

## Background document 1 – General IUC Concepts and Framework

### 1. What is an IUC about?

Linked to the general objective of an Institutional University Cooperation (IUC) programme envisioning both institutional and developmental change, the following sections are meant to support a common understanding of the concepts of the ‘I in IUC’ and ‘Societal impact’.

#### The I in IUC

The ‘institutional’ in IUC means that an IUC programme envisions a change process within the partner university leading to improved performance of the institution as an Higher Education Institution (HEI) in a number of institutional priority domains. The change within an institution is proposed as capacity building at different levels, having different dimensions (see below).

	Capacity creation	Capacity utilization	Capacity retention
<b>Individual level</b>	Development of adequate skills, knowledge, competencies and attitudes (e.g. PhD)	Application of skills, knowledge, competencies on the workplace (e.g. PhD holder applies new knowledge and skills)	Reduction of staff turnover, facilitation of skills and knowledge transfer within institutions (e.g. PhD remains staff member)
<b>Organisational level</b>	Establishment of efficient structures, processes and procedures (e.g. introduction of lab procedures)	Integration of structures, processes and procedures in the daily workflows (e.g. well-functioning lab)	Regular adaptation of structures, processes and procedures (e.g. Integration of regular evaluation mechanisms for lab management)
<b>Institutional and policy environment level</b>	Establishment of adequate “institutions”, policies, rules and regulations (e.g. development of a new research/ accreditation/ HR policy, ..)	Enforcement of rules and regulations for good governance (e.g. implementation of new research, accreditation/ HR policy, ..)	Regular adaptation of institutions, rules and regulations (e.g. evaluation mechanisms for research, curricula, HR, ..)

This change realised through **academic theme-based projects** (research and educational strengthening of involved departments) and mandatory **transversal (institutional strengthening) projects**. These “transversal projects” are expected to focus on institution-wide organisational capacity building in a number of prioritised institutional policy domains (research policy, curricula/accreditation, university management, HRD, international relations, finance department, gender policy); and/or in domains of internal service delivery (ICT, library, language, basic sciences labs, ..); and/or in domains of external service delivery (outreach services, dissemination, extension/ Research and Technology Transfer (RTT) - offices, communication, ...)

## Societal Change

Both type of projects, and the academic theme-based projects in particular, aim to have an impact outside the academic context as well (cf. the VLIR-UOS motto “Sharing Minds, Changing Lives”). Not only after the intervention but also during the intervention, from its very start onwards, via stakeholders involvement conditions for uptake are to be created. Societal impact requires uptake to happen: uptake of new knowledge created by projects, applications, products, services, etc. This ‘uptake’ does not happen automatically. It is important that IUC programmes develop the capacities and strategies to create the conditions for this uptake.

## 2. Main characteristics of an IUC partner institution

### Institutional characteristics

- Priority is given to institutions that see it as their **mission to make a specific contribution to the development of their country**. This goes back to the mission statement of VLIR-UOS university cooperation for development of 2000 referring to the three functions of a university and the role of a university in society: *“The university combines three functions in a unique manner. The university generates knowledge through research. The university disseminates knowledge, inter alia via instruction. The university permanently and critically reflects on the society in which it is situated, and with which it continuously interacts in various ways. Through this combination, which is essential to the university, and by the fact that the university makes the knowledge generated available to society, universities play a specific and fundamental social role.”* VLIR-UOS wishes to collaborate with universities in the South which adopt these three missions and which attempt to freely disseminate and make the acquired knowledge accessible.
- A potential IUC institution is expected to have the track record or **potential of playing a role as driver for change in its surrounding environment**, national sub-region and country, referring hereby to the general objective of an IUC programme (*“Empowering the local university as institution to better fulfil its role as development actor in society”*). IUC partner universities are selected both on the basis of their potential with respect to university education and research as well as the emancipatory role they play within their society. IUC partner institutions have a proven track record or potential in terms of uptake (e.g. proven capacity to work with stakeholders), change and **impact on society**.
- Classically an IUC partner institution is **not a first tier institution in a country, but a mid-range institution with sufficient academic capacity to build upon**, and with the potential for playing the envisaged role of driver of change in a specific regional setting but also with a number of clear needs in terms of institutional capacity building that can be met through cooperation.
- **Preference is given to public institutions**. However, both public and private universities may be considered insofar as the private universities are able to meet the selection criteria and fit within the VLIR-UOS country strategy. In some countries the country strategy gives explicit priority to public universities) or even includes a list of priority IUC partner universities. However, all universities in the listed countries (except top 2000) can apply, also private universities and

universities not listed in the respective country strategies, but they need to justify why they believe that they fit within the IUC programme logic in the given country.

- Preference is given to universities that due to distance, communication and/or other factors are **less privileged** in terms of accessing national or international resources. **This could be translated in a preference for regional versus metropolitan universities.**
- Partner institutions are expected to pursue an active policy of cultural, ethnic, social and philosophical **non-discrimination**.
- Preference is given to those universities that are active in south-south networking such that possible outputs and results may be spread and/or shared with a wider group of institutions in the South.
- The national context in both political and economic terms, as well as the local context must be sufficiently safe and stable to allow for a long term commitment to collaboration with the Flemish universities and university colleges.

## **A basic institutional capacity is required**

VLIR-UOS is not a funding agency. Therefore, an IUC partner programme based on academic collaboration, does not cater for:

- major investments in terms of facilities and infrastructure;
- institutional funding (salaries or other recurrent costs);
- basic institutional functioning.

Put differently, an IUC partner university is expected to be able to function adequately at all levels, and be able to direct its own institutional destiny in a coherent manner. This assumes an adequate level of institutional planning and management, and an institutional environment that is transparent. This includes a sufficient exposure to research as well as the availability of trained human resources. There is need for institutional stability, and a minimum of own financial means. It also assumes a readiness to engage in a process of change management.

An IUC partner university is expected to have or work on a gender policy, as well as an integrity policy.

English is the IUC working language. Consequently, potential IUC partner universities will be required to demonstrate a sufficient ability to use English as a working language. However, at the level of local programme implementation, other languages can be used (e.g. French in DR Congo, Spanish in Latin America,...).

## **A reasonable but meaningful level of VLIR-UOS support**

Irrespective of size and development stage, a fixed annual budget is availed to IUC partner universities through the VLIR-UOS IUC programme. At the same time a situation of over-funding (risk of over-dependence) or under-funding (no impact) has to be avoided.

As such, VLIR-UOS will give preference to collaboration with partner universities whereby VLIR-UOS is one of the more important donors ensuring impact and a genuine institutional dialogue. However, in order to avoid a situation whereby the level of funding is disproportionate to the level of basic/recurrent

(government) funding, only partner universities with a reasonable size (e.g. staff, student body, recurrent budget, ..) can be considered.

## **History of cooperation**

Preference might be given to a partnership that could build up on existing links with one or more Flemish universities and university colleges, but only if it adds on to the quality of the proposal. In this manner, it might be much easier to arrive at the required institutional dialogue and partnership. The ability to mobilise broad based support among Flemish universities and university colleges referring to existing links may contribute to the quality of the application. However, having had earlier cooperation with one or more Flemish HEI(s) is not required.

## **Partnership and ownership**

- An IUC is based on a partnership concept. Therefore the proposed cooperation programme is not only guided by both developmental and institutional priorities (mission and vision, strategic plan of the institution) guaranteeing local ownership and embeddedness, it also has to be matched with the expertise available and the willing offer by the Flemish HEIs. Each IUC partner programme should try and integrate all available expertise from interested Flemish academics from as many Flemish HEI as possible; insofar as this adds on to the quality of the programme.
- In order to achieve institutional impact at level of a partner programme should be sufficiently broad based and provide multi-disciplinary opportunities, i.e. not be limited to one department or be very discipline specific. IUC partner programmes have a need for and generate interdisciplinary cooperation. At the level of the selected partner universities this could imply a preference for so-called 'complete' universities. However, exceptions can occur (e.g. in countries where universities are organised by discipline) taking into account the extent to which the concerned partner university is meeting other criteria or considerations.

### 3. Programme Cycle and structure

#### Partner programme

An IUC partnership between one partner institution in the South and Flemish universities and university colleges is described in a multi-annual partner programme composed of successive annual programmes covering an earmarked phase of cooperation. The proposed partner programme is guided by a strong overall programme strategy and logic supported by a coherent set of projects involving interdisciplinary approaches.

#### Programme Cycle

The IUC programme Cycle starts with a Phase In (different steps in the IUC intake process leading to final selection of a partner programme) period of at least 1 year.

The core of the IUC programme consists of 10 years of partner programme funding, divided in 2 phases of 5 years each and followed by a Phase Out. The transition from Phase 1 to Phase 2 depends on a mid-term evaluation followed by a positive assessment of a Phase II proposal for cooperation. At the end of Phase 2 an end evaluation is foreseen in order to draw post-programme lessons.

IUC Programme Cycle	Phase In - Pre Partner Programme	Phase 1 partner programme Capacity Building					Phase II partner programme Consolidation and valorisation					Phase Out: Valorisation	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Year	0												
Partnerships	2020-2021	2022-2026					2027-2031						

The approved phase 1 partner programme is jointly implemented via a tripartite agreement between the local partner university, the Flemish coordinating university and VLIR-UOS. At the local level, the local institution proposes a local coordinator and at the Flemish level, VLIR-UOS appoints a Flemish coordinator of the IUC cooperation of the partner institution with the Flemish HEIs. The Flemish institution to which the Flemish coordinator is affiliated will function as Flemish coordinating university, meaning assuming, together with the partner institution, full responsibility for the management and implementation of the partner programme with the partner institution on behalf of the participating Flemish institutions.

The formulation and implementation of each individual project within the IUC is managed by project leaders, academics from both the (local) partner institution and Flemish HEIs. Flemish project leaders are appointed by VLIR-UOS after stage 2 of the IUC selection procedure on the basis of an open competition facilitated via a matchmaking procedure and taking into consideration the advice of the IUC partner institution.

## 4. Budget

VLIR-UOS foresees a budget for 5 new IUC programmes starting with a pre-partner programme by ultimately mid-2020 and running until the end of 2021.

After successful formulation, selected IUC partner programmes will start full programme activities in 2022<sup>1</sup>.

The indicative maximum annual budget for an IUC programme for this call is € 600.000, meaning that the full budget for a first phase of cooperation is up to € 3.000.000 for the whole five-year phase.

An IUC programme of such volume typically has up to 5 academic theme-based projects (research and educational strengthening of involved departments) and one or more Transversal Institutional Strengthening project. However, these numbers are for illustration only. Also an institutional programme support unit is included, gathering the administrative support and coordination costs related to the programme. Depending on the assessment of the concept notes, the institutional assessments and the final selection advice, this maximum annual budget of an IUC programme can be downscaled with an indicative minimum annual budget being € 450.000.

More information on the expenses allowed in the framework of an IUC programme can be found in the current VLIR-UOS [financial guidelines](#) for IUC programmes (*Update of 5 March 2018*).

## 5. Detailed timeline IUC intake procedure 2022

Steps	Detail	Timing
<b>Stage 1 – Concept Note South</b>		
1. Call for proposals for IUC cooperation	Call for proposals for IUC cooperation addressed to Southern partner universities – Concept note South	3 July 2019
2. Submission concept notes South	Submission by the Southern universities to VLIR-UOS	15 October 2019
3. Eligibility check	Decision by Bureau UOS	Final week of October 2019
4. Shortlist of potential IUC partner universities (max. 8 proposals)	4.1. IUC selection commission (SC) formulates a binding advice as to the shortlist of potential IUC partner universities (no ranking) 4.2. The Bureau UOS ratifies the shortlist of the SC	4.1. SC: week of 25 November 2019 4.2. 2 <sup>nd</sup> week of December 2019
<b>Stage 2 – Extended Concept Note</b>		

---

<sup>1</sup> The overall budget for this call is subject to final approval by the Belgian government of the overall VLIR-UOS budget for 2022 and the multiannual programme 2022-2026.

5. Call for and appointment of Flemish coordinators	<p>5.1. Call for Flemish coordinators</p> <p>5.2. Submission of applications for Flemish coordinatorship via the ICOS of the Flemish universities</p> <p>5.3. Advice of the southern universities as to the appointment of Flemish coordinators</p> <p>5.4. The Bureau UOS appoints the Flemish coordinators on the basis of the advice of the Southern universities</p>	<p>5.1. Call: week of 16 December 2019</p> <p>5.2. 28 January 2020</p> <p>5.3. Mid-February 2020</p> <p>5.4. Bureau UOS of 28 February 2020</p>
6.a. Institutional assessments (max. 8)	Institutional assessments performed by external expert teams, leading to an institutional assessment report	Institutional assessments : February – mid April 2020; submission reports to VLIR-UOS ultimately on 17/4/2020
6.b. Call for 'extended' concept notes to max. 8 shortlisted proposals (partner institutions and Flemish coordinator)	<p>6.b.1. Call for 'extended' concept note</p> <p>6.b.2. Submission of the jointly elaborated extended concept note (through the Flemish coordinator) to VLIR-UOS</p>	<p>6.b.1. Call: early February 2020</p> <p>6.b.2. Submission: 15 May 2020</p>
7. Selection of partner universities to move into phase in (pre-partner programme stage including formulation of partner programme proposals) (max. 5)	<p>7.1. The institutional assessment reports and 'Extended' concept note proposals will be submitted to the SC</p> <p>7.2. SC formulates a binding advice as to the selection of partner universities moving into phase in and programme formulation, on the basis of institutional assessment reports and extended concept notes</p> <p>7.3. The Bureau UOS ratifies the binding advice of the SC as to the selection of partner universities moving into IUC Phase In</p>	<p>7.1. Ultimately in the week of 19 May 2020</p> <p>7.2. SC meeting: 22-23 June 2020 (indicative date)</p> <p>7.3. Bureau UOS of 3 July 2020</p>
<b>Stage 3 – Pre-partner programme (incl. formulation of final partner programme proposals)</b>		
8. Selected IUC partner institutions start a phase in (max. 5)	8.1. Preparing pre-partner programme document and contract	8.1. July-Aug 2019

	8.2. Tripartite agreement until end of 2021	8.2. Start and end contract PPP: September 2020 to end of December 2021
9. Matchmaking	Delegations of selected IUC partner universities –appointed local teams as part of the IUC extended concept notes-will travel to Belgium to meet with (potential) Flemish universities and university colleges stakeholders	End of October 2020 (indicative week of 26 October 2020)
10. Launch of Call and appointment of Flemish project leaders	<p>10.1. Call for Flemish project leaders prior to matchmaking</p> <p>10.2. Submission of applications for Flemish project leadership by Flemish academics</p> <p>10.3. Advice of the southern universities as to the appointment of Flemish project leaders</p> <p>10.4. Bureau UOS appoints the Flemish project leaders, on the basis of the advice of the Southern universities</p>	<p>10.1. September 2020</p> <p>10.2. Week of 16 November 2020</p> <p>10.3. Week of 31 November 2020</p> <p>10.4. Week of 14 December 2020</p>
11. Formulation missions	Joint elaboration of partner programme proposals by the appointed local and Flemish teams	February-May 2021
12. Submission of IUC partner programme proposals	Jointly elaborated S/N, final submission by the Flemish coordinator	Indicative mid-June 2021 (indicative on 18/6)
13. Appraisal of partner programme proposals and final selection decision	SC appraises final partner programme proposals and formulates a binding advice as to the final IUC selection and start-up in 2022.	Early September 2021
14. Final decision by the Bureau UOS and confirmation of all mandates	Bureau UOS ratifies the binding advice of the SC as to the final selection and reconfirms all Flemish mandates	Week of 20 September 2021
Stage 4 – Start of IUC programme		
15. Start of IUC programmes	Start in new FYP 2022-2026	1 January 2022