



The Picture in Uzbekistan: Mapping Internationalization Across Uzbek Universities

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AGENDA

- 1. Introductions and Workshop Outcomes**
- 2. An Overview of the Uzbek Higher Education System**
- 3. Models for Internationalization**
- 4. Building and Sustaining Mutually Beneficial Partnerships**
- 5. Conclusion and Action Items**



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OBJECTIVES

- Introduce Uzbek higher education system and aspects that impact international collaboration
- Introduce models for internationalization; explore the purpose for internationalization in context of Uzbekistan higher education
- Understand best practices in international academic partnerships
- Explore student mobility programs as an aspect of internationalization; explore opportunities for developing study abroad programs
- Identify how collaboration with Uzbek institutions can advance internationalization at your home institution



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1. Introductions



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ABOUT TSUULL UNIVERSITY

Established in 2016, TSUULL is Central Asia's leading university dedicated to advancing the Uzbek language, history, ethnography, and Chagatai studies, while integrating global academic standards and inclusive internationalisation.

As a regional hub for Uzbek Studies, the university promotes national identity through modern linguistic research, digital humanities, and specialised programmes in Uzbek and Chagatai languages, supporting SDG-4: Quality Education through access, excellence, and academic innovation. TSUULL's internationalisation model is strongly inclusive and partnership-driven, consistent with Partnerships for the Goals. The university integrates Uzbek Studies into global academia and actively opens cultural and research centres in collaboration with Oxford University, Osh State University, Bursa Uludağ University, the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences, and Shanghai International Studies University, expanding global recognition of Uzbek culture and scholarship.

With a strong commitment to Gender Equality, TSUULL promotes gender-balanced participation in international programmes, supports women's leadership, and ensures inclusive access for students from low-income groups, rural regions, and vulnerable communities – as documented across multiple pages of the Sustainability Report (e.g., tuition support, community programmes, and cultural inclusion initiatives).



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TSUULL has rapidly strengthened its global academic reputation. In the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings, the university is placed in the **201+ global band**, with outstanding subject performance: **Top 10 globally in SDG 5** (Gender Equality) and **Top 23 globally in SDG 4** (Quality Education) – placing it among the world's most socially responsible and inclusive universities.

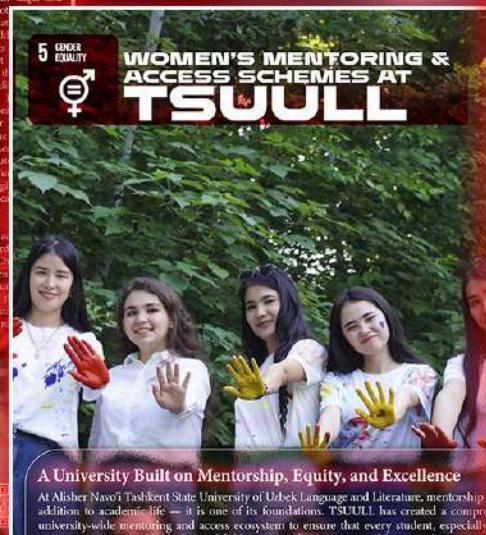
- In the QS World University Rankings by Subject, TSUULL is listed in the **301–350** band for Modern Languages, reflecting its rising international visibility in linguistics, literature, and cultural studies.



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TSUULL Mentoring Ecosystem 2025

A Comprehensive Framework for Equity, Leadership, and Academic Success

TSUULL's mentoring and access schemes exceed international benchmarks, with more than 40% of all students benefiting directly from structured guidance, leadership development, and targeted access programs. These initiatives are embedded into governance, academic support, career development, and wellbeing systems.

TSUULL's most impactful contributions to SDG 5: Gender Equality.

1. Academic Support Through Peer Empowerment

Helping students master challenging subjects through community-based learning.

2. Women's Leadership and Access to Global Opportunities

Building pathways for women to enter leadership roles and competitive international programs.

3. Holistic & Lifelong Learning

Ensuring students are confident, reconnected through academic journeys.

Core Policies Supporting Gender Equity and Workplace Inclusion

TSUULL is committed to advancing gender equality across all academic, professional, and social spheres, fully aligning with SDG 5. The University has established institutional frameworks and policies to eliminate discrimination, harassment, and gender-based barriers, ensuring equal access, participation, and leadership opportunities for women, men, and transgender individuals. Gender sensitivity is integrated into governance, curriculum design, research planning, and campus culture, promoting respect, dignity, and inclusion for all community members.

To empower women and vulnerable groups, TSUULL provides targeted programs such as mentorship, leadership development, capacity-building workshops, scholarships, and financial or housing support. Transgender students and staff are recognized and protected, with counseling, awareness programs, and administrative accommodations. Family-friendly policies, including maternity, paternity, and adoption leave, flexible study or work arrangements, and reintegration support, ensure that emerging responsibilities do not hinder academic or professional growth.

Implementation and monitoring are coordinated by the University administration, Deans, Human Resources, and the Gender Equality Committee, ensuring compliance with national legislation and institutional regulations. Through these measures, TSUULL actively promotes SDG 5 by increasing women's participation in leadership, protecting against discrimination, and fostering an inclusive, equitable environment where all genders can thrive academically and professionally.



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16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

TSUULL AS A NATIONAL SAFE PLATFORM FOR NEUTRAL CIVIC AND POLITICAL DIALOGUE

TSUULL provides one of Uzbekistan's strongest and most documented examples of a neutral, protected, and academically governed space for open political and civic dialogue. Guided by its Academic Freedom and Scholarly Independence Policy—which guarantees that “academic work, public lectures, and scholarly speech shall not be restricted or influenced for ideological, political, or administrative reasons”—the University hosts international forums where government representatives, NGOs, civil-society leaders, diplomatic missions, youth groups, and policy experts can engage in frank, evidence-based debate on sensitive national issues. Through its TSUULL Public Talk Series alone, the University has organized 40+ open, free, publicly advertised events, featuring speakers from UN-affiliated organizations, national ministries, regional NGOs, human-rights organizations, and independent research centers. All events are institutionally hosted, professionally moderated, and confidentially registered, ensuring that participants can speak without political pressure, censorship, intimidation, or institutional interference.

TSUULL's collaboration with the Association of Central Asia (ACARO)—whose national director is also a TSUULL professor—further strengthens its role as a trusted, neutral platform for discussions on equality, reform, human rights, discrimination in education, and democratic governance.

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY AT TSUULL

TSUULL integrates sustainability and SDG principles across all academic programmes, ensuring that every student—regardless of discipline—develops the competencies required to understand global challenges and contribute to sustainable development. Sustainability is embedded into coursework, research, community engagement, digital platforms, and university-wide initiatives, making it a core academic value rather than a stand-alone subject. The University incorporates SDG content across a range of disciplines, including sciences, engineering, arts, and humanities, supported by structured annual activities and measurable learning outcomes. Each year, TSUULL organizes 80+ SDG-focused workshops, lectures, and public dialogues, reaching more than 5,000 students. In addition, over 2,000 students participate annually in formal SDG literacy assessments, with a survey response rate averaging 82%, ensuring reliable insights into students' knowledge and engagement.

TSUULL's sustainability education covers a wide range of interdisciplinary themes relevant to the environment, digitics, education, communication studies, and digital communication. Students explore real-world challenges—including climate resilience, inequality, cultural preservation, peacebuilding, gender equality, and sustainable digital transformation—through both theoretical and applied perspectives. This approach equips graduates with critical thinking, responsible communication skills, and the ability to analyse and address complex global issues. Courses and academic pathways include sustainability-related subjects such as global development, education for sustainable development, gender equality, digital literacy, and ethical technology use, transnational environmental development, and social and emotional wellbeing in education. These are complemented by field practice, student volunteer projects, research seminars, and participation in outreach initiatives such as TSUULL Public Talks and SDG engagement events.

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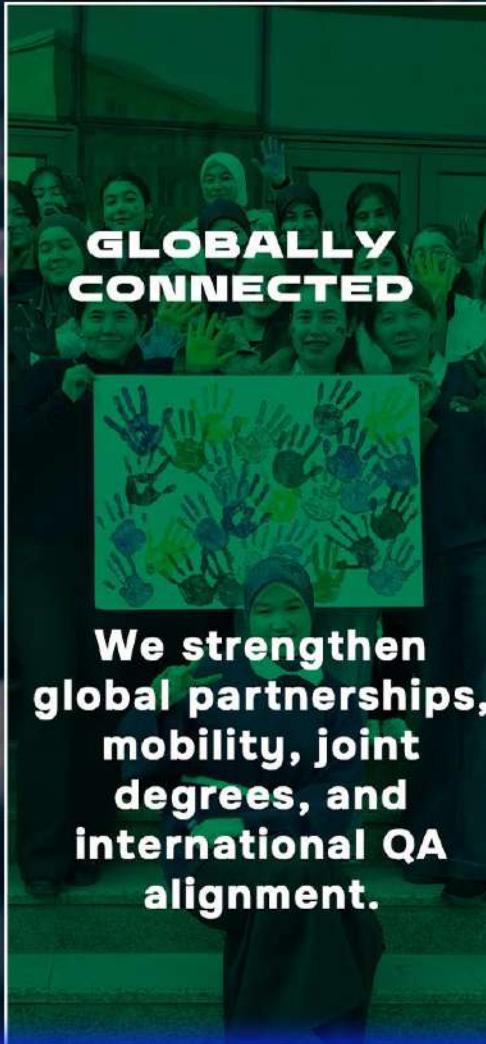
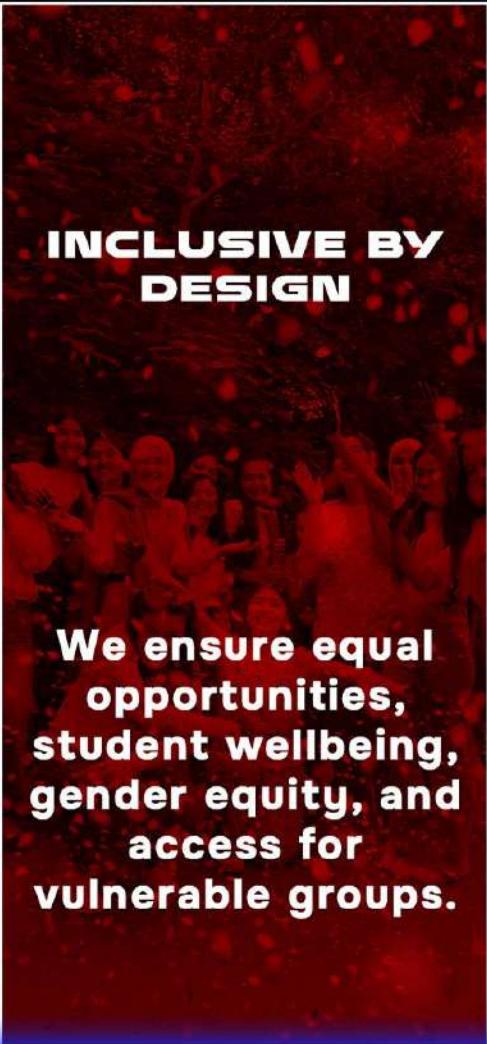
TSUULL'S DIRECT CONTRIBUTION TO NATIONAL & NGO SDG POLICY DEVELOPMENT

TSUULL plays a documented, institutional role in SDG policy development through sustained collaboration with national government bodies and regional NGOs. Each year, more than 25 TSUULL experts contribute to SDG-related working groups under the Ministry of Higher Education, the Ministry of Preschool and School Education, the State Test Center, and the Agency for Public Service Development. The University has co-developed 186 state-language assessment tasks, produced 12 policy briefs, 7 monitoring reports, and contributed expert analysis to 4 national strategies (SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 19, SDG 16).

Through its partnership with ACARO, TSUULL conducts 20–25 civil-education workshops yearly, identifies community challenges, co-designs interventions, and provides evidence for national NGO shadow reports. The Gender Studies Centre and SDGs Hub deliver annual gender policy assessments and revise civil society platform reports. TSUULL's input covers policy modeling, monitoring of interventions, and adaptive management, demonstrating a continuous, measurable contribution to Uzbekistan's SDG governance ecosystem.

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INSPIRE QA INNOVATE IMPACT



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Uzbek Higher Education



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DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN UZBEKISTAN

Rapid Expansion – Fast growth in universities, programmes, and enrollment since 2016.

Centralized Reform Agenda – Strong government leadership in modernization and policy direction.

Quality Assurance Transition – Shift toward ESG-aligned standards, external accreditation, and accountability.

Inclusive Internationalization – Active engagement in Erasmus+, global partnerships, and digital mobility.

Cultural & Language Focus – Strategic role in promoting Uzbek language, history, and cultural heritage.

Digital Transformation – Expansion of e-learning, digital libraries, and hybrid teaching models.

Skills & Employability – Priority on competency-based education and alignment with labor market needs.



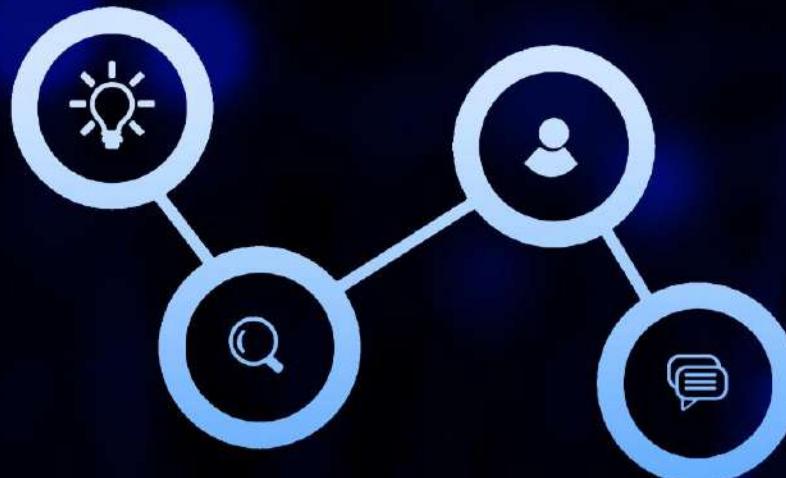
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WHAT TYPE OF UNIVERSITY ARE YOU?

Teaching

Widening Participation/access
Sector Skills
Graduate Employability
Employer Engagement and HE Targets
Professional Quals
Life Long Learning
Workforce Development
Foundation degrees



Research

Academic Research
International research base
Discipline advancement
New knowledge
World Class Knowledge Base

Academic

Graduates
Post Graduates
Higher Education Targets
Learning programmes
Intellectual Capital

Societal

Economic Growth
Business Competitiveness
Knowledge Transfer
IP exploitation/spinout companies
Regional Development and regeneration

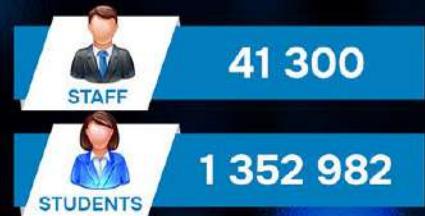


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2024



2025



PROGRESS OF INTERNATIONAL ACCREDITATION IN UZBEKISTAN'S HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR:

2023

21 programmes
• 6 HEIs

2024

42 programmes
• 10 HEIs

2025

23 programmes
• 7 HEIs



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UZBEKISTAN'S HIGHER EDUCATION LANDSCAPE PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

- Primarily funded by the Government of Uzbekistan, with strong central policy oversight.
- Tuition fees partially subsidized, especially for social groups and priority fields.
- Unified national tuition model (no in-state vs. out-of-state differentiation).
- Tend to be larger, long-established institutions with broader programme offerings.
- Represent the majority of student enrollment nationwide (over 75% of all HE students).
- Lead in quality assurance reforms, international partnerships, and accreditation, driven by national modernization priorities.

PRIVATE / NON-STATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

- Funded mainly through tuition payments, private investment, and limited donor or industry support.
- Tuition fees are generally higher than public institutions due to lack of state subsidy.
- Tend to be smaller, more flexible, and often focused on applied fields (business, IT, management, design).
- Growing rapidly and contributing to system diversification, innovation, and competition.
- Attract students seeking alternative formats, such as evening programmes or practice-oriented curricula.
- Represent a smaller but steadily increasing share of national enrollment (~20-25% and rising).
- Primarily funded by the Government of Uzbekistan, with strong central policy oversight.
- Tuition fees partially subsidized, especially for social groups and priority fields.
- Unified national tuition model (no in-state vs. out-of-state differentiation).
- Tend to be larger, long-established institutions with broader programme offerings.
- Represent the majority of student enrollment nationwide (over 75% of all HE students).
- Lead in quality assurance reforms, international partnerships, and accreditation, driven by national modernization priorities.



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Problems



Presidential Decrees, legal documents

 *Concept of Higher Education System Development of Uzbekistan until 2030*

 *Uzbekistan's Digital 2030 strategy*

 *Advancing Science and Education in Engineering Fields*

Results

 Implementing inclusive internalisation to all sectors of education, expanding access to higher education, granting autonomy to universities, and aligning educational quality with labor market needs, driving both social and economic growth in Uzbekistan

 the establishment of technology parks, startup incubators, and accelerator centers within universities is envisioned

 establishment of higher engineering schools in 2024 has fostered greater integration of research, innovation, and practical applications within universities, boosting the commercialization of research, increasing revenue through patents, and strengthening partnerships between academia and industry



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ISSUES IMPACTING HIGHER EDUCATION IN UZBEKISTAN

- Managing rapid system expansion while ensuring consistent quality across all institutions.
- Strengthening quality assurance and aligning fully with ESG and international accreditation standards.
- Enhancing faculty capacity in research, digital skills, and innovative teaching methods.
- Reducing regional disparities in access, infrastructure, and student support.
- Advancing digital transformation, including LMS modernization and digital literacy.
- Improving employability through stronger links between universities, industry, and skills development.
- Supporting inclusive access and gender equality, especially for women, rural students, and vulnerable groups.
- Expanding internationalization capacity to engage more effectively in global partnerships and mobility.



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DEFINING TERMS: COMPREHENSIVE INTERNATIONALIZATION

Comprehensive Internationalisation is a deliberate and strategic process through which post-secondary institutions integrate international, intercultural, and global perspectives into their mission, functions, and educational practices. It enhances the quality of learning, teaching, and research for all students and staff, while fostering institutions that contribute meaningfully to a more connected, inclusive, and globally engaged society.



CONCEPT
of Development of the Higher Education System
of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030



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“a means [to] address the supply-demand gap, remedy low quality of teaching & learning..., accelerate research & innovation, prepare students to be competitive in the global labor market ... and enhance [institutional] profiles internationally & domestically.”
(Iyer, 2017)



“a particular focus on student mobility, educational partnerships, and international rankings”
(Ota & Watanabe 2017)



“driven by economic development imperatives and the government’s desire to strengthen the country’s political and economic relationships with a wide range of trading partners.”
(Ziguras and Pham, 2017)



“driven by systemic higher education reforms aimed at improving quality, expanding access, advancing ESG-aligned quality assurance, and accelerating international collaboration to position Uzbekistan as a competitive and culturally distinct player in global higher education.”



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REASONS UZBEK INSTITUTIONS INTERNATIONALIZE

- To improve student preparedness for a global era
- To diversify students, faculty, and staff
- To become more attractive to prospective students
- To generate new revenue for the institution
- To contribute to new international development initiatives
- To raise international rankings and reputation
- To attract global talent (faculty and researchers)

Mapping Internationalization, CDE, 2022

PRIORITY ACTIVITIES FOR INTERNATIONALIZATION FOR UZBEK INSTITUTIONS (2020-2024)

1. Recruit international students to strengthen cultural diversity and global engagement across Uzbek campuses.
2. Increase outbound mobility, including participation of Uzbek students—especially women and regional students—in study-abroad, exchange, and internship programmes.
3. Develop strategic partnerships with institutions abroad, expanding joint degrees, dual diplomas, research collaboration, and regional/global networks.
4. Internationalize the curriculum and co-curriculum, integrating global competencies, multilingual instruction, digital mobility, and comparative cultural content.
5. Invest in faculty development, including EMI training, research capacity building, international accreditation skills, and participation in global academic networks.



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KEY GOVERNANCE PARTNERS FOR INTERNATIONALIZATION (UZBEK CONTEXT)

UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP

- **Rector** – final authority on all international agreements, MOUs, and strategic partnerships.
- **Vice-Rector for International Affairs** – key SIO at institutions meeting the 200+ international student requirement.
- **Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs & Vice-Rector for Science, Innovations** – coordinate academic programmes, joint degrees, rankings, and research partnerships.

CORE INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERS

- **Deans and Department Chairs** – develop joint programmes, academic mobility, and curricula.
- **International Relations Department** – operational hub for mobility, agreements, rankings, and diplomatic communication, reviews agreements, visas, HR matters for foreign faculty.
- **Strategic Development & Transformation Offices** – oversee QA, ESG alignment, THE/QS rankings, and international project portfolios.
- **Office of Research / Research Administration** – manages international projects, conferences, joint research grants.
- **Student Affairs Department** – supports incoming international students, orientation, housing, and wellbeing.
- **Finance Department** – coordinates scholarship payments, project budgeting, international procurement.



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THE PICTURE IN THE UZBEKISTAN

TOP COUNTRIES FOR INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS AS REPORTED BY UZBEK UNIVERSITIES

EXISTING ACTIVITY

TARGETED FOR EXPANDED ACTIVITY

Turkey	European Union (Germany, Italy, Spain, Poland) – Erasmus+, accreditation, STEM
South Korea	United States research partnerships, policy studies, graduate pathways
Russia	South Korea & Japan technology, engineering, language programmes
Kazakhstan & Kyrgyzstan (regional leadership)	Saudi Arabia & UAE academic hubs, funding opportunities
United Kingdom (Oxford, Westminster, Cambridge collaborations)	China digital education, cultural exchanges, joint research
China (Shanghai, Beijing, Confucius Institutes)	Türkiye humanities, language, heritage studies, dual degrees
Azerbaijan (ANAS, Baku State University)	Malaysia & Singapore innovation, TVET, digital transformation
Japan (JICA, university partnerships)	
India (IITs, language & technology cooperation)	



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DEVELOPMENTAL

- Align goals for partnership with institutional strategy
- Overall goals for the partnership activity
- Priorities for countries, activities, and project types
- Key stakeholders and their roles
- The aim of this phase is to establish the viability of the partnership

WHAT MAKES FOR A HIGH PERFORMING PARTNERSHIP?

- Ongoing, regular communication
- Genuine dialogue, mutuality
- Capacity to deal with difficulties
- Capacity to evolve
- Opportunity to spread across the partner institutions and expand capacity for teaching, research, or service
- Support and encouragement from university leadership



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CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

1. Institutional Compatibility

- Alignment with the university's mission, strategic goals, and Uzbek national priorities.
- Similarity or complementarity in academic strengths, programme structure, and student profile.
- Capacity to build synergies in language studies, digital humanities, STEM, or other priority areas.

2. Strategic Fit

- Partnership advances international teaching, research, mobility, and civic engagement.
- Supports institutional goals such as accreditation, English-medium instruction, Uzbek Studies promotion, or rankings.
- Fits into the university's overall internationalization strategy without duplicating existing partnerships.

3. Quality & Integrity

- Clear evidence of accreditation, recognized quality assurance, and ethical academic practices.
- Solid performance in global or regional rankings (THE, QS, subject rankings where relevant).
- Strong academic programmes and proven capacity for sustained collaboration



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CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

4. Geographical & Strategic Relevance

- Region/country aligns with Uzbekistan's diplomatic, cultural, or economic priorities.
- Adds value to the existing geographical footprint of partnerships (e.g., EU, Türkiye, Korea, China).
- Offers mobility and research opportunities appealing to Uzbek students and faculty.

5. Existing Engagement Potential

- Presence of active contacts – faculty cooperation, joint research, mobility pipelines.
- Ability to involve multiple departments, not only one unit or individual.
- Strong institutional commitment from both sides, reducing risks of unequal effort.

Challenges in Sustaining Partnerships (Uzbek HE Reality)

- Unequal commitment or lack of operational support on one side.
- Unclear goals or mismatch between expectations of the two institutions.
- Cultural and administrative differences, including bureaucratic procedures.
- Leadership transitions (rector or vice-rector changes), affecting continuity.



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MOBILITY

- Full-degree abroad
- Research cooperation
- Faculty and staff exchanges
- Internship and services experiences
- Study abroad
- Virtual exchange



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MOBILITY AS IT RELATES TO INTERNATIONALIZATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

- Connect faculty and staff in long-term relationships that build trust and cross-institutional knowledge
- Build complex understandings of partner and partner's country that deepen over time
- Create campus-wide awareness and atmosphere encouraging ALL students and faculty to connect with partner nation and institution
- Significantly contribute to intercultural students' intercultural learning
- Expand curricular offerings beyond what is available on student's home campus
- Create opportunities for intercultural learning for students on home campus through interacting with international students



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VIRTUAL EXCHANGE/ COLLABORATIVE ONLINE INTERNATIONAL LEARNING

- Virtual Exchange (VE) or Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) is an innovative pedagogy that allows professors and students to use technology to engage with their peers at universities around the globe.

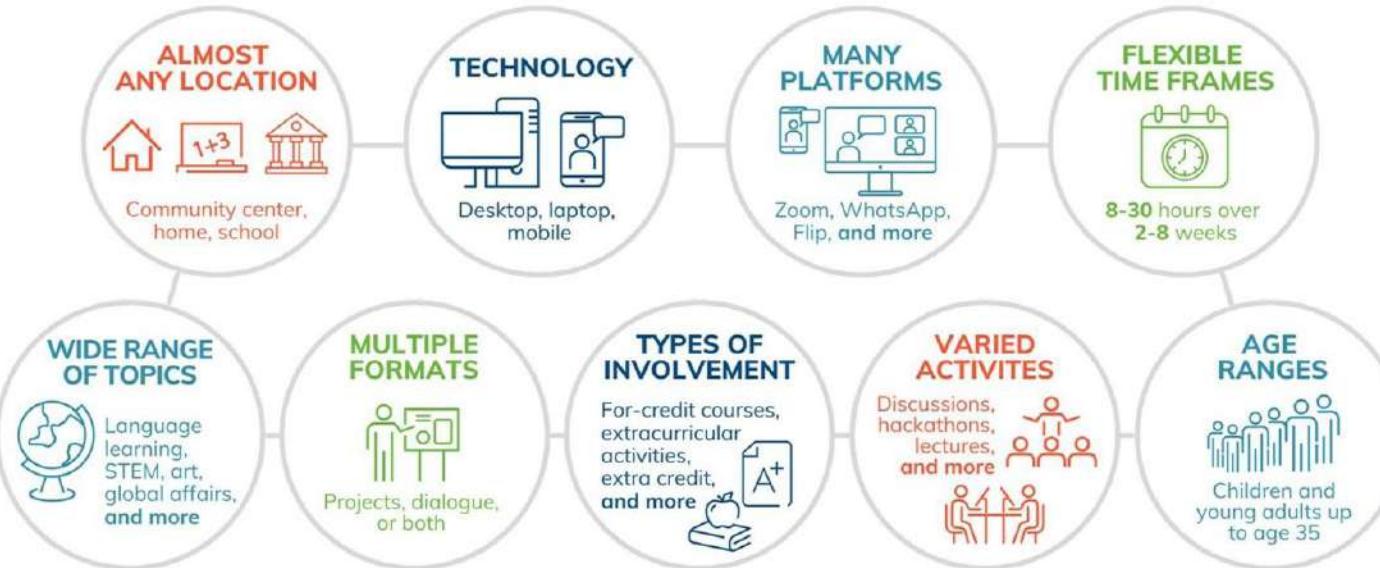
BENEFITS FOR VIRTUAL EXCHANGE

- Create opportunities for Uzbek universities to learn together without having to travel
- Effective pedagogical tool for student learning
- Cost effective
- Creates opportunities for faculty to work collaboratively
- Can advance curricular internationalization



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THAN YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!



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