



ARC4 Students' Forum

**University-Business Partnerships:
Asia and Europe Seeking 21st Century Solutions**

23-24 March 2015
Hangzhou, China

Policy Recommendations for the 5th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEM ME5) 27-28 April 2015, Riga, Latvia

The ARC4 Students' Forum on "University-Business Partnerships: Asia and Europe Seeking 21st Century Solutions" took place on 23-24 March 2015 at Zhejiang University in Hangzhou, China. On this occasion, 51 Students from all ASEM member countries developed Policy Recommendations on how universities and the business sector can better cooperate to equip students with employability skills, to cultivate entrepreneurship, and to innovate learning environments through information and communication technologies.

The Students convey the following recommendations for consideration of the ASEM Ministers for Education at the upcoming 5th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting on 27-28 April 2015 in Riga, Latvia. The Students also address these Recommendations to their university and business leaders and relevant institutions amongst other stakeholders in ASEM countries. Four Student Representatives personally handed over these Policy Recommendations to the Minister for Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia, Ms Mārīte Seile, at the Closing Ceremony of the 4th ASEM Rectors' Conference on 27 March 2015 in Hangzhou.

University-Business Partnerships for Employability Skills

1. Curriculum design processes should take a student-centred approach, in partnership with students, to provide flexible learning pathways and opportunities for soft skill development, in consultation with industry and external stakeholders when deemed useful, without jeopardising academic integrity. Opportunities to develop soft skills outside of the classroom, including student-led activities, need to be actively supported technically and financially, promoted, and the learning completely recognised by relevant stakeholders.
2. Transparent, independent and updated programme information for all Higher Education Institutions must be made accessible on centralised public platforms, available nationally and internationally to students, potential students, parents, teachers and employers. Career guidance services must be available at all levels and adequately resourced. Governments need to implement measures and make resources available to strengthen the role universities and businesses take in supporting such services.
3. University-Business Partnerships which provide quality work-placed learning opportunities must ensure decent working conditions and be incentivised and practically supported by long-term national strategies, designed by relevant stakeholders. Partnerships must ensure that expected learning outcomes are achieved



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by the learning completed, which is recognised academically and that students are compensated for the completed work.

University-Business Partnerships for Entrepreneurship

4. The institutionalisation of entrepreneurship within university curricula, in partnership with business (SMEs and MNCs), is a must. This should include teaching material enriched with actual business cases, inter-disciplinary courses, and the creation of start-up incubators in universities that provide mentorship and advisory services.
5. Universities, businesses and communities should work together to explicitly promote social entrepreneurship and develop business models that create shared value. This addresses problems in societies, encouraging sustainable development and the notion that entrepreneurship is not exclusively for profit-making, but has a social role to play ultimately for the benefit of everyone.
6. An improved funding system for university start-ups and entrepreneurial activities is needed. This includes tax incentives for investors, a system of preferential loans for entrepreneurs, improved seed-funding channels, allowing universities to access more external funding and provide venture capital funding for entrepreneurial activities.

University-Business Partnerships for New Learning Environments through Technology

7. Universities should have a policy framework that emphasises access to technology and training of faculty and students. This should include the establishment of strategic centres at universities to continuously improve technology use on campuses. Such activity should be supported by an international network to share good practices and close interaction with businesses.
8. Flexible approaches to institutionalise recognition of online learning as a complement to traditional education in universities, such as through Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) or other Open Educational Resources (OERs) are needed. For instance, these should be accredited and/or used as a supplement for admission applications to university.
9. Universities and business should support national and international student initiatives in leveraging on technology to create opportunities aimed at acquiring additional experiences and skills. Examples include administrative support and funding for online workshops, cross-university forums, networking meetings and other innovative projects.

We, as representatives of the ARC4 Students' Forum, have identified the above issues as priorities and commit ourselves to promote and find ways of applying them. We call upon the ASEM members to engage with us to work towards delivering tangible outcomes for the 6th ASEM Education Minister Meeting.