

# MEMORANDUM

Date: July 1, 2025

To: Mitzi Montoya, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

From: Randy McCrillis, Senior International Officer 

Subject: Proposed International MOU Approval Process

For many years, the University of Utah has fostered a diverse array of partnerships and strategic relationships with universities, organizations, and entities worldwide. These collaborations are primarily established through a shared Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which serves as a formal agreement outlining the intent and scope of cooperation. The Office for Global Engagement typically oversees the shepherding of these MOUs, ensuring they align with the university's international mission. Moreover, each proposed MOU undergoes a thorough review process involving several key stakeholders on campus, including the Foreign Influence Office and the Office for General Counsel. While this established process has proven effective in facilitating the advancement of MOUs, it has become increasingly evident that expanding the pool of individuals and groups involved in the review would enhance the rigor and comprehensiveness of the evaluations. Such an inclusive approach would allow for a broader perspective on the potential impacts and opportunities these agreements can offer the university community.

To effectively implement this innovative approach, I recommend incorporating the following offices into the review process:

- Government Affairs
- The Office for Faculty
- The Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

The new process will also include the following risk matrix.

## INTERNATIONAL MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING RISK MATRIX

<i>Risk Category</i>	Low Risk	Medium Risk	High Risk
<i>Legal/Regulatory Compliance</i>	Partner complies with international and local education laws; transparent legal framework	Some ambiguity in laws or compliance history; requires closer review	History of non-compliance, political instability, or unclear legal structure
<i>Academic Quality/Accreditation</i>	Accredited by a recognized body; strong academic reputation	Accreditation unclear or limited; moderate academic standing	Not accredited or accreditation body not recognized; questionable academic standards
<i>Operational Risk</i>	Clear MOU terms; experienced in international collaboration	Limited experience with MOUs; unclear processes or slow response times	No previous MOU experience; poor communication infrastructure
<i>Reputation Risk</i>	Institution has a strong global reputation and alumni network	Regionally recognized, but not well-known globally	History of scandals, academic dishonesty, or political sensitivity

<i>Strategic Alignment</i>	Strong match in research/academic goals and disciplines	Moderate overlap in mission or academic goals	Little alignment; collaboration feels opportunistic rather than strategic
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This matrix will be systematically reviewed for each Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to evaluate the associated risks of the participating institutions. Institutions categorized as low risk will be allowed to proceed through the process seamlessly, with no additional documentation or information requirements. In contrast, institutions identified as medium or high risk will necessitate a concise risk assessment. This assessment will outline specific concerns, potential implications, and any relevant context necessary to understand the risks involved thoroughly. The completed risk assessments will then be presented to all reviewers, facilitating a collaborative decision-making process that ensures comprehensive evaluation and oversight for each case.

The proposed process is as follows:

**1. Initial Drafting & Intake (Office for Global Engagement)**

- Conduct due diligence on the partner institution.
- Prepare a draft MOU using the institution’s approved MOU template.
- Collect necessary background information on the collaboration scope and goals.
- Coordinate with the proposing faculty or unit for context and support documentation.

**2. Preliminary Faculty Review (Office for Faculty Affairs)**

- Review proposed faculty involvement.
- Ensure alignment with faculty workload, ethics, and academic expectations.
- Provide feedback or conditional recommendations.

**3. Compliance Review (Office for Foreign Influence)**

- Assess the agreement for potential foreign influence risks.
- Review foreign partner affiliations (especially with sensitive or sanctioned entities).
- Confirm alignment with federal regulations (e.g., NSPM-33, export control).

**4. Legal Review (Office of General Counsel)**

- Conduct legal review of the MOU language.
- Ensure terms are non-binding (if intended as such) and appropriate for an MOU.
- Advise on risk mitigation and liability exposure.
- Finalize approved legal language.

**5. Strategic Alignment Review (Government Relations Office)**

- Evaluate for alignment with institutional and state/federal policy or diplomatic sensitivities.
- Ensure the MOU does not conflict with political or regulatory priorities.
- Flag potential concerns for senior leadership.

**6. Final Executive Review (Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs (SVPAA))**

- Review the finalized MOU package with input from prior offices.
- Approve or request further revisions.
- Authorize signature or recommend escalation to the President or Provost if needed.

**7. Signature & Archiving (Office for Global Engagement)**

- Facilitate signature by designated institutional official.
- Archive signed MOU in the institutional repository.
- Notify all involved parties and update the international agreements database.

It is essential that these offices grant their approval for any Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) before it is signed. By involving these key stakeholders, we can foster a collaborative environment that ensures our future partnerships are sustainable and yield significant benefits for the university as a whole. Their insights and expertise will be instrumental in building strong, mutually beneficial relationships.