

# Annex to the Guide on TNE Partnerships in Mexico: Facilitating International and UK TNE Partnerships

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# Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose of the Annex

Ecctis has been commissioned by the British Council in Mexico to deliver a consultancy project to facilitate Transnational Education (TNE) partnerships between Mexican and UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The primary objective of the project is to expand upon the British Council Mexico's TNE Guide on TNE Partnerships<sup>1</sup> by developing practical recommendations tailored for staff working in the international offices of Mexican HEIs. The guide was originally launched in June 2024 during a landmark event in collaboration with the National Association of Universities and Higher Education Institutions from Mexico (ANUIES).

The expanded guide, including this Annex, is designed to strengthen the British Council's strategic partnership with ANUIES and promote deeper collaborations in TNE in Mexico. The Annex aims to provide a review of the current TNE landscape in Mexico, highlighting opportunities for partnerships with UK HEIs as well as identifying the challenges. It also offers actionable recommendations to help Mexican HEIs develop institutional strategies for TNE and establish partnerships with UK institutions. By building on the foundation of the existing guide, the annex aims to deliver practical, supplementary guidance that supports the sustainable growth of TNE collaborations.

While the intention of this study is to primarily focus on TNE, the broader internationalisation strategies and activities in HE in the Mexican context are also considered where relevant, given that the process of internationalisation is often a precursor to establishing TNE partnerships.

To clarify, TNE refers to educational programmes delivered by institutions across national borders. It typically involves partnerships or direct delivery of courses by one institution in another country, allowing students to access international education without leaving their home country. Examples include joint degrees, dual degrees, branch campuses, and online programmes. Internationalisation by contrast is a broader concept that encompasses the integration of an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions, and delivery of higher education. It includes activities such as student and faculty exchanges, curriculum development with a global perspective and research collaborations. These activities can provide a foundation to support future TNE partnerships with international institutions.



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<sup>1</sup> British Council (2024) Guide on Transnational Partnerships in Mexico.

## 1.2 Structure of the Annex

This Annex comprises six sections. Section 1 introduces the Annex and the methodological approach. Section 2 includes a review of the literature around TNE and internationalisation in Mexico, identifying the key opportunities and challenges. Section 3 provides a summary of the stakeholder engagement findings, including in Section 3.1 the findings from a survey of HEIs in Mexico and Section 3.2 which includes the findings from a focus group with HEIs. Section 4 provides the actionable recommendations for developing strategies, initiating partnerships, adopting different TNE models and managing sustainable partnerships. Section 5 includes a concise summary of the findings of this study, while Section 6 lists the key sources used to complete the study.

Following the survey, a focus group engaged stakeholders directly to gather qualitative insights and highlight successful partnerships as well as key challenges and opportunities moving forward. These findings, combined with the document review, inform an overall analysis and appraisal of the current situation. The project builds on prior British Council initiatives to develop actionable guidance for international offices at Mexican HEIs, outlining key steps for establishing TNE opportunities and supporting institutional planning and decision-making.

## 1.3 Methodology Overview

This project has employed a structured approach combining desk-based analysis (the literature review), stakeholder engagement, and practical guidance development. It has included a review of existing policy documents and academic studies to establish an evidence-based understanding of the TNE and the broader internationalisation landscape in Mexico as an initial stage, including challenges and opportunities for collaboration with UK HEIs. A survey, designed by Ecctis and disseminated via ANUIES and other relevant stakeholder networks by the British Council, aimed to obtain feedback from a broad and representative mix of public and private universities as well as technological institutes and research centers. To ensure inclusivity, survey responses have been accepted in English or Spanish.



## 2. CURRENT LANDSCAPE OF INTERNATIONALISATION AND TNE IN MEXICO

### 2.1 Public Policy and Governmental Context

At a national policy level, the internationalisation of higher education (HE) and TNE in Mexico has been marked by a series of initiatives rather than a unified national strategy. While Mexico has engaged at a national level in internationalisation, with programmes such as bilateral agreements facilitating student exchanges, the scope and outcomes have been fairly limited nationwide. For example, in the 2021-2022 academic year, Mexico sent only 0.35% of its higher education students abroad, a comparatively low figure<sup>2</sup> compared to other LATAM countries such as Chile or Colombia<sup>3</sup>. The absence of a comprehensive national policy has also resulted in significant variations in participation across institutions.

Nonetheless, there have recently been efforts to address the need for internationalisation at a national policy level. In particular the Ley General de Educación Superior (General Law on Higher Education) includes provisions for internationalisation<sup>4</sup> and recognises its importance in achieving the general ambitions of growing the HE sector, facilitating quality and aligning HE with labour market needs. A new law enacted in 2021, it serves as a legislative framework specifically designed to regulate the higher education sector makes particular reference to the "solidary internationalisation" of education, science, and technology, promoting cooperation while respecting the sovereignty of each country. This includes goals such as student and faculty mobility, research collaboration, and TNE partnerships, yet falls short of providing comprehensive strategy and guidelines for implementation. Furthermore, the National Development Plan (PND), a strategic

instrument for planning across social, economic and political spheres across a six year timespan, recognises importance of improving the quality of education, of which internationalisation could potentially play a part, although there is no explicit mention of HE internationalisation and TNE within the plan<sup>5</sup>.

Government agencies such as the Secretariat of Public Education (SEP), specifically through its General Directorate of International Relations (DGRI) have played a role in promoting internationalisation by establishing bilateral and multilateral agreements with other countries and organisations. For example, as well as establishing student exchanges through the Erasmus plus programme, the SEP has also engaged with organisations such as the OEI (Organization of Ibero-American States) and UNESCO-IESALC in regional initiatives aimed at promoting educational cooperation, enhancing higher education quality, and promoting academic mobility and collaborative research. Moreover, the Mexico-France programmes (MEXFITEC and MEXPROTEC) have been beneficial for specialised areas such as engineering and technical education, supported by the General Directorate of University and Intercultural Higher Education (DGESUI) Success has been variable again due to financial constraints and limited by the subject specificity of some of these programmes (MEXFITEC for instance), as well as potentially by a lack of overarching policy or coordinated approach at national level for engaging in bilateral partnerships<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Comparatively, Colombia's outbound mobility rate was approximately 1.5% in 2017, according to UNESCO data. Specific figures for Chile are not readily available in the provided sources.

<sup>3</sup> ANUIES (2024) 'Colaboración y alianzas estratégicas', in Compromiso común por el futuro de la educación superior mexicana. Trazando una ruta a 2030. Ciudad de México, México: ANUIES, pp. 98–106.

<sup>4</sup> ANUIES (2024) 'Colaboración y alianzas estratégicas', in Compromiso común por el futuro de la educación superior mexicana. Trazando una ruta a 2030. Ciudad de México, México: ANUIES, pp. 98–106.

<sup>5</sup> INILAT (2022) 'Internacionalización de la educación superior en México', in Análisis de políticas públicas para la internacionalización de la educación superior en América Latina. México: AMPEI, pp. 84–104.

<sup>6</sup> Gácel-Ávila, J. (ed.) (2018) La dimensión de la educación superior en América Latina y el Caribe. RIESAL, UDG.

In addition, an important element of public policy facilitating internationalisation in Mexico has been the National Humanities, Science and Technology Council (CONAHCYT), a government agency which plays a key role in promoting research partnerships between Mexican universities and international institutions. The work of CONAHCYT is underpinned by the Law on Humanities, Science and Technology (LHCyT) which aims to promote technological development and international cooperation in the field. Through scholarships and research funding, CONAHCYT has enabled Mexican research scholars to engage in global academic networks, thereby strengthening the international profile of Mexican HEIs<sup>7</sup>. However, while the LHCyT provides a framework for support, institutions have reportedly struggled with limited resources, which impedes their ability to fully engage in international collaborations, even in areas where CONAHCYT has provided support.<sup>8</sup>

Other specific government agencies also play a supporting role in internationalisation and TNE partnerships, particularly in regard to promoting international relations (the Secretariat of Foreign Relations) more broadly and, importantly in the recognition of overseas qualifications (SEP). The SEP, through the General Directorate of Accreditation, Incorporation, and Validation (DGAIR) is responsible for validating international qualifications through the National System of Credits, Revalidation, and Equivalency (SINCRE). Furthermore, the regulatory environment in Mexico supports international collaboration through agreements for the mutual recognition of qualifications, which facilitates the creation of dual degrees and streamlines the recognition of international qualifications. Notably, the recognition process includes professional qualifications without requiring submission to professional bodies, further facilitating international partnerships in higher education<sup>9</sup>. While acknowledging the value of mutual recognition, recent British Council research<sup>10</sup> shows there is still a lack of awareness in

the HE sector and perceived barriers such as slow and bureaucratic recognition processes impacting the success of dual and joint degree programmes and TNE where recognition is of particular importance.

Internationalisation has also been facilitated at a national level in Mexico through national non-governmental associations with direct links to HEIs. One of the key bodies steering internationalisation efforts include the Association of Universities and Higher Education Institutions (ANUIES), which collaborates closely with federal and state-level governments to promote global partnerships and TNE initiatives. ANUIES has advocated for policy reforms that facilitate international collaboration, mobility, and partnerships between Mexican and foreign institutions<sup>11</sup>. The Association's "Vision 2030" strategy explicitly encourages Mexican universities to engage in joint degrees, academic exchanges, and the establishment of branch campuses abroad<sup>12</sup>. Other key aspects include supporting international mobility for students and staff, integrating international perspectives in curricula, and fostering global collaboration in research projects. In addition to ANUIES, the Mexican Association for International Education (AMPEI) is a non-profit association focused on enhancing the quality of Mexican higher education through internationalisation and international cooperation.

<sup>7</sup> Fernández, C.F. and Velázquez, M.A. (eds.) (2020) *La internacionalización de la universidad pública: retos y tendencias. Una visión desde la UNAM*. 1st edn. Available at: [https://www.unaminternacional.unam.mx/doc/dgeci/librola\\_internacionalizacion\\_de\\_la\\_universidad\\_publica.pdf](https://www.unaminternacional.unam.mx/doc/dgeci/librola_internacionalizacion_de_la_universidad_publica.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Fernández, C.F. and Velázquez, M.A. (eds.) (2020) *La internacionalización de la universidad pública: retos y tendencias. Una visión desde la UNAM*. 1st edn. Available at: [https://www.unaminternacional.unam.mx/doc/dgeci/librola\\_internacionalizacion\\_de\\_la\\_universidad\\_publica.pdf](https://www.unaminternacional.unam.mx/doc/dgeci/librola_internacionalizacion_de_la_universidad_publica.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> British Council (2024) "Brief Research Report – Globalising Higher Education: TNE Models and Regulatory Insights in Latin America".

<sup>10</sup> British Council (2024) "Brief Research Report – Globalising Higher Education: TNE Models and Regulatory Insights in Latin America".

<sup>11</sup> ANUIES (2024) 'Colaboración y alianzas estratégicas', in *Compromiso común por el futuro de la educación superior mexicana. Trazando una ruta a 2030*. Ciudad de México, México: ANUIES, pp. 98–106.

<sup>12</sup> ANUIES (2024) 'Colaboración y alianzas estratégicas', in *Compromiso común por el futuro de la educación superior mexicana. Trazando una ruta a 2030*. Ciudad de México, México: ANUIES, pp. 98–106.

In terms of factors impacting internationalisation policy recently, it is important to note that the COVID-19 Pandemic posed significant challenges particularly in terms of physical student mobility and international exchanges. However, the Pandemic also led to important policy reforms which have directly and indirectly facilitated internationalisation, for example policies were introduced to enhance virtual mobility and online education as viable alternatives to traditional educational models, which can be used effectively in TNE offerings. At a national level, the Secretariat of Public Education (SEP) played a role, in conjunction with ANUIES, promoted the rapid digital transformation of Mexican universities, supporting the development of virtual exchange programmes and online TNE models that would ensure the continuity of international collaborations during the pandemic<sup>13</sup>.

Having acknowledged some of national level policies and initiatives towards internationalisation including ANUIES in joint degrees and TNE, and CONAHCYT in STEM and research partnerships, it is important to emphasise the need for a coherent and defined national framework and approach to establishing global partnerships as well as aligning the overall HE regulatory environment towards one that is compatible with internationalisation. In particular, one should be developed that can incorporate key elements such as faculty development, curriculum integration, and infrastructure enhancement, which are often overlooked<sup>14</sup> as well as including a strategy for implementation. Given the extent of the variations stemming from fragmented policy development, there is also a general need to provide a more equitable approach across different types of institution and disciplines to ensure broader participation in TNE across the Mexican HE system. With regard to the regulatory environment of the HE system, ensuring systems in place for transparent recognition of international qualifications as well as quality assurance processes and standards at a national level would also facilitate internationalisation<sup>15</sup>.



<sup>13</sup> Castiello-Gutiérrez, S., Pantoja Aguilar, M.P., and Gutiérrez Jurado, C.E. (2022) *Internacionalización de la educación superior después de la COVID-19: Reflexiones y nuevas prácticas para tiempos distintos*. 1st edn. Puebla: Universidad Popular Autónoma del Estado de Puebla.

<sup>14</sup> INILAT (2022) 'Internacionalización de la educación superior en México', in *Análisis de políticas públicas para la internacionalización de la educación superior en América Latina*. México: AMPEI, pp. 84–104.

<sup>15</sup> INILAT (2022) 'Internacionalización de la educación superior en México', in *Análisis de políticas públicas para la internacionalización de la educación superior en América Latina*. México: AMPEI, pp. 84–104.

## 2.2 Institutional Landscape

Whilst a number of national agencies and associations support internationalisation in Mexico as we have seen, HEIs are considered to be the main drivers of internationalisation activities and their implementation. Mexico's HE system nonetheless exhibits significant diversity, which shapes the extent and nature of internationalisation efforts, particularly in relation to TNE provision. With around 3,900 HEIs serving close to 5 million students based on data from 2022<sup>16</sup>, the landscape is characterised by variation in resources, institutional missions, and capacity for engaging in international collaborations. Whilst HEIs are increasingly recognising the importance of internationalisation, the majority of TNE partnerships are concentrated in a small number of well-resourced institutions located in urban centres such as Mexico City and Guadalajara.

The institutional landscape in Mexico is divided between public and private HEIs, with public institutions enrolling approximately 65% of students, while private institutions account for 74% of the total number of HEIs<sup>17</sup>. Private universities, though generally smaller in size (recruiting on average 600 students), can be flexible and market-oriented, positioning themselves as key players in international partnerships, particularly those that align with global business and professional sectors. Many of these private institutions have reportedly been proactive in developing dual-degree programmes, student mobility initiatives, and international collaborations.

This variation in institutional focus influences the nature of TNE in the country. The larger public institutions, such as Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) and Tecnológico de Monterrey (ITESM), has been at the forefront in establishing international programmes, whilst smaller public universities face greater challenges in engaging with TNE due to limited financial resources, technology gaps, and administrative constraints. ITESM, in particular, has been a pioneer in establishing branch campuses abroad and offering dual degree programmes in partnership with European and North American universities. Some HEIs including ITESM and UNAM have also reportedly embraced online education as a means of delivering TNE, particularly in response to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Another key characteristic of Mexico's HE system is the focus on undergraduate education, with 85%<sup>18</sup> of the student population enrolled in Bachelor degree programmes. As a result, much of the internationalisation efforts in Mexican HEIs are geared towards undergraduate student mobility and exchange programmes, often at the expense of postgraduate education and research-driven internationalisation initiatives. While some leading institutions are involved in postgraduate internationalisation, such as joint research projects and PhD mobility programmes, these efforts remain limited to a small number of universities with the capacity to engage in research collaborations.

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<sup>16</sup> INILAT (2022) 'Internacionalización de la educación superior en México', in *Análisis de políticas públicas para la internacionalización de la educación superior en América Latina*. México: AMPEI, pp. 84–104.

<sup>17</sup> INILAT (2022) 'Internacionalización de la educación superior en México', in *Análisis de políticas públicas para la internacionalización de la educación superior en América Latina*. México: AMPEI, pp. 84–104.

<sup>18</sup> INILAT (2022) 'Internacionalización de la educación superior en México', in *Análisis de políticas públicas para la internacionalización de la educación superior en América Latina*. México: AMPEI, pp. 84–104.



The focus on undergraduate internationalisation also affects institutional priorities, with smaller HEIs, particularly those in the public sector, prioritising domestic provision and lacking the resources or expertise to participate in global academic networks. This imbalance in internationalisation strategies across the sector reflects broader challenges in ensuring equitable access to international education opportunities for all Mexican students, regardless of their institution's size or location.

Whilst acknowledging the challenges in establishing global TNE partnerships and, more broadly, exchanges, an emerging trend in the Mexican institutional landscape is the increasing focus on "internationalisation at home," whereby universities aim to embed global perspectives into their domestic curricula without necessarily requiring students to travel abroad. The Universidad de Colima<sup>19</sup>, for instance, has been implementing innovative strategies to internationalise its campus by promoting the inclusion of international students, virtual exchanges, and Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) programmes. Such initiatives provide students with intercultural experiences and exposure to global learning environments, even if they cannot physically study abroad. Moreover, COIL can serve as a foundation for building institutional partnerships, including TNE collaborations, as it facilitates connections that have the potential to evolve into more formal agreements, such as joint or dual-degree programmes.



<sup>19</sup> Hernandez, N.J.E. & Amador, F.G. (eds) (2020) Buenas prácticas de internacionalización en Casa: Experiencias en la Universidad de Colima. Universidad de Colima. Available at: [http://www.ucol.mx/content/publicacionesenlinea/adjuntos/Buenas-practicas-de-internacionalizacion-2\\_490.pdf](http://www.ucol.mx/content/publicacionesenlinea/adjuntos/Buenas-practicas-de-internacionalizacion-2_490.pdf)

## 2.3 Opportunities and Challenges – UK TNE

### Opportunities

Mexico's geographic proximity to the U.S. and Canada continues to present significant opportunities for cross-border educational partnerships. UK TNE meanwhile provides a valuable model for how these collaborations can support national development agendas. UK TNE has proven effective in countries like Malaysia and Singapore by rapidly expanding HE systems, aligning education with labour market needs, and meeting student demand where local capacity is insufficient. This is particularly relevant to Mexico's ambitions for expanding HE access, where distance and online learning, already present in UK programmes delivered in Mexico, can offer scalable, cost-effective solutions<sup>20</sup>.

Mexico's bilingual environment and established partnerships with English-speaking countries, such as the UK, create ideal conditions for offering dual-degree programmes and increasing access to underrepresented groups. British Council research highlights how UK TNE's flexible learning models, including online learning and in-country collaborations, have successfully expanded HE access for students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. This approach could help Mexico better serve its diverse student population while meeting increasing demand.

The rise of digital education following the COVID-19 Pandemic aligns with the OECD's observations on the growing diversity in Mexico's HE offerings. UK TNE's experience in providing distance and online learning, as well as in collaborative partnerships, demonstrates how such approaches can both improve the quality and diversity of HE and support Mexico's alignment of higher education with labour market needs. Evidence from other countries shows that UK TNE produces graduates more aligned with industry requirements<sup>21</sup>, which has been identified as critical for Mexico's economic development.

Mexico's growing research capacity and the potential for research-based partnerships can also benefit from international as well as UK TNE models. UK partnerships have shown significant contributions to institutional capacity-building, including staff development, teaching, and the exchange of pedagogical knowledge. UK TNE's role in fostering 'brain circulation', where faculty members benefit from exposure to new teaching and assessment methods, could be invaluable as Mexican universities strengthen their research and teaching infrastructures.

### Challenges

Financial and government support remain primary challenges for both internationalisation broadly and UK TNE in Mexico. Many Mexican HEIs, particularly those in rural or under-resourced regions, face significant financial constraints, limiting their ability to invest in the infrastructure and technology needed for TNE engagement. The 2015 Mexico-UK bilateral agreement on mutual recognition of qualifications could facilitate future collaboration, but its full impact will depend on its finalisation and the establishment of clear policy and regulatory frameworks for TNE.

Regulatory barriers and a lack of mutual understanding between the international and Mexican higher education systems also present challenges. Mexican universities face complex approval processes for launching joint degree programmes or establishing long-term collaborations. Accreditation differences between countries create further challenges in aligning qualifications. Moreover, overseas, including UK institutions may lack detailed knowledge of Mexico's complex higher education structure, including the roles of federal and state governments<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> British Council (2022) Environment for Transnational Education Partnerships and UK Qualifications: Challenges and Opportunities – Mexico and the UK

<sup>21</sup> British Council (2022) Environment for Transnational Education Partnerships and UK Qualifications: Challenges and Opportunities – Mexico and the UK

<sup>22</sup> British Council (2022) Environment for Transnational Education Partnerships and UK Qualifications: Challenges and Opportunities – Mexico and the UK

The digital divide remains a significant obstacle for both internationalisation and UK TNE. While leading Mexican universities have leveraged online learning platforms to expand TNE, many institutions, particularly those in rural or economically disadvantaged areas, lack the technological infrastructure to support virtual learning<sup>23</sup>. This disparity limits the ability of smaller institutions to engage in internationalisation and TNE initiatives, especially in a post-pandemic landscape where digital education is playing a more important role. The pandemic has reportedly exacerbated these inequalities<sup>24</sup>, making it even more difficult for under-resourced institutions to participate in global education efforts on an equal footing.

Language and cultural barriers are also critical issues for UK TNE in Mexico. While English proficiency is often required for faculty and students participating in TNE programmes, Mexican stakeholders have emphasised the need for reciprocity, suggesting that UK institutions should also make efforts to engage with the Spanish language. Addressing these linguistic and cultural challenges is essential for creating balanced, mutually beneficial partnerships, where both sides are equally invested in the collaboration<sup>25</sup>.

Faculty readiness is a critical challenge for both HE internationalisation in general and prospective UK TNE partnerships in Mexico. While institutions like UNAM and ITESM have faculty experienced in international collaboration, many smaller universities may not have extensive experience in global education methodologies. Faculty members at these institutions can also face heavy teaching and administrative loads, leaving limited time for the development of TNE programmes or participation in international research collaborations. In addition, from an administrative perspective, International

Offices (IOs), which typically play a central role in managing international partnerships, are often viewed as second-tier administrative functions in Mexican universities. This lower status, combined with high turnover rates among IO heads, hampers long-term internationalisation strategies, as these offices lack the influence and stability needed to foster sustained international engagement<sup>26</sup>. Strengthening both faculty readiness and the administrative structures that support internationalisation can be considered key to enhancing Mexico's capacity for successful TNE collaborations.

Economic and political uncertainty also plays a significant role in both general internationalisation and UK TNE. Changes in governmental priorities or reductions in public funding for education could severely impact the sustainability of TNE initiatives. While the Mexican government has been generally supportive of higher education internationalisation in recent years, economic downturns or changes in political leadership could result in reduced investment in these programmes, affecting their long-term viability<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> Castiello-Gutiérrez, S., Pantoja Aguilar, M.P., and Gutiérrez Jurado, C.E. (2022) *Internacionalización de la educación superior después de la COVID-19: Reflexiones y nuevas prácticas para tiempos distintos*. 1st edn. Puebla: Universidad Popular Autónoma del Estado de Puebla.

<sup>24</sup> Castiello-Gutiérrez, S., Pantoja Aguilar, M.P., and Gutiérrez Jurado, C.E. (2022) *Internacionalización de la educación superior después de la COVID-19: Reflexiones y nuevas prácticas para tiempos distintos*. 1st edn. Puebla: Universidad Popular Autónoma del Estado de Puebla.

<sup>25</sup> Lizárraga González, A.M. & Rodríguez Betanzos, A. (2023): *La universidad como espacio cultural para la paz*.

<sup>26</sup> Romero, C.C.I. (2020) *La internacionalización de la educación superior como herramienta de proyección global*. UNAM-Facultad de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales. Available at: <https://www2.politicas.unam.mx/sda/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Carla-Ivon-Romero-Cervantes1.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> Cabrero Mendoza, E. & Moreno, C.I. (2024): *El futuro de la política de educación superior en México: Los rezagos y las oportunidades*.

## 3. SUMMARY OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

### 3.1 Survey Insights

A total number of 76 institutions responded to the survey, of those 67% were public universities, 16% private universities, 12% technological institutes and 4% were research centers.

#### 3.1.1 Internationalisation and Existing TNE Activities

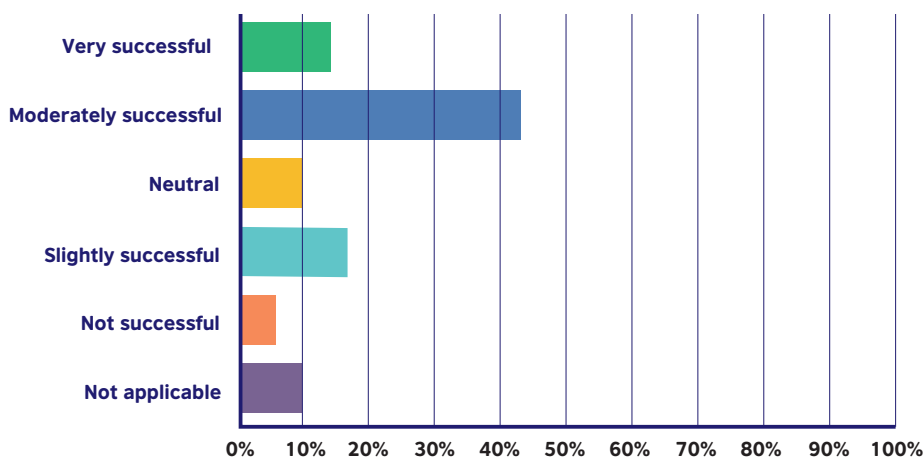
##### Overall Trends

An encouraging 89% of the institutions who responded (in the ANUIES network) reported that they either already engage in TNE activities or have clear plans for internationalisation in the near future. Few partnerships between Mexican and UK institutions were explicitly mentioned in the responses. Two institutions made reference to student exchange and faculty exchange programmes with UK institutions, but did not elaborate on these. The survey did however highlight the widespread interest in expanding global connections, including with the UK.

The types and extent of involvement in internationalisation activities and TNE vary across institutions. Among those engaged in internationalisation activities, the most common activities include **student exchange programmes, faculty exchanges, joint/dual degree programmes, and research collaborations.** Interestingly, despite the diversity in TNE activities, joint/dual degree programmes were particularly highlighted across responses as a key focus area for development. A public university highlighted the success of its dual degree programmes, and expressed a desire to expand this further, while a private university aims to “*increase the offer of double degree programmes and professional practicum opportunities.*”

The survey also asked respondents to rate the success of their current partnerships.

Figure 1: How would you rate the overall success of your current TNE partnerships?



As can be seen above, 14% of institutions rated their partnerships as “**very successful**”, while 44% rated them as “**moderately successful**”. Other institutions (approximately 27%) rated their partnerships as only “**slightly successful**” or felt that they had “neutral” outcomes. For instance, a public university reported “*moderate success with existing partnerships, particularly in student exchanges.*”

## Trends by Institution Type

Public universities reported success overall in their internationalisation initiatives and (where applicable) TNE partnerships, with 13% rating them as very successful and **54%** rating their efforts as **moderately successful**. Private universities generally reported reasonable success rates with around 17% reporting very successful, 33% describing their efforts as **moderately successful** and the remaining respondents reporting slight success, neutral or unsuccessful outcomes. In contrast, technological institutes who responded to the survey reportedly experienced less success, with half of respondents not engaging in TNE and the other half reporting variable outcomes. This was reportedly due to a focus on technical exchanges as part of broader internationalisation initiatives and limited funding available for this type of partnership.

### 3.1.2 Key Challenges Faced by Mexican HEIs

The survey responses made it clear that while many Mexican institutions are keen to develop or expand their internationalisation efforts including TNE partnerships, they face significant challenges in doing so. These challenges can be grouped into four key areas:

- **Identifying Suitable Partners:** A number of the respondents reported difficulty in finding suitable UK partners as a major barrier. A public university stated that more “*networking opportunities with UK institutions*” were needed to overcome this obstacle.
  - **Legal and Regulatory Barriers:** A proportion of survey respondents also reported facing legal and regulatory challenges in maintaining or establishing international partnerships. A technological institute highlighted “*language and visa issues, as well as the bureaucracy around agreements, make it difficult to establish partnerships,*” reflecting a common challenge in navigating administrative requirements for partnership formalisation.
- Other more specific challenges relate to logistic and practical matters particularly at public institutions. One institution highlighted the lack of available human resources and time required to initiate partnerships. Furthermore, there is no centralised platform or standardised process for institutions to follow to guide the process of initiating, coordinating and establishing partnerships.
- **Financial Constraints:** Financial limitations were highlighted as the primary barrier to successful internationalisation initiatives. The issue of financial sustainability also extends to institutions that are struggling to find funds to initiate or maintain partnerships, including TNE.
  - **Language Barriers:** Numerous respondents identified language barriers as a significant challenge. For many, the ability to communicate effectively with UK institutions, and to prepare students and staff to work in English-speaking environments, poses difficulties. A technological institute highlighted this issue, noting that “*language and visa issues, as well as the bureaucracy around agreements, make it difficult to establish partnerships.*”

### 3.1.3 Opportunities for Growth and Strategic Partnerships

Notwithstanding these challenges, institutions frequently expressed optimism about future opportunities for expanding their wider internationalisation initiatives and TNE partnerships with UK institutions. The survey identified several key areas of growth:

#### Internationalisation Initiatives:

- **Research Collaborations:** Research-driven partnerships also stand out as a priority. Most institutions highlighted research as a key area for future collaboration. A public university specifically mentioned interest in “*collaboration on research and innovation projects*,” while a technological institute stressed their goal of increasing research collaborations.
- **Student and Faculty Exchanges:** Exchange programmes remain a core component of many institutions’ international strategies. A technological institute shared their intention to “*arrange student mobility at prestigious foreign universities for all our educational programmes*.” Similarly, a private university hopes to “*consolidate international alliances and generate new ones*” to support both student and faculty exchanges.

#### TNE:

- **Joint Degree Programmes:** A number of institutions expressed interest in expanding joint/dual degree programmes. For example, a private university mentioned their goal to “*establish dual/joint programmes in the form of the 3+1 model*” which would be compatible with the UK education system and European models, potentially facilitating partnerships. Similarly, another private university plans to increase their offerings of joint degrees over the next few years.

### Findings by Institution Type

Public universities cited a focus on wider internationalisation initiatives such as research partnerships, enhancing global reputation and increasing access to international experiences, particularly for students from diverse backgrounds. Private universities, as with public universities, report a strong focus on expanding TNE activities making specific reference to dual degree programmes. Furthermore, strategic alliances with high-profile international institutions to enhance their competitiveness are being prioritised as one respondent noted, “*We are working to expand our joint degree offerings and establish partnerships with well-regarded international institutions*”. Technological institutes highlighted a focus on faculty exchanges and technology transfer with less reference to TNE activities such as dual and joint degrees. One technological institute shared their goal to “*develop practical research projects and technology transfer with international partners*.”

### 3.1.4 The Role of External Organisations: Support Needed

To facilitate internationalisation, most institutions expressed a need for external support, particularly from organisations such as the British Council. The following forms of support were most frequently requested:

- **Financial Assistance:** The need for financial support was strongly expressed, with a majority of respondents calling for funding opportunities to support their internationalisation goals. Creating dedicated funding programmes, including scholarships, would reportedly alleviate many of the financial barriers identified.
- **Networking Opportunities:** Around significant number of institutions also noted the importance of networking events to help them identify and connect with UK partners. A private university mentioned that “*networking opportunities with UK institutions are crucial for building these partnerships*.”

- **Language Training Programmes:** Offering language training programmes for students and staff could help mitigate the communication challenges highlighted by numerous respondents.
- **Workshops and Training:** Some institutions expressed the need for capacity-building support, such as workshops on the legal and regulatory as well as operational aspects of internationalisation, including TNE. This would help institutions navigate the complexities of formalising and sustaining international partnerships.
- **Focus on Joint Research and Innovation:** Joint research initiatives present an ideal growth opportunity. This was identified as a key area where UK institutions could play a significant role, particularly in STEM fields.
- **Regulatory Support:** Guidance on navigating the legal and regulatory aspects of international partnerships would potentially simplify the process for many institutions.

### 3.2 Focus Group Insights

The focus group held on October 24, 2024, brought together representatives from three Mexican HEIs as well as two representatives from UK institutions involved in internationalisation and TNE to discuss the landscape of TNE in Mexico. This summary outlines the main themes that emerged in relation to internationalisation activities and potential TNE partnerships between Mexico and the UK.

The participant institutions in the focus group offer a variety of internationalisation initiatives, including student exchange programmes, and virtual learning initiatives such as Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) and mirror classes as well as TNE partnerships such as dual-degree partnerships (e.g. with universities in France and the U.S.). A private university participating also provide international internships and practicum opportunities, while others use virtual and hybrid models to overcome

financial and logistical barriers. These activities reflect a focus on expanding international collaboration despite challenges related to funding and alignment with international institutions.

#### Theme 1: Benefits of TNE and Internationalisation

The focus group highlighted several key benefits of internationalisation and TNE, particularly its role in enhancing students' global competitiveness by developing intercultural skills and preparing them for international job markets. Institutions also noted that internationalisation fosters cross-border collaboration, especially in research, which can enhance the academic profile of Mexican universities. Collaborating with UK institutions was mentioned as offering opportunities for alignment with professional accreditation standards, particularly in STEM fields, thus has the potential to open pathways to international careers.

#### Theme 2: Lack of a National Strategy on Internationalisation

One of the primary challenges identified by participants was the absence of a coherent national strategy for internationalisation in Mexico. Unlike other countries with structured government support, Mexico lacks a unified approach to fostering internationalisation, and in particular TNE initiatives. The federal government's focus remains more on local issues rather than creating policies that promote international collaboration or facilitate global education programmes. Participants highlighted that while networks and agencies such as ANUIES support internationalisation, these efforts are driven by individual institutions rather than a national framework.

### Theme 3: Fragmented Funding Structures

Funding was consistently mentioned as a significant barrier to advancing internationalisation and TNE. The current landscape is characterised by pockets of funding without a clear structure, making it difficult for institutions to sustain international programmes. For example, a public university participating in the focus group relies on limited government scholarships, while a private university reportedly has to navigate expensive student exchange programmes with minimal external support.

### Theme 4: Flexibility of Private Universities in TNE

The private university participating highlighted their flexibility in implementing TNE initiatives. They have been able to engage in dual-degree programmes and, more broadly in terms of internationalisation activities, student exchange partnerships with greater ease, particularly in subjects such as business. However, this flexibility is tempered by the challenges of gaining recognition from UK institutions, which reportedly may question the size of smaller Mexican universities as well as the alignment of standards and curricula.

### Theme 5: Barriers to Effective Collaboration

A major challenge to international partnerships is the lack of mutual understanding between Mexican and international HEIs, particularly with UK institutions. Smaller Mexican institutions reportedly may find it difficult to meet the standards or reputational expectations of their UK counterparts. This has, according to participants of the focus group, resulted in rejections during partnership negotiations, with UK institutions expressing concerns about student interest and institutional alignment. Additionally, logistical challenges such as long response times during partnership negotiations and differences in curriculum alignment also reportedly hinder the process of collaboration.

### Theme 6: Faculty Readiness, Administrative Capacity and Language Proficiency for TNE

Faculty readiness remains a critical issue for Mexican HEIs, particularly smaller institutions. While larger universities such as UNAM and ITESM have faculty experienced in international collaborations, many smaller institutions lack this exposure. Heavy teaching and administrative loads limit faculty engagement in developing internationalisation activities and TNE programmes.

Language readiness emerged as a core challenge for Mexican institutions involved in TNE. Participants highlighted that many students and faculty possess only basic English proficiency, typically B1, which falls short of the academic English skills needed for success in English-speaking environments. The lack of continuity between secondary and undergraduate language programmes exacerbates this issue, resulting in students who may meet minimum language requirements but lack the specialised vocabulary and academic comprehension needed for international study or TNE programmes. Institutions suggested embedding English training within academic courses and creating preparatory programmes focused on discipline-specific language skills to better prepare students and faculty. Additionally, collaborative programmes offering affordable English training, potentially supported by UK partners, were seen as potential solutions.

### Theme 7: Opportunities for Growth and Strategic Partnerships

Despite these challenges, participants identified several opportunities for growth in UK-Mexico TNE collaborations. Business programmes and STEM fields were highlighted as promising areas for dual degrees and joint research initiatives. The focus on professional accreditation, such as engineering programmes that align with UK standards, offers a potential pathway and opportunity for Mexican institutions to enhance their global competitiveness.



## 4. PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MEXICAN HEIS

### 4.1 Developing Institutional TNE Strategies

#### 1. Define Institutional TNE Goals Linked to Strategic Priorities

- Identify core objectives for TNE from the outset: Consider starting by setting TNE goals that align with the institution's mission and strengths, such as increasing research collaboration, enhancing employability, or expanding academic offerings.
- Align with broader educational and economic goals: Use general national priorities, such as labour market needs, to inform TNE objectives. Alignment will enable a close connection between TNE objectives and institutional and national development needs.
- Identify sought-after accreditations that require 'internationalisation' to support the development of TNE projects. There could be scope for Mexican institutions to obtain the same accreditation as target UK institutions, as a starting point from which to build joint-TNE projects, such as those leading to dual degrees.

#### 2. Map Out Potential TNE Activities and Focus on Effective Models

- Select the most appropriate TNE Models: Evaluate the suitability of different TNE models such as those referenced in the British Council TNE framework report, and select the most applicable for the institution in question. These include international branch campus, franchise, validation, joint degree programme, dual degree programme and distance/online learning. Consider which of these models best suit the institution's resources and objectives.
- Consider initiating partnerships with activities that are scalable and require fewer resources before advancing to more complex TNE models such as exchange programmes and dual degrees.

- Focus on fields in high demand: Prioritise TNE in areas with high student and industry demand, particularly where international accreditation can strengthen job prospects for graduates.

#### 3. Build a Cross-Functional Team to Lead TNE Initiatives

- Establish a TNE team: Establish a team comprising international office representatives, academic staff, and administrators to manage TNE planning and execution. This group will intend to ensure TNE goals are harmonised and consistent across departments.
- Train and prepare faculty: Provide faculty with resources and training on intercultural communication and international collaboration, building the skills needed for teaching and working within TNE frameworks.
- Establish an effective leadership function: Ensure a TNE team is set up with an ambassador, or leader in place for each project, ideally one who is not part of the academic faculty. This is to ensure continuity should faculty staff changes take place.

#### 4. Develop Partnerships with Targeted International Institutions

- Identify strategic partners based on complementary strengths: Choose partners that align with the institution's academic focus and goals. For example, institutions strong in STEM research could partner with UK universities with a similar emphasis on STEM research or innovation.
- Employ online and hybrid models for greater access: Work with partners experienced in online or hybrid TNE to create flexible, scalable offerings that reach students across regions with limited infrastructure.

## 5. Secure and Sustain Funding for TNE Programmes

- Pursue co-funding opportunities: Collaborate with private sector partners, local industry, or government agencies (e.g., CONAHCYT) to support TNE programmes, particularly those linked to skill development in high demand fields.
- Develop internal funding mechanisms: Establish institutional scholarships or small grants to help students and faculty participate in internationalisation activities.

## 6. Enhance Language and Cultural Preparation to Support TNE Partnerships

- Integrate targeted English training: Consider setting up and running English courses focused on technical language and intercultural competencies, particularly for disciplines engaged in TNE, to improve readiness for English-speaking environments.
- Create cultural orientation programmes with international partners: Design virtual preparatory and cultural workshops in partnership with international institutions to ease transitions and build intercultural understanding.

## 7. Set Clear Evaluation Metrics and Conduct Regular Reviews

- Define success metrics: Establish key performance indicators (KPIs) such as student satisfaction, research outputs, and employability rates to assess TNE's impact.
- Adapt based on regular feedback: Collect feedback from students, faculty, and partners to refine TNE programmes continuously, ensuring they remain aligned with institutional goals and evolving educational needs.

## 4.2 Initiating Partnerships with UK HEIs

### 1. Identify Suitable UK Institutions

#### 1.1 Conduct a Needs and Compatibility Assessment:

- Evaluate the institution's TNE goals (e.g. dual degrees) and identify compatible UK institutions based on factors such as programme alignment, research strengths, and internationalisation track records.
- Use online resources like UK HEI websites to pinpoint institutions known for strengths in target fields and who are open to developing international partnerships. Consider targeting institutions with a track record of successful partnerships with institutions in LATAM.

#### 1.2 Utilise Networks and Existing Contacts:

- Connect with Mexican alumni networks in the UK, associations such as ANUIES, or industry bodies with UK ties to gather referrals or introductions to UK institutions, which can facilitate initial outreach and bridge trust.
- Also, research whether faculty members have existing connections with UK institutions to facilitate formal introductions<sup>28</sup>.

### 2. Develop a Targeted Partnership Proposal: Set out Goals and Benefits to Facilitate Mutual Interest

- Create a concise proposal that outlines how the TNE partnership aligns with both institutions' strategic priorities. Include tangible benefits for the UK institution, such as access to Mexican student markets, joint research, or regional expertise. Set out the benefits for the end users, i.e. students (language, cultural immersion, intercultural skills and competencies).

<sup>28</sup> It is noted that TNE projects often tend to be faculty driven rather than institution driven, although taking both approaches may yield results.

### 3. Identify Internationalisation Activities with Clear, Immediate Value to Support TNE Partnerships:

- Propose initial, manageable activities like virtual student exchanges<sup>29</sup>, COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning), or visiting scholar programmes that demonstrate value quickly and build momentum for setting up a TNE programme such as dual programmes.
- If led by the International Office, consider leading with a dual degree proposition, potentially including COIL as part of the agreement.

#### 3. Initiate Contact and Schedule Introductory Meetings

- Use formal channels for first contact: Reach out through official channels, such as the UK institution's international office or partnership development team. Attach the proposal and an expression of interest from senior leadership to signal commitment and formality, once agreed.
- Copy in UK institution senior leadership representatives (if contacts are obtainable) as well as international office when contacting institutions<sup>30</sup>.
- Engage in virtual introductory meetings: Arrange initial discussions via video conferencing to explore compatibility, share mutual goals, and identify specific collaboration opportunities. Prepare a list of priority discussion points (e.g. programme alignment, funding sources, student mobility options) to guide the conversation.

#### 4. Explore Funding Opportunities Together

- Identify joint funding sources: Investigate co-funding options such as British Council grants, CONAHCYT for research partnerships, or the Erasmus+ programme, which supports mobility. This step can help establish financial feasibility and proactive planning to UK partners.
- Develop a co-funding proposal if required: If external funding is sought, collaborate on a shared proposal. Clearly outline each institution's

contributions, expected outcomes, and a timeline, which strengthens the partnership's commitment and readiness.

#### 5. Develop a Detailed Partnership Framework

- Define specific roles and responsibilities: Collaborate with the UK institution to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) or preliminary agreement that delineates roles, responsibilities, timelines, and initial activities for each party<sup>31</sup>. This agreement can be translated into Spanish for internal review and mutual understanding of key terminology. Clear definitions reduce misunderstandings and clarify expectations.
- Address key operational and logistical details early on: Outline specifics for logistics, such as student exchange support, faculty accommodations, and administrative roles in managing partnerships. Addressing these operational areas early ensures smoother implementation.

#### 6. Facilitate Cultural and Academic Readiness

- Arrange preparatory language and culture training: Offer English language and cultural workshops focused on British academic standards and expectations for participating faculty and students. Consider partnering with British Council Mexico for resources.
- Plan academic orientation sessions: Host virtual orientation sessions with UK partners to clarify academic expectations, programme outcomes, and support services. Use these sessions to address any questions and ease the transition for both students and staff.

#### 7. Establish Communication Channels and Monitoring

- Set up a Communication Plan: Designate primary points of contact at each institution and establish a regular meeting schedule (e.g. monthly or quarterly) to discuss progress, challenges, and adjustments.
- Define evaluation metrics and milestones: Agree on partnership success indicators like student satisfaction, research output, or engagement levels. Schedule periodic reviews to assess progress and identify areas for improvement.

<sup>29</sup> If driven by specific faculties from both institutions, these initiatives can form part of an initial agreement.

<sup>30</sup> Sometimes emails only to international office email accounts can be overlooked, if it is sent directly to senior leadership, the email may stand a better chance of being acknowledged.

<sup>31</sup> Sometimes UK institutions may request that the Mexican institution to work with a MoU which includes clauses aligned to UK law, translation into Spanish would enable Mexican institutions to identify and understand elements which may require further review and agreement.

## 4.3 Models for Internationalisation and TNE Collaboration

### 4.3.1 TNE Partnerships

#### 4.3.1.1 Joint Degree Programmes

Students can earn a single degree jointly awarded by two or more institutions in different countries. Academic responsibilities, such as teaching and assessment, are shared between partner institutions in joint degree programmes. Joint degrees can provide a framework for Mexican HEIs to elevate their global reputation by collaborating with institutions offering complementary academic strengths. This model aligns well with fields like engineering and health sciences, where international accreditation is beneficial.

#### Examples:

- A public university has expressed interest in expanding Joint degree programmes in technical disciplines, which have the potential to evolve into joint degrees.
- UK-Mexico collaborations in STEM could leverage the mutual recognition agreements for qualifications established in 2015.

#### 4.3.1.2 Dual Degree Programmes

In regard to dual degree programmes, students earn two separate degrees from two institutions, often spending time studying at both. A common example of a dual degree is when a student completes 4 out of 5 years at their home institution and then finishes the final year at the host institution, earning degrees from both. This model typically requires alignment of curricula and academic calendars. Dual degrees can address growing demand for internationally accredited programmes in Mexico, particularly in professional fields like business and engineering. They also provide a pathway for Mexican students to access global job markets.

#### Examples:

- Tecnológico de Monterrey (ITESM) has a history of offering dual degrees with European and North American universities, including the UK, particularly in business and technology fields.

Universidad Cristóbal Colón aims to expand dual degree offerings in business and other high-demand areas.

#### 4.3.1.3 Distance and Online Learning

Degree programmes can be delivered online or through blended learning models, allowing students to access international curricula without leaving their home country. The distance learning model provides scalable solutions for rural and underfunded institutions in Mexico. It could address Mexico's digital divide by enabling access to quality education.

#### Examples:

- ITESM has pioneered online education and could collaborate with UK universities to offer co-branded online programmes in business and engineering.
- Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) initiatives, like those at Universidad de Colima, can serve as a foundation for more formal online TNE agreements.

#### 4.3.1.4 Franchise Model

Under a franchise model, a UK institution licenses its academic programmes to a Mexican partner, which delivers them locally under the UK institution's quality assurance framework. This model allows smaller Mexican HEIs to offer internationally recognised programmes, reducing the need for resource-heavy dual degrees or branch campuses. While this model is not yet common in Mexico, private universities with market-oriented approaches (e.g Universidad Cristóbal Colón) may find it appealing to enhance their programme offerings in business or IT.

#### 4.3.1.5 Validation Model

In a validation model, the institution assesses and approves a programme developed and delivered by a local institution. The overseas institution ensures the programme meets the UK academic standards and grants its degree to students completing the validated course. Unlike a franchise model, where the Mexican institution would provide the programme, the local, UK institution in this case retains significant control over the programme design and delivery while adhering to the quality assurance requirements of the validating institution.

Validation models may offer Mexican HEIs an opportunity to expand their international credentials without the need for substantial resource investments in joint programme design or delivery. This model would potentially be appealing for Mexican institutions seeking to align their curricula with international standards while maintaining local relevance.

### 4.3.2 Internationalisation Activities

#### 4.3.2.1 Research Collaborations

While research collaborations generally fall outside of the general definition of TNE, partnerships may support the development of TNE programmes. Partnerships focus on joint research initiatives, often involving shared resources, co-publications, and faculty exchange. With initiatives like CONAHCYT in Mexico supporting research-driven partnerships, this model is ideal for expanding STEM and innovation capacities. Research collaborations also enhance faculty expertise and institutional global visibility.

#### Examples:

- Mexican universities already collaborate with international institutions in high-impact research areas like renewable energy and biotechnology.
- A technological institute in Mexico has expressed interest in increasing research collaborations, particularly with UK institutions, in applied technology fields.

#### 4.3.2.2 Collaborative Research and Development

Joint projects involving shared research facilities, faculty, and funding to develop innovative solutions or technologies. Collaborative R&D aligns with CONAHCYT's objectives and supports Mexico's broader economic development goals, particularly in technology transfer and industrial innovation. Collaborative efforts between Mexican and UK institutions in renewable energy research could drive shared solutions for regional challenges while enhancing academic outputs.

#### 4.3.2.3 Student and Faculty Mobility

Programmes that facilitate student and faculty exchanges between institutions, either for short-term visits or longer study and teaching opportunities. Mobility programmes can offer Mexican students exposure to international education while fostering intercultural competencies and professional readiness. Faculty mobility enhances academic practices and strengthens research collaboration. Initiatives such as Erasmus+ and UK partnerships could be adapted to increase mobility between Mexican and UK institutions, especially in STEM and business fields.

#### 4.3.2.4 Hybrid/Blended Learning Models

A mix of online and face-to-face learning delivered collaboratively by two institutions. Hybrid models offer a middle ground between fully online programmes and physical exchanges, making them particularly suitable for regions with infrastructure challenges.

#### Examples:

- Post-pandemic, institutions including Mexican private universities have leveraged hybrid models to internationalise curricula, which could evolve into formal TNE partnerships.

### 4.3.3 Overarching Recommendations for Adopting TNE Models in Mexico

- Prioritise demand-driven models: Focus on models like dual degrees and research collaborations, which align with labor market needs and national research priorities.
- Consider adopting digital and hybrid solutions: Expand access and reach through distance and hybrid learning models, especially for rural or underfunded institutions.
- Build scalable pilot projects: Start with scalable initiatives to build capacity and trust with UK partners, evolving into larger collaborations over time.
- Expand programmes incrementally by adding complementary offerings and involving broader institutional stakeholders to maintain quality while growing impact.
- Create joint alumni networks and showcase partnership achievements to build credibility, strengthen ties, and attract further support for long-term sustainability.

## 4.4 Sustainability of TNE Partnerships

Building sustainable TNE partnerships requires deliberate effort to maintain, scale, and adapt collaborations to ensure mutual benefit and long-term viability. Below is a list of practical recommendations for Mexican HEIs to follow in order to achieve this.

- Establish a clear vision for the partnership with mutual goals and regular review processes to ensure continued alignment and adaptability to changing needs.
- Seek to diversify funding sources through co-funding potentially with government agencies, and private partners.
- Build strong relationships through structured communication channels, regular meetings, and collaborative technology platforms to ensure transparency and collaboration.
- Develop key performance indicators (KPIs) to assess progress, and use regular feedback loops from students, faculty, and administrators to refine and enhance programmes.
- Prioritise ongoing faculty and staff training, infrastructure upgrades, and incentives for joint research to ensure institutional readiness for scaling and sustaining TNE activities.



## 5. CONCLUSION

### 5.1 Next Steps for Mexican HEIs

The stakeholder engagement findings, including survey and focus group insights highlighted the need for Mexican HEIs to adopt targeted strategies to address current challenges and take advantage of opportunities for internationalisation and establish TNE partnerships. Based on these insights, Mexican HEIs can focus on the following actions:

#### Developing Strategic Institutional TNE Plans:

Mexican institutions should look to align their internationalisation and TNE objectives with their strengths and broader national goals, particularly in areas such as labour market alignment and international accreditation. Stakeholder feedback indicates a strong interest in expanding dual-degree programmes and creating opportunities that enhance student employability and institutional reputation. Scalable models, such as online and hybrid learning, were frequently highlighted as critical for addressing the diverse needs of students, particularly those from underrepresented regions.

#### Enhancing Institutional Capacity:

The stakeholder engagement findings highlighted faculty readiness and administrative capacity as significant barriers, particularly in smaller institutions. Building dedicated TNE teams and empowering international offices to play a more central role in partnerships can enhance institutional capacity. Mexican institutions noted the need for long-term planning and better resource allocation to sustain international initiatives.

#### Addressing Language and Cultural Barriers:

Language proficiency emerged as a recurring challenge in the stakeholder engagement, with many institutions emphasising the need for improved English skills among students and faculty. There was also a call for UK partners to engage with Spanish to enable balanced and reciprocal partnerships. Embedding language and intercultural training within academic programmes can help address this challenge.

#### Building Partnerships with UK HEIs:

Identifying suitable partners was highlighted as a barrier in both the survey and focus group discussions. Institutions reported a need for greater networking opportunities and support to establish connections with UK universities. Focus group participants also recommended starting with manageable collaborations, such as virtual exchanges, to demonstrate immediate value and establish trust before moving towards TNE partnerships.

Research collaborations were identified as a strategic growth area in terms of internationalisation more broadly, particularly in high-demand fields like STEM and business. These partnerships offer opportunities to enhance academic outcomes and align with global accreditation standards. In order to facilitate partnerships, greater understanding of the respective education systems was identified as a key step for both Mexican and UK institutions, particularly in the private sector. Furthermore, while mutual recognition agreements have paved the way for collaboration, ensuring curriculum alignment is viewed as important step in establishing dual degree programmes. STEM and business were identified as two areas where global standards or accreditation systems can facilitate alignment.

#### Pursuing Funding Opportunities:

Financial constraints were a primary concern across all stakeholder feedback both for internationalisation more broadly as well as TNE. This study has identified the need for targeted funding to support internationalisation efforts, including mobility programmes, infrastructure development, collaborative research and dual degrees in relation to TNE. It is recommended that institutions in Mexico actively explore opportunities with government agencies, private-sector partners, and international organisations.

### Facilitating Sustainability

Stakeholder input highlighted the importance of clear evaluation metrics to ensure the long-term success of internationalisation and TNE initiatives. Regular feedback loops from students, faculty, and partners can help institutions refine their programmes and adapt to changing needs. Incremental pilot projects, such as online learning collaborations, can serve as a foundation for scaling successful initiatives while maintaining quality.

## 5.2 Final Thoughts on Internationalisation and TNE Development in Mexico

The stakeholder engagement findings from this study, supported by a review of the relevant literature, provide a solid view of the opportunities and challenges in advancing TNE in Mexico. The feedback from Mexican institutions underscores significant potential to expand higher education access, enhance institutional capacity, and better align education with labour market needs. TNE initiatives such as dual-degree programmes and, more broadly, international research collaborations were particularly highlighted as promising areas for growth, aligning well with global best practices.

The challenges identified, such as financial constraints, regulatory barriers, and language proficiency, could require a strategic and collaborative approach. Smaller institutions face unique difficulties in navigating these barriers, but scalable solutions, including hybrid and online models, can help bridge the gap and facilitate inclusivity.

The opportunities for internationalisation and TNE in Mexico lie in utilising the country's bilingual environment, fostering partnerships in high-demand fields, and aligning educational offerings with international standards. Stakeholders emphasised that TNE partnerships with UK HEIs can enhance institutional reputations, increase student employability, and support broader economic and social development goals. By addressing challenges collaboratively and focusing on sustainable, demand-driven models, Mexican HEIs can create opportunities for TNE partnerships, including those with UK institutions.





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