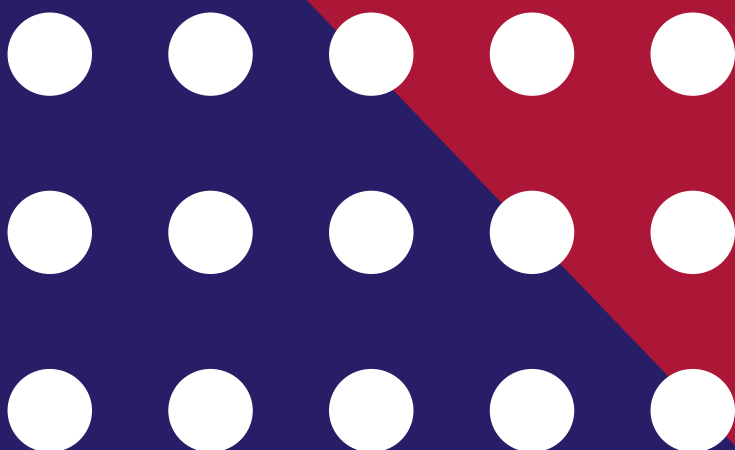


Transnational Education Quality Assurance Framework for Kazakhstan



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Astana, 2025





ЖАҺАНДЫҚ СЕРІКТЕСТІКТЕРДІ ДАМУ БАҒДАРЛАМАСЫ

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Introduction

This TNE Quality Assurance Framework (TNE QAF) for Kazakhstan has been developed by representatives from organisations of higher and postgraduate education (OHPEs) across Kazakhstan who either currently engaged in transnational education or are planning to do so. Their work was supported by the UK Quality Assurance Agency and the British Council. It provides a framework that should be applicable to all TNE partnerships, not just those with UK universities.

Preparation of the framework was informed by best practice from around the world as well as the experience of providers in Kazakhstan. Discussions relating to the framework inevitably reached beyond quality assurance and enhancement of TNE to include other challenges that the higher education sector is facing in Kazakhstan. Whilst these are important, the framework maintains a focus specifically on quality in TNE and on the most common forms of partnerships which are described further in the 'main types of TNE' section below. Staff and student exchanges that do not involve an award from an international partner and research partnerships are not specifically included in this framework although some principles and practices may be relevant.

The preparation and consultation phases for the framework gave rise to considerable discussion about areas that are particularly problematic to implement in Kazakhstan and the kinds of support that will be needed in order to use the framework effectively. The notes at the end of this document outline some of the issues raised and also point to further advice and guidance that would be welcome. The next phase of this project will be to develop advice and guidance resource packs, starting with those that were identified as most important.

The Role of the Framework

The framework is designed to serve as a guide to quality assurance for providers who are setting up and operating TNE partnerships. It aims to support the assurance and enhancement of the quality of provision by offering a set of principles to underpin practice. These principles are further clarified through the description of some of the main practices involved. These are not meant to be prescriptive or to limit the quality activities of partnerships, some of which may already be operating very effectively without the framework. However, for those who are looking for guidance and support in being confident that they have/ are developing appropriate structures and processes to support quality, this framework should serve as a guide.

As stated in the introduction, this is not a compulsory set of standards and the framework has no regulatory status, but this is, in some ways, its strength as it enables the higher education sector to work together in promoting a high-quality student experience based on what it has identified as best practice. The language used is therefore that of 'principles' with the present tense used to indicate normal practice but avoiding any obligation with words such as 'should', 'will' or 'must'.



Transnational Education

Transnational Education (TNE) is education delivered in a country other than the country where the awarding body is based e. g., students in Kazakhstan studying for a degree awarded by an Australian university. This may be delivered online or through local campuses or existing Kazakhstani OHPEs. The important differentiating feature between TNE and other types of international partnerships is that the students receive an award from the foreign university for a programme of study undertaken primarily in Kazakhstan.

The main types of TNE partnerships are:

Branch campuses — established by a foreign university in Kazakhstan to deliver its awards to Kazakhstani and international students. Students graduate with a degree/diploma from the foreign university. In some cases, the branches may be established on the campus of an existing OHPE or in partnership with a funding partner. Terminology such as ‘global campus’ and ‘joint venture’ can be applied to these types of partnership.

Dual, double and joint programmes — the curriculum for these awards has been designed so as to support students in achieving the learning outcomes for both a foreign and a Kazakhstani degree/ diploma. This may involve extra hours of study in order to include elements that are compulsory in Kazakhstan and any required by the foreign partner. Set up requires considerable collaboration to ensure that the students have a coherent and integrated learning experience.

Franchised programmes — these are programmes that are delivered in Kazakhstan and awarded by the foreign university. In the case of franchise, the programme learning outcomes are usually the same as in the country of the awarding body but some of the content can be tailored to the local context.

Validated programmes — these are programmes that are developed jointly by the foreign and Kazakhstani providers but and lead to an award from the foreign university. They can therefore be tailored to the local context more

fully. The programme will not be the same as the one running in the awarding body's country but will still meet the awarding body's standards, regulations, and other requirements.

The differences between franchised and validated provision can be small and will depend on the awarding body's in house definitions.

In all the above types of TNE, students may have the opportunity to complete part of their programme in another country. The important distinction is that all the above involve students in Kazakhstan studying for an award by from foreign (non-Kazakhstani) organization. This may be alongside or independent of an award from a Kazakhstani OHPE.

Other types of partnership that fall outside the definition of TNE (the TNE QAF is less likely to be useful for these types of partnerships):

Progression/ articulation agreements at the foreign university

(2+2/1 etc.) — these are agreements in which the foreign university accepts a Kazakhstani student onto a programme on their campus with advanced standing (normally entering the second half of a degree). This involves mapping of learning outcomes and credits between the partners and grade conversion. This type of partnership is not normally classified as TNE when students progress to study with the awarding body rather than qualifying in their own country. If students are able to progress to a foreign programme in Kazakhstan with advanced standing, this is likely to be through a franchised or validated programme (sometimes referred to as a 'top up').

Exchange and research partnerships — these types of partnerships are important elements of internationalization and can lead to other types of partnership once understanding and trust have been established. However, they do not lead to a full award from a foreign university (although credits and certificates may be awarded) and are therefore not classified as TNE.

Glossary

Awarding Body	the organization who will be issuing the diploma at the end of the programme. The awarding body normally has ultimate responsibility for quality assurance even though its day-to-day management may be delegated to a partner.
OHPE	Organisations of Higher and Postgraduate Education
Parties	those involved in the partnership which may include external investors and representatives of external organizations
Partner	this refers to both the Kazakhstan OHPE and the provider from another country, usually the awarding body
Provider	this term is used to refer to the organization who is delivering the programme
Stakeholders	this refers to all people and organisations involved with or that have an interest in the partnership. The list in Principle 2 below suggests some of these but this is not exhaustive and may change as the partnership develops. In some cases, stakeholders may include employers from the nation of the awarding body.
Staff	refers to professional services, administrative and academic staff members as appropriate

The Principles

- 1: Shared vision and supportive infrastructure for TNE
- 2: Stakeholder involvement in TNE
- 3: Student information, recruitment and selection
- 4: Design and approval of programmes
- 5: Internal Monitoring, Review and Enhancement of TNE
- 6: External review of programmes and partnership
- 7: Teaching and Learning
- 8: Assessment and academic integrity
- 9: Staffing and staff development.
- 10: Resourcing and supporting students to achieve their full potential



1: Shared Vision and Supportive Infrastructure for TNE

Principle: Partners have a shared, inclusive, long-term vision for the partnership based on shared values and goals and linked to economic and societal benefits. They have a common understanding of the quality assurance policy(ies) that apply to the partnership. They have a written agreement on the responsibilities of each partner and a governance and committee structure that ensures that all parties monitor the effectiveness of the partnership and are able to identify and action improvements as required in order to support longevity and sustainability of the partnership.

Key Practices:

- a. TNE programmes take into account the legislative and regulatory requirements of Kazakhstan and partners ensure that they work together to meet these.
- b. Partners have a strategic approach to TNE which includes an understanding of shared goals and purpose that are clearly stated at the outset in the Memorandum of Agreement.
- c. Policies, regulations and procedures for the operation of the partnership are agreed and written down in an accessible format and made available to all interested parties.
- d. All parties are aware of the risks of working in partnership and have completed the necessary due diligence and risk assessment and have agreements on how risks will be jointly managed. Senior management fully support the TNE provision and seek to manage and reduce regulatory obstacles.
- e. Partners understand and agree the mutual benefits of their co-operation both institutionally and for the wider society. The rationale and benefits of the partnership are reviewed and enhanced in order to ensure that they remain relevant and meaningful.
- f. There is a team of designated people at operational and senior levels of each partner who are in regular communication and know how

to take action where needed. Knowledge of the partnership is thus shared and reliance on 'champions' is avoided.

- g.** Consideration of TNE is integrated into the agendas and normal business of committees so as to both assure quality and identify and track the implementation of continuous enhancement.
- h.** There is a formal process for the annual review of the partnership in order to ensure that areas of commonality such as research strength are capitalized on, and the partnership is continuously enhanced.
- i.** There is a plan for the effective management and assurance of the quality of provision in case of any closures or terminations of partnerships



2: Stakeholder Involvement in TNE

Principle: In its collaborative activities, the partnership takes into account the needs, interests and requirements of all interested parties including investors, employers and representative employer groups, local, regional and national councils and groups, professional bodies, students and staff working for the partnership.

Key practices:

- a. Partners work together to ensure that shared provision takes account of the needs of employers in the market that the programme is targeting e.g. local/national/international companies, organisations and professional bodies.
- b. There is a communication plan that is tailored to the needs of different stakeholders. The plan identifies appropriate media for communication with different types of stakeholders. Partners ensure that information is accurate and culturally sensitive.
- c. The expectations of students' families are managed within the limits of the policies and practices of the partners.
- d. Employer and other relevant sector feedback is sought on all aspects of the programme. They are given full information about their role and expectations. Stakeholder panels (or equivalent) review content and outcomes and participate in relevant events.
- e. Partners ensure that there are culturally appropriate mechanisms for students to give regular feedback on all aspects of their experience through surveys, fora and other appropriate mechanisms.
- f. The committees relating to TNE provision have (elected) student representatives in their membership and they are invited to attend unless there is confidential business such as discussion of grades. Representation reflects the diversity of the student population and students are provided with appropriate training to support them in their roles.
- g. Students receive responses and summaries of survey outcomes and other kinds of feedback and know when actions have been taken.

3: Student Information, Recruitment and Selection

Principle: Information for prospective students and their families is clear and correct, giving a realistic picture of the programme of study and the wider student experience. The processes for recruitment, selection and admission of students are transparent, fair and equitable and take into account the culture and expectations of students in Kazakhstan and any legal requirements of both partners.

Key Practices:

- a. There is a clear plan for the marketing of TNE programmes which is developed collaboratively and takes into account the Kazakhstan context. Information is accurate and inclusive and, in addition to standard programme information, details the full cost of study, language of delivery, potential careers and further study.
- b. Partners monitor data and collect feedback on the recruitment process and regularly review and enhance their practices. There is a clear admissions appeals process.
- c. Partners jointly agree and operate a process for recognition/ accreditation of prior learning
- d. Where online learning is incorporated into the programme, the quantity, nature and purpose of this is explicit and understood by students and staff.
- e. Any changes to the programme that may impact on applicants, such as removal or addition of modules, are communicated as soon as possible and applicants are given the opportunity to discuss and re-consider their choice
- f. Collaborative partners jointly consider the likely demands of parents and funders and agree ways in which expectations can be managed where different jurisdictions have legal requirements or practices e.g. in relation to sharing of student information or differences in grading and turnaround times for assessment.

4: Design and Approval of Programmes

Principle: Programmes are jointly designed/adapted to meet the needs of the target audience and any national, institutional and professional body requirements. In arrangements where the programme is also run in the awarding body's home institution, appropriate consideration will be given to the Kazakhstan context. Learning outcomes/ objectives are clearly stated and align with the partners' qualifications frameworks.

Key practices:

- a. The initial proposal for the programme is based on a realistic, evidence-based assessment of national and international recruitment markets and the fit with the partners' and local and national strategies for development.
- b. Any legal and/or regulatory requirements relating to structure and content of programmes are integrated into programme design where applicable.
- c. The policy and processes for the design, approval and modification of programmes and modules are agreed, available and understood by partners. Academic staff involved in development and approval are given appropriate training in TNE programme design.
- d. There is a structured approach to ensuring that academic and graduate skills are integrated throughout the programme and assessed appropriately
- e. Internal and external expertise, publications and data from all partners are drawn upon as well as academic staff expertise to ensure that the programme is up to date and draws on the latest developments
- f. Programmes and modules are consistent with national standards and credit frameworks of the awarding body and mapped to the equivalent standards for the partner(s)
- g. A set of definitive programme and module descriptors is accessible to all involved in the delivery and monitoring of the programme
- h. For distance learning, the process for design and approval incorporates explicit requirements in terms of structure, underpinning infrastructure and all aspects of delivery

5: Internal Monitoring, Review and Enhancement of TNE

Principle: Partners jointly monitor the TNE programmes that they are delivering through feedback, data and discussion with staff, students and other stakeholders. Annual monitoring is conducted at module and programme level and informs action plans for enhancement. Periodic review of the programmes and partnership is undertaken jointly, following agreed procedures and cycles.

Key practices:

- a. The process of annual monitoring and enhancement of quality operated by the TNE partnership is equitable, agreed and documented as part of the approval process.
- b. As far as possible, quality monitoring policy and processes for TNE provision is mapped to the Kazakhstani provider's internal quality monitoring processes so as to avoid duplication.
- c. There is a system for gathering feedback from students, consideration in committees and action planning and monitoring to ensure enhancement of quality. Students are informed of the enhancements that have been put in place.
- d. Data is collected and made available to all partners for consideration of the health of the programme and changes that need to be made. The platform(s) to be used and level of access to data are agreed in writing and training is provided where necessary.
- e. Academic and professional services staff access all data related to their students/ teaching, within the limits of Kazakhstani data security legislation.
- f. There is an agreed approach to proposing and making changes to the content, assessment, delivery and/or learning outcomes of courses and modules that enables changes to be made for the next iteration of the module or programme. For dual and double degrees, the changes are mapped so as to ensure on-going parity.
- g. An annual report on the programme/ provision is jointly produced and there is an agreement on the format of this report which will align, where possible, with the Kazakhstani provider's own requirements.

- h.** Consideration of annual monitoring reports and tracking of planned actions are the responsibility of designated committees or groups which include provider and awarding body staff.
- i.** Policies, procedures, committee minutes and other useful documents for the partnership are stored on a platform that is accessible to both partners.
- j.** Internal periodic review includes all stakeholders and promotes the identification of effective practice and areas for development and enhancement. There is joint responsibility of partners for implementation and monitoring but there should also be a designated lead for each initiative.



6: External Review of Programmes and Partnerships

Principle: There is an agreed cycle of full review and reaccreditation of the TNE programmes. The process and criteria for the review are clearly defined and shared and all stakeholders are involved in the approval process.

Key practices:

- a. Cyclical review, whether optional or required by national quality frameworks or accrediting bodies, is built into the partnership's strategic approach and aligns to the agreed internal quality and standards monitoring and evaluation activity.
- b. Providers understand the requirements and process for external reviews that may be required by regulators in partner delivery locations.
- c. Providers and their partners use the TNE Quality assurance framework (TNE QAF) as a guide to support their preparations as well as an underpinning to their on-going quality monitoring.
- d. External accreditation bodies understand the nature of TNE provision and contextualise their reviews to take account of the particular features of the partnership in order to support the positive identification of effective practice as well as areas for enhancement.
- e. Where providers are undergoing external review with several different accreditation agencies and professional bodies, their processes are set up so as to capture the data and evidence required in a way that reduces duplication of effort.

7: Teaching and Learning*

Principle: Providers facilitate a collaborative and inclusive approach that enables students to have a varied, student-centred experience and to progress through their studies. All students are supported to develop and demonstrate academic and professional skills and competencies appropriate to their discipline.

Key Practices:

- a. Effective planning and discussion between staff in the partnership promotes a carefully planned transition to hybrid and/or the awarding body's approaches to teaching and learning
- b. Partners work together to ensure that teaching and learning is contextualised so that students can link materials and examples to their own experience whilst also gaining knowledge and understanding of the global context.
- c. Partners collaborate to ensure that the approach to teaching and learning integrates a range of approaches based on current pedagogical practices and research and is planned to support a range of learning styles and needs.
- d. Students are enabled and encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and to play an active role in enhancing the learning process. Staff support them in reflecting on their learning and identify gaps and successes.
- e. Students are supported to progress through stages of learning through an approach that ensures that they have the underpinning knowledge and skills to progress to qualification and into employment.
- f. Partners agree in advance an academic calendar that aims to accommodate the main requirements of the awarding body and the provider's own context as far as is possible.
- g. Qualitative and quantitative data is used to monitor learning and achievement and is used to support continuous enhancement

** this principle needs to be used in conjunction with principles 8 and 9*

8: Assessment and Academic Integrity

Principle: Assessment employs a variety of methods, embodying the values of academic integrity and designed to meet the stated learning outcomes for the TNE programme. Teaching, learning and assessment align to ensure students can demonstrate their achievements, reflect on and reinforce their prior learning, skills and knowledge, and fulfil their potential.

Key Practices:

- a. Partner staff collaborate on assessments to ensure that they test appropriate learning outcomes and are fair, reliable, accessible, authentic and inclusive. Where applicable, and sustainable, students are offered different options for undertaking assessments to promote accessibility and inclusion.
- b. Assessment practices are described in a written policy and include agreed practices in relation to marking, moderation and feedback.
- c. Students are given clear information about the nature, timing and expectations of assessments as well as information on outcomes being assessed and marking criteria.
- d. There is an agreed policy on academic integrity and students and staff are given regular training, advice and guidance to ensure that they understand what is expected of them.
- e. The regulations on passing, progressing and achievement of qualifications are available to staff and students and explained to them at regular intervals. Students understand their grades.
- f. Providers establish coherent approaches to technologies that impact teaching, learning and assessment (such as Generative Artificial Intelligence). These approaches are clearly communicated to staff and students, include how they are utilised, and define misuse of such technologies
- g. Where grade conversion is required, the method is developed collaboratively and shared with students and other interested parties.

- h.** Examination boards apply regulations fairly and consistently and use data to evaluate overall student performance. The outcomes of this evaluation support the identification of effective practice and areas for further development or enhancement.
- i.** There is an agreed partnership academic appeals process that is communicated to staff and students and administered equitably and in a timely manner.



9: Staffing and Staff Development.

Principle: Staff are appropriately qualified, trained and supported to deliver effective learning and support for all students, including those with specific needs and requirements. They receive induction into the TNE programmes and regular training related to quality assurance and delivery of the student experience.

Key Practices:

- a. There is a process for the approval of staff who will be delivering the TNE provision by both partners and an agreement on the requirements in terms of level of experience and required training
- b. Academic staff appointment, working conditions and remuneration are, as a minimum, in line with national requirements in the country of delivery
- c. Staff are trained and supported in understanding and carrying out their role in quality assurance and enhancement
- d. There is an annual plan for staff development that includes updating on quality and regulations, pedagogy, IT training and identification and sharing of effective practice by partners and provider
- e. Staff are aware of the data collected in relation to the provision they are delivering and are trained to understand and use it to enhance their teaching and support of students
- f. Academic staff stay up to date with research in their subject area and are able to incorporate it into their teaching and/or suggest curriculum changes in light of new findings.

10: Resourcing and supporting students to achieve their full potential

Principle: TNE partners jointly agree on a policy for the provision, review and enhancement of resources and support services for students.

Key Practices:

- a. Required academic resources are identified during programme approval and should be in place at the commencement of the programme.
- b. Partners, in collaboration with staff and students, monitor and evaluate on a systematic basis the effectiveness and impact of learning environments and the resources required for the delivery and enhancement of the learning experience
- c. Specific resources relating to Kazakhstan contextualization and updates such as new research and changes in the professional sector are made available and there is an agreed budget to ensure that there is regular updating of these.
- d. Partners agree on the provision of and payment for IT based learning environments and ensure that they are accessible and well maintained so as to support the students' learning experience and broader sense of belonging. Where there are multiple learning platforms, students and staff are clear about their purpose and have been trained to access them effectively.
- e. Provision of student support services forms part of the written partnership agreement. Students and staff are aware of the academic, professional and pastoral services and activities available.
- f. Staff are able to signpost students to appropriate support and encourage them to access them throughout their learning journey.
- g. Where students are undertaking their studies in a third language (in addition to Kazakh and Russian), appropriate support for academic language development is planned into the resource strategy and reviewed regularly in relation to student success.

- h.** Where TNE provision includes a period of study in another country, partners ensure that support is put in place for pre-arrival, arrival and on-going support of students to cover both academic and practical aspects of their visits such as accommodation and cultural and linguistic integration.



Notes on the Principles

These notes were prepared following discussion with participants in Kazakhstan during the consultation phase of the QAF. They add some clarification and highlight some areas that would benefit from further advice and guidance.

Principle 1: Shared Vision and Supportive Infrastructure

Implementation of this principle and associated practices would usefully include consideration, advice and guidance on governance, committee structures and practices that support TNE; case studies relating to sustainable partnership and wider societal benefits could be used.

Key practice 1e should take into consideration that human contact and ‘chemistry’ between partners is important but the sustainability of the partnership requires integration into the core business of the provider rather than belonging to a single or small group of people. Equally, senior management need to understand and support the partnership and put in place the appropriate mechanisms for oversight and review.

Principle 2: Stakeholder Involvement in TNE

Further advice and guidance should include ways in which employers can be brought on board; stakeholder panels; use of alumni; chambers of commerce etc. Case studies of student engagement strategies. Recommendations will include Ministry and other bodies supporting universities in gaining buy-in from employers.

Student feedback is an area for further enhancement so as to ensure that they understand how and why they need to give feedback. Traditionally, feedback has been verbal so other types of feedback need to be explained and training given e.g. to student representatives invited to attend committees. There is also training to be done on using feedback to promote enhancement.

Principle 3: Student Information, Recruitment and Selection

Advice and guidance would benefit particularly from inclusion of examples of effective practice in student information. There needs

to be some contextualisation to understand what parents want to know and what is permissible with adult students (and the limits when in partnership with countries that operate European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)).

Marketing of programmes is not generally established in universities in Kazakhstan so information, examples and case studies should be included in any further advice and guidance

Principle 4: Design and approval of programmes

Providers would find case studies and examples of contextualisation, examples of approval and modification policies and procedures. There is already effective practice in this area that could be shared amongst TNE providers in Kazakhstan

Incorporation of national and international priorities and drivers such as sustainable development goals into the curriculum are subjects for discussion between partners and in relation to institutions' visions and strategies rather than matters relating to quality.

Principle 5: Internal monitoring, Review and Enhancement of TNE

Annual monitoring practices differ across partnerships although their goal is the same. Annotated examples of these and the opportunity to understand their role and importance should be included in any training/ advice and guidance.

Principle 6: External review of programmes and partnerships

Advice and guidance could include sharing of best practice and case studies e.g. from engineering where there are several accrediting bodies all potentially requiring different processes and documents.

Principle 7: Teaching and Learning

The framework focuses on the core quality-related processes for TNE partnerships and therefore does not specifically incorporate areas that were identified as important during the consultation period.

These include:

- Planning for the re-integration of students into their studies in Kazakhstan after a period abroad
- Consideration of certification for extra-curricular activity
- Inclusion of multidisciplinary qualifications in the framework for recognition

For further consideration by providers during implementation of the QAF: Sharing of effective practice would help to support the sector and underpin enhancement. This really needs to be instigated and owned by the sector e.g. by setting up 'Centres of TNE pedagogical excellence' or repositories and opportunities to meet to share practice.

Principle 8: Assessment and Academic Integrity

Foreign providers' assessment practices are very different to those that students and staff are used to in Kazakhstan, so training is needed and careful introduction. This should include feedback on assessment so that all understand the requirements and purpose of feedback. The process of standardisation, moderation, double marking, external examiners, exam boards also need further advice and guidance.

Academic integrity is complex for staff and students and requires training and resources such as an academic integrity module and further regular iteration.

Principle 9: Staffing and Staff Development

The development of staff recognition and qualifications for TNE practice would be a welcome development that could be instigated by the sector or offered by an external organization.

Principle 10: Resourcing and Supporting Students

TNE programmes can be attractive to students from countries other than Kazakhstan. Whilst the specific support that they need is not part of a TNE framework, it was noted that there have been issues in relation to visas for students in debt in another country and the need for financial due diligence and criminal records checks which are likely to form part of the responsibilities of a government body. Student exchanges and visits per se are not TNE provision but may be part of MOUs with partners. Key practice 10h above can underpin these practices.

