gaining income from these special programs. It is obviously seen that these courses can practically converse with the University's income.

It is suggested that the management of the field trip empowers students to learn, develop, and improve experimental learning in both formal and informal settings, in which



the school can examine a field trip study inexpensively or free of charge (Behrendt and Franklin, 2014). Thus, it is important to ensure the proper cost, duration, and provision of activities. The field trip study can include a tailored course and appropriate activities. It should cover the basis of the academic course, domestic travel, local sightseeing, or tourist attractions. As a guarantee of the greatest experience worth paying for, the selling point of localism must be characterized. The local community will totally benefit from tourism or a field trip study since there are fewer expenses and fewer controls over tourism planning, development, and administration (Mowforth andMunt, 2015).

Cost reduction can be achieved through the use of current resources such as Thai undergraduate buddies to take care of foreign students while staying at the host university in exchange for extra credits, a certificate, or a pass for a particular project in the extra curricula activities. Moreover, foreign students can perceive that their buddies are someone special, making them less lonely, socially and personally experienced, and able to experience deep relationships like a family member (Nissen, Laursen, andHaslund-Thomsen, 2022).

5.3.3 Reputation

Potential university students may select a university based on its reputation, such as its antique, wealthy legacy, how difficult it is to get into, and good employment records (U Multirank, 2022). Anyhow, students as the customers of the University can be attracted through the university's marketing strategy. Because they choose educational institutions based on their reputation, Universities must build their reputation through the uniqueness of their products and services. The overall consumer-based brand equity or the University's reputation falls into two types: core and supportive (Khoshtaria, Datuashvili and Matin, 2022). The previous study surveyed a group of students, who expressed the core dimensions of quality of faculty, University reputation, emotional environment, and brand loyalty and awareness as the most important factors in identifying each university. Likewise, supportive dimensions such as libraries, living support, career development, and facilities are highly considered by students (Pinar, Trapp, Girard andBoyt, 2014). The insightful decision-making in selecting the university for the students led to the feasibility of getting further scholarships, being funded on particular projects, and getting loans (Li and Hu, 2019).

Thus, there is an urge to build the reputation of universities, particularly newborn Universities. One of the simplest ways to establish a reputation is to enter into an MOU with one of the world's most well-known international Universities. Apart from the formal method of publicizing a University's reputation, the University partners can even advertise the activities through our university's name informally. However, as it is known, mouth-to-mouth talking is one of the most successful marketing strategies in promoting the quality of services. It is our responsibility to provide a memorable welcome and experience for international



students, who make up a sizable portion of our customer base. The alumni of the program, i.e., exchange program, dual degree, or any activities under the MOUs, will also directly and indirectly publicize the name of the University to be globally known.

5.3.4 Ranking

The last benefit of signing MOUs with international institutions is to rank up the university. To be one of the top ranked universities, a university must present itself as an institution with great scholars and a large number of research studies that can attract talented students from both rich and poor backgrounds. Second, the satiability of the competition is needed. Third, it requires financial and societal costs to keep its super league status (Prinz andEhrmann, 2022). As per the QS World University Rankings, there are six metrics by which universities will be evaluated: 1) Academic Reputation, 2) Employer Reputation, 3) Faculty/Student Ratio, 4) Citations per Faculty, 5) International Faculty Ratio, and 6) International Student Ratio (Craig, 2012). Similarly, the Times Higher Education World University Rankings indicated only five indicators: 1) Teaching 2) Investigation, 3) Citations4) international outlook; and 5) industry income (The Times Higher Education World University Rankings, 2021). As clearly seen, making MOUs has high potential to influence all the mentioned metrics. MOUs with international partners can strengthen academic and employer reputations as well as increase the international faculty-to-student ratio, leading to plenty of research activities and citations. Thus, starting an MOU is the fast-growing step-taking on higher rankings for the new-born universities.

5.4 The Step of Signing MOU

There are specific steps to follow when making an MOU. According to Figure 3, after both institutions have agreed on the content of the MOU draft, it requires administrative work to get it done. In some cases, there is an organizational template that requires small information to get it approved and signed. In some other cases, the content of the MOU is completely different from the organizational template, in which case it needs additional steps of approval from a specific division, law division, academic senate, and university council. The following figure shows the steps of MOU generation or extension.



Figure 3 Steps of MOU (The International Affairs Division, KhonKaen University, 2020)

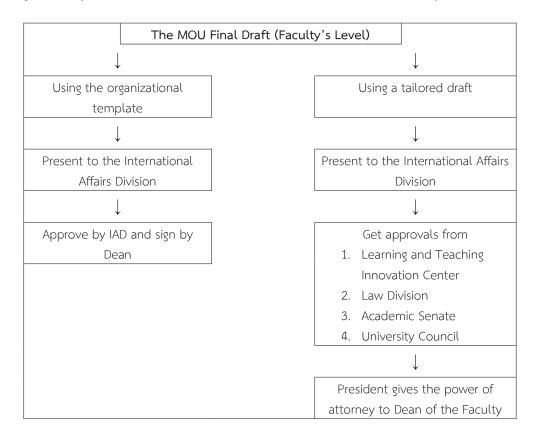


Figure 3 shows the step of signing MOUs. Using the organizational template without editing much information, it is likely a fast track that the faculty can get the MOU approved and signed in a short period of time. However, if the faculty is unable to comply with the organizational template, the content of the MOU draft needs to be cross-checked by several internal parties, such as the Learning and Teaching Innovation Center, the Law Division, the Academic Senate, the University Council, and the Power of Attorney provided by the President. After getting approval from all relevant sectors, the MOU draft can finally be signed.

5.5 Parties

The MOU is usually signed by two parties or more. However, there are several internal divisions within each party. The organizational structure of each institution is different regardless of the country's laws, rules, and regulations. Hence, the current article



mentioned the divisions used in an autonomous university in Thailand per se. The internal division may involve

- 1. The programs or departments from both parties or more,
- 2. International Relations or Foreign Affairs in handling all related issues and processes,
 - 3. The Faculty's board in approving the MOU drafts
- 4. The Law Division in approving that all articles are eligible and lawful with mutual benefits.
 - 5. The university council approves the MOU drafts.
 - 6. The individuals who are authorized to sign memorandums of understanding

6. Summary

To fulfil the aim of the article: to what extent do universities have to consider in initiating international collaborations through MOUs?,the below Figure 4 proposes five considerations in initiating MOUs: 1) components of MOUs, 2) aspects of MOUs, 3) benefits, 4) steps of making MOUs, and 5) parties involved.

Figure 4 Considerations in initiating MOUs

| Component | Aspect | Benefit | Steps | Parties |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| Logos of the institutions Names of the institutions | Exchange of students Exchange of Academic Staff | Opportunity Income Reputation University Ranking | Drafting Getting approvals from both parties | International Relations or Foreign Affairs |



Figure 4 (Continued)

| Component | Aspect | Benefit | Steps | Parties |
|---|--|---------|---|--|
| Areas of cooperation Scopes of activities Further amendments or additional agreements How to terminate Duration Effective date. | Exchange of non-academic staff Joint research programs Exchange of research materials Exchange of publications Exchange of information Dual degree Short course Tailored course Co-hosting international conference Etc. | | Getting approvals from the foriegn university Getting approval from the faculty's boad, law division, academic senate, and university council respectively Signing ceremony | The programs or departments The Faculty's board The Law Division The university council The authorized persons |

Figure 4 shows the summary of the considerations in initiating MOUs. The basic components of MOUs consist of eight main components: 1) logos of the institutions, 2) names of the institutions, 3) areas of cooperation, 4) scopes of activities, 5) further amendments or additional agreements, 6) how to terminate, 7) duration, and 8) effective date. The university should also consider the aspects of the MOUs, for example, the exchanges of students, academic staff, non-academic staff, tailored courses, dual degrees, etc., based on the mutual interest and benefits, available resources, and feasibility of being successfully implemented. In particular, the four main benefits of MOUs: opportunity, income, reputation, and university ranking, help newly built universities be in better conditions. As per the steps to get MOUs signed, it starts with drafting, getting approval, and signing by authorized persons. Finally, the parties and internal divisions involved should be taken into account to follow the rules, regulations, and laws of the organization and the country.

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