Risk and opportunity assessment for international collaboration and activities

STINT
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Preface

Internationalisation is a prerequisite for scientific quality, relevance and renewal. At the same time, the world has become more unpredictable. Researchers, higher education institutions and funding bodies more often face difficult considerations due to geopolitical tensions, new regulatory frameworks, and contradictory or insufficient information. These circumstances mandate a working method that not only identifies risks but also highlights benefits.

This report can be read as a follow-up to STINT's *Responsible Internationalisation: Guidelines for Reflection on International Academic Collaboration* report[1], published in 2020. While the earlier report laid the groundwork for responsible internationalisation, this present report also focuses on opportunities and value creation. This is justified as in the current climate, dominated by risks and threats, which may mean that value-creating partnerships are discontinued or never initiated.

The report is directed at everyone who deals with international issues in higher education and research, from individual researchers and lecturers to academic leadership, research funders, and policymakers. The aim is to offer exploratory tools that can be adapted to different contexts and decision-making levels.

The report is intended to contribute to a nuanced, constructive discussion of internationalisation in Swedish higher education and research and offers a framework for reflection and dialogue that may support well-founded decision-making. No general solutions or templates are proposed. Each international collaboration is unique and must be assessed in its specific context.

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Stockholm, October 2025

[1] Shih, T., Gaunt, A., & Östlund, S. (2020). *Responsible internationalisation: Guidelines for reflection on international academic collaboration, R 20:01, STINT:* Stockholm, 2020.

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1. Introduction

The balance between risk and opportunity is at the heart of responsible internationalisation. This report aims to inspire discussion at higher education institutions, research funders, and other actors in the research and higher education system as well as guide efforts to assess international collaborations based on *both* the risks and opportunities they present. The focus falls on analysing potential risks and opportunities concurrently, which paves the way for better informed decisions and proportionate risk management measures.

International cooperation is of fundamental importance to academic activity.[2] International cooperation has been proven to largely strengthen, develop, and enhance research and higher education. Yet the world has changed considerably, with greater tension between the leading science nations and an increasing number of armed conflicts.[3]

As the international environment becomes increasingly characterised by mistrust between governments and competition between countries, there is a greater need for higher education institutions and research funders to act in a risk-aware and responsible manner. However, if the discussion mainly focuses on risks, actors may refrain from international collaborations – even though broad international cooperation often is decisive for the development of research and higher education.

Many higher education institutions and funders have recently started to build both organisational awareness and capacity to identify different types of risks that may arise in connection with international cooperation. This development is necessary and significant as geopolitical uncertainty increases and governments in advanced economies and research nations highlight the need to bolster national competitiveness and defence capabilities. However, a focus on risks should always be balanced with identifying and evaluating the value that may be created through such collaborations. In this report, the concept *risk*[4] is used in its traditional sense: as uncertainty regarding negative consequences. Because we often accept risks precisely to gain something valuable – such as scientific renewal, international networks, or benefits to society – these potential benefits must simultaneously be analysed and weighed.

By consistently and systematically highlighting and analysing the opportunities

[2] STINT (2024) *Rationale for International Cooperation in an Increasingly Polarised World* R 24:02

[3] Forskning.se (2024) Rekordmånga väpnade konflikter i världen

[4] Merriam-Webster (n.d.). Risk: Definition & meaning. Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Retrieved 17 September, 2025 RISK Definition & Meaning – Merriam-Webster

and values created through international collaborations and other activities,[5] Higher education institutions, individual researchers, or funders may determine whether an activity should be implemented and developed as well as the extent to which risk management measures are justified and proportionate.

At the same time, it is important to underline that systematic risk and opportunity assessments require time, skill, and support structures. Even if higher education institutions have the intent and potential to develop such approaches, they often lack organisational capacity to implement them systematically. As such, advancing responsible internationalisation cannot be taken for granted – efforts must be organised, staffed, and prioritised. Individual researchers and administrators need to have access to guidance, tools, and organisational support in order to perform such assessments in practice.

Systematic risk and opportunity assessments require researchers to reflect on risks and opportunities, even when they concern academic principles, research integrity and security, or society at large.

2. Joint risk and opportunity assessment

Risk and opportunity assessments are already an integral part of academic work. For example, they constitute a central aspect of evaluating research ideas: Is it possible to answer a specific research question? What are the risks that the project will not succeed? Which new opportunities may arise if it succeeds? Similarly, the benefits of international collaborations are often clearly described, for example in funding applications or in agreements between parties. The problem is therefore seldom that opportunities and value-creating effects are overlooked, but rather that these are usually not systematically analysed together with risks. There is often no common framework for weighing risks and opportunities against each other, which may hamper balanced decision-making on proportionate risk management measures and activities. Nevertheless, it should be possible to conduct a combined analysis of risks and opportunities systematically. Articulating the opportunities and values that may arise can assist individual researchers, higher education institutions, or funders in formulating the broader aims of the activity. Such a concretisation should also be useful when discussing the design of projects and activities with partners.

In this report we aim to provide support regarding the concurrent analysis of risks and opportunities and which trade-offs may be made. Opportunities may for example concern long-term knowledge development, network building, or

[5] Activities that are not collaborations may for example include student recruitment, contract education, fieldwork, alumni activities, participation in conferences, branches located abroad, etc.

scientific revitalisation, while the risks often involve security, ethics, or reputation. However, the dimensions mentioned are not easily weighed against each other. A well-founded overall assessment therefore necessitates structures that facilitate the discussion of different types of opportunities, risks, and uncertainties within a common analytical framework. This may involve establishing a shared language, clarifying assumptions and interests, as well as fostering an understanding for how different perspectives interact in the specific situation.

2.1 Mapping opportunities

International activities and collaborations create a range of values for both higher education institutions and for society more broadly.[6] These values may manifest both as direct effects of the particular activity and as more long-term or indirect results.

The more immediate effects for example include the opportunity to access the unique expertise of international colleagues, research data, material, or infrastructures that would not have been available otherwise. A collaboration may lead to joint research projects, co-creation of novel findings, and publications that would not have been possible without the international connection. This can contribute to greater visibility in high-ranking journals and increase the impact of both the researcher and the higher education institution. The insights and experiences of individual researchers may be decisive in identifying such opportunities early on.

International student mobility, joint study programmes, practical placements, and fieldwork in other countries create significant added value for the individual student, and the higher education institution. For students this means new perspectives, intercultural competence, and personal development. For higher education institutions, mobility may contribute to increased attractiveness, widening participation, and deeper partnerships.

In addition to these immediate benefits for researchers, students and higher education institutions, international collaboration often generates indirect value. These include the opportunities to address global challenges, deepen cross-cultural understanding, and strengthen international relations. Deepened international partnerships can also contribute to policy development, foster innovation, promote democratic exchange and enhance cooperation between academia, business and industry, and civil society.

However, sometimes it may be difficult to identify concrete positive effects of international collaborations and other activities, particularly when these effects

[6] Statens offentliga utredningar (2018) *En strategisk agenda för internationalisering*, SOU 2018:3

arise long after the actual activity – sometimes several years later, and often in the form of indirect benefits. It is therefore important to develop tools and methods that facilitate both the identification and description of such long-term values, even when they are not immediately visible.

Opportunities also change over time. A collaboration that initially seems to have limited potential may develop, through technological advances, new research questions, or changed societal needs, to yield new and significantly greater value. Assessing opportunities should therefore be a recurrent aspect of project monitoring.

In this context, the enhanced competence created through international cooperation presents an important opportunity. International activities build knowledge on partners, contexts, and safe practices, which may boost organisational and individual competence to identify, manage and prevent future risks.[7]

It is also important to note that value may arise at various levels: individual (e.g. a researcher's career and competence development), institutional (e.g. the higher education institution's strategic profile, attractiveness, international reputation), and societal (e.g. knowledge production, innovation, international understanding, strategic relations, and democratic exchange). These values may be unequally distributed between the different parties to a collaboration.

An assessment of opportunities is often affected by organisational culture, disciplinary traditions, and individual priorities. What is regarded as "valuable" knowledge or collaboration varies between disciplines, and in the discussion, different types of values – scientific, financial, cultural, social – are afforded varying attention. To avoid a narrow focus, one may therefore benefit from a variety of perspectives in the assessment process.

At the same time, there is a risk that some opportunities and values are underestimated precisely because they are difficult to measure or only arise long after the activity itself. This applies for example to long-term cultural or intellectual value that arise through mutual learning, access to different knowledge traditions, or through the stimulation of creative thinking. Such soft values may be hard to identify and even harder to quantify, but they may nevertheless constitute some of the most significant results of international cooperation.

Summary

– Values may arise both as direct effects of the particular activity and as more long-term or indirect results.

[7] Gulati, R. (1995). Does Familiarity Breed Trust? The Implications of Repeated Ties for Contractual Choice in Alliances. *Academy of Management Journal*, 38(1), 85–112

– The more immediate effects include for instance the opportunity to gain access to unique research data, material, or infrastructures that would otherwise not have been accessible.
– Long-term and indirect value may include enhancing educational environments, knowledge and innovation systems, and long-term knowledge development and the building of strategic relationships.
– Value-creating effects may occur at various levels: individual, institutional and societal. Such effects may be unequally distributed between the different parties to a collaboration.

2.2 Mapping risks

The diversity of risks

Risks in connection with international cooperation are often based on contextual factors, indications, or potential chains of events. They are frequently characterised by insufficient information, uncertainty and depend on changes in the surrounding world. In some instances, there are legal boundaries; in others, assessments require professional judgement. Risks may be directly connected to collaboration partners, technological applications, the content of the project, or the political context in which a project is conducted.

Students' participation in international contexts may involve particular risks. These may for example concern their physical or digital security in the host country, legal uncertainty, surveillance, ideological pressure, or restrictions to academic freedom. It is important to be aware that students' possibilities to express themselves freely may be severely limited, especially in environments where certain topics or opinions may be sensitive or politically controversial.

While certain risks can be assessed objectively (e.g. a history of human rights violations or direct connections to military actors through funding), other assessments are more subjective. The ability to perceive and interpret risks may vary depending on organisational level, access to contextual analysis, research field, prior experience, etc.

It is also important to note that certain risks mainly arise at the individual (e.g. researchers doing fieldwork in authoritarian settings) or system level (e.g. dependence on technological platforms or funding). Additional risks may be national and may constitute threats to national security. Risks may be asymmetrically distributed between the parties to a collaboration: it is not always the parties bearing the largest risk that exert the greatest influence over decisions. Risks may of course also arise for actors that are not directly involved in the collaboration.

An awareness of the level and distribution of risks is therefore central to a logical, feasible assessment.

It is further difficult for individual researchers to determine what constitutes a manageable risk in complex international contexts. Therefore, risk assessment cannot solely be an organisational responsibility, but ought to be a *process* in which individual staff members and academic leadership receive concrete support to formulate questions, gather and evaluate information, and make decisions.

Interpreting and managing risk in practice

External actors may both provide support in risk assessment efforts, by contributing their knowledge and perspectives, and exert pressure, by wielding influence or creating expectations that collaborations should be avoided even when the risks are deemed manageable. Security authorities, interest groups, think tanks, or other expert communities may contribute knowledge to broaden perspectives. At the same time, such actors, political statements, or media scrutiny may create external pressure to refrain from collaborations even in cases offering considerable research or educational value with manageable risks.

In some cases, risk assessment is based on information from national security authorities or other actors unable to disclose the underlying details. This creates a situation where higher education institutions or researchers are asked to consider risks without having full insight into the nature of the risk or threat. In such situations and in the absence of clear legal directives or explicit threats, it becomes difficult to assess what constitutes a proportionate response or which actions it would be reasonable to avoid.[8] To reduce information asymmetry, some countries, such as the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, have created channels between academia and the relevant authorities. The ambition has been to enhance information exchange and build mutual understanding for each side's mandate and logic. This may improve chances to take well-grounded decisions, also in situations when all information cannot be made public.

Risks, just as opportunities, are not static. External events, political developments, policy changes, or new knowledge may mean that a collaboration which appeared relatively unproblematic at the start later poses new or amplified risks. Moreover, the content or character of a collaborative project often changes while it is in progress, which may mean that the initial risk assessment no longer is comprehensive. Therefore, risk assessment needs to be a recurrent part of project monitoring, rather than a one-off activity in the startup phase.

[8] Shih, T. (2025). *Challenges to Research Security.* (s. 1-8). SSRN. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=5172561

In addition, risk assessments are often influenced by language, norms and organisational culture. What is deemed an "acceptable" risk varies between disciplines, and different types of risks – ethical, financial, legal, political – are often afforded unequal space in the discussion. To avoid blind spots, broad perspectives and a variety of voices should be involved.

Reflection on the foundational principles of academia is also required when mapping risks. Certain ethical boundaries are not negotiable or manageable through risk mitigation strategies, they may instead represent red lines that preclude engagement altogether. The same applies to collaborations where academic freedom risks being restricted through censorship, surveillance, or demands to adapt research questions to political aims.[9] Such risks pose a risk to academic integrity, and although hard to measure their impact is profound.

Summary

- Risks associated with international cooperation are seldom clear or direct. They are often based on contextual factors, indications, or potential chains of events.
- The ability to perceive and interpret risks may vary, depending for example on organisational level, access to contextual analysis, research field, and prior experience.
- Some risks arise at the individual level, while others are institutional (e.g. risks to reputation) or systemic risks. Risks may be asymmetrically distributed between parties to a collaboration and those bearing the greatest risk do not always have the most influence over decisions.
- When mapping risks, it is also important to reflect on the foundational principles of academia.

2.3 Combined risk and opportunity assessment: Weighing risks against opportunities

Academic values such as academic freedom, integrity, and autonomy,[10] together with principles of research ethics such as reliability, honesty, respect and accountability,[11] function as a normative framework when risks and opportunities are weighed against each other. Some opportunities cannot justify compromising fundamental values, and some risks are only acceptable provided that these values are safeguarded. At the same time there are situations in which factors such as

[9] Scholars at Risk (2019). *Obstacles to Excellence: Academic Freedom & China's Quest for World-Class Universities.* New York: Scholars at Risk Network.

[10] Magna Charta Universitatum (2020) *Magna Charta Universitatum 2020*, Retrieved 17 September, 2025 https://www.magna-charta.org/magna-charta-universitatum/mcu2020

[11] ALLEA (2023) The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity – Revised Edition 2023. Berlin.

legislation, sanctions, or assessments related to national security set the limits on what is possible, irrespective of academic assessments. In such cases transparency in the decision-making process is particularly important.

Well-founded decisions on international collaborations and other activities therefore require a concrete analysis of both risks and expected positive effects. The clearer the assessment and understanding of potential risks and opportunities, the better the conditions for weighing these against each other and determining which measures are proportionate and required for the responsible implementation of the collaboration or activity. A first step is identifying the factors which should be considered. One such factor may be ethics and democratic values, which may encompass research ethics, human rights, power balances, and academic freedom. Intercultural understanding and dialogue as well as strengthening democratic values may for example be positive effects, while self-censorship or power asymmetry between partners may be risks.[12] Likewise, in the area of data management, for instance the collection, storage, sharing, and protection of research data and metadata, opportunities to create shared databases and analyses or access unique data sources may be regarded as positive values, while insufficient data protection or data misuse and privacy violations must be regarded as risks.

When factors have been identified it may be useful to use simple tools to visualise the distribution of risks and opportunities clearly. Matrices, for example, can be used to support further analysis. Below two simple matrices are proposed.

Effect/probability: Each risk or opportunity can be positioned in a matrix based on its probability (low/high) and expected effect (low/high). This approach helps set priorities and identify which issues require special attention. For example, an unlikely but very serious risk could call for strong protective measures, while a modest but probable benefit could still justify pursuing a collaboration. In this context probability refers to how likely it is that a certain effect, positive or negative, will occur. The matrix thus applies both to the probability that a risk materialises and to the likelihood that an opportunity is realised.

Effect/Probability	High probability	Low probability
High effect	Prioritised area. Investment/measures should be considered here.	Careful assessment is crucial. Requires strategic trade-offs.
Low effect	Consider refraining or low-priority management. Managed according to ordinary routines.	Consider refraining. Limited impact and uncertain result.

[12] Schroeder, D., et al. (2018). *Equitable Research Partnerships: A Global Code of Conduct to Counter Ethics Dumping.* Berlin: Springer

Overall risk/expected opportunity per category: The type of management required becomes clearer when each risk and opportunity is analysed across areas such as ethics, data management, legal frameworks, or academic quality. By mapping these factors in a matrix with *overall risk* on one axis and *expected opportunity on the other,* organisations and projects can better understand where to focus their efforts. This also includes the overall weighing between risks against value-creating effects, beyond simple pairwise comparisons. Cases in which recurrent conflicting goals have been identified may indicate a need for structural or organisational changes, such as clearly defined responsibilities, standardised processes, or training and capacity building. For instance, areas with low risk but high opportunity can often be managed with simplified routines, while an area with both high risk and high benefit require particularly close monitoring.

	High risk	Low risk
High opportunity for positive value creation	**Requires in-depth analysis and strong governance,** e.g., advanced technological collaboration in unsafe environments. **Measures:** Clear allocation of responsibilities, monitoring plan, escalation to leadership.	**Fast track with follow up,** e.g., long-term collaboration with a tried and tested partner. **Measures:** Thorough documentation and regular review.
Low opportunity for positive value creation	**Deprioritised or discouraged,** e.g., uncertain collaborations without clear scientific benefit. **Measures:** Consider refraining or redesigning the project.	**Appropriate for simplified management** **Measures:** Simplified analyses, less documentation.

Advanced technological collaborations with complex export controls and sensitive data may belong in the *high – risk/high – opportunity* quadrant: the potential benefits are significant, but the risks require in-depth analysis, caution regarding data access, external legal and security reviews, exit clauses, and predefined criteria for pausing, evaluating or reconfiguring the collaboration. An established EU collaboration with open data and common standards could be placed in the *low risk – high opportunity* box: here a fast track may be used with less documentation and annual review, so that the benefits can be realised without unnecessary administrative burden.

Likewise *high risk – little opportunity* usually means that one should wait or refrain from collaboration. A short assignment with uncertain scientific relevance, undesirable conditions (e.g. vetting of teaching or publications) or unclear intellectual property would be an example. In such a case, the project should either be redesigned, or the conditions should be regarded as a red line. *Low risk – little op-*

portunity activities have vague goals and a weak connection to strategic objectives, such as a courtesy seminar series. Simplified management is probably sufficient, or the aims and indicators of the projects must be honed before it commences.

Placement in the matrix is based on an overall assessment of risks and opportunities in relevant areas (ethics, data, legislations, quality, etc.), rather than on isolated conditions, unless there are red lines that risk being crossed (e.g. a tangible risk for the safety of test subjects, clear dual-use problems, conditions such as politically motivated vetting/censorship, or conflict with sanctions regulations). Such risks cannot be balanced by great opportunities; the project must be redesigned or abandoned.

Regardless of where a collaboration is positioned in the matrix, overcaution should be counteracted by briefly documenting the reasons for its placement as well as the risks of *not* collaborating. The matrix may also be used in parallel for several risk categories in the same project, which can provide a nuanced picture of where governance and resources are best deployed.

These tools are not intended to give simple, immediate answers. Instead, they provide a framework for reflection and dialogue, supporting decision making processes where relevant actors may weigh scientific, ethical and strategic perspectives.

Determining the detail and depth of such an analysis involves balancing the need for knowledge with the effort required. It is reasonable for the decision-making body, and actor responsible for managing risk, to determine how comprehensive an analysis is needed in each individual case. Tools for risk and opportunity analysis should therefore be designed so that they can be used even when a relatively high level of detail is necessary. However, this does not mean that this level of detail is always required.

In this context it is important to emphasise that risk and opportunity assessments cannot aim to provide complete information or documentation. Their aim should be to provide *sufficient* documentation to support sound and responsible decisions. Assessments must be proportionate, taking into consideration the complexity and potential consequences of the individual case. The organisation of assessments should focus on usability and actual needs, rather than on complete information.

In some cases, risk management measures taken to mitigate a considerable risk may have the unintended effect of limiting opportunities to attain the original objectives of the project. Measures could for instance restrict access to important

partners or limit the exchange of data or resources, which could reduce the potential of the project. Complex trade-offs are therefore required: the scope and character of risk management must be assessed in relation to the value-creating effects the project is expected to generate. In such cases it may be necessary to either reformulate the aims of the project, explore alternative forms of collaboration, or reassess the project's overall feasibility.

Typically, a combination of factors determines whether a collaboration succeeds or becomes problematic. A collaboration with certain ethical risks but low geopolitical risks may for example be assessed as feasible. Yet if these risks are combined with high complexity in data management and weak governance the overall risk may increase disproportionately. Similarly, several small opportunities can combine to create strategically important advantage, for instance if they enhance research quality, external funding, and student mobility.

Time, irreversibility, and strategic resilience

Some collaborations create long-term, mutual dependencies and may be difficult to terminate without incurring significant costs, not only financially, but also through lost networks, diminished academic standing, reduced access to infrastructure or data, or damage to personal relations. An analysis should therefore also consider how easy it would be to withdraw or redirect a collaboration if circumstances change. An activity with moderate risk but high irreversibility requires more care than a project that can quickly change course.

Risks and opportunities do not necessarily materialise at the same time.[13] Some risks may be acute and require immediate measures, while many of the value-creating effects of an international collaboration are long term and develop over time, sometimes only after several years. A balanced analysis should therefore include a reflection on the time profiles of various risks and opportunities. Which effects are immediately evident, and which are based on assumptions about future developments, such as networks, academic reputation, policy influence, or geopolitical trends? Such a temporal categorisation also helps to make visible which effects depend on continued investment or strategic resilience.

When a collaboration involves both high risks and great opportunities, particularly well-considered decisions are required. Some projects present significant opportunities, but with complex or uncertain – e.g. legal, ethical, or political – risks. In such cases one needs to consider what is at stake. What happens if the collaboration does not take place? Are there other ways of achieving the same goals?

[13] Nilson F., de Goër de Herve M., (2023) Exploring the transfer of risks, *Safety Science*, Volume 166, 2023,

And what level of resources is required to manage the risks reasonably?

It may also be prudent to consider how difficult or easy it would be to terminate the collaboration if anything changes.[14] Sometimes it may be appropriate to take such projects to a higher decision-making level in the organisation and to ensure that they are particularly closely monitored. A clear plan for monitoring and, if needed, terminating the collaboration may be crucial.

Shifting risks

An often-overlooked aspect of risk assessments is that risk mitigation measures may themselves create new risks for other actors or at other points in time. When a higher education institution decides to terminate or limit a collaboration due to security considerations this may have unintended consequences that extend beyond the academic sphere. For example, cancelling a research collaboration in the field of medicine may for example increase the risk that patients lose access to new treatments. Risk management that aims to reduce the threat posed by a certain country may stigmatise all researchers, lecturers, and students from that country, which in turn undermines mutual trust and may damage research environments and quality.

Therefore, a thoughtful risk assessment should include reflection on which new risks that risk management measures might create, considering who may be affected, how and at what point in time. This underlines the importance of choosing proportionate measures and engaging in dialogue with involved parties on the consequences of different management options.

Student mobility and internationalisation of higher education

Student mobility and the internationalisation of higher education may require specific considerations. High-risk destinations may offer outbound students unique learning opportunities – for example access to specialised expertise, cultural immersion, or valuable language skills. Inbound mobility may give students important perspectives as well as networks benefitting both the mobile students and the students they meet at their higher education institution, while problems may arise with visas and residence permits, for instance.

Assessments need to be adapted to both the individual's situation and the mobility context. The higher education institution shoulders a particular responsibility to provide clear information, adequate support, and preventative measures,

[14] Leibniz Association (2021). *Risk management in international scientific cooperation – Points to consider.* Risk_management_in_international_scientific_cooperation.pdf

while students also are responsible for their own choices. Insurance coverage, legal protection, access to support structures, and feedback routines should be weighed against the academic and personal value that mobility may generate to facilitate proportionate, well-informed decisions.

Summary

– Ethics, data security, legislation, geopolitics, and academic quality are examples of areas where risks and opportunities should be mapped.
– Matrices that combine effects and probability provide a clear overview and support prioritisation and decision-making.
– The aim is to provide documentation that supports sound decision-making; completeness should not always be the goal. An analysis should be proportionate and practical.
– Risks and opportunities often manifest at different times. Long-term effects and the difficulty of withdrawing should be considered.
– Risk management may itself generate new risks for other actors.

3. Organisational support

Higher education institutions have different options for systematising and supporting risk and opportunity assessments. One option is to establish an advisory function at the higher education institution to review projects and collaborations that require further assessment. KTH Royal Institute of Technology has for instance created an Advisory Board for Responsible Internationalization (RAI), with representatives from across administration, research, and education, bringing different areas of expertise. Particularly difficult cases which RAI assesses may be escalated to a Governing Board for Responsible Internationalization (SAI), consisting of representatives from the university leadership. These groups for example consider issues regarding legislation and organisational reputation. Similarly, Lund University has a cross-faculty forum for responsible internationalisation.

Risk and opportunity assessments concern not only the activity itself, but also the organisation's capacity to manage them.[15] A collaboration that requires complex management of data or sensitive agreements may be feasible if the higher education institution has access to the necessary routines and infrastructure for information security as well as legal and ethical expertise, but may be inappropriate if such resources are lacking. It is therefore important to consider the in-

[15] LERU (League of European Research Universities) (2023). *Managing and governing risks in international university collaboration*. LERU News (16 May 2023).

ternal capacity to manage, govern, and monitor international collaborations in the analysis. This capacity may also need to be gradually developed.

If the parties know each other well before commencing a collaboration, it may be valuable to obtain external perspectives – for example from researchers with similar experience, subject specialists with contextual knowledge, or experts from other sectors. The aim is not to influence the scientific contents, but rather to provide broader basis for understanding of the conditions of cooperation, possible effects, and any risks. An external eye may also help to identify possible innovations, policy relevance, or other effects. This may for example be valuable in situations where internal assessments risk being characterised by narrow perspectives, for example as a result of long-term collaboration or strong personal networks. It is important that this is initiated by the parties themselves, but higher education institutions can support the process.

A greater focus on opportunities means that researchers and higher education institutions ask: *What can be achieved?* However, this must be accompanied by the question: *What risks need to be mitigated?* Together these inquiries support a balanced approach that helps cultivate a culture in which internationalisation is regarded as a means for creating long-term quality and relevance, pursued responsibly.

Summary

– Systematising and supporting the weighing of opportunities and risk may take many forms.
– Higher education institutions may establish advisory groups, create fora for dialogue, or build capacity through training for researchers, administrators and academic leaders. Higher education institutions and other organisations may also embark on joint initiatives in this area.
– A risk and opportunity assessment does not only concern the activity itself, but also organisational capacity to manage it. One way of providing support in this area is by formalising the view on expected effects and obtaining a common understanding of risks.

STINT, The Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education, was set up by the Swedish Government in 1994 with the mission to internationalise Swedish higher education and research.

STINT promotes knowledge and competence development within internationalisation and invests in internationalisation projects proposed by researchers, educators and leaderships at Swedish universities.

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