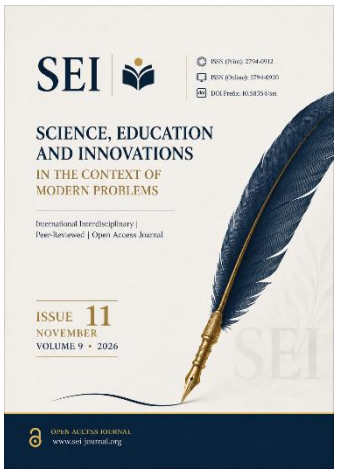

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International Partnerships and the Attractiveness of Professional Military Education in Azerbaijan: A Comparative Documentary Analysis

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Abstract

International partnerships can support professional military education, but counts of exchanges and agreements reveal little about changes in teaching or the attractiveness of programmes to prospective applicants. This article examines how international cooperation, domestic qualifications policy and recruitment support can be connected in Azerbaijan. A qualitative comparative analysis of eight public documents and publications distinguishes policy provisions, programme design and scholarly interpretation. The materials cover NATO's Defence Education Enhancement Programme, UNESCO's qualifications recognition principles, Azerbaijan's national qualifications framework and recruitment incentives, and scholarship on domestic military education. The documentary synthesis identifies curriculum alignment, faculty development, academic mobility, transparent recognition and quality assurance as complementary mechanisms. It also distinguishes the educational experience, admission transparency, material support, language and research opportunities, and career clarity as separate dimensions of attractiveness. On this basis, the article proposes a phased implementation framework and indicators that link partnership outputs to local adoption, continued use, and evidence of student and graduate experience. The model enables institutions to specify baselines, denominators, data sources and decision points before implementing change. The documents establish policy provisions and programme design, but they contain no comparable applicant, cadet or graduate outcome data. The proposed framework therefore supports future evaluation rather than estimating the effects of international cooperation or recruitment incentives.

Citation

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INTRODUCTION

Professional military education sits at the intersection of higher education, public-service formation and occupational training. Its institutions must prepare graduates to interpret incomplete information, exercise professional judgment and communicate across organisational and national boundaries. Changes in regional security and rapid technological development have placed additional demands on curricula, but adding topics does

little when programme outcomes, teaching practices and assessment criteria are misaligned. The same problem affects international cooperation. An institution can maintain an active schedule of exchanges, conferences and joint educational events without developing a durable capacity to revise its own programmes. The educational question is how partnership activity becomes a change in the way an institution teaches, assesses and learns from its own performance.

International collaboration provides several routes to renewal. Faculty and cadet exchanges expose participants to alternative teaching and assessment practices. Joint modules, academic seminars and comparative reviews allow institutions to examine differences in programme design. Research partnerships can connect professional experience with scholarly inquiry. These opportunities span peace support, humanitarian response, logistics, crisis management, digital security and emerging technologies as areas of curricular attention. Their educational value depends on how institutions select projects, document what participants learn and incorporate adaptable practices into the domestic curriculum. A completed visit establishes that contact occurred. Evidence of institutional learning requires further records, such as a revised module, calibrated assessment criteria, demonstrated classroom application or a scheduled review.

A second question concerns the attractiveness of military education to prospective applicants. Recruitment is an educational as well as a workforce issue. Candidates and families weigh living and study conditions, the affordability of attendance, admission requirements, perceived teaching quality, opportunities for intellectual growth and the obligations attached to a military career. Recruitment measures can widen the opportunity to apply, while programme quality and truthful information help candidates decide whether the education fits their aspirations. For this reason, competitiveness at entry is only one component of attractiveness. Indicators should also track whether applicants understood the programme and whether enrolled cadets report that expectations were borne out.

Azerbaijan as an institutional case

The distinction between mobility and the internationalisation of everyday education is important in this case. The broader higher education literature treats internationalisation as a varied institutional agenda spanning work abroad and at home (de Wit & Altbach, 2021). For professional military education, a useful implication is that the benefits of an exchange should be assessed partly through the educational opportunities available to students who do not participate directly. Faculty may integrate additional readings, an international case comparison or a jointly developed assessment into a programme already taken by a wider group. Relevant measures may include the reach of revised modules across cohorts and evidence that students can engage with material from more than one institutional context. These measures illuminate a different aspect of educational change than participation totals.

The same reasoning applies to institutional reputation. A partnership may provide a visible signal of academic opportunity, but its significance for prospective students depends on what the institution can explain and deliver. The documents examined here allow the study to identify where opportunities might arise and which domestic conditions shape them. They also justify a distinction between the quality of an advertised opportunity and the availability of that opportunity to a particular student. This distinction is consequential where language proficiency, schedule or programme level affects participation. Evaluating reach, access and quality together would give applicants and institutions a more accurate account of the value of the partnership.

Azerbaijan provides a setting in which to examine how international partnership design intersects with domestic education governance. Its qualifications framework offers a language for describing award levels and learning outcomes, while the December 2023 presidential decree establishes material measures intended to encourage entry into military education. Local publications discuss educational governance and the theoretical foundations of military education (Məmmədzadə, 2025a, 2025b). Together, these materials show why an account centred solely on competition for recruits would miss the institutional conditions needed to sustain educational improvement. International cooperation is relevant when it complements national education priorities, professional requirements and available faculty capacity. The case also makes visible a distinction that applies elsewhere: academic comparability and professional eligibility for service require separate decisions.

An analytical model of programme change

The mechanisms identified in the manuscript can be arranged in a sequence from resources to educational outcomes. At the resource stage, an institution identifies a partner, assigns faculty time and establishes access to appropriate materials. At the implementation stage, academic staff adapt one or more practices and record where they enter existing programmes. An immediate result may be a new assessment instrument or a revised module. Evidence of a further outcome would show how the instrument was applied or what students could demonstrate after the revision. These stages depend on different institutional decisions and may develop at different speeds. One programme may devote a year to revising and piloting a curriculum while another can adopt a single academic practice more quickly.

This sequence also explains why the relationship between internationalisation and attractiveness should be tested rather than assumed. Partnership participation may alter how an institution describes its programmes and what it can offer its students. That information may matter to some prospective applicants who value a language programme, international exchange or scholarly development. Other candidates may weigh affordability, location, personal commitments or career requirements more heavily. The institution-level change and the applicant-level response are different outcomes. By recording both, the proposed evaluation can investigate whether reforms are visible to applicants and relevant to their decisions. This makes it possible to evaluate the credibility of the claimed connection without treating interest in admission as a proxy for learning.

Research questions and contribution

Three questions guide the analysis. First, what mechanisms connect international professional military education cooperation to curriculum renewal, faculty development and institutional capacity? Second, what educational, organisational and material factors should institutions consider when assessing attractiveness? Third, how can Azerbaijan connect international cooperation to measurable educational outcomes while accounting for domestic governance and the limits of the available evidence? The contribution is a document-based synthesis and an evaluation framework that distinguishes activity, implementation and outcome. Its purpose is to specify what records would be needed to test reform claims, identify reasonable denominators and retain the institutional detail required to interpret change. The framework also treats qualifications recognition and mobility as related processes, with their relationship mediated by credible assessment and usable records.

METHODS

Design and sources

The study uses qualitative comparative document analysis. The unit of comparison is a policy instrument or institutional account and the function it performs in education governance. NATO programme materials describe cooperation design and its stated objectives. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2019) provides principles for the recognition of higher education qualifications. The Azerbaijani sources describe the national qualifications framework, measures to encourage enrolment and the governance of educational processes. This design compares provisions, mechanisms and interpretations across document types. It supports conclusions about what is documented, how mechanisms might operate together and what evidence a future evaluation would require (Bowen, 2009).

The core corpus comprises eight sources from the original manuscript. Four describe domestic policy or scholarship: the presidential decree, the education ministry's qualifications framework notice and two publications by Məmmədzadə (2025a, 2025b). Three NATO sources describe the Defence Education Enhancement Programme (DEEP), its strategic development and education and training more broadly. The remaining source is UNESCO's Global Convention. The corpus is purposive and bounded. Documents were included for direct relevance to programme design, educational governance, recruitment support or qualifications recognition. The study reports no database search, screening totals or population-level sample. Bowen (2009) informs the interpretation of document evidence, and Biggs (1996) informs the discussion of alignment between learning outcomes and assessment. These are methodological and conceptual references rather than programme evidence.

Table 1 identifies the analytical role of each group of documents and the claims that can reasonably be made from it.

Table 1

Document Groups and Their Role in the Analysis

Source group	Documentary contribution	Limit of inference
NATO programme and strategy materials	Descriptions of tailored support, faculty and curriculum development, peer cooperation and strategy.	Programme design establishes intended support. Local implementation requires records from participating institutions.
UNESCO Global Convention	Principles and procedures for recognition of higher education qualifications within the convention's scope.	No automatic recognition or entitlement to hold a military position follows from the framework.
Azerbaijani qualifications framework and presidential decree	Qualification descriptors, internal quality provisions and material support measures for eligible groups.	The documents establish provisions. Applicant knowledge, uptake and resulting choices need independent evidence.
Azerbaijani education scholarship	Context on academic governance and methodological foundations of military education.	Local scholarship informs interpretation and does not supply a controlled assessment of partnership effects.

Note. The eight documents and publications constitute a purposive corpus. General methodological references provide interpretive guidance.

Comparative procedure

The source classes also serve different purposes when assessing transferability. International programme material can supply a model to compare with domestic arrangements. It cannot establish that two institutional environments have equivalent staffing, authority or resources. Local academic publications can help describe factors that a comparison needs to consider, such as the responsibilities of faculty and programme managers. The policy texts can establish the domestic framework in which specific decisions are made. Taken together, the materials allow a comparison at the level of institutional functions. The evidence remains insufficient for ranking institutions or comparing the effectiveness of national education systems.

The evaluation measures proposed in the discussion are derived from this separation between institutional provision and participant experience. The procedure asks what each source can establish about an arrangement, what record would establish implementation and what observation would be needed for an outcome claim. For example, a qualifications framework can specify what outcomes should be described. An institutional syllabus can show whether an outcome appears in a programme, an assessment can show whether a cadet was asked to demonstrate it and a suitably evaluated response can provide evidence of performance. Each has a specific evidentiary purpose. Bringing them together is a future research design rather than a claim that such records were collected for this article.

The analysis compares the materials along four dimensions: the purpose and governance of cooperation, curriculum and faculty development, mobility and recognition, and institutional attractiveness. Within each dimension, it identifies the type of evidence available. A decree documents a policy provision and its eligibility conditions. A programme description establishes the stated design of institutional support. A convention provides principles and procedural obligations for applicable cases. Academic publications offer interpretation and contextual evidence. These distinctions matter when interpreting apparent agreement. For example, alignment between UNESCO's

emphasis on transparent recognition and Azerbaijan's use of qualification descriptors supports a conceptual connection, while the effectiveness of a particular recognition process would require case-level records.

The synthesis links each proposed mechanism with observable evidence. A proposed link between faculty mobility and curriculum renewal would require a record of participation, a documented local change and evidence that the practice was applied. A proposed link between financial support and access would require verified eligibility information and observations of applicant behaviour. Where the corpus supplies no baseline or outcome measure, the tables specify the missing evidence. Institutional claims are therefore reported at their appropriate level. No interviews, surveys, field observations or estimates of effect are presented. The analysis does not infer that a mechanism operated at an institution merely because the mechanism appears in a policy text.

RESULTS

International cooperation as a mechanism for institutional learning

A comparative account also needs to distinguish between harmonisation and equivalence. Two programmes may use different materials yet produce comparable learning outcomes, while programmes with apparently similar names may carry different academic expectations. Joint curriculum work is most informative when academic staff compare requirements for success, the assessment burden, the resources available and the kinds of students served. A decision to adapt a partner's materials should state which elements are retained and which need local development. This approach preserves scope for Azerbaijani institutions to maintain their educational traditions and responsibilities while testing specific changes against evidence.

Adaptation requires programme managers to distinguish changes in documentation from changes in instruction. Rewriting a learning outcome can clarify an expectation even when practice remains unchanged. A programme may also improve teaching before its documentation is revised. The distinction is consequential for evaluation because the available records can easily overstate or understate the extent of reform. Linking approved syllabi to sample assignments, assessment documentation and faculty accounts would improve the interpretation of apparently similar implementation rates across departments. Reviewers could then identify whether a difference reflects timing, documentation quality or a real difference in practice.

NATO's education and training materials situate learning within a broader institutional effort to develop common professional understanding and cooperation (North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO], 2025b). DEEP provides a more specific model of partnership among institutions. Its public materials identify curriculum development, faculty development and peer engagement as areas in which a partner can receive tailored support (NATO, 2025a). The programme strategy also places cooperation within a longer-term reform orientation (NATO, 2021). The important feature for the Azerbaijani case is the sequencing of assistance around locally identified needs. An institution can name an educational problem, define a project with an external partner and assess whether the product is usable within its own quality system. The policy materials describe a model of support. They do not establish which educational changes occurred in an Azerbaijani institution.

Curriculum renewal begins with a specification of what graduates should be able to demonstrate. An outcome such as reasoned professional judgment is too broad to assess until the programme specifies the kinds of evidence that will demonstrate it. In educational settings, examples include explaining the basis for a decision, articulating uncertainty, evaluating information quality or identifying the relevant ethical and legal constraints in a case. Constructive alignment links these outcomes to teaching and assessment (Biggs, 1996). A shared module can expose differences in how institutions set expectations, choose learning activities and judge performance. A useful result of exchange is therefore an approved, intelligible alignment between objectives, learning activities and criteria, documented in the syllabus and assessment materials.

Faculty development translates such changes into classroom practice. Instructors work across academic and professional domains and influence cadets' understanding of professional conduct. Peer observation, assessment

calibration, joint preparation of course materials and mentorship provide routes for translating external exposure into local teaching. Active learning can be applied through seminars, case analysis, structured debates, simulations and reflective reviews. The educational justification for each activity depends on its relationship to a defined outcome. A simulation is especially valuable when the debriefing and rubric make visible the reasoning demonstrated by learners. Institutions could therefore document instructor participation as an output and distinguish it from adoption of the relevant pedagogical practice.

The original analysis identifies intellectual interoperability as a further mechanism. In the educational context, it means the ability to engage with shared terminology, interpret unfamiliar analytical assumptions, discuss differences in professional ethics and communicate across institutional cultures. It can be cultivated through exposure to different perspectives in joint seminars, language modules, research discussions and work on humanitarian or multilateral case material. A shared professional vocabulary helps students communicate, while comparative work helps them recognise that terms sometimes carry different institutional meanings. The relevant evidence is educational: whether learners can explain differences accurately, interpret unfamiliar professional material and justify judgments to audiences with different backgrounds.

Research collaboration complements curriculum and faculty development by connecting professional reflection to publicly discussable scholarship. Conferences, joint projects, expert seminars and publication offer opportunities to compare approaches to leadership, institutional management, legal responsibilities, logistics education and technological change. Locally relevant scholarship on the management and methodology of military education also helps clarify where partner resources fit existing institutional practices (Məmmədzadə, 2025a, 2025b). Research and instruction can draw on publicly available materials and appropriately cleared institutional records. The scholarly record should clearly distinguish sources and case-based interpretation. These conditions make findings more useful beyond a single project and clarify which material is available for peer scrutiny.

Digital instruction extends participation through shared seminars, electronic libraries, language study and faculty development. It also requires institutions to consider accessibility, platform governance, responsibility for learning resources and the suitability of teaching materials for external access. A digital module can continue to benefit an institution after cooperation ends if local staff can maintain its materials and update its assessments. Programme quality should therefore be evaluated through the usability and continuation of the resource. Access policies and institutional information-handling rules form part of the context for deciding what may be exchanged. Digital delivery does not remove the need to specify educational goals, support instructors or monitor learner experience.

The evidence points to a distinction among contact, adoption and institutionalisation. Contact is the exchange, agreement or event. Adoption occurs when instructors or academic units use an adapted practice. Institutionalisation is visible when the practice enters the programme's review, staffing or assessment cycle and remains usable when external support ends. This progression applies across officer and non-commissioned officer education, though the evidence to be collected should be proportionate to the qualification and learner group. A partnership reporting system that stops at contact cannot assess whether domestic capacity changed.

Attractiveness across the applicant and graduate pathway

A quality-driven approach to recruitment gives different institutional units distinct responsibilities. Admissions staff can monitor the readability of public information, the stability of selection criteria and recurring questions from candidates. Academic teams can explain programme requirements and how they relate to progression. Student support units can identify whether new cadets experience obstacles they were unprepared to encounter. Graduates can explain which elements of their education proved valuable and where they required further support. When interpreted together, these perspectives reveal where recruitment promises, delivery and transition converge or diverge.

To evaluate material incentives, the institution would need to distinguish awareness, eligibility and uptake. A benefit may be described in a decree without being widely understood by the people it intends to reach. Uptake may also depend on administrative requirements or circumstances that differ among applicants. A candidate

questionnaire could ask what sources people used, which conditions they understood and how support entered their decisions. This would support a more informative evaluation than a simple comparison of application counts before and after the policy. Any report would still need to consider changes in the availability of places, competing education opportunities and demographic trends.

At the level of teaching, student confidence in the educational value of study may depend on the consistency of information received from instructors. Transparent criteria permit cadets to understand the standards applied across different activities. Opportunities to practise written and oral analysis, receive specific feedback and resubmit suitable work can make progression visible. Institutions can examine whether different learner groups have comparable opportunities to use these resources, including access to language support and research mentoring. Such review links the classroom conditions described in the manuscript to candidate perceptions and eventual programme decisions.

Attractiveness is treated here as prospective students' and families' assessment of the educational opportunity, the conditions under which it can be accessed and the career obligations it entails. This definition covers military lyceums, colleges and higher education institutions while recognising that candidates at each level face different choices. Public prestige and a desire for service may encourage interest. An informed application still requires an understanding of eligibility, programme content, daily conditions and longer-term professional pathways. The framework therefore distinguishes initial awareness, application and selection, experience during study, and post-graduation transition.

Academic quality is central because candidates need credible evidence of what they will learn and what opportunities the institution makes possible. A modern curriculum can retain established military subjects while clarifying the purposes of education in leadership, ethics, international humanitarian law, digital literacy, research and communication. Teaching quality is partly visible through clear assessment, structured feedback, access to qualified instructors and opportunities to apply knowledge. Practical activities should show students why the learning matters. Opportunities to conduct research, participate in academic writing activities, collaborate on applied projects or use simulation and language resources can also help explain the institution's intellectual expectations. Their contribution to attractiveness remains a plausible mechanism until tested against candidate or cadet evidence.

A demanding learning environment can coexist with psychological support, procedural fairness and respect. Discipline and collective responsibility do not eliminate the need for accessible support or consistent explanations of institutional rules. Applicants should be able to find current criteria for academic, physical and medical eligibility, examination steps, available specialisations and how performance is assessed. Cadets should know where to raise concerns and how to access educational or personal support. Candidate information should describe expectations clearly, including demanding elements and the obligations that accompany study and subsequent service. Feedback obtained through confidential procedures can reveal when public descriptions diverge from student experience.

Career clarity and material access address different questions. Career information allows candidates to understand specialisation, appointments, further study and anticipated development after graduation. Financial support can reduce uncertainty about the immediate costs of enrolling. The presidential decree of 14 December 2023 established one-time and monthly payments for eligible cadets and provisions related to preferential mortgage support for eligible graduates, subject to specified service conditions (President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2023). These are documented policy provisions. Their actual effects on applications, participation or retention require outcome evidence. An evaluation should examine whether candidates understand the benefits and their conditions, and whether changes in participation are concentrated in groups for whom costs previously posed a barrier.

Institutional reputation can grow when service motivation is supported by reliable information. Open days, school outreach, meetings with graduates and demonstrations of educational resources can help candidates make informed choices when they accurately reflect programme conditions. Participation counts indicate the reach of outreach. A short follow-up could establish whether attendees understand the admission criteria, training environment and

obligations more accurately afterwards. Comparing that information with enrolled cadets' early experiences would help identify what needs to change in communication or programme delivery.

Foreign-language preparation and digital literacy have dual value. They support mobility and engagement with international scholarship while providing educational benefits to participants who remain at their home institution. Language development can incorporate professional correspondence, seminars, presentations, terminology and communication with culturally different audiences. Digital competencies can support access to academic literature, evaluation of information, collaboration and responsible use of institutional platforms. The question for quality assurance is whether specified competencies appear in the curriculum and are assessed progressively. A separate question for recruitment is whether prospective applicants know what learning opportunities are available and understand any prerequisites.

Recognition, mobility and quality assurance

Mobility decisions need usable evidence on both sides of the partnership. Before departure, an institution could document the expected learning, the proposed means of assessment and the responsibilities of the home and host units. On return, assessment records would permit the home institution to decide whether the learning can be counted within a programme or documented in another way. In cases where participation is valuable but formal recognition is unavailable, the unit could still document academic contribution through professional development records or a review of how the experience informed teaching. Doing so would clarify the purpose of the activity and reduce uncertainty about what it can deliver.

There is a difference between setting a quality standard and having enough evaluative capacity to apply it. Institutions need staff who understand how to describe outcomes, evaluate assessment evidence and explain the basis of a decision. They also need time for review and an accessible record of what was concluded. Institutions with a limited capacity could begin by examining a manageable group of programmes rather than auditing every course at once. The findings from an initial review can help establish whether the underlying challenge is poor documentation, a shortage of staff development or disagreement about the educational standard itself. Those diagnoses lead to different corrective decisions.

The documentary comparison identifies programme transparency as a common condition for mobility and recognition. Azerbaijan's qualifications framework describes learning through qualification levels and attributes that include knowledge, skills, responsibility and autonomy (Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2018). UNESCO's (2019) Global Convention establishes principles for recognition within its scope, including fair and transparent decision-making. Military institutions can use these principles to organise publishable information about award levels, credits or workload, programme goals, assessments and general competencies. Institutions and authorities can then assess a qualification with a clearer statement of what was learned. Academic recognition remains subject to applicable rules, and occupational appointment or authority remains a matter for the competent national bodies.

Mobility connects the publication of programme information to the circulation and use of expertise. Before participation, a project should state what the learner or instructor is expected to gain, how the host activity relates to home programme objectives and which evidence will be considered on return. For cadets, evidence may include a transcript, assessed assignment or report on a public academic topic. For instructors, it may include teaching material, a seminar for colleagues or a locally adapted pilot class. For institutions, it can include recognition records, review minutes and changes documented in the curriculum. These forms of evidence distinguish an individual experience from a practice passed on to colleagues.

Internal quality assurance connects module-level evidence with institutional decisions. Programme teams can periodically review syllabi, instructor preparation, assessment results, student feedback, teaching infrastructure and graduate experiences. External review, including peer feedback and relevant accreditation procedures, brings different perspectives and may test the clarity of the underlying evidence. It cannot substitute for ongoing internal responsibility. A review is complete when a responsible unit records a decision, assigns responsibility for

implementation and checks what changed in the next cycle. This applies particularly to modules involving new technologies or evolving legal issues, where educational content and assessment arrangements require regular review.

DISCUSSION

Implications for the Azerbaijani cooperation model

The sources support three connected propositions. First, the educational contribution of a partnership depends on what the home institution can apply and sustain. Second, a qualification becomes easier to explain when learning outcomes and assessments are readable beyond the originating unit. Third, financial and social support can address material barriers, while attractiveness over the longer term depends on programme quality, a credible learning environment, academic opportunity and clarity about service. These propositions are consistent with the documents and scholarship consulted. Testing their strength requires institutional records and stakeholder experience.

Azerbaijan's first priority would be to identify needs before selecting partners or projects. An institutional audit could map programme outcomes, assess the capacity of teaching staff, review digital and language resources, inventory current partnerships and identify gaps in graduate follow-up. The audit should involve those who deliver programmes and those who depend on the results, including academic managers, instructors and relevant student support services. Each unit should identify the evidence available for its judgments. This would help distinguish areas requiring an external partner from improvements already possible through existing domestic expertise.

The second priority is to specify partnership outputs in writing. A memorandum can authorise collaboration, while an implementation document can describe an individual project, its purpose, responsible staff and review schedule. Possible products include a co-developed academic module, a faculty development programme, a secure learning resource, a joint research output or a revised assessment process. Ownership and responsibility after the pilot matter as much as initial production. For example, a joint module should have a designated academic owner, a controlled syllabus, a review arrangement and a practical route to local delivery. This is how an institutional relationship becomes assessable over more than one academic year.

The third priority is to connect mobility with recognition, quality assurance and dissemination. Institutions could ask participants to document learning and share applicable materials with colleagues. Academic units would then assess relevance and decide whether to adopt, adapt or set aside a practice. Records of these decisions would help explain why some partnership outputs enter a curriculum and others do not. A proportionate recognition procedure would make the basis for academic decisions clear, including which evidence is required and who handles questions about comparability. Decisions about professional practice or service would follow the applicable domestic rules.

The fourth priority is to develop language and digital education as integrated institutional capacities. A language and terminology laboratory could support academic reading, professional correspondence, oral presentations and multilingual communication. Digital resources could provide distance seminars, curated reading and faculty development. Coordinating these arrangements would let students and instructors practise before exchanges and share appropriate materials afterwards. Sustainability depends on the institution's ability to maintain resources, support staff and provide access under applicable information governance rules. The educational evaluation should focus on demonstrated learning and continued local use over time.

Proposed evaluation design

The proposed assessment framework should permit findings that challenge the original reform assumptions. A high satisfaction rating with an exchange does not establish that the practice was adopted. An increase in the use of digital resources does not establish improvement if the resources are poorly aligned with programme requirements. A decline in applications may occur alongside better understanding of the career and stronger alignment between candidates' expectations and the programme. The evaluation should allow for these patterns and describe the

evidence that explains them. This makes the indicators suitable for decisions about improvement rather than merely for reporting progress.

Monitoring can proceed at two levels. At module level, academic teams can examine what changed and whether delivery followed the planned design. At institutional level, a responsible committee can examine whether the changes fit programme requirements, whether external support is still necessary and whether results vary across cohorts. Separating the two levels reduces the risk that a successful pilot will be described as institution-wide improvement before there is evidence of broader adoption. It also makes accountability clearer: an instructor can report pedagogical use, while the programme committee can take responsibility for curricular continuation and resource allocation.

The public version of the annual report should convey findings without disclosing personal or unnecessarily sensitive institutional data. The underlying evidence can remain with authorised academic personnel, while public reporting provides aggregate counts, denominators, definitions and explanations of decisions. The protocol should describe how missing records are treated, particularly for small or specialised cohorts. A year with incomplete graduate follow-up should be reported as such. Investigating why a record is missing can also uncover avoidable weaknesses in the reporting process.

Evaluation should distinguish implementation from change in educational outcomes. The baseline should record the proportion of modules meeting the institution's alignment criteria, faculty development participation, current feedback processes, prior mobility activity and information available about graduates. In setting targets, programme leaders should first agree on what counts as an eligible module or an active instructor. If the denominator changes because programmes are reorganised, the report should show both the count and the denominator and explain the change. Different institutions should compare results only after checking that programme levels and indicator rules are sufficiently comparable.

A useful monitoring system would ask whether each activity took place, whether the relevant change was implemented and whether educational outcomes subsequently improved. For a joint module, the syllabus and documented approval show development. Teaching records and observation show use. Rubric scores and student feedback show aspects of the learner experience. A subsequent review decision shows institutional follow-through. Evidence at one stage does not imply success at the next. Tracking that sequence across activities would allow programme managers to distinguish delayed adoption from design weakness or a shortage of implementation capacity.

Candidate indicators should include information quality, progression through the admission process and feedback on reasons for seeking or declining enrolment. Applications per seat can change with cohort size, publicity, altered eligibility or a reduction in places available. Analysts should report the denominator and interpret it alongside candidate understanding, applicant eligibility and the proportion of offers accepted. Student feedback and withdrawal records provide a subsequent check on how faithfully public information reflects actual experience. Small groups should be reported in ways that protect confidentiality.

For graduate outcomes, a follow-up instrument could ask about preparedness for initial role responsibilities, perceived adequacy of programme content and areas where further education was needed. Report response rates and identify the relevant cohort. Variations in placement, supervision and additional training may explain differences attributed to the original programme. A graduate survey would therefore be informative for reviewing curricula, particularly if corroborated by several types of evidence. Its results alone would not identify the causal effect of the international partnership.

An annual quality report could bring each indicator together with a short account of decisions taken. For the joint module indicator, plausible attachments include the approved syllabus, anonymised feedback, an assessment summary and the next review date. Faculty development figures could be accompanied by examples of peer-reviewed teaching material. Where satisfaction declines, the report should explain plausible reasons and what evidence would distinguish them. Responsibility for collecting and reviewing evidence should be assigned before

activities begin, including responsibility for verifying privacy protections and deciding which outcomes can be reported publicly.

Table 2 develops the original manuscript's five assessment areas into operational measures and records for annual review.

Table 2

Proposed Indicators for Educational Quality and Internationalisation

Area	Proposed indicator and definition	Supporting evidence and interpretation
Curriculum	Outcome-aligned modules approved and taught ÷ eligible modules offered. Report numerator and denominator by programme.	Use syllabi, alignment records, rubrics and review minutes. Check actual delivery before treating approval as adoption.
Faculty development	Report instructors completing training and, separately, trained instructors applying a documented practice ÷ trained instructors eligible to teach.	Use completion records, faculty observation and teaching materials. Certification counts indicate reach and can be compared with classroom application.
International engagement	Joint outputs assessed against agreed goals ÷ outputs due. Track adapted modules, research outputs and returning participants sharing learning.	Use project records, approval papers, course feedback and dissemination records. Separate meetings held from outputs used.
Attractiveness	Report eligible applicants per available place, offer acceptance and candidate understanding of programme and career requirements.	Use admissions data and voluntary feedback. Interpret alongside seat availability, eligibility, outreach and financial support.
Graduate outcomes	Report survey coverage and graduate-rated preparedness for first appointments. Track professional development where data are available.	Use cohort follow-up and permitted institutional feedback. Consider timing, role differences, supervision and nonresponse.
Recognition and mobility	Mobility cases with an academic decision documented ÷ cases requiring a decision. Record decision time and grounds.	Use learning agreements, records of achievement and decisions. Without applicable academic recognition, document relevant development or dissemination.

Note. All measures are proposals. Each institution should set a baseline, an accountable unit, a reporting period and an agreed target before collecting data.

Implementation and decision points

The schedule should be read as a planning horizon rather than a uniform timetable for every institution. Some changes require approval at programme level, while others can be tested within an existing module. A delay can be educationally justified if it allows faculty to calibrate assessment or address a documented access problem. When a pilot is deferred, the responsible unit should record the reason and identify the condition that would make continuation appropriate. This preserves the usefulness of the timetable without creating incentives to report adoption prematurely.

During the first 12 months, participating institutions could complete the baseline and select a limited number of pilots. Priorities would be grounded in documented gaps and agreed criteria for evaluating adoption. In years one to three, universities and partners could develop modules, faculty programmes and language or digital resources, then compare successive versions using feedback and assessment records. At the end of each pilot, the responsible institution would decide whether to stop, revise or extend the intervention. After year three, graduate tracking, external review, accreditation-related development and joint research could support wider adoption where earlier evidence justifies it.

Expansion should be conditional on educational quality and maintenance capacity. Strong results from one cohort could justify continuation at the original site, while transfer to another programme would require scrutiny of staff capacity, learner readiness and the relevance of the learning outcomes. An indicator can guide this decision without serving as a target in isolation. For example, certifying more instructors should inform decisions about available teaching capacity. Evidence that the relevant teaching practices are used and reviewed is needed before claiming programme-level improvement.

Table 3 summarises the phased programme and the evidence needed before moving to the next phase.

Table 3

Proposed Implementation Schedule and Review Decisions

Indicative period	Main activities	Evidence for the next decision
0–12 months	Conduct an institutional needs assessment. Map programme outcomes, faculty capacity, mobility arrangements, information for applicants and current evaluation records.	Approve an auditable baseline and identify a small set of priority problems. Select partners and pilots that address those problems.
Years 1–3	Pilot joint modules, instructor development, language and terminology resources and digital learning opportunities. Test the reporting of mobility and recognition decisions.	Review delivery, assessment, participation and feedback. Decide what to revise, discontinue or extend and identify who will own each continued activity.
After year 3	Develop graduate tracking, joint research and external review. Expand suitable educational practices to additional programmes where feasible.	Review whether adoption persists and whether qualified staff can maintain it. Document what can be transferred and what requires local adaptation.

Note. Timeframes come from the proposed model and do not describe completed implementation.

Limitations and next research steps

The design also leaves questions about interpretation across institutions. Graduates of different kinds of programmes may enter roles with different expectations, and faculty groups may start from different levels of prior pedagogical preparation. In future comparisons, programme characteristics should therefore be documented alongside outcomes. Analysis could then focus on whether a reform was implemented as intended before asking whether observed differences can reasonably be attributed to it. The most informative first studies may be smaller comparative investigations with reliable documentation rather than wide comparisons based only on administrative counts.

The corpus is small and deliberately selected. International sources describe institutional aims and cooperation arrangements. Azerbaijani sources describe policies and discuss features of the national educational setting. The sources do not supply admissions microdata, interviews, longitudinal records or comparable graduate data. They therefore cannot establish a causal effect on recruitment, teaching quality, retention or service adaptation. Statements about programme success should be tested through separately collected data rather than inferred from the existence of policy or activity.

Future research could compare similar modules before and after revision, document implementation using faculty observations and gather anonymous feedback over successive cohorts. Candidate and cadet views would help determine whether institutional messaging and programme experience correspond. Comparative analysis should account for changes in admissions policy, programme size, eligibility or benefits. An independent review of how documents are selected and classified could strengthen the credibility and reproducibility of later studies. Reporting clear inclusion criteria, dates, source excerpts or links and divergent evidence would help readers evaluate where the proposed model is transferable.

CONCLUSION

International cooperation can support professional military education in Azerbaijan when partner activity is converted into locally owned teaching, assessment and quality improvements. The analysis identifies curriculum alignment, faculty development, documented mobility, transparent recognition and structured review as related processes. It also identifies the educational experience, recruitment transparency, research and language opportunity, career clarity and material support as distinct components of attractiveness. These conclusions concern the design and evaluation of reform. Whether a particular programme changes applications, student outcomes or graduate experience remains to be established empirically.

Azerbaijani institutions could begin by documenting existing provision, choosing partners around demonstrated needs and agreeing on evidence for each pilot. Useful measures would show which modules were updated, whether instructors applied new practices, how returning participants shared knowledge and what graduates reported about preparation for their roles. The long-term objective is the institutional ability to assess, adapt and sustain effective educational practices with appropriate review. A partnership model built around that objective gives policy and programme leaders clearer reasons for continuing, changing or ending individual initiatives.

Declarations

Data availability. The analysis is based on publicly available sources cited in the reference list. No participant data are reported.

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