

INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT: SAMPLE PROBLEMS

Please read the scenario assigned to your table and consider the appropriate response. We're most interested in the values that need to be considered and perspectives that should be included in decision-making.

Scenario 1: An academic association with international membership issues a call for proposals for universities to host its annual conference. The criteria mentioned in the call emphasized factors such as the ability of the university to provide administrative and financial support, adequacy of accommodations and facilities, ease of travel to the location, and rotation among major parts of the world. One highly competitive proposal comes from a university in a country that has been criticized by human rights groups for persecution of ethnic minorities. Some groups have accused the government of genocide. A member of the committee reviewing the proposals says that the association should not hold a conference in that country, or that the association should at least make a statement during the conference condemning the persecution. What should the association do with the university's proposal?

Scenario 2: A US-based organization with an international membership organizes a conference in New York. Two months before the conference, the US government imposes new restrictions on entry into the United States for individuals from Muslim-majority countries. Many international members of the association announce that they will not attend the conference to protest the new federal rules, which they consider to be discriminatory. Some members from Muslim-member countries notify the association that they cannot attend the conference because of the rules. What should the association do?

Scenario 3: An international academic association announces plans to hold a research workshop in Country X. The workshop is co-hosted by a new academic research center in Country X that is focused on gender and identity themes. The center is controversial and has struggled to continue its work. Shortly after the announcement, some members of the association send a protest about the workshop. They point out that Country X has a law criminalizing homosexual acts, with a maximum penalty of up to two years in jail. No charge had been made under the law in the past five years, but the government of Country X has also ignored calls to repeal the law. The members say that the conference should be relocated to protest the law and protect people traveling to the conference. However, the co-hosting center worries that relocation will undercut its standing and jeopardize its financing. What should the association do?

Scenario 4: An international journal receives a manuscript from a university in Country X that presents data about the role of international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) in delivering primary education programs for women in that country and reaches negative conclusions about the value of this work. A reviewer asks whether the journal should publish the manuscript. The reviewer says:

The government of Country X has been campaigning against INGOs and tightening rules about their activities. It is also well known that professors in Country X are subject to discipline by the central ministry of education. This leads me to question whether the interpretation of data in this paper is objective, and also whether the data itself is accurately reported. The paper gives little or no space to contrary interpretations and does not acknowledge what the government is trying to do. Given the political situation, I'm not sure how the author could revise the paper to address my concerns.

The reviewer insists that if the paper is published, some other expert should be invited to contribute a short comment that explains the context and presents an alternative perspective on the role of INGOs in Country X. What should the editors do?

Scenario 5: An American public affairs school is considering an exchange program with a partner school in another country that widely described as a non-democratic state. Elections for the presidency are not free and fair and the judiciary is not independent. The partner school is financed and overseen by a government ministry, although in practice it has significant autonomy. The partner school requests that the curriculum focus mainly on technical problems of policy design and implementation, avoiding lectures or case discussions that mention political or judicial reforms. Should the American school agree to these restrictions?

Scenario 6: An organization responsible for accreditation of public affairs programs is asked to accredit a program in a country that is regarded as illiberal and non-democratic by several watchdog groups. Faculty in the program requesting accreditation may be subject to discipline by central government agencies, and almost all graduates of this program will be employed within government, including agencies responsible for public order and censorship. Are these considerations relevant to the accreditation decision?