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Sept. 10

Principles for International Collaboration in Graduate Education

Educators and experts from around the world who are focused on graduate students on Friday issued the [“Banff Principles”](#) as guidelines to discuss further efforts to work together.

While some of the principles are not surprising (promoting quality, encouraging innovation), others set out an agenda for some of the more challenging issues in international collaboration. For example, the principles commit signatories to working to clarify and strengthen the role of the master’s degree, to review and understand the global flow of graduate students and postdoctoral fellows, to promote high quality collaboration in programs that cross national borders, and to create an “inclusive global platform” to discuss the best practices in graduate education.

The principles were developed at a meeting last month – in Banff, Alberta – involving educators from the United States, Canada, Europe, China and Australia. The principles arrive at a time that many issues involving graduate education cross borders. The European Universities Association, for example, just released [a study on doctoral education](#), noting the development of new kinds of doctorates and more international collaboration. And Europe’s [shift to three-year bachelor’s degrees](#) has raised numerous issues for American graduate schools.

Debra W. Stewart, president of the Council of Graduate Schools, the American group that was one of the organizers of the effort, said that the principles are an important first step in dealing with many key issues. She stressed that the effort, which is expected to lead to more detailed principles, was “not about standardization.” But she said that efforts to assure quality control (and the recognition of degrees in other countries) could not exist with out at least a common agenda across national boundaries and a common vocabulary, so a discussion about master’s degrees is really about master’s degrees.

The countries and regions were selected not for just producing graduate students, but for having their own graduate programs. Stewart said other countries or regions might well join the effort down the road.

“In a world where people are not only moving from Germany to France, but from Illinois to Belgium, it is going to be more important for us to understand what these degrees mean,” she said.

– [Scott Jaschik](#)

The original story and user comments can be viewed online at <http://insidehighered.com/news/2007/09/10/banff>.

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