

**University of Southern Maine
Office of International Programs**

**Points to Consider When Negotiating an
International Formal Linkage Agreement**

Negotiating a linkage agreement generally involves several steps, each leading to greater clarity and specificity about the scope of the proposed mutual programs and activities. The process can occur within a short time, or it may take a year or more before a formal agreement is signed.

The negotiation generally will proceed from the general aspects of the linkage to the very specific elements that will govern mutual programs and activities. In the first phase of the negotiation, each institution must clarify and specify its goals for the proposed linkage as a whole and for each of its component parts. The partners must satisfy themselves that their goals are indeed complementary.

The next step is for the partners to explore and negotiate the details of the various programs and activities they identified in the previous phase. Details are important. If not discussed and clarified, they can lead to misunderstandings and problems. The questions that should be asked will include the following:

- How will each of the exchange activities and programs be funded, and from what sources within each of the partner institutions? If external sources are to be approached, who will write the proposal, make the approach, and manage the funds?
- Do the academic calendars of the partner institutions coincide or conflict, and what adjustments may need to be made for joint activities?
- How many participants can the student or faculty exchange program accommodate annual?
- What will be the minimum and maximum length of each student faculty or staff exchange?
- If the agreement calls for reciprocity of student, faculty or staff participants, what will be done to maintain balance?
- How will potential exchange participants be identified, and how will candidates be selected? Selection criteria and a selection process will need to be devised and defined.
- What is the role of the receiving institution in selecting participants?

- What sorts of application materials will be needed?
- What will be the deadlines for the various exchange activities?
- Who will be responsible for the participants while they are resident at the partner institution?
- What type of support services for students and scholars are normally available within each institution, such as an interpreter? Will extra services have to be provided for the exchange participants? How will government formalities related to immigration and work permission, among other topics, be dealt with for the participants? The same questions apply to the members of the exchange participant's family.
- What type of housing is appropriate and available for student, faculty and staff exchange participants?
- What type of pre-departure programs will be organized by the sending institution for participants preparing to travel abroad? Correspondingly, what type of orientation program will be organized by the hosting institution for participants arriving from abroad?
- What type of reentry program will be organized for participants preparing to return to their home institutions? What type of reentry program will be organized for participants returning from abroad?

Other important questions are specific to student, faculty and staff exchange programs and the duration, evaluation, and termination of exchange agreements.

* Adapted from NAFSA News