How to Develop Delegation Visits for Maximum Partnership Impact

This document consolidates insights gathered from roundtable discussions during the 2025 EAIE Conference *Spotlight Session: How to Develop Delegation Visits for Maximum Partnership Impact*, hosted by the EAIE Thematic Committee on Partnerships. The discussions focused on developing a practical checklist for hosting international delegations. These notes reflect diverse perspectives from global practitioners and aim to provide a comprehensive framework for planning, executing, and evaluating delegation visits. The resulting checklist are designed to help institutions ensure alignment with strategic priorities, optimize resources, and foster meaningful, mutually beneficial partnerships.

1. Strategic Foundations

- **Nominate a Sponsor / Accountable Person**
    - Assign a lead (faculty, central office, or department) responsible for coordination and follow-up.
- **Create a webpage for international visitors**
    - Highlight university practices for hosting international visitors (e.g., minimum notice period, unsuitable visit dates, and other criteria for hosting.)
    - Create an online form for visit requests collecting essential information (e.g., dates of visit, members of delegation, goals, specific areas of interest, etc.)
- **Decision-Making Process**
    - Define who approves the visit (president, committee, or group decision).
    - Ensure stakeholder buy-in for commitment.
- **Alignment with Institutional Strategy**
    - Confirm the visit supports university goals and priorities.
    - Avoid "academic tourism" by focusing on tangible outcomes.
- **Prioritization Rules**
    - Set an annual cap on delegations.
    - Create criteria for prioritizing requests during peak periods.
- **Screening & Risk Assessment**

    - Contact embassies or national agencies to verify partners.
    - Assess geopolitical risks and foreign interference.
- **Ownership & Centralized Process**
    - Define if the visit is program/department/faculty-specific or university-wide.
    - Communicate the centralized process internally (e.g., webpage, etc.)

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2. Pre-Visit Planning

- **Define Objectives & Outcomes**
    - What goals or agreements should be achieved? (MoU/MoA if relevant)
    - Establish milestones and success metrics.
- **Internal & External Communication**
    - Share objectives and expectations internally and with visitors.
    - Engage senior leadership early.
- **Preparation Timeline**
    - Minimum notice period (e.g., 4–8 weeks).
    - Schedule internal pre-meetings with faculty and leadership.
- **Budget & Cost Analysis**
    - Calculate cost vs. expected return.
    - Address cultural differences in hospitality expectations.
- **Briefing Materials**
    - Prepare a comprehensive briefing: agenda, bios, visiting university profile (e.g., location, academic strengths, ranking, etc.), and previous/current collaborations with this university.
    - Share materials with all participants before the visit.
- **Pre-empting Issues**
    - Inform visitors of unsuitable times (graduation, holidays, summer).
    - Plan contingency for last-minute changes.

- **Mandatory Feedback**
  - Include feedback requirement in application form.
  - Raise awareness for reporting and accountability.

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3. Program & Logistics

- **Agenda & Milestones**
  - Include clear timings, goals, and networking opportunities.
  - Consider shorter visits with campus tours if needed.
- **Travel & Accommodation**
  - Assist with visas, hotels, and transportation – even if it's just a document with visa information and travel information.
  - Ensure accessibility and cultural considerations.
- **Language & Interpretation**
  - Arrange interpreters or bilingual materials.
- **Hospitality & Protocol**
  - Define gift policy (or no-gift policy) and communicate it.
  - Plan culturally appropriate meals and activities.
  - Address reciprocity concerns transparently.
- **Student Involvement**
  - Include volunteers or interns for engagement and support (e.g., campus tour).
  - Ensure the students involved are thoroughly briefed on their role, the incoming visitors, and culturally specific details.

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4. On-Site Execution

- **Welcome & Orientation**
  - Assign greeters and facilitators.

    - Provide welcome packets and tech support.
- **Ensure Right Connections**
    - Match visitors with relevant faculty and researchers.
    - Use an internal database or expert list for targeted meetings.
- **Shadowing**
    - Senior staff should accompany guests to ensure consistency.
- **Cultural Engagement**
    - Offer experiences beyond campus (local culture, student interaction).

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5. Follow-Up & Evaluation

- **Immediate Follow-Up**
    - Document the visit and share internally. Highlight three main action items, who is responsible, and schedule the next check-in.
    - Send thank-you notes and recap agreed actions.
    - Post institutional social media updates if appropriate.
- **Accountability**
    - Encourage academics to sign off on agreed actions.
    - Assign responsible stakeholders for follow-up.
- **Scheduled Reminders**
    - Set reminders for next steps and milestones.
- **Evaluation**
    - Review outcomes at 6 months and 1 year.
    - Reflect on ROI and strategic impact.
- **Continuous Improvement**
    - Collect feedback from visitors and internal participants and update processes.
    - Build a database of lessons learned.

- **Data Management**
    - Enter visit data into tracking systems for analysis.

Best Practices Highlighted

- Pre-visit online exchanges to clarify expectations.
- Share materials early (bios, agendas).
- Fix minimum notice period (e.g., 4 weeks).
- Capture and report top 3 promised actions.
- Tailor visits to partner needs and cultural context.
- Engage students where possible for added value (and ensure they are trained for the visit).
- Manage expectations—avoid overpromising.