

SPOTLIGHT: Globalization of Management Education

Through Spotlights, AACSB highlights effective and notable programs, institutions, or practices related to each online Resource Center, on a rotation basis. Prior Spotlights remain accessible in an archive library, and visitors are invited to nominate their own school or another school as a potential future focus. The following is a featured spotlight for the [Globalization of Management Education Resource Center](#).

Featured Schools:

The Academic Members of CEMS—The Global Alliance in Management Education Jouy-en-Josas, France

CEMS—The Global Alliance in Management Education

The CEMS Alliance describes itself as a “strategic alliance of leading business schools and multinational companies,” whose “first mission is to set a global standard of excellence for pre-experience Master’s in management.”¹ According to CEMS Alliance Deputy Director Roland Siegers, the goal of CEMS member schools is to involve businesses in the creation of a practice-based course of study, while in the process showcasing corporate environments and experiences for business students. He says that the close involvement of business schools with corporate partners to deliver a practical and highly integrative academic program has been a core tenet of the alliance from its very beginnings.

The founding members of the Community of European Management Schools and International Companies, as the alliance was originally known, were Spain’s ESADE Business School, HEC School of Management Paris, Italy’s Università Commerciale Luigi Bocconi, and the University of Cologne in Germany.² These four schools joined with nine corporate partners to establish the CEMS Alliance as a not-for-profit organization under French law in 1988. Siegers says that back when CEMS was founded, the Partnership in International Management (PIM), a similar consortium to which the four schools belong that was founded in 1973,³ then functioned primarily to enable student exchanges, faculty exchanges, joint research, and the like. The initial idea behind CEMS was to establish deeper cooperation initiatives between its members than PIM was willing to support at that time.

The membership of the CEMS Alliance has grown over the years, eventually expanding beyond Europe in 2008.⁴ As of this year, schools representing 26 countries on all continents but Africa are members of the alliance. According to Siegers, this expansion outside of the European community does not reflect a change in mission for CEMS, but only a change in scope. He acknowledges that the alliance has, of necessity, had to develop greater IT and communications capabilities to encompass more global operations, whereas physical meetings previously were the norm. Nevertheless, he says, if CEMS schools aim to train international business managers, “international cannot just mean European anymore.”

To date, it has been the practice of the CEMS Alliance to grant membership to only one school per country. Each school chosen to be a member of CEMS must therefore be recognized as a national leader in terms of reputation and research (however the represented nation in question measures such things). Siegers says that each potential member of the alliance must also be prepared for the highly resource-intensive nature of the partnership. The CEMS Alliance is by design deeply integrative at all levels—administration, services,

curriculum design, etc.—especially with regard to the CEMS Master’s in International Management (MIM), the signature joint degree program of the CEMS Alliance around which its activities are largely centered.

The CEMS Master’s in International Management

The CEMS MIM is the “main vehicle” for the alliance’s goal of preparing future international business leaders.⁵ It is a pre-experience master’s degree worth 65 credits under the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS).⁶ The MIM is always offered to selected students of CEMS member schools in conjunction with a pre-experience master’s degree, usually a Master’s of Science (MSc), from the member school at which each student is enrolled; thus, CEMS members must offer such degrees in order to join the alliance. Indeed, Siegers notes that this requirement has led prospective members to launch such programs where none were before just for the chance to join the CEMS Alliance, particularly in non-European areas where such programs are less common.

CEMS members jointly develop the curriculum for the MIM, and decide which of each member school’s pre-experience master’s degree(s), or major options, are compatible with the program. Some member schools have more such degree programs or majors than others. The University of St. Gallen in Switzerland, for example, offers 11 different MSc options with which the MIM can be combined, according to Siegers, while ESADE Business School has four,⁷ and the Richard Ivey School of Business in Canada has one.⁸ Depending on the size of the institution, each CEMS member school selects 20–70 of its MSc students per year for a MIM cohort, based on mutually agreed-upon admissions guidelines and any applicable local regulations. Siegers says the average number of students per school is about 40, and that the 2011–12 MIM cohort consists of approximately 950 students in total, though individual students typically come in contact with only 80 or so during their CEMS MIM year.

The CEMS MIM curriculum includes a week-long Block Seminar, two six-month academic terms, several one-day seminars covering practical managerial skills (run concurrently with the academic terms), and an internship of at least 10 weeks with a firm in a nation other than the student’s home country.⁹ At least one of the two academic terms must also be taken at a CEMS member school other than the one at which the student originally enrolled. The curriculum does offer some flexibility with regard to when courses can be taken, owing to the fact that each MIM student must also complete the requirements of the pre-experience master’s degree at the CEMS member school in which they are enrolled.

The MIM program has two required courses, one in strategy taken during the first academic term and one in cross-cultural management during the second term. Additionally, there is a required consultancy-style business project in the second term, while elective courses fill out the balance of the ECTS credits each term. All elective courses available for the program are mutually agreed-upon as acceptable by members, and are chosen from among the international management courses available at each CEMS member school, including some that are exclusive to CEMS MIM students.

Indeed, as Siegers points out, because the MIM program in and of itself is not required to conform to the various accreditation laws of its member schools’ countries, faculty involved in the program are free to use the CEMS platform to develop elective courses that are innovative and off of the main-stream, for which he says MIM students are very appreciative. As an example, he cites the University of St. Gallen, which developed a Climate Change Strategy Game in which students play the role of country negotiators in a simulated UN-style Copenhagen Conference. This game proved so successful that three other member schools have become involved, including ESADE, the University of Cologne, and the Warsaw School of Economics in Poland.¹⁰

All CEMS MIM courses are delivered in English, so fluency in that tongue is necessary for all students in the program. However, students must demonstrate fluency in other languages as well. How many others depends on whether they select the tri-lingual track or the tri-national track of the MIM program. Students on the tri-lingual track are required to demonstrate fluency in two languages other than English (which can include their mother tongue, in the case of non-native English speakers).¹¹ The tri-national track involves taking both CEMS MIM academic terms at a different CEMS member school than the one in which the student is enrolled, in

which case the student attends part of the program in three different countries. Students on the tri-national track are required to demonstrate fluency in only one language other than English.

According to Siegers, students generally find the more standard tri-lingual track to be more economically feasible. The tri-national track is only available to students at some CEMS member schools, since not all have the ability to offer it. Additionally, he says, European students (who continue to make up the majority of each cohort) frequently already possess sufficient linguistic skills to complete the tri-lingual track. With regard to tuition, scholarships, and other financial matters, students follow the applicable guidelines of their home institutions. Siegers notes that international student mobility, particularly between the nations signatory to the Bologna Accords, can make this arrangement interesting, as the laws of some of the nations that have a CEMS member school do not allow them charge tuition. Nevertheless, he says, the CEMS member schools operate on the principle of reciprocity, which has yet to result in any tension between the academic partners.

Quality Assurance

Considering the prestigious nature of the schools heretofore chosen to become CEMS Alliance academic members, nearly three quarters of whom hold AACSB and/or EQUIS accreditation, one might think that quality assurance would not have to be a major concern for the alliance. Siegers, however, describes a robust, two-tiered process by which the CEMS Alliance members ensure the quality of the MIM program. The first layer of quality assurance is the CEMS Alliance Head Office, for which Siegers himself works directly. The Head Office evaluates key elements of the MIM program via online survey of staff at CEMS member schools, to assess how well the program's learning goals are met. It then creates overviews of best practices, as well as identifying those areas where improvement is needed, and communicates its findings to program directors at CEMS member schools, according to Siegers.

The second layer of quality assurance is a process of periodic peer review, similar to the review processes performed by accreditation organizations such as AACSB and EFMD. Every five or six years, Siegers says, teams of three to four CEMS stakeholders visit academic member institutions for one and a half days. These teams conduct interviews on-site and read self-evaluation reports provided by the university in question, which list all elements of the MIM program at that school (e.g., curricula, student services, strategy, etc.). The school's report and action plan, and the team's report, are assessed by the alliance's Academic Quality Assurance Committee, which can decide to assign a later progress report, ask for another review, or deny the school the ability to offer the CEMS MIM program for certain period of time until issues are resolved.

Corporate Partners

Corporate partners have a strong voice in the alliance, particularly since, as Siegers points out, the nearly 70 CEMS Alliance corporate partners make up almost three quarters of the alliance's total membership (academic plus corporate).¹² Indeed, in keeping with the CEMS Alliance's philosophy of integrating the academic and practical aspects of business education, the corporate partners are highly invested both in the governance of the CEMS Alliance (as members of the Strategic and Executive Boards), and in the development of the MIM program and services surrounding it.

CEMS corporate partners take part in MIM program development by helping to select compatible pre-experience master's programs at CEMS member schools to pair with the MIM. They arrange the annual Career Forum, and provide live business problems and other content for student projects, cases, and seminars. Siegers says the corporate partners also like to participate as interviewers in the student selection process, enabling them to follow individual students throughout their CEMS MIM year, so that they can be among the first to make employment offers at graduation. Additionally, he notes that over 80% of the approximately €2 million budget for the alliance comes from the membership fees of corporate partners, with the academic members making up the rest.

While it is not required for CEMS MIM students to do so, according to Siegers many of them choose to do their international internships at one of the corporate partner organizations. He notes that the students generally find the priority access that the CEMS Alliance provides to these multi-national firms to be very valuable.

Doctoral and Faculty Engagement

In 2009, the CEMS Strategic Board decided to extend the alliance's collaborative activities beyond the level of the MIM program.¹³ The Doctoral Education and Early-Career Programme (DEEP) represents the CEMS Alliance's first foray into the realm of doctoral education. Siegers cautions, however, that the DEEP is not an attempt to create a joint doctoral degree program similar to the MIM, since at the doctoral level such a joint program is far more difficult, logistically speaking.

According to Siegers, the alliance looked for quite some time into the possibility of an integrated PhD program. However, he says, PhD programs vary too widely according to differing national higher education environments and standards to make this possible. For example, in some countries students pursue doctoral degrees in order to foster careers in industry, while in others such degrees are seen as useful purely for those going into academic careers. Languages of delivery are almost always those of the given school's nation, and much harder to homogenize than at the master's level. Even the structure varies greatly, with some countries incorporating coursework and others basing the degree entirely on the strength of the thesis.

Due to the extreme difficulty in bringing all these disparate elements into a single structure, the alliance decided instead to focus the DEEP on creating opportunities for networking, providing access to research output (both online and through doctoral seminars), and consolidating information about alliance members' doctoral offerings and open faculty positions. According to Siegers, the CEMS Alliance is also in the early stages of developing groups of PhD students in specific fields, who can benefit from meeting peers at other CEMS member universities. He says this is particularly helpful for students whose research field is sufficiently specialized that they may not have peers at their own institution.

Faculty at member schools also have networking opportunities through the CEMS Alliance. They may do so by joining one of the (currently) 14 Faculty Groups, or even create new ones.¹⁴ Siegers describes these groups as self-selecting, interest-based units which allow faculty to pursue joint research, share and develop course material, and disseminate best practices in pedagogy. He says some of the more interesting projects that have come out of the Faculty Groups are joint teaching projects, such as the Climate Change Strategy Game mentioned above. Joint research has also been a strong point, as members of the Cross-Cultural Management Group have received this year's Global Forum Best Paper Award from the Management Education & Development Division (MED) of the U.S. Academy of Management.¹⁵

CEMS Faculty Groups are not the only means by which the alliance is working to connect faculty and staff at its member schools. Siegers says that four to seven personnel at each member school have designated CEMS Alliance roles, from governance (primarily deans and vice deans) to quality assurance implementation. CEMS has created several working circles of people with similar functions such as these. The latest group the alliance is working to connect are the public relations and communications directors at its member schools, according to Siegers. Ideally, he says, the goal would be to establish joint CEMS communications initiatives.

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End Notes

¹ CEMS- The Global Alliance in Management Education. (2011) About CEMS web page. Electronic document, <http://www.cems.org/about>, accessed May 23, 2011.

² CEMS- The Global Alliance in Management Education. (2011) CEMS History web page. Electronic document, <http://www.cems.org/about/milestones/history>, accessed May 24, 2011.

³ Partnership in International Management. (2011) PIM History web page. Electronic document, <http://www.pimnetwork.org/nuovo/content/pim-history>, accessed May 24, 2011.

⁴ CEMS- The Global Alliance in Management Education. (2011) CEMS History web page. Electronic document, <http://www.cems.org/about/milestones/history>, accessed May 24, 2011.

⁵ CEMS- The Global Alliance in Management Education. (2011) CEMS Mission Statement web page. Electronic document, <http://www.cems.org/about/mission>, accessed May 24, 2011.

⁶ CEMS- The Global Alliance in Management Education. (2011) Curriculum web page. Electronic document, <http://www.cems.org/mim/curriculum>, accessed May 24, 2011.

⁷ ESADE Business School. (2011) CEMS MIM @ ESADE web page. Electronic document, <http://www.esade.edu/management/eng/programmes/cems-mim>, accessed May 26, 2011.

⁸ University of Western Ontario, Richard Ivey School of Business. (2011) Ivey Master of Science in Management web page. Electronic document, <http://www.ivey.uwo.ca/msc/>, accessed May 24, 2011.

⁹ CEMS- The Global Alliance in Management Education. (2011) Curriculum web page. Electronic document, <http://www.cems.org/mim/curriculum>, accessed May 24, 2011.

¹⁰ Wüstenhagen, Rolf. (2011) Curriculum Vitae. Electronic document, www.alexandria.unisg.ch/export/DL/Rolf_Wuestenhagen/84082.pdf, accessed May 31, 2011, Page 2.

¹¹ CEMS- The Global Alliance in Management Education. (2011) Management and Business Communication web page. Electronic document, <http://www.cems.org/mim/curriculum/management-business-communication>, accessed May 24, 2011.

¹² CEMS- The Global Alliance in Management Education. (2011) Corporate Partners web page. Electronic document, <http://www.cems.org/corporate-partners>, accessed May 24, 2011.

¹³ CEMS- The Global Alliance in Management Education. (2011) Doctoral Education and Faculty web page. Electronic document, <http://www.cems.org/academic-members/doctoral-education>, accessed May 31, 2011.

¹⁴ CEMS- The Global Alliance in Management Education. (2011) CEMS Faculty Groups web page. Electronic document, <http://www.cems.org/academic-members/faculty-groups>, accessed May 31, 2011.

¹⁵ CEMS- The Global Alliance in Management Education. (2011) Cross-Cultural Management Group web page. Electronic document, <http://www.cems.org/academic-members/faculty-groups/cross-cultural-management>, accessed May 31, 2011.