

Workshop on Transatlantic Degree Programs, Chicago, June 17, 2006
Sheila Embleton, York University, Toronto

When I was first invited to participate in this workshop in Chicago, I had no idea I'd be standing here in the Kellogg School of Management – particularly appropriate, as the first joint degree between a Canadian and a US institution was the joint executive MBA between York's Schulich School of Business and Northwestern's Kellogg School of Management. Joint degree following 18 months of very intensive study at both institutions.

Comment on Assumptions:

- definitions: joint degree: students graduate with a single credential jointly awarded by two institutions; double degree: students graduate with two separate credentials from two institutions. In practical terms, joint degree is one piece of paper with 2 logos and the signatures of 2 presidents; dual degree is two pieces of paper.
- there appears to be an underlying assumption in the program for this workshop that joint and double degrees, rather than other kinds of initiatives like exchanges, are the way to go in internationalization, but it is not clear why; hope there will be time to explore that assumption in follow-up discussion

Canadian Postsecondary Context:

- in Canada, unlike some other countries, education is not a federal matter and there is little if any leadership at the national level regarding postsecondary education; educational structures, policies and funding are all within provincial jurisdictions, so there are variations across the provinces – this complexity means it is not always easy to develop transfer arrangements and partnerships among institutions even within Canada, let alone on an international system-to-system basis
- also little or no funding to encourage or support international linkages at either federal or provincial government level, at least in Ontario, though there have been some recent signs in Ontario of increased interest in international aspects of postsecondary education and a more strategic approach, as part of an overall effort to develop social, cultural and economic links, especially with China and India
- kinds of postsecondary educational institutions (e.g., universities, colleges, university colleges, CEGEPs, etc.) and their inter-relationships vary from province to province (note: the CEGEPs, which exist only in Quebec, do not correspond exactly to any institutions in Europe, so they face particular problems in developing collaborations)
- there is no national postsecondary education policy and no national transfer policy; the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada (CMEC) has tried without much success to develop a more “harmonized” transfer system, though students can transfer quite readily between accredited universities in different provinces
- Canadian universities strongly protect their autonomy and have resisted attempts at government regulation/articulation and measurement and regulation of standards, performance measures, rankings, etc.
- all of this means any development of links with international universities on a coordinated national basis is unlikely; York and the other Canadian universities remain open to the development of partnerships, but it seems likely they will continue to develop individual institution-to-institution links meeting their own needs and those of their students

- note recent federal change which may encourage international students to take advantage of opportunities to study in Canada: international students are now permitted to work outside the university
- UNESCO report, 2006: North America accounts for just 3% of the global total of mobile students, with 41,000 from the US and 39,000 from Canada (and given the roughly 10:1 proportion of the populations, the Canadian figure is far higher than the US figure). Students from the US are the least likely to study abroad, with the world's lowest outbound mobility ratio (0.2%), compared to 3% of Canadian students. The US is the first destination for Canadian mobile students, followed by the UK and Australia. Mobile students from the US go to the UK and then Canada. This highlights the effects of language and perhaps common history/culture in selecting a host country. (Canadian students studying abroad in 2004: US – 27,017, UK - 3890, Australia - 3100, France - 1267, Germany - 556)

The York University Internationalization Context:

- York has set an objective to be a leader in Canada in international activities and specifically to offer opportunities for international experience to all our students in order to enrich and broaden their educational experience and prepare them for global citizenship; most other Canadian universities also have international objectives and are developing international links to a greater or lesser extent
- at York we have taken a strategic and multi-faceted approach to internationalization including:
 - o individual courses: language instruction and cultural/historical studies
 - o degree programs: iBBA, iMBA, iBSc, iBA; interdisciplinary programs on countries/regions and international themes
 - o exchange agreements and study abroad opportunities
 - o research collaborations
 - o international internships
 - o international floors in residence

The Role of Europe/Germany:

- York, like most Canadian universities, initially focussed its international attention on Europe; we have thriving exchange programs and other collaborations in many European countries, and Europe remains the region with the largest number of partnerships; it is likely fair to say that none of the Canadian universities have systematically pursued joint or double degrees with European or other international institutions
- an important coordinated effort is the Ontario/Baden-Württemberg exchange program (administratively housed at York), which currently involves a consortium of 15 Ontario universities and 9 universities in the Baden-Württemberg region of Germany; over its 15 years of operation, 1500 students have participated (50 students in each direction each year) – it provides an excellent model for developing and promoting partnerships with European universities and could be applied more broadly – students earn degrees from their home universities only
- there is a similar agreement between Ontario universities and those in the Rhône-Alpes region of France (also 50 students in each direction each year)
- these agreements reflect the significance attached by Ontario universities to partnerships with Germany and France and our confidence in the quality of the programs offered

- recently, Canadian universities (and governments) have increasingly turned their attention to development of links with institutions in Asia, in particular China and Japan, as well as India, and in South America, particularly Brazil

Turning specifically to joint and double degrees:

- not much systematic information available about joint and double degree initiatives involving Canadian and international universities: AUCC (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada) does not have such information but believes activity in this area to be increasing; they will be conducting a survey in the fall which should capture some of this information

Examples at York and Elsewhere:

- although we have many exchange agreements, we have a very limited number of joint and double degrees developed under several different models, both within and beyond Canada:
 - o programs with Ontario CAATs [Colleagues of Applied Arts and Technology] (allow students to combine theoretical study at the university with more applied focus of CAATs): students may earn a York degree and CAAT diploma through study at two institutions (e.g., communication arts programs with Seneca and Centennial Colleges); normally takes the equivalent of an extra year beyond the degree to complete the two programs; students can earn a joint Honours BDes (Bachelor of Design) from York and Sheridan College in four years; there are also collaborative Nursing programs with Seneca and Georgian Colleges (essentially transfer credit agreements; students earn a York Honours BScN after two years at the College and two years at York)
 - o programs with other Ontario universities: two graduate programs: MA and PhD joint degree programs in Communication and Culture with Ryerson, which combine the strengths of the two institutions; Joint Collaborative PhD in Ancient Greek and Roman History with University of Toronto (combines resources of two institutions to offer a program neither could offer individually)
 - o Osgoode-NYU LLB/JD program: students earn two degrees (York LLB and New York University JD) after four years of study; another similar program to offer an LLB/LLM is in development with NYU
 - o of most direct interest to this group: International Dual Degree Program in Mathematics and Statistics at York and L'Aquila University in Italy: the program is designed so that students earn degrees from both institutions (they spend one year at the partner institution) without additional courses
- there are similar arrangements in place at other Canadian universities for joint LLB/JD programs such as the one York offers, e.g., between the University of Ottawa and Michigan State University and the University of Ottawa and Washington College of Law (American University), between the University of Windsor and Mercy College Law School (Detroit, just a few minutes across the bridge, but still international!)
- other Canadian universities also offer joint degree programs with international institutions, e.g. Simon Fraser University in Vancouver has an innovative dual degree program in computer science with Zhejiang University in China; it is a cohort-based program over five years (first year at home university [very much language and culture based, with intensive language study in the summer between first and second years], second and third year at ZU, fourth and fifth year at SFU) which results in degrees from both institutions; funding/student support issues

- York as an institution is very open to collaborating with other institutions both locally/nationally and internationally, provided that the programs benefit our students and are of high quality
- we have had discussions with partners in Asia with regard to development of joint or double degrees, and our business school is well along in considering developing programs with Peking and Korea Universities
- however, our experience is that exchange programs with international partners of high quality are more attractive to our students than joint degree programs

Objectives of joint/double degrees/Obstacles: why there so few of them:

- joint or double degree programs offer students a level of engagement that goes beyond even exchange experiences (though they also usually require a higher level of commitment)
- joint or double degrees would appear to be most attractive and successful when there is “value added” associated with the achievement of the specific credential(s); for example, the JD/LLB programs qualify graduates to work in both the Canadian and US legal systems, and joint business programs prepare graduates to function smoothly in international business settings
- programs need to complement, not simply duplicate, each other, or there is no point to them, as seen through student eyes and pocketbooks
- for students working in the sciences, particularly at the PhD level, there is considerable attraction and benefit in being able to work with scholars, or in labs, at leading international institutions and having this experience formally recognized; e.g. a PhD candidate in Psychology/vision research from York earned a PhD from both York and Lyon by completing the requirements for the York degree, while doing some of the research at Lyon – this was arranged on an ad hoc basis to suit the student’s particular needs – this raises the question of whether there is a need for a general policy statement setting out a framework to permit and govern these kinds of “one-off” arrangements meeting individual needs and/or resulting from individual contacts, in addition to more formalized programs
- there are a number of challenges associated with double and joint degree programs, some of which apply to exchange arrangements as well, for example:
 - o language barriers associated with studying internationally
 - o “culture shock”
 - o costs (tuition and living costs/loss of wages; tuition is a particular issue for students coming to Canada from European institutions since they are charged foreign student fees here if they are proceeding to a York degree)
 - o family and work commitments
 - o concerns about quality and standards of partner programs
 - o double/joint degrees frequently add an extra year of study (whereas exchanges do not usually do so); e.g. SFU – Zhejiang program referred to earlier; length makes a difference, especially with our tuition costs, even in Canada which is a lot cheaper than the US
 - o bureaucracy; meshing of different jurisdictions
 - o apprehension about spending an extended period abroad: what if it doesn’t work out?
 - o how to draw together the components of two programs into an integrated whole, so it really is a joint degree, not 2 disjointed bits glued together
 - o concerns relating to grading and recording of grades from courses at international institutions (e.g., grades may be negatively affected by the unfamiliar situation which in turn can impact ability to proceed to medical or law school)

- difficulty for institutions of identifying appropriate partners (location, quality of institutions, range of programs, “institutional fit”), and then there being enough students perennially who want exactly that combination
- a particular issue for developing joint or double Engineering programs relates to accreditation: requirements for accreditation of Canadian Engineering programs are governed by very stringent and accreditation becomes difficult if part of the program is taken elsewhere, either as a joint/double degree or on exchange; it’s already very difficult for accreditation if you have transfer students or anyone not directly from high school and who has studied only at your institution (i.e. no exchanges).

Alternatives to joint/double degrees:

- there is a strong case to be made for offering students international experience in terms of the enrichment of their educational experience and the development of an understanding of other cultures and of global issues; for institutions, there is the benefit of a diverse student body
- but it is not clear that other alternatives (besides joint/double degrees) would not work as well or better for many students, if the objective is to encourage them to gain international perspectives; students’ need and interests should be paramount and we need to offer them a range of flexible alternatives to gain international experience (within and outside degree programs), including:
 - courses and programs on international topics taken at the home institution
 - traditional exchange and study abroad arrangements
 - co-op placements in international settings (University of Windsor offers this opportunity and provides bursary assistance; University of Rhode Island’s International Engineering program includes international placements, including in Canada)
 - international internship program (York’s international summer internship program supplements degree studies and provides financial assistance; it includes placements with Engineers Without Borders)

Trends and Scope for Further Development:

- do not see scope for significant growth in development of joint and double degrees, except in cases where there are tangible reasons such as those associated with double law degrees; there is also a certain cachet associated with international business programs
- however, there appears to be strong and increasing interest (coming from both institutions themselves and now from government, as well as from students) in international opportunities generally, including (to a lesser extent) increased attention to the possibility of joint or double degrees
- need to provide students with a range of international opportunities that meet their goals and circumstances
- most students still prefer to go to institutions where classes are conducted in English; increased use of English as the language of instruction in European universities may lead to more student interest
- interest in Europe continues, but interest in other parts of the world (Asia, India, Australia) is growing
- students are being encouraged to take advantage of international opportunities as a way of developing new skills, opening new horizons and possibilities, and developing networks, as well as preparing for careers