



**PRESS RELEASE – for immediate release**

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**LEADING INTERNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION NETWORK SIGNS  
GROUNDBREAKING AGREEMENT**

- **Fourteen international universities sign joint PhD agreement**
- **Unique approach to PhD programmes**
- **Aim to become benchmark for other collaborative networks**

*Universitas 21* (U21), the leading network for international higher education, has today signed a Memorandum of Understanding to launch a unique development in the opportunities available to PhD students around the network.

The agreement, signed by Vice Chancellors and Presidents from fourteen leading universities around the world at their annual meeting this year at Korea University, establishes a joint PhD programme which enables doctoral students to embark on joint degrees which will considerably enhance their research and employment opportunities on an international scale.

Unlike a number of other joint programmes, this MoU gives an over-arching framework for universities to create tailor-made programmes of study for each student, taking individual research needs into account and enabling collaboration with another of the network's universities.

The institutions involved in this ground-breaking programme from across the globe, are the universities of Auckland, Birmingham, British Columbia, Delhi, Dublin (University College), Edinburgh, Glasgow, Hong Kong, Korea, McGill, Melbourne, Nottingham, Queensland and Virginia, thus presenting a truly global choice of research partners for students embarking on a PhD.

Speaking on the launch of the programme, Professor John Casteen, President of the University of Virginia and Chair of the *Universitas 21* network, said "*The signing of this MoU today marks a key development in the way in which U21 universities are approaching study and research. Not*

*only does this distinguish us from the other programmes already in existence, by being focused clearly on the needs of the individual students, but it sets a new benchmark for international collaboration at PhD level and a trend which I believe is one which should be followed by other major networks and consortia.”*

The programme grew out of discussions among Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies within the *Universitas 21* network, and was led by Professor Mary Bownes at the University of Edinburgh, who saw the opportunity to use the strength of collaboration between the network members and draws on the unique position the network holds, being a strong and cohesive network of 21 universities over 14 countries in 4 continents of the world.

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Universitas 21 is a network of 21 research-led universities around the world. It aims to promote and achieve collaboration, co-operation and work of a comprehensive nature, drawing on a strong bond of collegiality found between similarly-minded universities all of whom occupy a highly regarded status in their respective global regions and among the global league tables. The membership comprises: University of Auckland, University of Birmingham, University of British Columbia, University of Delhi, University College Dublin, University of Edinburgh, Fudan University, University of Glasgow, University of Hong Kong, Korea University, Lund University, McGill University, University of Melbourne, University of New South Wales, University of Nottingham, University of Queensland, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, National University of Singapore, Tecnológico de Monterrey, University of Virginia, Waseda University.

For further information about the joint PhD project contact Professor Mary Bownes [mary.bownes@ed.ac.uk](mailto:mary.bownes@ed.ac.uk).

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