FOREIGN EXCHANGE GRADUATE STUDENTS

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Each year dozens of students come to study at the University of Illinois through MOAs/MOUs/Exchange Agreements with foreign institutions.

Several hundred of these arrangements exist on our campus. Some are established and maintained at the department level, and others are at the college or campus level.

In some cases we have multiple agreements with the same foreign institution.

The Graduate College reviews MOAs/MOUs before approval, only if the agreement specifically includes the admission of graduate students.

BACKGROUND

The Graduate College
MOAS/MOUS ARE...

- An agreement that has been approved by both institutions.
- Active for a limited amount of time, but may be extended by mutual consent.
- Usually unique to a specific population, for example only faculty or only graduate students.
- Started from a template and then individually customized, and so the terms are unique and vary by agreement. For example, they can outline a research collaboration, faculty exchange, student exchange, or simply be a promise of future collaboration.
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
BETWEEN
THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS, USA
AND
[PARTNER INSTITUTION]
IN
[CITY/COUNTRY]

THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS, acting on behalf of its [name of sponsoring academic unit], on its Urbana-Champaign campus, in Urbana, Illinois, U.S.A. ("ILLINOIS") and [PARTNER INSTITUTION], in [city/country] ("INSTITUTION"), each a "party" or "institution," wishing to establish a cooperative relationship through mutual assistance in the areas of education and research, agree as follows:

ARTICLE 1: SCOPE OF COLLABORATION
1.1 General Scope. Each institution may offer to the other opportunities for activities and programs, such as teaching, research, exchange of faculty and students, and staff development that will foster a collaborative relationship.

1.2 Specific Activities. Specific activities and programs implemented under authority of this MOU shall be subject to availability of funds and the approval of each institution's authorized representatives. The institutions contemplate implementation of programs or activities such as: (a) joint educational, cultural, and research activities; (b) exchange of faculty members and advanced graduate students for research, lectures, and discussions; (c) participation in seminars and academic meetings; (d) exchange of academic materials, publications, and other information; and (e) special, short-term academic programs.

1.3 Separate Agreements. Prior to initiating any specific activity or program, the parties will negotiate and enter into a separate agreement, signed by each party's authorized signatory, describing the terms of the arrangement, including the budgets. Each party will designate a Liaison Officer to develop and coordinate specific activities or programs.

1.4 Student Exchange Limitations. While advanced graduate and professional students may participate in cooperative activities as proposed in Article 1.2 above to conduct collaborative or independent research, this MOU does not provide for the exchange of undergraduate or graduate students.
An Exchange Agreement is a very specific type of MOU that outlines how two institutions will exchange students.

Some individual departments have agreements with peer institutions, and the campus has many agreements which are overseen by the Study Abroad Office (SAO) or disciplinary college offices.

The agreement states the goals, sets the limits on how many and what type of students may come, how long they stay, the responsibilities of each institution, and what the students are promised.

Normally students only stay for one or two semesters, and students receive a Foreign Exchange Waiver for tuition and some fees.

Exchange balances are how the institutions keep track of how many students have been sent by each institution over the course of an agreement.

Many agreements arrange for institutions to take students “at a level determined by the host institution.”
The Graduate College admits very few students under MOU/MOAs, and even fewer under Exchange Agreements.

- When programs admit one of these students, they need to send a copy of the agreement with the referral for admission.

- But the undergraduate colleges may process as many as 200 students coming in under agreements term.

- And what we have found is that some of them are graduate students.
When admitted by the undergraduate colleges, these students are then coded in Banner as freshman, non-degree students, which causes several problems:

- Housing has to be careful not to place them in freshman dorms, which is not allowed.
- They are restricted from some graduate courses that they need access to, and so overrides have to be completed manually.
- Their coursework is reflected on undergraduate transcripts, and so they may have difficulty having transfer credit assigned after returning home.
- Course instructors do not know that they truly are graduate students.
- They are not assessed graduate fees.
- Graduate departments may not be aware the students are coming.
- TOEFL is waived.

**GRADUATE STUDENTS**

The Graduate College
So instead we would like to have these students admitted as graduate students, if they do hold a bachelor’s or bachelor’s equivalent.

To do that we need:
- To know early that the student is a graduate student
- To have them apply to the ApplyYourself system
- To have graduate departments admit them as non-degree students

SO - CHANGE THE PROCESS
We need to know early in the process if a student is a graduate student.

- So our Undergraduate Coordinators will pre-screen Exchange student applications to be sure, and if they are graduate students, then direct them to apply in the AY system.

SAO needs to know which programs will accept exchange students, so that if an Exchange Student wants to join a program that won’t accept them there is enough time for them to find another exchange opportunity.

- So we will ask each unit if they would be willing to participate.
We have heard some concerns from graduate programs and are trying to address them:

- It is possible to communicate to partner institutions and potential applicants that these are coursework exchanges, and students should not be anticipating research experiences as a part of their visit.
- Graduate departments process admissions much earlier than the exchange application deadline, so SAO will communicate to foreign coordinators earlier application deadlines for graduate applications.
- SAO will communicate to foreign coordinators that acceptance to graduate programs is highly competitive, and admission is selective.
- Our agreements have a clause that if an exchange student decides to seek a degree from UIUC, they must return home and apply as a regular graduate student. They can’t stay another semester and earn a degree. (And only 12 hours of non-degree coursework can be transferred to count toward a master’s.)
- Graduate Admissions will receive all the Foreign Exchange applications and forward these applications to participating departments as indicated by the student, as non-degree applicants.
- Undergraduate Coordinators will work with departments to help with placement of these students.
- The Graduate College and SAO will develop web resources for these students in particular and for departments that admit them.
- Graduate Admissions will pre-check that a student is participating in a valid exchange and that they have a bachelor’s equivalent before forwarding the application to the department.
- It is normal for Exchange students to pre-select the courses they will enroll for. So having planning for coursework only students is very easy if we ask them to provide those courses ahead of time.
BENEFITS TO PARTICIPATING

- Opportunities for our students to go abroad, especially our undergraduates, but also graduate students if desired
- Diversity and international perspective in our graduate classrooms
- Goodwill with foreign institutions and potential partnership building with selected international programs
- Ability to work with students prior to their application to a degree program
The Graduate College will be sending a letter to each graduate department asking if they would be willing to participate.

For those interested, the Graduate College, disciplinary Undergraduate Coordinators, and programs will meet, college by college. These meetings will allow graduate programs to meet their Undergraduate Coordinator and discuss specifics of that college’s programs – where students come from, how many may be coming, etc.
THANK YOU FOR COMING!

Questions?

Other concerns?