



# **The SAGE Encyclopedia of Online Education**

## **Academic Partnerships**

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An academic partnership is a formal arrangement between an academic institution and another academic institution, an industrial firm, or other stakeholder, seeking shared academic and research goals. The nature of such academic partnerships revolve around varied agenda. Academic partnerships can be local, regional, national, transnational, or international. In terms of online institutions, transnational or international partnerships have become increasingly important, particularly between colleges and universities of the developed world and less-developed regions.

Partnerships between educational institutions can take place when the two institutions are sufficiently different, yet need what the partner institution can provide. For example, online institutions often create partnerships with traditional colleges and universities, bringing a global reach and technological prowess to an institution that can provide a sense of mission and expertise in various academic disciplines. One of the major benefits stemming from international partnerships between two institutions is international experience and exchange of knowledge. The institutions can build up an expert network that plays to the strengths of both. Such partnerships may open career opportunities both for the academicians and for the students. Moreover, the quality and standards of educational delivery, research outcomes, recognition of the programs, and the acceptability of the learners are enhanced by the access to a larger pool of experts. Some case studies of international academic partnerships between institutions in Europe and Asia suggest that the capability of the institutions to work as equal partners was also enhanced. As a result of the academic partnerships, institutions from developing regions became more capable in undertaking superior roles in the accomplishments of the projects. A central benefit for all institutes is that they are capable of participating as equal partners, which leads to a higher quality of education.

Academic partnerships between industry and higher educational institutions have occurred for decades. However, the knowledge-driven global economy that has emerged in the past two decades or so has created an atmosphere where such partnerships are longer lasting than those traditionally focused on individual research initiatives. Partnerships are created to invest in long-term goals and focus on the future directions of both education and industry, as well as the regions of the world that are affected. For online educational institutions, such partnerships can be truly global in scale.

Most partnerships between educational institutions and industry consist of exchanges based on what each partner brings as a specialization. Often, educational institutions bring expertise in research, development, and teaching, while the industry partner brings financial and/or technological resources. For example, ANSYS, an American company primarily engaged in developing engineering simulation software, participates in more than 150 academic partnerships around the globe. The results of such academic partnerships are shared through technical journal articles, conference presentations, and similar published materials. Some of the most common areas of interests include information and communication technology, pharmaceutical research, automobiles, industrial designs, space research, and energy research.

The benefits of partnerships between academic institutions and industries are many. The institution benefits from financial and technological aid. The quality of the final product from the academic institutions becomes more competitive. The research outcomes of the faculty members gain credibility. Employability of its graduates is enhanced, which attracts future students.

The benefits for the industrial partner include access to firsthand research that can aid in

introducing innovative products to the market. Many research outcomes also acquire patent rights, resulting in more profit. The industry partner gets the opportunity to customize its future human resources by making connections with students who may become employees of the industry partner after graduation and by preparing their future human resources at comparatively less cost. Case studies show that automobile companies from Japan had such academic partnerships with Industrial Training Institutes in India, aiming to create customized automobile technicians. Such academic partnerships also enhance the brand value of the firm and its products by the connection with an established university, as consumers perceive the products to be the outcome of thorough research and attach higher worthiness and higher quality to them.

While often an excellent opportunity, promoting sustainable academic partnerships also comes with certain challenges. A lack of adequate funding from the industrial or government partner is a critical issue. Opportunities for global employment may further lead to difficulty in human capital formation, especially in the developing countries. Academic partnerships evolve around predefined goals for each party as described above, and these at times can be in conflict with each other.

To ensure the sustainability of the partnership, it should be a comprehensive exercise, rather than a fragmented mission. A comprehensive academic partnership between two academic institutions or an academic institution and an industry partner should include working together in curriculum development leading to internationally recognized degrees, collaborative research and sharing of facilities and infrastructures, cross-cultural approaches in handling global issues in education and research, international certification programs in specific professions, the establishment of strong linkage among academic–business–government, and the joint publication of meeting proceedings, books, articles, and e-journals.

**See also** [Corporate Partnerships](#)

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#### **Further Readings**

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