

Best Practice: Stream Lining the International Legal Process

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Anna Sukhrstina graduated from Kazan State Technological University in 2007. Her major area of study was polymer chemistry and she graduated from the University with honors and obtained a qualification of Specialist in Engineering. During her University years she took additional training in English language and, in 2005, obtained the Diploma of Specialist in Technical Translation from Kazan State Technological University. Now Anna is a PhD student focusing in Theory of Education. Anna's working experience started in 2007 when she took the position of an interpreter at one of the largest chemical companies in the region – JSC Kazanorgsintez. In 2013 she joined the team of Kazan National Research Technological University as an interpreter of International Affairs and a lecturer of the Department of Foreign Languages. Owing to her work as an interpreter at industrial site she could share her experience with her students, giving them an opportunity to see the practical side of knowing a foreign language. Anna's work at International Affairs is multifunctional. it comprises interpreting at international conferences run by the University, administration of several international projects, interpreting at negotiations with partners, protocol assistance for international delegations, coordination of business trips of KNRTU management, and etc.

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Introduction

Modern globalization processes lead to constant extension of international contacts and engage all human activities and education.

Internationalization of an engineering university is a complex multistep process facing certain challenges. One of such challenges is that advanced internationalization initiatives require a specific environment to be successful.

Over the last several years, internationalization management has been changed on institutional level in many universities. In this regard, we can observe the initiatives to reorganize the system of international activity management at a university level^{1,2,3,4,5}. One of challenges is the fact that internationalization management needs stream lining the international legal process.

Education internationalization management assumes regular work in planning, organization, supervision and control of international activities in a university⁶.

This paper is dedicated to the problem faced by certain Russian engineering universities integrated into the international legal process. We offer a case study of a new internationalization initiative implemented in a Russian engineering university. It has not been done before at other Russian universities, it is a completely new process that has not been followed before.

A Russian Engineering University in International Legal Process

The International Legal Process (ILP) is the understanding how international law works. It concentrates not only on the exposition of rules and their content but also on how international legal rules are actually used by foreign policy makers.

In the recent years, scientists reported about the deficit in the ILP normative environment. New ILP approaches are developed with somewhat new philosophic background⁷. Nevertheless, comprehensive functioning of the norms of international law at a university level requires them to be based not only on a well-organized system of norms and regulations, but also on a sustainable institutional system of international activity management. The fact is, a new limiting factor appears at a certain level of a university's international outreach: poor administrative and legal background for internationalization create a 'bottleneck' effect, many projects with international partners become less efficient as they were supposed to be because too many legal and administrative problems have to be solved.

The experience of a Russian engineering university allowed achieving good results in this respect and demonstrated overcoming this 'bottleneck' effect in some activities. In a Russian engineering university, the Office of Legal Support has been created within university's international department in addition to a general Legal Office. This office is quite unique for universities as legal issues of international activities are usually considered by university's general legal advisors who have neither enough time to focus on internationalization needs nor adequate expertise in international law.

The most important responsibilities of this Office are:

Development, approval and implementation of efficient technologies, forms and methods for university's internationalization management;

1. Development of procedural and institutional aspects of this management and its regulatory support;
2. Analysis of legal aspects of networking involving international partners and implementation of various types of academic mobility;
3. Development of a legal basis for dual degree programs.

The Office of Legal Support became an administrative ice-breaker for the following long-lasting legal problems: prevention of international law infringements; development of legal mechanisms for academic mobility; monitoring of university internationalization.

New Legal Practices in Internationalization

The administrative solutions prepared the environment for new legal practices in internationalization. The successful projects are described below.

1. New regulatory documents have been developed for internationalization, especially for academic mobility.

A relevant local legal basis was developed as an essential component of the university system of international activity legal regulation. This system provides a regulatory basis for international activities.

University mission, concept, program, strategy, and internationalization plan form the top level of this system. Quality and strategic dimension of these components provide management efficiency. As a consequence it leads to the development of instruments and tools to intensify the professional training process⁸. University's internationalization concept and program include a strategic model of university internationalization and a mini-model of higher education internationalization that occur on global and national levels.

After the strategic internationalization model was developed, we concentrated on regulatory documents comprising the tactics of internationalization management, considering the state of corresponding current legislation, and accomplishing an organizing function in a university's international activity. In the academic year 2014-2015, we developed the following regulatory documents:

- Provisions on International Affairs;
- Provisions on the Office of Legal Support of International Affairs (the Office of Legal Support was established on October 1, 2014);
- Provisions on the Academic Mobility Office of International Affairs;
- Provisions on the Protocol Office of International Affairs;
- Provisions on the Academic Mobility of Education Process Subjects;
- Provisions on Joint International Academic Programs;
- Provisions on Visiting Foreign Residents and Delegations;
- Provisions on Employment of Foreign Residents.

Provisions on Networking Forms in University are being developed now.

In addition to these documents, a set of job descriptions for the staff of International Affairs was developed and approved.

These documents make it possible to provide the following solutions:

- a) the structured and logical system of local regulations and norms for university international activities;
- b) basic concepts describing the processes of university internationalization such as individual academic mobility, cooperation in education and research, external academic mobility, internal academic mobility, incoming academic mobility, outgoing academic mobility, individual educational path, academic exchange, joint academic programs;
- c) important mechanisms were described and implemented for academic mobility of students and faculty. For example, mobility as a part of joint international academic programs was assisted by the development of an algorithm for participants of mobility programs with all the required steps such as providing information to potential applicants, hints to leaving abroad, documents including standard learning agreement and transcript record; the protocol procedure for international delegations was formalized; the legal procedure was offered for attraction and employments of foreign citizens providing additional opportunities for cooperation with the US and European universities;
- d) academic mobility rights of the participants of academic relations (dual degree diploma, guarantees for mobility participants, and etc.);
- e) a clear subdivision of responsibilities was accomplished for various university offices involved in internationalization.

Generally, these documents allow modeling and launching a mechanism of engineering university internationalization management.

Thus, the development of local regulations can be considered as a major social and pedagogical condition for the efficient management of international education.

2. The new Office concentrated not only on signing collaboration agreements with new partners but also on updating existing agreements to make them more specific, practice-focused and considering ongoing cooperation projects with these partners.

For example, in 2015, Office of Legal Support took direct part in the organization of cooperation with one of the prestigious world-class Dutch companies in chemical technology. In August 2015, a Memorandum of Intent was signed and in November parties signed a contract on performing research.

An important activity area of the Office of Legal Support is international cooperation of the university with the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the People's Republic of China. These countries are of a great interest for Russian universities. The university where Office of Legal Support is located opened a Representative Office in Vietnam in 2014 and various legal aspects of its activity require constant attention⁹. The Office provides legal assistance for the applications for PhD scholarships of President's Fellowship Program, Chinese Academy of Sciences. In 2015, the draft agreement was developed for the applicants, as well as the draft Letter of Guarantee ensuring the employment of university's alumni after completing PhD degree in China.

New opportunities for international faculty employment have been found, resulted in sustainable increase in the number of international faculty. In November 2015, the university signed a General Agreement on Cooperation with one of Chinese associations. The Agency Agreement is coming for signing. This document will be dedicated to the recruitment of prospective students for the university.

Besides that, the Office of Legal Support provides expert evaluation for international agreement drafts including their legal evaluation with respect to compliance with the requirements of the international and Russian legislation as well as elimination and minimization of potential legal risks.

3. A distance contract system has been developed to hire top world scientists as university professors. These professors are performing now as the lobbyists of the University's international projects in Europe and Asia.

Conclusion

It can be concluded, therefore, that a new approach of establishing a legal office within university international affairs proved to be successful. The new focus on the legal aspects of academic mobility resulted in certain intensification of internationalization in a Russian engineering university by finding new opportunities from legal expertise. There are success stories which can be used by other Russian and foreign universities.

The future prospect for the work of this office is a fresh look it can provide for other problems of engineering education internationalization requiring complex approach and involvement of other administrative units of a university. For Russian universities, for example, there is a need to increase the number of international faculty. This problem requires close cooperation with the local migration services responsible for visa support and other aspects of international faculty visiting. Such state bodies are constantly offering new projects and regulations for international visitors and adaptation to these new legal initiatives is a challenge. Another challenge is the funding for internationalization projects which is a very complex process in any large legal entity especially with state funding (such as a big engineering university in Russia, where both raising and spending of internationalization funds require close and complex attention). These problems are the expected areas of future activities of this Legal Support Office.

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