

DEVELOPING A PROCESS FOR INTERNATIONAL
ARTICULATION AGREEMENTS IN UAA

By

Douglas Baye

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APPROVED:

Roger Hull, B.S., PMP, Committee Chair
LuAnn Piccard, M.S., Committee Member
Walter Almon, M.S., Committee Member

LuAnn Piccard, M.S., Chair
Department of Project Management
Robert Lang, Ph.D., Associate Dean
College of Engineering

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ABSTRACT

Institutions of higher education find themselves in the forefront of addressing the challenges of college affordability, access and completion. Articulation agreement is an important, cost-effective tool to help students transfer credits successfully and also a marketing vehicle to aid institutions in recruiting students. The UAA is interested in progressively increasing the number of international students through articulation agreements with foreign higher education institutions, however there is no documented process in place.

Through a survey, interviews and literature review, the project carries out a research on the articulation agreements process in use in UAA and at various US institutions, gain insights into problems of creating agreements in UAA, identifies stakeholders and gathers requirements for an international articulation agreement process for UAA. Findings indicate that there is no clearly defined process. To address this, an international articulation agreement process is developed using project management techniques and principles. Project management tools are also recommended for use in the process. The project also highlights best practices in international articulation agreements and develops a ranking tool for evaluating international articulation agreement processes in use at various US institutions.

Keywords: international articulation agreement, articulation agreement, transfer pathways, transfer, mobility, transnational higher education, project management

INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly expanding and inter-connected world, students just like every other tangible or intangible commodity are mobile and higher education institutions are constantly challenged to create an accommodating environment. An environment that encourages "global thinking" and a broader, world-view approach to issues. This is achieved by collaborating; forming alliances, partnerships or working relationships with other higher education institutions and commercial organizations around the world. Research work suggests there are benefits for collaboration for the institutions. These include improved educational offerings, innovative research opportunities, potential revenue generation and enhanced prestige or visibility. For students who have opportunity to study outside their normal cultural environment there is the potential to gain important insights into cultural or global issues, acquire new skills and perhaps learn a second or third language. All of this subsequently benefits both the individual and society at large. But in order to take advantage of these benefits, fundamental components must be in place to facilitate these initiatives; good starting point is having an internal process or framework.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

From research conducted, forty percent of interview and twenty-eight percent of survey responses indicate the absence of a clearly defined process for international agreements in the institution. This project addresses that need.

Findings also suggest UAA has resources and favorable factors that can contribute to creating beneficial relationships with international universities. One of such examples is the strong international ties through a culturally diverse alumni, student body and staff. As of fall of 2017, about 38% of UAA athletics teams are made up of international students of various nationalities recruited from over 10 different countries.

There is also a strong indication that faculty and staff are largely in favor of partnering with other institutions. As evidenced from information received during research, over 90% of the past and present agreements established in the institution were initiated by a faculty or staff member. But with no defined process in place, harnessing the opportunities in these connections cannot be achieved. Hence the importance of this project.

The project is consistent with UAA's interest in establishing meaningful relationships with other higher education institutions which will be beneficial to the institution and its students. Quoting a high ranking administrative official A at the university, "management is interested in establishing partnerships with universities that will lead to attracting more international students." This statement is corroborated by the observed level of support and enthusiasm put into initiatives which aim to foster healthy relationships with international students and partner institutions such as participation in the American Council of Education Internationalization Laboratory, AHAINA program, ESL program, International Student

Thanksgiving celebration and Exchange Student Partnership Luncheon. The ESL program, which for many years was a major attraction of the university had to be eliminated due to financial considerations. The project is consistent with the UAA international and intercultural values statements which were approved by the International and Intercultural Task Force on March 9, 2012 and further endorsed by the Provost, Executive Vice Chancellor and the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs on May 2, 2012. The statements help to guide the development of international and intercultural programs at the institution. Also quoting university official A, “management prefers to pursue articulation agreements over other forms of partnerships”. Around 80% of the international partnership programs currently in the university’s portfolio are student exchanges. This type of partnership attracts students who attend the university for only one or two semesters primarily for the study abroad experience. Student exchange programs do not typically lead to the enrollment of students into degree programs. The university is focused on recruiting longer term students into its degree seeking programs and as a vehicle to achieving this, is striving to increase the number of international articulation agreements. At least, one agreement that brings in one student

In spite of the political climate, the US is still a popular destination for international students. For the past 60 years, more students studying abroad have made the United States their destination than any other country. In 2005, there were over half a million international students enrolled in American community colleges and universities, which represents nearly a quarter of all students studying abroad worldwide (Junor, Usher, 2008). Furthermore, trends from subject matter experts such as the World Education News & Reviews, Institute of International Education and ICEF Monitor indicate that there are new, emerging international student markets in parts of South America, Asia and Africa which are largely being overlooked. The reports also support that the US still remains a popular destination for prospective international students.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Through research conducted, problems associated with creating agreements were identified, requirements and best practice recommendations for developing a new process were gathered and examination of articulation agreement processes in use at other institutions was carried out. The process for international articulation agreements was developed from understanding and prioritizing stakeholder requirements. The recommended processes were arrived at utilizing a ranking tool developed for this purpose. The parameters utilized for evaluation of the processes were derived from assessing the institution’s needs and priorities.

PROJECT PURPOSE

The outcome of this project is important for providing guidance to stakeholders who are interested in initiating international articulation agreement projects. Long term, this will be instrumental in supporting the drive for increased international student enrollment.

OBJECTIVES

- Promote the use of project management tools, techniques and principles to manage international articulation agreement projects
- Facilitate effective communication between advisors, faculty and administrative staff
- Improve the potentials of achieving more international articulation agreements

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is an extensive body of literature about articulation agreements focused on issues between 2- and 4-year US institutions and in comparison, very little material about international articulation agreements. Research suggest this could be due to the rise of community colleges and aggressive efforts by several US government administrations to produce more baccalaureate holders via a pathway through community colleges. The size, diversity and flexibility of the US higher education system is also be a contributing factor for the relative underdevelopment of international articulation agreements.

TERMINOLOGY

Common terms in articulation agreements often differ among institutions, countries, or continents. For the purpose of clarity, the following definitions and distinctions are used consistently in this project.

A credit is the unit of measurement for academic work. Credit is awarded to students who have demonstrated mastery and successful completion of a subject. This is usually established by meeting a minimum standard specified in an assessment process, commonly known as a “pass” or “passing grade”.

Course articulation is the process by which one institution matches its courses with those at another institution. This is the backbone of articulation agreements. Course articulation is used to assure students that courses they complete or have completed will not have to be repeated at the other institution to which they intend to transfer. Course articulation may be done *ad hoc* when a student actually wishes to transfer. It may also be done pursuant to existing course-to-course comparison data, or based on formal articulation agreements.

Transfer is the actual process where credit earned at one university is accepted at another.

Articulation Agreement is a formal, written document that serve as an agreement between institutions. It establishes the standards by which students will be evaluated and awarded articulated credit.

Memorandum of understanding is usually the first formal communication between institutions that indicate the beginnings a formal agreement. There is usually no obligation for either party at this stage.

STUDENT MOBILITY AND TRANSFER OF CREDITS

As noted earlier, students are mobile and becoming increasingly aware that they can move beyond geographical boundaries, without loss of prior academic work. As a result of this mobility comes the need for universal frameworks to ensure seamless transfer of academic credit. Or in other words, systems that make it easier for students to move from one institution to another without loss of prior education. Europe has the regional student mobility framework known as ECTS / ERASMUS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System / European Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) which makes transfer of credit across EU national borders easier. In the Asia-Pacific region, there is a similar initiative called the UMAP (University Mobility in Asia Pacific) program.

One of the major barriers to student mobility and credit portability is the multiple acceptance level constraint. In summary, if a student wants to transfer from a certain University UA to University UB in program ZZZ, the ZZZ credits earned at UA could be accepted as credits toward a degree at UB level by the responsible office, admissions or registrar. But at the departmental, faculty level or academic program level, the credits could be rejected. In addition, UB's ZZZ program could also still demand that the student take certain courses, which in some respects, duplicates credits already taken at UA. With transfer from or to an international institution, there is an added layer of complexity. The process may involve having an external company which specializes in transcript evaluation to examine the transcripts from the sending institution and convert the credits into the system of the receiving institution before equivalency and usage is determined. Essentially, the core issue here are in the terms “acceptability” and “applicability”. A credit might be accepted or rejected at the discretion of the receiving institution. If it is accepted, how or to what purpose is it applied at the receiving institution? This is where articulation agreements are appropriate.

THE ROLE AND BENEFITS OF ARTICULATION AGREEMENTS

Articulation agreements make smooth transfers from one institution to another possible while ensuring that students do not lose credits in the process. Effectively implemented, they essentially facilitate overcoming the barrier of credit acceptance and applicability leading to less duplication of courses, potentially lowering tuition cost and ensuring faster graduation for a student.

“Articulation agreements constitute one of the most important issues in higher education because their success or failure is central to many dimensions of education, including access, affordability, and quality, in addition to the promotion of degree achievement” (Wellman 2002). Articulation agreements are

beneficial for all parties involved. For the student, there is a high degree certainty that they will gain admission and the course work from previous learning will not have to be repeated thereby potentially saving costs by reducing the time taken to attain a degree. For the educational institutions, articulation agreements can be a valuable marketing tool and means of attracting students.

OVERVIEW OF ARTICULATION AGREEMENTS

Articulation agreements, particularly international agreements, is mostly between individual institutions. In simple terms, designees or representatives of each institution communicate and make arrangements to compare courses. They will determine which courses are comparable or equivalent and clearly establish how they will be used when transferred. After this determination is made, the outcome is then formalized in a written document endorsed by all parties. This document, or details of it, will usually be made public or marketed, regularly updated, maintained and used as a guide by students, faculty and administrators.

INTERNATIONAL ARTICULATION AGREEMENTS IN U.A.A

There have been a number of international articulation agreements established and implemented in UAA. Most of the agreements have lapsed or are no longer in effect. But there is strong indication that management considers these agreements to be a successful means of recruiting and retaining international students compared to study exchange and study abroad agreements. In recent years, international students have been admitted through this arrangement and spent at least two years in the institution. On record, there is at least one international student that completed a one-plus-one articulation agreement type program with a Chinese university. The table below shows a listing of some articulation agreements that have been established in UAA. A detailed listing of all the institution’s agreements will be included in the appendix.

Partner University	Format
Far Eastern State Transport University	2 +2 dual degree program
Vladivostok State University of Economics and Service	2 +2 dual degree program
Takushoku University	2 years study in UAA
National University of Mongolia	Unspecified

Nankai University	1+1 dual degree program
Jilin University of Finance and Economics	1+1 and 2 + 2 program

Exhibit 1: some UAA International Articulation Agreements

RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

Research played a key role in the project. Data extracted were useful in the identification of stakeholders, elicitation of requirements, building a case for the project and development of deliverables.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

In order to gather stakeholders input and requirements, learn more about the processes used by other institutions that have instantiated international articulation agreements, and to better determine the characteristics of those processes that have proven to be beneficial and successful for these institutions, as well as find out how the same can be achieved in UAA, interviews, surveys and literature review were conducted to answer the following research questions:

- “What are the problems of creating international agreements in UAA?”
- “What stakeholders consider as important requirements for international articulation or general agreements process in UAA?”

DATA COLLECTION

Face-to-face and phone interviews were conducted. The interviews were semi-structured, with a set of four standard questions followed up with additional questions depending on the responses of the interviewee. Interviews averaged 30 minutes duration. Eight UAA staff and one staff of a partner university resident on the UAA campus were interviewed.

Survey was carried out by means of an online questionnaire. The majority of the questions in the survey were open-ended. The questionnaire was designed in the UAA Qualtrics Research Suite with invitations to participate distributed by email to sixty UAA staff and faculty.

Literature review included both online and paper documents. Project management textbooks and international higher education publications were consulted. Online documents were obtained through the UAA departmental websites, project management professional websites and websites of educational institutions. Google Scholar, ERIC database and the UAA/APU Consortium library were used for searches. Documents include:

- Journals and publications of international higher education expert and consultants for information on trends in international agreements, best practices in articulation agreements and recommendations.
- Samples of old agreements between UAA and international institutions.
- Agreement templates of peer, aspirational and other reference institutions highlighting best practices and detailing the processes in use were assessed.

An extensive list of resources consulted in the course of the project is provided in the references section of this report. A listing of the universities or colleges reviewed will be presented in the Appendix.

Brainstorming sessions and observation of workflow and activities in UAA were also source for data.

DATA COLLATION AND VERIFICATION

Survey feedback and transcribed interview notes were recorded and stored. To verify ambiguities, incorrect data or get additional information, respondents or interviewees who consented to and provided follow-up contact information were emailed for clarification. Duplicate data were deleted.

DATA ANALYSIS

Responses with a common theme are grouped and given a unique name and description corresponding to: narrative of the current process, problems associated with the current process and features or requirements for a new process. The frequency distribution of each category were used to show the option most often highlighted. Best practices or approaches were also identified and grouped. Ranking tools were developed to prioritize the requirements data gathered and compare between articulation agreements processes of different universities to determine the best suited for use in UAA.

RESULTS OF RESEARCH

Of the sixty survey questionnaire invites distributed, nineteen returned with at least one answer. Eleven interviews were also conducted. The results and findings from literature review, brainstorming, observations, survey and interviews are presented in this section.

SURVEY AND INTERVIEW BREAKDOWN

Twenty-eight answers was received from the survey and separated into different categories. Thirty-five percent of the respondents indicate that they are aware or have some knowledge of an agreement between UAA and another higher education institution. Fourteen percent identified at least one problem with creating agreements, described the process they have used or observed in use at the institution and know

someone with knowledge of agreements in UAA respectively. Over twenty-one percent suggested at least one requirement or functionality for an effective process for the institution.

The bar chart below details the count breakdown of each category.

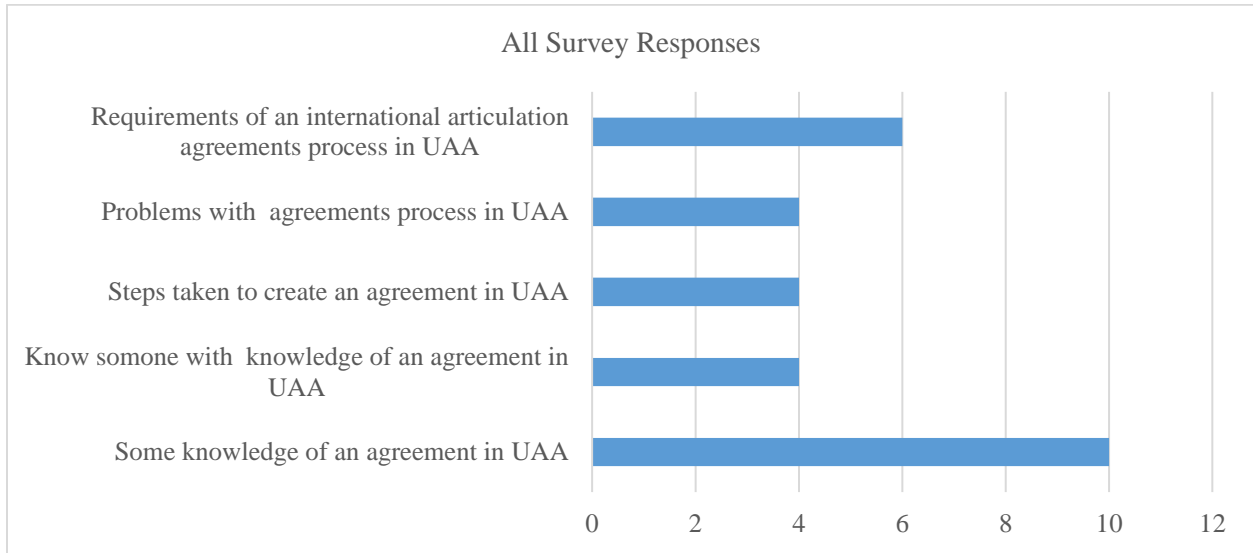


Exhibit 2: Breakdown of survey responses

Eleven interviews were conducted and produced a total of thirty-one answers. Thirty-two percent of the responses identified at least one problem with creating agreements and suggested at least one requirement or functionality for a useful process for the institution respectively. Sixteen percent described the process they have used or observed in use and know someone with knowledge of agreements in UAA respectively. The bar chart below details the count breakdown of each category.

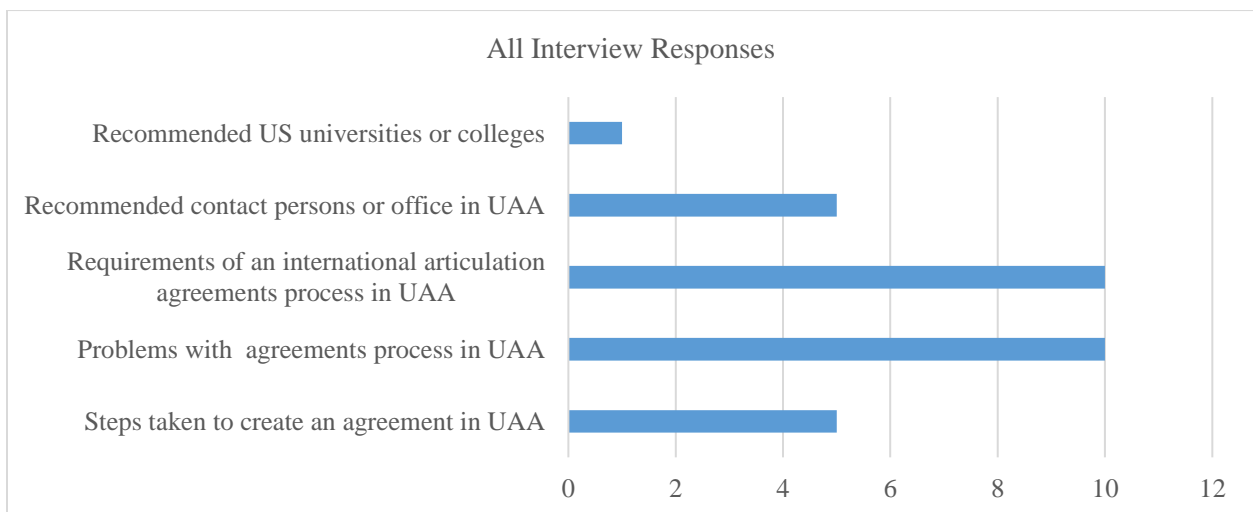


Exhibit 3: Breakdown of all interview responses

Some of the answers are considered to be important because they may be potential indicators to the state of awareness of agreements in the institution.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS BREAKDOWN

There were twenty interview and seven survey responses that specifically addressed the research question, “what are the problems of creating international agreements in UAA?”

Similarly, the question, “what are the requirements for an international articulation or general agreements process in UAA?” twenty-six interview and twenty survey responses were received.

PROBLEMS

The findings from both sources highlight improper implementation, lack of a clearly defined process, lack of management support, lack of resources, lack of a policy and information as the significant factors.

From survey, forty-three percent cite improper implementation, twenty-nine percent cite lack of a clearly defined process and fourteen percent cite lack of management support and information. The chart below shows the breakdown of the different categories.

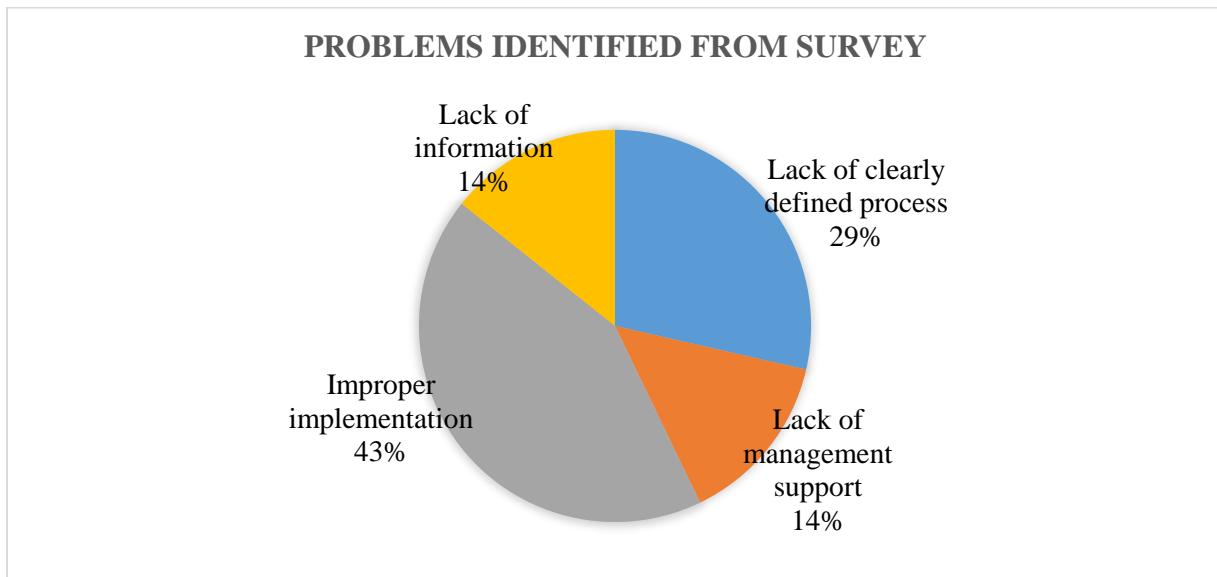


Exhibit 4: Breakdown of problems identified through survey

From interviews, forty percent cited lack of clearly defined process, twenty-five percent mentioned lack of management support and twenty-percent mentioned lack of resources. Other factors which could not be aggregated into a common category accounted for five percent of the data collected. Issues highlighted under this category include: implementation, organizational culture and stakeholder relationships. The chart below shows a breakdown of the different categories.

PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED (FROM INTERVIEW)

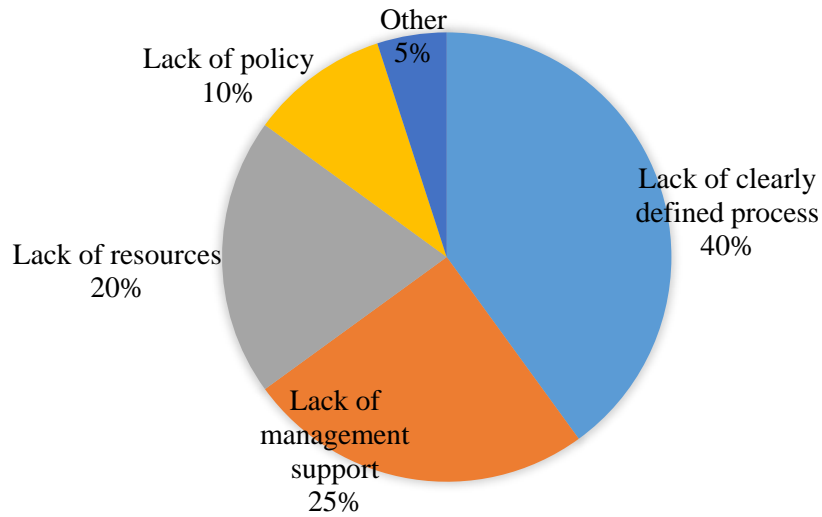


Exhibit 5: Breakdown of problems identified through interview

REQUIREMENTS

The findings from both sources highlight management support, faculty involvement, stakeholder communication, proposal review and additional resources as the most significant requirements for an articulation agreement.

From survey, twenty-five percent cited management support, twenty percent cited adequate scrutiny of proposals, and fifteen percent cited faculty involvement and additional resources each. Other factors which could not fit into any other category were aggregated into a common category and accounted for twenty-five percent of the data collected. Factors mentioned in this category include: costs, logistics, past agreements and course and credit equivalencies. The chart below shows a breakdown of the different categories.

REQUIREMENTS SOURCED THROUGH SURVEY

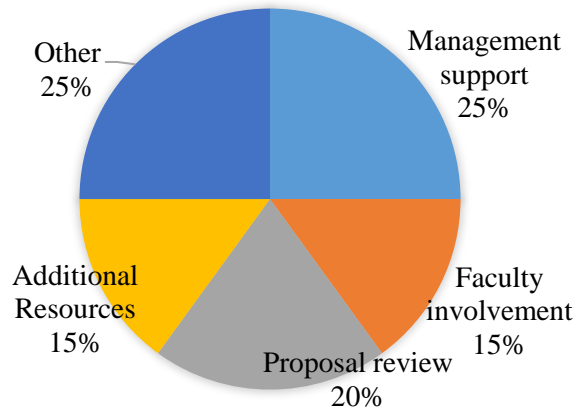


Exhibit 6: Breakdown of requirements identified through survey

From interviews, twenty-seven percent cited management support, fifteen percent cited stakeholder communications, twelve percent called for additional resources and a modular-designed process, eleven percent cited faculty involvement and eight percent cited a centralized system. Other factors which could not be aggregated into a common category accounted for fifteen percent of the data collected. Factors mentioned in this category include: technology, politics and other enterprise environmental factors. The chart below shows a breakdown of the different categories.

REQUIREMENTS SOURCED THROUGH INTERVIEW

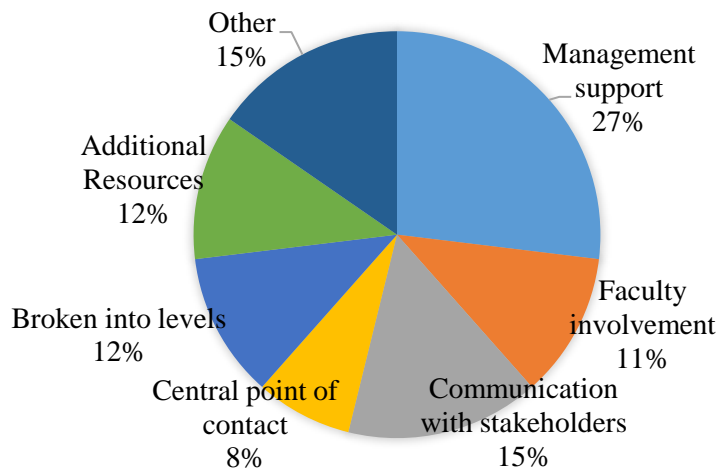


Exhibit 7: Breakdown of requirements identified through interview

Refer to the appendix for the project Requirement Traceability Matrix and Plan which contains an extensive listing of the requirements gathered and the process followed to rank them.

CREATING AGREEMENTS IN U.A.A

From data gathered, a concise description of a process in use for creating agreements could not be established. However it was observed that:

- Proposals typically originated from the colleges or departments
- The Offices of International and Intercultural Affairs and Academic Affairs maintained records of international agreements
- The offices of the Dean, Provost and Chancellor were involved in the process
- Approval or endorsement of the Dean of College is mandatory and evidence of this is required to advance an agreement proposal to a higher review level
- The UAA Chancellor is the final approver

BEST PRACTICES IN ARTICULATION AGREEMENTS

All agreements differ in theory, nature and practice. Whilst there is no 'one size fits all' solution, it is possible to identify valuable principles of good management and approaches which have been the driver behind a number of successful and sustainable partnerships and can therefore be useful future initiatives.

Listed below are best practices recommended in literature reviewed.

- Faculty involvement is crucial as they will be tasked with the most important tasks of matching up courses, creating equivalency tables, determining applicability and developing curriculum
- A central point of contact or administrative office ensures that there is coordination and accountability in the system
- There should be provision to evaluate or assess the feasibility of agreement proposals and examine the credentials of partner institutions
- Agreements can be built on the foundations of a firm linkage or relationship between members of partner institutions but should ultimately be designed to transcend that connection to ensure sustainability
- Most institutions have a range of online tools to manage agreements and support the process

PROJECT MANAGEMENT APPLICATION

Project management principles guided the approach to achieving the final outcome of the project.

Techniques and tools in the knowledge areas of stakeholder, communication and scope were of particular importance in conducting research, planning and execution of the project and also as inclusion in the project deliverable. Samples of all tools mentioned are attached in the appendix and included in the documentation turned over.

APPROACH

A project as a temporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique product, service or result (PMI, 2013). The process for creating international articulation agreements can be viewed as a project based on the characteristics observed:

- The process is temporary endeavor and has definite start and end dates
- The process creates a unique end product
- The process is not typical, daily, ongoing work effort of an institution

With this in context, a project lifecycle model was developed and utilized as the basic framework for carrying out the project. There were four stages in the project's lifecycle. These stages are Initiation, Planning, Implementation, and Close Out. Within the stages, the PMI standard process control groups are iteratively applied. There were review gates in the transition between stages for feedback and incorporation of feedback.

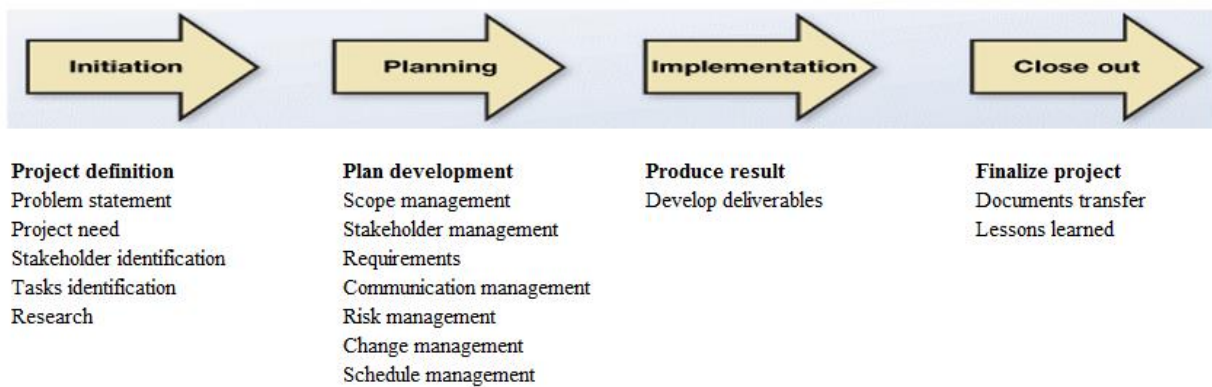


Exhibit 8: Project lifecycle

KNOWLEDGE AREAS

After thorough evaluation of the project idea, enterprise environmental factors and the general environment of the project, the following knowledge areas as key to the project.

STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT

The success or failure of a project is often times dependent on the perception of its stakeholders. With this in mind, stakeholder management was one of the key knowledge areas focused on in this project.

Stakeholder management approach was influenced by concepts in Lynda Bourne's Stakeholder Circle methodology. Stakeholder management was guided by a three step process which covered establishing

the scope of the stakeholder community, identifying stakeholders, identifying relationships, understanding their characteristics and determining how best to communicate with them.

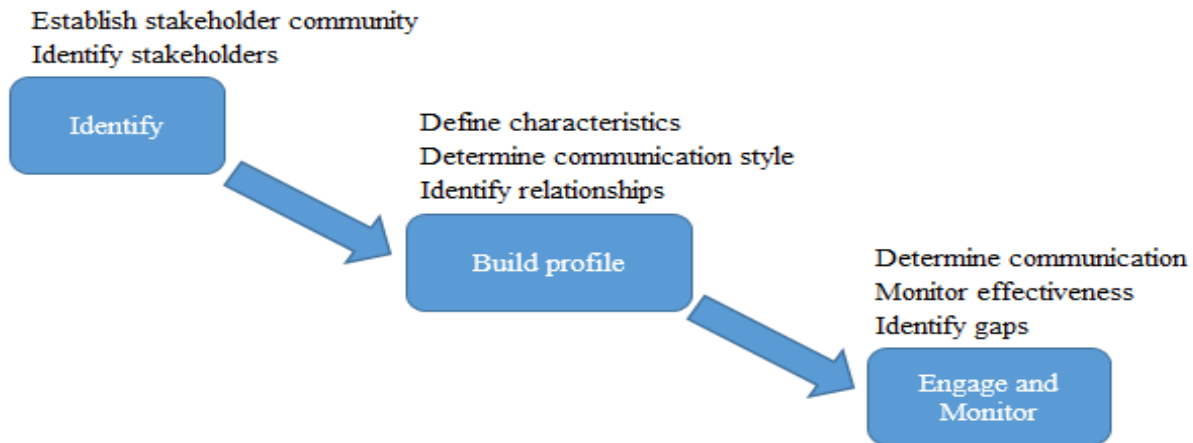


Exhibit 9: Stakeholder management approach

The early stages of the project was dedicated to identifying people who would be directly by the project or its outcome. The scope of stakeholder identification was largely limited to the institution and immediate project environment. The institution organization chart and project manager’s knowledge of the project environment was utilized in the initial identification stages. As the project progressed, more stakeholders were identified through referrals. A stakeholder register was used to capture important information about identified stakeholders. Categorization was primarily by power or influence and interest. Decisions regarding when to discontinue interaction with some key stakeholders were based on the observed interest and participation level of the stakeholder at the time. Power-Interest grid and Stakeholders Engagement Assessment Matrix was used for analysis of the stakeholders over the course of the project.

Realizing that feedback is an asset, targeted communication to stakeholders always included prompts for inputs. The project manager’s knowledge of and personal relationships with stakeholders was leveraged to the benefit of the project.

The number of stakeholders identified between PPM review gates was the measurement applied.

COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT

Communication was critical in organizing resources and managing the project to completion. The work involved extensive communication with stakeholders, reporting and incorporating feedback.

Planning of project communication focused on who needs information, frequency, timing and format.

A communication matrix was created for storing stakeholder communication information and preferences.

Due to the fast paced nature of the project environment and schedule constraints of stakeholders, email and meeting was the primary and secondary means of project communications unless otherwise agreed with the stakeholder. Presentations were made to advisory board at review gate sessions which were held every three or four weeks throughout the course of the project. To reduce the possibility of time wastage, meetings and interviews were time-boxed to thirty minutes durations. Targeted messaging was another method used to elicit feedback and raise awareness, interest and engagement levels of stakeholders.

SCOPE MANAGEMENT

Project management professionals always emphasize the importance of defining and establishing all tasks that is included in and excluded from the work to be done.

From assessing the project charter and enterprise environmental factors using expert judgement, brainstorming, literature reviews, meeting and discussions with stakeholders, the approach to managing scope was defined. A listing of tasks was also produced which resulted in the development of the project WBS included in the appendix of this report. The project scope statement, subsidiary plan for scope and requirements documentation were developed in the process.

Stakeholder requirements were collected through interviews, survey and literature reviews and categorized. Utilizing a modified variation of the MoSCoW technique a prioritization tool was developed. Weights to the requirements based on the value, relevance and constraints of the project, feasibility of implementation, needs of the institution and enterprise environmental factors.

The number of scope changes between PPM review gates were monitored and measured.

CONTRIBUTION TO PM BODY OF KNOWLEDGE

This project contributes to the project management body of knowledge by providing a standard in the form of a process and tools for the execution of international articulation agreements in UAA to meet the objectives of the institution.

The project further promotes that the process of international articulation agreement be regarded as projects and in this light, be approached and handled according to the standards and best practices of the project management discipline. This will increase awareness and use of tools, techniques and principles project management, thereby positively impacting the project management maturity of the institution

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

The outcome of the project are, processes, templates and tools which have been developed and recommended for use in the UAA.

INTERNATIONAL ARTICULATION AGREEMENT PROCESS

The process was developed based on best practice information gathered from literature review, stakeholder requirements and also taking into consideration project assumptions and constraints, as well as the resources available in the institution. This conception of this process was based on the following assumptions:

- The offices and committee notations are placeholders and do not refer to any particular offices, department or units in the institution
- The proposer can be a student, staff, faculty, department, college, member of the community or any stakeholders external to the university
- The proposer has already established a relationship or some form of contact with the potential partnering institution and appropriate internal Deans or Departmental heads
- The AA office is the facilitator and the main point of contact for the institution
- Information about proposed and approved agreements will be made public in a manner agreed upon by key stakeholders involved in the process
- Appropriate subject matter experts within the institution will have involved in reviews, recommendations and decisions
- The term “subject matter experts” used in this context refers to all the individuals, groups, departments and offices that have been determined as having the knowledge and experience to provide advice and recommendations on proposed agreements
- The term “relevant stakeholders” used in this context refers to all the individuals, groups, departments and offices that have been deemed as important to be informed about the status and progress of proposed agreements
- There is a consistent point of contact or contact person for the proposer or designee
- External proposal must be sponsored by a college or department
- Every proposal has to have buy-in of the appropriate Deans or Departmental Heads affected by the proposed agreement
- That all UAA policy, guidelines, standards, regulations and requirements on international admissions and transfer will be adhered
- No set time constraints between conception and actualization of agreement
- There will be a standard set of appropriate supporting documents for proposals determined by the key stakeholders in the process

The flowcharts below depict the high-level detail of the two-tier international articulation agreement process that was developed.

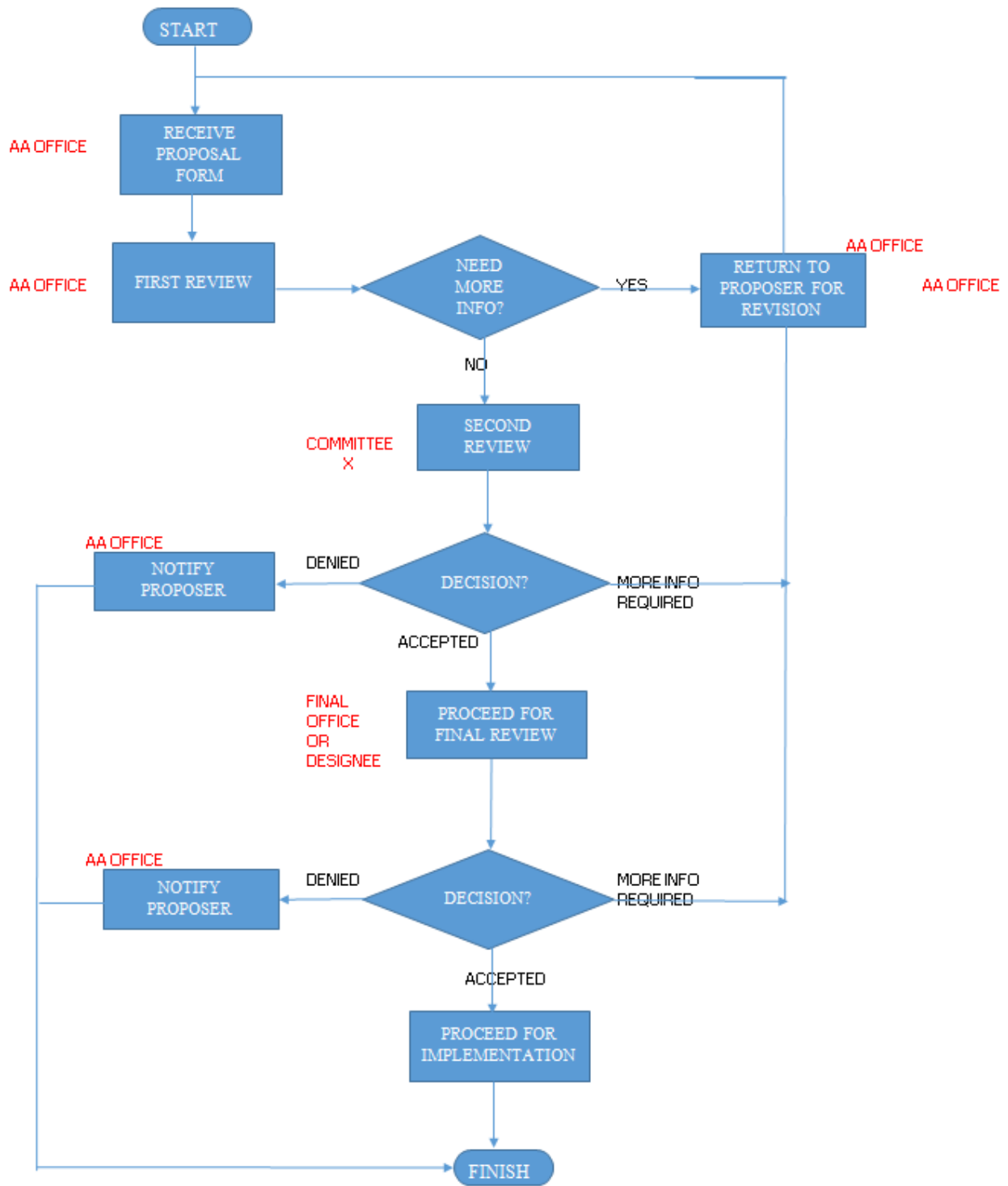


Exhibit 10: International Articulation Agreement Process tier-1 Flowchart

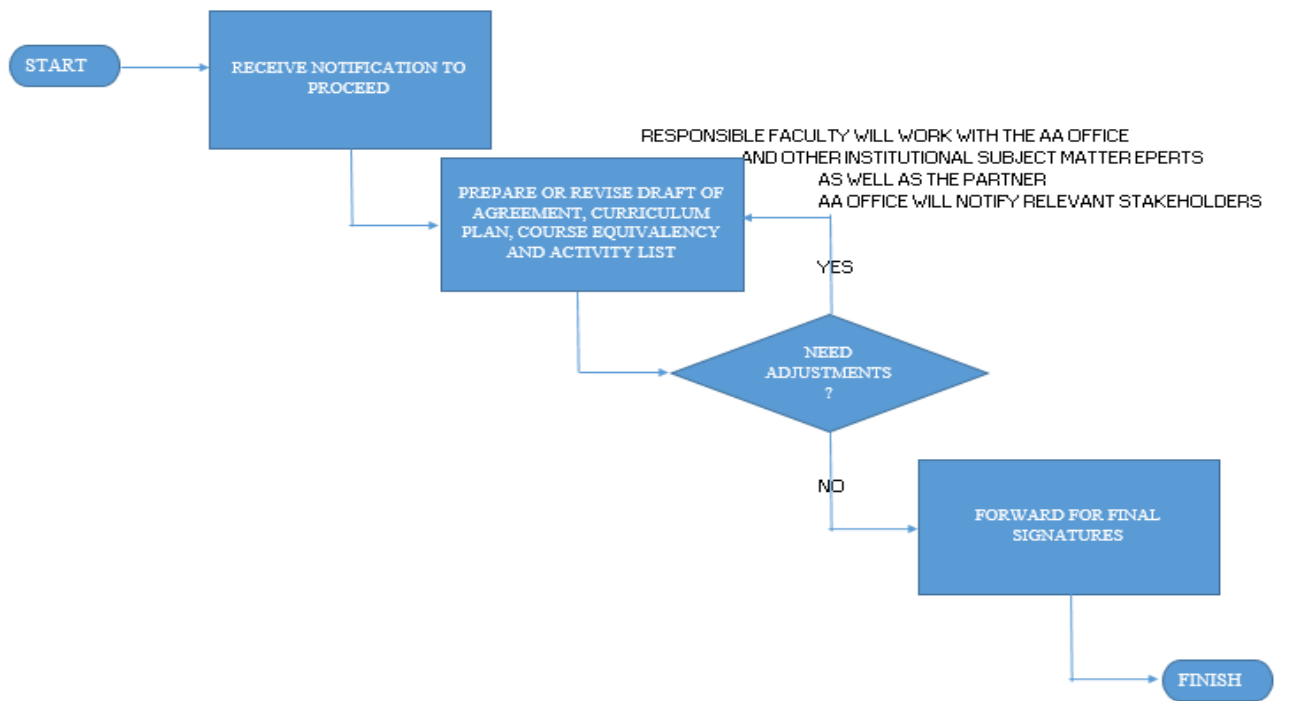


Exhibit 11: International Articulation Agreement Process tier-2 Flowchart

TOOLS AND TEMPLATES

The following tools and templates have been developed as companions to the developed process. Actual samples are included in the Appendix.

- Proposal Evaluation Tool

The tool utilizes weighted criteria to assess individual agreement project proposals. The selected parameters were derived from best practices in literature reviews, approach of other higher education institutions, stakeholder requirements and the project manager knowledge of the institution.

- Partner Evaluation Tool

The tool utilizes weighted criteria to assess partner potential universities. The selected parameters were derived from best practices in literature reviews and at other higher education institutions researched.

- Process Evaluation Tool

The tool utilizes weighted criteria to measure processes at universities. The selected parameters were derived from the project manager knowledge and observation of the institution and at other higher education institutions researched.

- Project Management Tools

The project recommends the use of specially customized RACI and Stakeholder-Communication Matrix. Sample of each is included in the appendix.

- Proposal Form

This is a recommended form that will be completed with the details of a proposed agreement project by a proposer and turned in along with appropriate supporting documentation for review.

- Sample Agreement

Findings at the later stages in the project revealed that the institution has just recently made public copies of old agreements. The UAA-Nankai University agreement was one of the many samples examined by the project and it was determined to be standard and consistent with samples of other US institutions that were reviewed.

CONCLUSION

UAA has favorable environmental factors that can be leveraged to its benefit for international agreement and partnerships. Quoting a faculty, “UAA does not always have the highest reputation but there are numerous ‘pockets’ of excellence in the institution.” Elaborating further, “due to the location and mystique of Alaska, people want to partner with us. Many faculty want to participate with other schools and are willing to do much of the work but as this is a ‘unique’ process, the wheel gets re-invented each time, a great de-motivator”.

The statements largely corroborates findings from research conducted by the project that the lack of a clearly defined process, lack of management commitment or support and lack of readily available information about the partnerships and agreement as the biggest problems to starting or creating international agreements at the institution.

However, there are indications of a change. Just recently, Academic Affairs unit has updated its website to include a listing of all the universities international agreements as is the standard practice in most US universities and colleges that were researched. Previously unavailable organizational process assets such as agreement samples have also been made available on the website and a section of the website has been reserved specifically for information about articulation agreements. This is a welcome development that key stakeholders in the institution will find uplifting and will undoubtedly the creation of a viable environment for ideas that will help international collaborations thrive.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The institution should adopt, internalize and make public a well-designed, effective process such as that which was developed by this project. Based on determination using the Process Evaluation Tool, the project also proposes other alternatives that the institution can look into the possibility of adopting and

modifying. The international articulation agreement processes used at the *Western Kentucky University* and *Grand Valley State University* came up as the top ranked best-fit solutions for UAA.

This project also developed form templates that can be used with the process. The form templates can be further customized or developed to suit the institution's needs. These forms, can also be made available online on the institution's website. The institution should also consider collecting information on proposed agreement ideas. Even if the idea does not result in the implementation of an agreement, the historical data can be useful for future reference, trend analysis and decision making with regard to international agreements. The project also recommends that the UAA-Nankai University agreement can be utilized as a standard template from which all other agreements can be drafted.

The institution can emulate practice of some notable higher education institutions both in and outside the US with regard to how they have presented information regarding international partnerships on their websites. The international relations section of the University of Alberta, Canada website is a very good example.

Having a clearly defined and publicly communicated process will send out a clear statement of intent, commitment and interest in developing international agreements and also encourage more stakeholder involvement, opening the doors to opportunities.

Several research discussions have suggested that developing an institutional partnership program is a multipronged, long-term project. This means whenever the process for creating an international articulation agreement is invoked, a project has been started. In this vein, an international articulation agreement project should be managed according to the standards and best practices defined in the project management discipline. A project lifecycle model should be developed and utilized as a standard frame of reference for guiding the initiating, planning, management and execution of international articulation agreement projects. A notable example is that in use at the Angelo State University IT Project Office. Furthermore, it will be meaningful to involve the Risk and Project management offices as well as the staff and faculty of the Engineering Science and Project Management Department can also be valuable resources to assist in this regard.

The project also recommends the use of simple yet effective project management tools, the RACI matrix and Stakeholder-Communication Register. The process of creating international agreements involve multiple stakeholders, constant communication and clear definition of roles and responsibility, this tools can streamline communications and remove potential bottlenecks. The RACI, a type of responsibility assignment matrix, will be important in identifying work to be done and specifying the roles of various offices or individuals this goes a long way to ensure clear divisions, roles and expectations. The Stakeholder-Communication Register will be beneficial in identifying stakeholders and managing their

communications needs particularly as this may likely involve people in different geographical locations and cultural characteristics.

International higher education experts’ advice that intentionality should be the key to partnerships. The institution needs to establish who and why it wants to enter into agreements. The development of overall plans and policies to this effect will guide the establishment of new agreements and reposition the partnerships to fit institutional goals and mission.

Establishing mutual metrics of success with partner institutions such as that utilized at the Maricopa Community College shown in exhibit 12 below will also add greater value to the agreement, ensuring that partners are aligned to the same goals and enhancing engagement.

**University Partners Metrics of Success
Support of the Memorandum of Understanding**

Goal/Objective	Metric	Performance Metric
Collect And Share Data	Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed Annual Data Request
Increase Success Rate Of Maricopa Transfers	Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number Of Students With Maricopa Credit Obtain Baccalaureate Degree
Increase Enrollment	Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number Of Maricopa Students Transferring To Institution
Support Acceptance And Application Of Transfer And Non-Traditional Credit	Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Application Of Community College Credits Beyond 64 Credits Accepts/Applies Military Credit Accepts/Applies CLEP/AP Accepts/Applies International Credit Accepts/Applies Credit For Prior Learning
Provide Meaningful Incentives To Students	Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scholarships Dedicated To Maricopa Students Scholarships For Transfer Students Waiver Of Application Fee Book Discounts
Attend Maricopa Events And Activities	Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance At The Student Success Conference Attendance At College Fairs
Promote Timely Response And Follow-Up	Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timely Response To CCTA/Colleges (Within A Week Of Request) Timely Follow-Up On Meeting Action Items

Exhibit 12: Partners Metrics of Success

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH PROSPECT

Due to schedule constraints, the number of stakeholders that the project could interact with was very limited. A wider range of stakeholder input will significantly increase the confidence level of research findings.

The ranking tools developed for proposal and partner evaluations are predominantly subjective in nature and will be more effective with more research on how to apply a deeper scientific design.

There is may be potential opportunity to study cross-cultural communication and examine the application of other key knowledge areas like risk and quality management to the project.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

International Articulation Agreement Process Description

Step 1: If the proposer is an external stakeholder, they will complete an Intent to Develop an Agreement Form and contact the AA Office for an initial discussion about the proposed articulation agreement. An internal proposer may choose to skip this step.

Step 2: Obtain an Agreement Proposal Form from the AA office.

Step 3: Complete the proposal form and return to the AA office with supporting documentation. Supporting documents may include but not be limited to: proof of accreditation and affiliations, cost-benefit analysis, student participation forecast, curriculum information and course descriptions.

Step 4: The AA office will appraise the submission and return to the proposer if there are missing or additional items required.

Step 5: If the submission is complete, the AA office will forward the proposal along with supporting documents to a Committee X for further review. Committee X can reject-and-return for more information or move it on for further review and final acceptance.

Step 6: Committee X will send its decision and recommendation(s) to the AA office. If the decision of Committee X was to reject, the proposer has an opportunity to make a better case or provide additional supporting documents. If the decision of Committee X was to accept, the AA office will forward the proposal and recommendation(s) to the Final Approver. The AA office will notify to the proposer and other key stakeholders.

Step 7: The Final Approver will review the proposal and decide. If the decision is to reject, the proposer has an opportunity to make a better case or provide additional supporting documents for another review and final decision. If the decision is to accept, the proposal will advance to the next stage. The AA office will notify the proposer and key stakeholders.

Step 8: The proposer, working with the AA office, partner institution and responsible faculty, will produce the draft of an agreement, course equivalency chart, activity and implementation plan, and submit to the AA office for review. This may take multiple iterations as the AA office will likely involve other key stakeholders for input.

Step 9: The AA office will review the drafts, liaise with key stakeholders and repetitively request revisions from the proposer until the final acceptable document is reached.

Step 10: The AA office will arrange with the proposer and final authority for the official signing of the agreement, giving the go-ahead for implementation.

Step 11: The AA will inform key stakeholders of the impending partnership.

APPENDIX 2
Proposal Evaluation Rubric

Category	Criteria	Options	Point
C1	Partner University Evaluation		
C2	Program Type	Articulation	10
		Study Abroad	5
		Student Exchange	5
		Faculty Exchange	6
		Student & Faculty Exchange	6
		Joint Degree	8
		Joint Research	8
		Other	4
C3	Proposer Type	Student or Alumni	3
		Staff or Faculty	5
		Upper Management	4
		Dean or HOD	4

		Corporate Sponsor	4
		External / Personal	2
C4	Need or Demand	High	3
		Moderate	2
		Low	1
C5	Program Quality	High	5
		Moderate	3
		Low	2
C6	Sustainability	High	4
		Moderate	2
		Low	1
C7	Cost and funding	Below or within budgetary and funding capability	5
		Slightly exceeds budgetary and funding capability	3
		Moderately exceeds budgetary and funding capability	2
		Greatly exceeds budgetary and funding capability	1

C8	Student direction	In-bound	5
		Both in and out-bound	3
		Out-bound	2
C9	Feasibility	High likelihood of success	4
		50-50 likelihood of success	2
		Low likelihood of success	1

APPENDIX 3

Partner Evaluation Rubric

	Recommended for use in the event that there are competing agreement proposals with different institutions		
Category	Criteria	Options	Points
C1	Academic Transcript System	Students transcripts does not need to be sent to WES for evaluation and translation	5
		Students transcripts has to be sent to WES for evaluation and translation	2
C2	English Proficiency Status	Test of English proficiency result is not required from students	4
		Sufficient supporting documents required in lieu of the Test of English proficiency result	3
		Test of English proficiency result is required from students	2
C3	Regional Accreditation	Institution is accredited or has candidacy status with a US regional accreditation body	5
		Institution has candidacy status with a US regional accreditation body	3
		Institution has no accreditation or candidacy status with a US regional accreditation body	0
C4	National Accreditation	Institution is accredited in the country of location by national body	4
		Institution is in candidacy status in the country of location by national body	2
		Institution is not accredited in the country of location by national body	0

C5	International Accreditation	Institution has been accredited by a credible, international accreditation body	5
		Institution has candidacy status with a credible, international accreditation body	3
		Institution has no accreditation or candidacy status with a credible, international accreditation body	0
C6	Affiliations	Belonging to common consortium, associations or organizations	5
		Belonging to credible, recognized consortium, associations or organizations but not common	3
		None	0
C7	Institutional Linkage	There is a firm, established relationship or interaction either through student, staff, faculty, activity or program	5
		There is an indirectly established relationship or interaction either through student, staff, faculty, activity or program	2
		No linkage	1
C8	Comparability	Peer or aspirational institution	5
		Similar in size and structure	2
		No similarities	1
C9	Experience	Potential partner is vastly experienced in international agreements	5
		Potential partner has considerable experience with international agreements	2

		Potential partner has little or no experience with international agreements	1
C10	Professionalism, integrity and ethics	No recent or existing sanctions, law suits or PR issues against the institution for ethical and/or legal violations	3
		Recent or existing sanctions, law suits or PR issues against the institution for ethical and/or legal violations	0
C11	Strategic Alignment	Core mission, vision, values and ideals are closely aligned	4
		Core mission, vision, values and ideals are in moderately aligned	2
		Core mission, vision, values and ideals are not	
C12	Geographical location	Situated in a primary priority region	4
		Situated in a secondary priority region	2
		Situated in a tertiary priority region	1
C13	US foreign policy	Good relations between US government and country of the institution	4
		Fair relations between US government and country of the institution	2
		Poor relations between US government and country of the institution	1

C14	Program Compatibility	Strong similarities between degree programs and curriculum offerings	4
		Moderate similarities between degree programs and curriculum offerings	2
		No similarities between degree programs and curriculum offerings	1

APPENDIX 4

Process Evaluation Rubric

Criteria	Description	Weight	x	Score
Detail	Process description	1.5		1 - 10
Process assets	Samples, templates and website	4		
Applicability	Modify to UAA needs	5		
Reviews and approvals	Number of review and approval levels	2.5		
Stakeholder involvement	Range of offices and officials involved	3.5		
Structure	Layout of the process components	3.5		

APPENDIX 5
Process Evaluation Tool

Criteria		Detail	Process assets	Applicability	Review and Approval	Stakeholder Involvement	Structure		Total Score
Weber State University		4	4	3	6	6	4		87
Western Kentucky University		7	5	9	7	8	7		145.5
Northern Kentucky University		6	6	8	6	7	6		133.5
University of Arizona		7	5	6	6	8	6		124.5
Grand Valley State University		7	6	8	7	8	7		144.5
Penn State University		8	3	9	8	7	7		138
California State University		6	3	5	5	6	4		93.5
Michigan State University		5	3	4	5	7	5		94
Portland State University		3	3	8	7	8	6		123

University of Maryland BC		8	4	8	6	7	9		139
Marquette University		8	3	5	6	8	8		120
University of Incarnate Word		7	4	4	5	6	6		101
Delgado Community College		6	3	6	7	7	6		114
University of Hawaii Manoa		5	4	4	6	7	5		100.5

APPENDIX 6

Partner Evaluation Tool

Recommended for use in the event that there are competing agreement proposals with different institutions			Enter point in the corresponding cells of institutions for each category. See PU Eval Rubric for guidance.					
Category			University A	University B	University C	University D	University E	Comments
C1								
C2								
C3								
C4								
C5								
C6								
C7								
C8								

C9							
C10							
C11							
C12							
C13							
C14							
TOTAL							

APPENDIX 7
Proposal Evaluation Tool

Category		Proposal A	Proposal B	Proposal C	Proposal D	Proposal E	Comments
C1							
C2							
C3							
C4							
C5							
C6							
C7							
C8							
C9							
Total Weight							

APPENDIX 8

Stakeholder-Communications Register

Stakeholder-Communications Register

Project Name: Agreement with [insert name] University										
Identification Information						Communication (How they like to be communicated with)				
Stakeholder ID	Institution / Organization	Designation / Position / Title	Location	Role	Contact Information	Mode	Frequency	Level of detail	Format	Other helpful info (cultural peculiarities)

APPENDIX 9

RACI chart

<u>LEGEND</u>	OFFICES / DEPARTMENTS / UNITS / INDIVIDUALS							
<i>R = Responsible</i>		Name 1	Name 2	Name 3	Name 4	Name 5	Name 6	Name 7
<i>A = Accountable</i>	Activity	[Institution / Department]	[Institution / Department]	[Institution / Department]	[Institution / Department]	[Institution / Department]	[Institution / Department]	[Institution / Department]
<i>C = Consult</i>	Task 1							
<i>I = Inform</i>	Task 2							
	Task 3							

RACI is an acronym that stands for responsible, accountable, consulted and informed. The RACI maps tasks and deliverables against roles. Decision-making and responsibilities are also allocated to each role.

Responsible (do the work). This person or role is responsible for getting the work done or making the decision. It can sometimes be more than one person.

Accountable (ownership). This person or role is owns the overall completion of the task or deliverable. They won't get the work done, but are responsible for making sure it's finalized. Can only be assigned in one row.

Consulted (provide assistance). This person, role or group will provide information useful to completing the task or deliverable. There will be two-way communication between those responsible and those consulted.

Informed (keep aware). These people or groups will be kept up to date on the task or deliverable.

APPENDIX 10

INTENT TO DEVELOP AN AGREEMENT

Use this form to set up contact with the AA office and discussion about the feasibility of your idea for an international agreement project. Completed form can be emailed to [email address] or dropped off at [office].

Name		
Contact Phone		
Contact Email		
UAA Staff?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> (please specify):	
Type of agreement		
Proposed partner Institution Name and Country		
Staff of the proposed partner institution?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> (please specify):	

Rationale to support entering into the agreement

Signature:

Date:

APPENDIX 11

INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT PROPOSAL FORM

Thank you for your interest and commitment to international agreements in UAA. Complete this form to propose a new international agreement between the UAA and an international institution. The information provided will help UAA establish the feasibility of this project and identify the best way to achieve your international linkage goals.

SECTION 1. PROGRAM AND PARTNER INSTITUTION	
New or Existing Agreement?	New <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal <input type="checkbox"/>
Level of Agreement	Institution-wide <input type="checkbox"/> College or Department specific <input type="checkbox"/>
Type of Agreement	Articulation <input type="checkbox"/> Student Exchange <input type="checkbox"/> Study Abroad <input type="checkbox"/> Joint Degree <input type="checkbox"/> Faculty / Staff Exchange <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> (please specify):
Direction of student / faculty / staff flow	In-bound <input type="checkbox"/> Out-bound <input type="checkbox"/> Both <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
Expected number of student / faculty / staff	Minimum: _____ Maximum: _____
Institution Name and Country	
Colleges or Departments that will be involved	
Programs or Majors	
Description of the proposed agreement	

Rationale of proposed agreement		
Contact Person Name and Position		
Contact Email and Phone		

SECTION 2. INTERNAL INFORMATION		
Relationship to the partner university	Alumni <input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/> Staff or Faculty <input type="checkbox"/> Joint Research <input type="checkbox"/> Program <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> (please specify):	
Sponsoring Colleges or Departments		
Other Colleges or Departments that will be involved		
Programs or Majors		
Contact Person Name and Position		
Contact Email and Phone		
Is the original idea from an individual or group external to both institutions?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Contact Person Name, Organization and Position		
Contact Email and Phone		
Relationship to partnering institutions		

SECTION 3. REVIEWS		
Is the application complete and acceptable?		Comments
College / Department	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
AA Office	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Committee X Chair	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Final	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	

SECTION 4. SIGNATURES		
College / Department	Name:	Signature and Date:
AA Office	Name:	Signature and Date:
Committee X Chair	Name:	Signature and Date:
Final	Name:	Signature and Date:

APPENDIX 12

Survey and Interview Questions

	Survey Questions	Interview Questions
Q1	Do you have knowledge of an agreement between UAA and another university?	Problems with current agreements process?
Q2	Do you wish to continue with this survey?	Description of current agreements process?
Q3	Can you provide information about the agreement?	Requirements for a proposed international articulation agreement process?
Q4	What is the name and country of the partner institution?	Recommended UAA contact persons or office?
Q5	What is the type of the agreement? - Selected Choice	Recommended US universities or colleges?
Q6	Briefly outline the steps taken to establish the agreement? (Enter "N/A" if you do not know the details)	Other contributions
Q7	What were some of the problems faced in the process of establishing the agreement? (Enter "N/A" if you do not know the details)	
Q8	Do you know anyone else who can provide additional information about the agreement?	
Q9	What functionality or features should be present in a UAA process for articulation partnership programs?	
Q10	Do you know anyone who may have knowledge of an agreement between UAA and another university?	

Q11	Please state their name(s) and department(s)	
Q12	Do you wish to be contacted for a follow-up interview?	
Q13	Enter a contact email address or phone number	