



## Bridging borders: Transforming Indian higher education through global collaborations

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## Introduction

As globalisation and technology reshape education, Indian institutions are uniquely poised to redefine their global standing through international collaborations. Beyond academic exchange, these collaborations drive innovation, foster cutting-edge research and create cultural bridges. For institutions seeking to develop or expand international collaborations, nuanced strategies and a clear understanding of potential barriers and enablers are critical.



## The current landscape: Opportunities and models

Indian higher education is increasingly globalised, and collaborations are being used to address challenges such as climate change, public health and technological advancement. In 2022, 49 foreign universities expressed interest in collaborating with Indian institutions, demonstrating the growing interest in mutual academic exchange.

### Key collaborative models



**Joint and dual degrees:** These programmes enhance institutional reputation and student credentials, offering a competitive edge in global education.



**Twinning programmes:** Allowing students to begin their education in India and complete it abroad, these programmes combine cost efficiency with global exposure.



**Research collaborations:** Long-term projects in emerging areas such as AI, biotechnology and sustainability amplify research influence and attract global funding.



**Faculty and student exchanges:** These enable cultural integration and knowledge transfer, fostering a more diverse academic ecosystem.



**Virtual collaborations:** The use of digital platforms for joint courses and research initiatives has grown significantly, offering scalable, cost-effective solutions.

## Building effective collaborations: Strategic insights

Building effective international collaborations requires a clear vision and deliberate planning. Institutions must move beyond transactional collaborations to develop mutually beneficial relationships that align with strategic goals. These collaborations should be rooted in trust, shared values and a commitment to long-term effect. By focusing on alignment with institutional strengths and proactively addressing potential barriers, Indian universities can enter collaborations that yield lasting academic, cultural and societal benefits.

Indian institutions should highlight their unique strengths, such as expertise in affordable healthcare solutions or IT innovations, to attract global partners seeking complementary capabilities.

### Overcoming challenges: Practical solutions

While international collaborations present significant opportunities, they also come with unique challenges that can hinder their success if not addressed effectively. Indian institutions must navigate complex regulatory environments, cultural differences and financial limitations to build sustainable and impactful associations. Addressing these challenges requires a proactive approach, innovative solutions and institutional resilience. By tackling these obstacles strategically, universities can unlock the full potential of global collaborations and create frameworks for long-term success.



## Regulatory and policy barriers

01

**Challenge:** Lengthy accreditation processes and complex visa requirements.

**Solution:** Advocate for streamlined regulatory frameworks and develop institutional collaborations to effectively navigate bureaucratic hurdles.

## Cultural and academic differences

02

**Challenge:** Variations in teaching methods, communication styles and academic standards.

**Solution:** Invest in orientation programmes for faculty and students and foster open dialogue to bridge cultural gaps.

## Financial constraints

03

**Challenge:** Limited budgets for travel, infrastructure and scholarships.

**Solution:** Use technology for virtual collaborations and explore funding from international grants, industry collaborations and alumni networks.

Furthermore, limiting collaborations only to foreign universities ranked within the top 1,000 globally restricts collaborations with high-quality institutions that may choose not to participate in ranking systems. This approach will broaden opportunities while maintaining academic standards.

## Creating a supportive ecosystem

A robust and supportive ecosystem is essential for sustaining and scaling international collaborations. Institutions must build the necessary infrastructure, foster faculty and student engagement and create an environment conducive to innovation and cross-cultural exchange. By investing in the right resources and cultivating a collaborative culture, universities can maximise the benefits and ensure long-term success.

### The role of technology

Digital tools play a transformative role in enabling collaborations. From virtual classrooms to shared research platforms, technology reduces costs, expands access and fosters real-time interaction. Institutions should explore hybrid models that integrate in-person and digital elements for a more flexible and inclusive approach.

### Community engagement

Involve students, faculty and alumni in shaping collaborative efforts. A diverse set of stakeholders ensures more inclusive and impactful initiatives.

### Faculty development

Encourage faculty participation in global conferences, workshops and exchange programmes to bring back international best practices and expand institutional expertise.

### Institutional infrastructure

Establish a dedicated international relations office to efficiently manage collaborations. Equip the office with skilled professionals who understand global academic landscapes and cultural nuances.

## “A world in a campus”

### O.P. Jindal Global University: Case study

“The inaugural flight of my life also marked my first international experience when I travelled to London on a Rhodes Scholarship. It was a truly transformative experience that changed my life and sparked the dream of building a university in India. As a young student at Oxford and later at Harvard, I wondered why international education was accessible to students like me only with the help of a scholarship and after completing several years of university education in India. Finally, in 2009, with the philanthropic support of Chancellor Mr. Naveen Jindal, O.P. Jindal Global University was established with the vision to democratise the opportunities for providing an international world-class education for students on a truly global campus in India.”

- Professor (Dr.) C. Raj Kumar, Founding Vice-Chancellor, O.P. Jindal Global University

The democratic vision of providing opportunities for international education to students who lack the privilege of international mobility, as articulated by Professor (Dr.) Kumar in the quote above, has shaped the policies and practices of O.P. Jindal Global University (JGU) over the past 15 years since its establishment. Indeed, this vision and the corresponding policies and practices have facilitated JGU’s recognition as an institution of eminence by the government of India. This recognition is given only to 10 public and 10 private universities among 1,000 universities in India.

On the world stage, JGU has been ranked as India’s top private university for three consecutive years (2021–2023) and among the top 700 universities globally by QS World University Rankings 2023. JGU has been recognised among the top 150 universities globally under 50 years by the QS Young University Rankings 2022. In 2024, JGU was among the top 200–400 universities globally for successfully delivering three sustainable development goals according to the Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings. JGU was ranked as the number 1 university in the world and awarded ‘Gold’ in the THE Online Learning Rankings 2024. The Jindal Global Law School has been ranked number 1 in India for the fifth consecutive year and is the only law school in India among the Global Top 100 law schools in the QS World University Rankings by Subject 2024.

In 15 years, JGU has grown into an institution with 14,000 students from 75+ countries, 1,100+ full-time faculty members and 2,900+ administrative staff on its fully residential campus. JGU’s faculty members represent 49 countries, with 107 full-time international faculty and 278 faculty members who are graduates of the top 100 universities in the world, according to THE, ARWU and QS global ranking agencies.

More than 150 students go to study abroad and participate in semester exchange programmes every year. JGU has research and teaching collaborations with 500+ leading institutions from over 75 countries and offers 50+ dual degree programmes with reputed foreign universities. The teaching collaborations also include thesis co-supervision by faculty members from foreign universities and industry experts. To ensure the rigour of doctoral research, at least one doctoral thesis examiner is recruited from an international university outside of India.



Academic, curricular and co-curricular programmes at JGU cater to the needs of students from diverse backgrounds. JGU also receives full degree-seeking international students and semester-exchange students from different countries worldwide. Currently, there are 142 full-time degree-seeking international students. In 2024–2025, JGU hosted 300+ international students for a semester exchange and a short-term “India-immersion” programme designed to meet the intercultural learning needs of international students.

The fully residential campus infrastructure provides access to a world-class library, sports infrastructure and healthcare facilities. With the mission to provide civic education, JGU recently established India’s first Constitution Museum and the Rights & Freedoms Academy on its campus in celebration of the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the Indian Constitution.

Jindal India Institute at JGU has launched an online MA programme in “India Studies” and an on-campus “Namaste India” programme to provide introductory lessons in Hindi language, Indian society, economics, business, politics and cultural diversity to international students. JGU is taking a decolonial approach in promoting internationalisation while meeting the NEP 2020 mandate for the internationalisation of higher education and the promotion of Indian languages and knowledge systems.

To further facilitate the inward mobility of international students, JGU has launched a one-year Naveen Jindal Young Global Research Fellowship programme named after its founding chancellor. It aims to promote interdisciplinary collaboration and academic growth among young PhD scholars from around the world by providing the opportunity to work with JGU faculty experts and co-author findings from their research in peer-reviewed academic journals. The fellowship programme is designed to host and cultivate a dynamic intellectual environment for researchers from diverse disciplines worldwide. O.P. Jindal Global University has consciously created a campus ecosystem that promotes internationalisation through faculty and student recruitments, teaching and research collaborations and co-curricular activities.

## Strengthening the foundations for collaboration

Institutional and policy-level interventions are critical for international collaborations to thrive. Policymakers are pivotal in creating an enabling environment that encourages cross-border academic collaborations. Beyond addressing immediate challenges, they must proactively shape policies that foster innovation, inclusivity and global engagement in education.



### Simplify and harmonise regulations

- **Streamline cross-border processes:** Introduce unified frameworks for credit transfers, degree recognition and joint programme approvals to reduce administrative bottlenecks.
- **Visa flexibility:** Simplify visa processes, including long-term and multi-entry visas, for students, researchers and faculty.
- **Mutual recognition of credentials:** Collaborate with global education bodies to ensure seamless recognition of Indian and foreign academic qualifications.



### Expand financial support mechanisms

- **Dedicated funding pools:** Create government-backed grants and scholarships to support research collaborations, faculty exchanges and student mobility.
- **Tax incentives:** Offer financial incentives to private entities and institutions actively engaging in international collaborations.
- **Public-private collaborations:** Encourage collaborations between academia and industry to co-fund global initiatives.



### Enhance collaboration through technology

- **Virtual education Infrastructure:** Invest in digital tools and platforms to enable virtual exchange programmes and collaborative research.
- **Online accreditation systems:** Simplify compliance and accreditation for international programmes through robust online portals.
- **Digital learning standards:** Develop guidelines for virtual collaborations to ensure consistency in quality and delivery.



### Foster regional and global alliances

- **Regional cooperation:** Strengthen ties with institutions in emerging regions such as Southeast Asia, Africa and Latin America to address shared challenges.
- **Global forums and networks:** Participate in international education summits and consortia to influence global academic policies.
- **Interdisciplinary focus:** Promote collaborations in fields that address global priorities, such as sustainability, AI and public health.



## Conclusion

International collaborations are more than strategic opportunities, they are essential to the future of Indian higher education. These collaborations empower institutions to address global challenges, enhance academic excellence and contribute to societal progress. However, realising their full potential requires a collective commitment to innovation, inclusivity and sustained investment.

For institutions, success lies in aligning collaborations with their unique strengths and long-term vision. For policymakers, the task is to create robust support systems and incentivise global engagement. Together, these efforts can position Indian universities as global leaders in education and innovation, setting new benchmarks for collaboration, influence and excellence. By fostering an environment of trust, adaptability and shared purpose, India can shape the future of higher education globally.

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