

Press release – Embargoed until 00:01 15 July 2009

Legal guide helps UK universities navigate overseas partnerships

A guide published by the UK Higher Education International Unit helps UK universities navigate the legal complexities of overseas partnerships.

International Partnerships: A Legal Guide for UK Universities, written by international law firm Eversheds, is designed as a practical 'route map' which gathers together in one place all the issues that need to be considered by a university serious about doing business abroad and getting it right from start to finish.

Key features of the guide include:

- Chapters on managing and documenting a partnership, including laying the groundwork, due diligence, troubleshooting and risk assessment with accompanying lists of 'dos' and 'don'ts'.
- Guidance on what to do if things go wrong.
- Country-specific case studies detailing legal and higher education jurisdiction, (Australia, China, Hong Kong, India, Malaysia, Qatar, UAE and USA)

Professor Rick Trainor, President of Universities UK, said, 'International activities should protect and enhance a university's brand, reputation and mission. Getting an international academic relationship right at the outset is always preferable to fixing mistakes later. It is my belief that this guide will prove to be of considerable and lasting practical use to our colleagues in the HE sector who are charged with establishing and running the full range of collaborative ventures with our counterparts abroad.'

Glynne Stanfield, partner and head of international education at Eversheds, said: 'Having been involved in providing legal support to the International Unit at Universities UK since its inception, we are delighted to have produced a guide for the sector on international activities. We have seen a major increase in the international activities of universities over the last few years; we expect that trend to accelerate and we hope the guide assists universities to do so. As an international law firm we fully recognise the increasing importance to the UK of international activities particularly in education, one of the UK's key export markets.'

International partnerships have, to date, been a success story for UK universities, but gone are the days when the terms of collaboration could be agreed between Vice-Chancellors on no more than a handshake. UK universities are sophisticated international collaborators and are increasingly taking account of legal issues when entering overseas partnerships. The guide conveys the complexities of the law in an accessible and readable format.

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Notes

1. The report will be launched at the British Universities International Liaison Association (BUILA) Annual Conference at Loughborough University on 15 July 2009.
2. *International Partnerships: A Legal Guide for UK Universities* is available to download from the UK HE International Unit website: www.international.ac.uk. Login and password details are required (UK users only).
3. For further information contact Elizabeth Farnell, Communications Officer, UK HE International Unit: 020 7419 5609 / elizabeth.farnell@international.ac.uk or at Eversheds contact Jaime Carron: 0845 497 0886 / jaimecarron@eversheds.com

The UK Higher Education International Unit coordinates, promotes and undertakes activities designed to support UK universities in a globally competitive world. The UK HE International Unit is funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England, the Scottish Funding Council, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, the Department for Employment and Learning (Northern Ireland), GuildHE and Universities UK. www.international.ac.uk

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