

# Examining the context, connection and complexity of collaborative doctoral programs in international business

Critical  
Perspectives on  
International  
Business

Katerina Boncheva

*Cardiff Business School, Cardiff University, Cardiff, UK*

Hanna Gajewska-De Mattos

*Leeds University Business School, University of Leeds, Leeds, UK*

David A. Griffith

*Mays Business School, Texas A&M University, Texas, USA*

Giuseppe Pirrone

*Department of Economics and Management, University of Pavia, Pavia, Italy*

Aušrinė Šilenskytė

*School of Management, University of Vaasa, Vaasa, Finland, and*

Alexander Tonn

*School of Economics and Political Sciences (SEPS-HSG) and School of Management (SoM-HSG), Institute of Economics, University of St Gallen, St Gallen, Switzerland*

Received 18 December 2024

Revised 16 May 2025

27 July 2025

Accepted 12 August 2025

## Abstract

**Purpose** – By using the 3Cs framework (i.e. context, connection and complexity), this paper aims to examine the state of doctoral education in the field of international business (IB) and the collaborative IB doctoral programs, defined as programs formed through collaborations between multiple universities and/or associations.

**Design/methodology/approach** – We examine multiple collaborative programs in doctoral education in IB (i.e. the AIB-CIBER Doctoral Academy, Nordic Research School of IB, Emerging Scholars from Emerging Markets Program and the Finnish Graduate School of International Business) under the 3Cs framework. This examination allows for a better understanding of how these programs prepare students to nurture the IB disciplinary and societal demands.

**Findings** – We suggest that enhancing doctoral education in IB to meet the challenges of understanding context, connection and complexity, requires extending both formal and informal components of doctoral programs, beyond home institutions of doctoral researchers, with an increased emphasis on informal aspects of doctoral training and an increased focus on students as learners striving for excellence. These components,



© Katerina Boncheva, Hanna Gajewska-De Mattos, David A. Griffith, Giuseppe Pirrone, Aušrinė Šilenskytė and Alexander Tonn. Published by Emerald Publishing Limited. This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) licence. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this licence may be seen at <http://creativecommons.org/licences/by/4.0/>

Critical Perspectives on  
International Business  
Emerald Publishing Limited  
1742-2043  
DOI 10.1108/cpoi-12-2024-0170

which are a particular strength of collaborative IB doctoral programs, can positively shape scholarship and practices in the field of IB.

**Originality/value** – This paper provides a contemporary examination of doctoral education in the field of IB beyond the predominant focus on within-institution doctoral training elements and enhancements that could positively influence the context, connection and complexity of IB doctoral education globally.

**Keywords** Doctoral education, 3Cs framework, Formal and informal doctoral training, International business, Collaborations

**Paper type** Conceptual paper

## 1. Introduction

International business (IB) scholarly traditions are deeply rooted in theoretical, methodological and research practice approaches (Buckley *et al.*, 2017; Casson and Li, 2022; Delios, 2017a, 2017b) aimed at addressing a business phenomenon that spans diverse contexts, connections and complexities (Dau *et al.*, 2022). These approaches within the IB scholarly tradition are paramount in the era of increasing protectionism, nationalism and confrontations, because perspectives offered by IB scholarship and education about them “is a solution that can bridge divisions in the world and provide a path for shaping a better future” (de Fontaines and Côté, 2024, p. 1). The latter even further elevates the constantly existing demand for well-trained IB scholars capable of pushing the boundaries of knowledge and educating business leaders who are ready to engage with complexities and diverse ways of reaching business and societal goals both locally and globally (de Fontaines and Côté, 2024). IB doctoral education is central to addressing this demand as it defines knowledge, skills and practices that are likely to be adopted by IB scholars.

Prior to these most recent pressures for IB doctoral training stemming from increasing confrontations globally, IB education has attracted the attention of scholars (Barnard, 2024; Cavusgil, 1998; Dieleman *et al.*, 2022; Kuhne, 1990; Stanton Webb and Allen, 2005; White and Griffith, 1998), many of which have called for a fundamental rethink of IB doctoral education in the light of the nature of the IB discipline. For example, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) and the European Doctoral Programmes Association in Management and Business Administration (EDAMBA) have completed a joint investigation of doctoral programs (cf. McLead *et al.*, 2021) noticing that interdisciplinarity in doctoral training is lacking and pointing to the fact that most PhD programs in business are non-IB centered (Stanton Webb and Allen, 2005). A decade earlier, AACSB International Doctoral Education Task Force (AACBS International Doctoral Education Task Force, 2012) surveyed both doctoral program directors and students and discovered similar shortcomings in doctoral training. The reports, along with academic literature (e.g. Cavusgil, 1998; De Meyer, 2013; Kuhne, 1990; Stanton Webb and Allen, 2005), while providing many new and important insights on rethinking doctoral training, focus solely on within institution program elements. This neglects a contemporary perspective on collaborative programs in IB doctoral education, defined as programs formed through collaborations between multiple universities and/or associations working to address the limitations of any single institutional effort. These programs have been created to address IB disciplinary needs, but their potential impact has not yet been extensively examined.

We address this shortcoming in the understanding of IB doctoral education and specifically work to answer the following research question:

*RQ1.* How do collaborative doctoral programs in International Business address the unique requirements of and expectations for the IB discipline?

To answer this question, we use the 3Cs framework as a framework for examining collaborative programs in IB and their potential impact. 3Cs framework speaks directly to IB researchers and educators (cf., [Dau et al., 2022](#)) – both professionally guided through IB doctoral education. The 3Cs framework consists of “context”, which addresses organizations’ actions within their global environment, “connection”, which focuses on bridging disciplines, nations and analytical levels to understand IB phenomena, and “complexity” concerned with the complex interplay of internal and external to organizations systems, structures and relationships. Taken together, the 3Cs capture the nature of the IB field. Thus, we adopt the 3Cs framework to understand the skills, knowledge and scholarly practices that the unique IB discipline demands ([Casson and Li, 2022](#); [Dau et al., 2022](#)) and examine how the current design of institutionally-centered and collaborative IB doctoral programs addresses them.

To achieve the above, we first offer an overview of the disciplinary demands and their implications to IB scholarship captured through the 3Cs framework. Then, we examine the state of collaborative doctoral programs in IB and their ability to expose doctoral students to the diversity of contexts, provide cross-disciplinary social networks and exposure to diverse analytical lenses, and engagement with different stakeholders. We argue that it is the limitations of institutionally-centered doctoral programs, arising from a lack of exposure to the 3Cs, which motivated the emergence of collaborative education programs in IB. Then, we proceed with an examination of how collaborative IB education programs work to address the 3Cs to help develop IB scholars who would be able to research, educate and apply their knowledge as per the disciplinary demands. To perform this examination, we discuss the formal and informal elements as well as their combinations to estimate the potential outcomes and impact of collaborative doctoral programs. Specifically, we examine four collaborative IB doctoral education programs (i.e. the AIB-CIBER Doctoral Academy, Nordic Research School of IB, Emerging Scholars from Emerging Markets Program (ESEMP) and the Finnish Graduate School of International Business) under the 3Cs framework.

Through this examination, this study advances the understanding of collaborative IB doctoral education programs and their ability to address unique disciplinary demands. Our findings indicate the diversity of collaborative efforts and suggest strengths and weaknesses of each program in relation to their ability to address the implications stemming from the 3Cs framework. This examination also helps to reflect on how the current IB doctoral education equips researchers with skills, knowledge and practices for making a needed scholarly impact, especially in the context of grand challenges and multiple global crises. We also note that higher education leaders and administrators have an important role in removing institutional barriers as they can encourage and support enrolment and participation in collaborative doctoral education that works toward reducing global frictions. Furthermore, we contribute to the literature on IB doctoral education by offering guidance for potential improvements that can be achieved through considering collaborative IB doctoral education programs. For example, we suggest that advances in doctoral program’s formal and informal components, which are a particular strength of collaborative IB doctoral programs, potentially create a strong foundation for transformative scholarly education.

## 2. Conditions for the emergence of collaborative doctoral education in International business

### 2.1 *The International business disciplinary demands captured in the 3Cs framework*

While some have argued that IB is not so unique in comparison to the broader management and strategy field, and the community falls for the “false uniqueness bias” ([Aguinis and Gabriel, 2022](#)),

there is substantial evidence and discussion available to argue for the uniqueness of the discipline and its disciplinary demands (e.g. [Beugelsdijk, 2022](#); [Casson and Li, 2022](#); [Dau et al., 2022](#)). The 3Cs framework developed by [Dau et al. \(2022\)](#) conceptualizes the unique nature of IB along three attributes: context, connection and complexity. The three attributes are interconnected and produce far-reaching implications for IB as a field, and for IB academics, educators, policymakers and practitioners.

The first C, context, refers to the fact that firms and individuals do not operate in a vacuum but rather act in highly unique circumstances ([Dau et al., 2022](#), p. 3). These circumstances are formed by cultural or institutional differences reflective of contextual changes over time, influencing IB operations locally, globally and in the inter-unit collaboration of the multinational corporation (MNC). Contextual awareness of IB researchers, educators, practitioners and policymakers allows for effective and competent decision-making within diverse contexts. Thus, acknowledging that context matters and having a skillset to address the context makes IB research and education timely and impactful.

The second C, connection, relates to how IB crosses “borders”. By its nature, IB is cross-disciplinary, i.e. it connects perspectives rooted in management, political sciences, economics and the broader social sciences. IB also encourages methodological diversity from quantitative, qualitative and mixed-method research traditions. Furthermore, IB crosses national borders, connecting countries and cultures and addressing geographic specificities. Moreover, IB is cross-level, i.e. it bridges various analytical levels from the individual (e.g. an individual manager or employee) to the supra-national (e.g. international organizations and organizations active in transnational governance) ([Dau et al., 2022](#), p. 3). Therefore, IB scholars, educators and practitioners need to develop knowledge that captures these connections, develop competencies to cope with the multifaceted perspectives on the IB phenomenon and provide new insights on how these interconnections change over time, bringing new implications to IB theory and practice.

The third C, complexity, speaks to IBs’ “*ability to examine complex systems, structures, and relationships in a meaningful manner*” (c.f., [Eden and Nielsen, 2020](#)) and thereby the ability to derive real-world implications ([Dau et al., 2022](#), p. 4). The complexity inherent in the global economy makes this aspect especially relevant for IB research ([Casson and Li, 2022](#)). IB’s advantage lies in examining “[...] *differences and similarities across units of analysis (e.g., organizations, nations, institutions, regions of the world, etc.), constructs, categories, theories, etc.*” and leveraging these insights holistically and systemically ([Dau et al., 2022](#), p. 4). Therefore, in IB, scholars, educators and practitioners – through critical investigations – need to capture and prepare for addressing complexity as well as the interplay of diverse components by applying diverse lenses of analysis.

The current frictions and confrontations observed globally underscore the value of knowledge and skills that help address complex issues occurring in local and global industries and policymaking. They reinforce requirements for IB scholars to provide research insights and education for developing the ability to navigate the 3Cs. For instance, the Future of Jobs Report 2025 ([WEF, 2025](#), p. 41) emphasizes that the core skills needed in 2030 – as perceived by employers – center on cognitive skills, self-efficacy and technology skills. The 2022 report on the “Competences for Policymaking” ([Schwendinger et al., 2022](#)) emphasizes competences related to collaboration in cross-cultural settings, communication and working with evidence across borders. These skills are necessary for global policymakers to tackle global challenges and drive societal change in a net-value-creating way. In other words, the ability to combine complex perspectives from various levels of analysis (macro, meso, micro; the connection as well as the linkages between them; the

complexity) is what IB research and education should provide and therefore IB scholars who deliver it should be able to train.

The implications stemming from the 3Cs and their further reinforcement through global trends help to elucidate the needs of doctoral training in IB, and especially the needs for PhD or DBA training that can provide a foundation for a successful career. Postgraduate students in IB need to be able to produce insights bridging context, connection and complexity to the research relevant for the IB scholarly community, practitioners and policymakers. Moreover, they should be able to design an IB education that develops the competencies necessary for these stakeholders to apply such knowledge in IB business settings. To delve into this issue, we next explore traditional institutionally-centered doctoral IB education and, subsequently, the collaborative doctoral IB programs.

## 2.2 *The state of doctoral education in International business*

IB education has been a central focus of study and discussion by academics for decades (Barnard, 2024; Cavusgil, 1998; De Meyer, 2013; Dieleman *et al.*, 2022; Kuhne, 1990). In addition, major accreditation bodies, such as the AACSB and the EDAMBA, as well as academic organizations, such as the Academy of International Business, have also engaged in efforts to better understand the state of doctoral education. While accreditation studies have not focused on IB specifically, they do provide substantive insights into doctoral education within business schools. Building from these program assessments, and a review of the literature, we identify three underlying concerns in relation to (IB) doctoral education. These concerns are directly related to potential program limitations when considering the need of understanding IB phenomena derived from context, connection and complexity.

First, as one might expect, doctoral programs in business administration are heavily research focused. Institutions offering a doctoral education have highly qualified research faculties capable of functional training in knowledge foundations and research methods in areas such as accounting, finance, entrepreneurship, human resource management, strategy, marketing and supply chain management. However, with limited exceptions (e.g. in the University of South Carolina, GA State University, George Washington University, the University of Leeds, Western University and the University of Vaasa), the expertise of faculty in most PhD programs in business is non-IB centered. As such, doctoral programs in business administration often do not have IB as an identified area of study and offer students few, if any IB specific courses (Stanton Webb and Allen, 2005). This situation has unfortunately not changed significantly in decades (Kuhne, 1990; AACBS International Doctoral Education Task Force, 2012; Trinh and Conner, 2019). Moreover, critical perspectives in IB doctoral education have been partly absent and less considered as a part of mainstream doctoral training, since mainstream and IB scholarship have remained divided (Dörrenbächer and Gammelgaard, 2019), until very recently.

While some faculty and courses may work to address international aspects (mainstream or critical) of functional areas via coursework, IB-specific courses, and hence content, is largely absent. This type of content by its nature requires an interdisciplinary approach due to the intersections of complexity and connection (Casson and Li, 2022; Cavusgil, 1998; Dunning, 1989), varies in meaning across national contexts and requires specialized education (Tolstikov-Mast *et al.*, 2021). Interdisciplinarity is particularly vital in the context of being equipped to address IB's grand challenges (Sinkovics *et al.*, 2022), since many of the problems of our times are complex and multidimensional and affect various stakeholders (Casson and Li, 2022; Van Tulder *et al.*, 2021). The absence of interdisciplinarity in doctoral training, along with the faculty's skill set, presents a significant opportunity to enhance IB doctoral education.

Second, insularity continues to be a challenge in doctoral education. The supervisory relationship has historically been and continues to be the core element of doctoral education (De Meyer, 2013; McLead *et al.*, 2021). This has traditionally been a single individual. The supervisory role has often been shaped by the supervisor's own unique interpretation of what should be involved and the underlying views on the philosophy of sciences (Wright *et al.*, 2007). Consequently, working with a supervisor(s) whose research interests align with those of the doctoral student can greatly enhance the learning experience. For many students, cooperating with the "right" supervisor can facilitate their ability to engage in specialized research and teaching within the IB realm. In addition, it is noted that most doctoral programs across all regions have a supervisory model where multiple individuals serve as co-supervisors/advisors. However, one individual is considered the primary supervisor. Students often take courses from multiple faculty members, although differences in educational traditions across countries usually determine whether the doctoral program is a course-based curriculum taught by various institution faculties or an apprentice model where a student studies under a single or small group of functional area faculties from a single institution.

In any case, the insular nature of a doctoral program to a specific set of faculties hosted at a single academic institution is a significant limitation. This not only affects the students' ability to gain access to a diversity of knowledge and perspectives and explore various contexts but also affects the students' ability to build a broader social network (Cavusgil, 1998; De Meyer, 2013), limiting student association with the broader field of scholars and career opportunities. Supervisors may over-enthusiastically encourage students to align closely with their own research agendas, leading to over-specialization and restricting the students' ability to explore broader intellectual landscapes. Further, this dynamic often involves asymmetric exchange, with supervisors holding major influence. This imbalance can limit students' academic independence, making them reluctant to challenge established paradigms, deepening our understanding of complex phenomena. This is particularly problematic in IB doctoral education, where diverse perspectives and interdisciplinarity are necessary for addressing the 3Cs, the demands stemming from IBs very nature. Geographical and institutional constraints further exacerbate this issue (e.g. institutions from developing and underdeveloped countries), especially in regions where academic institutions lack international networks and collaboration opportunities (Barnard, 2024). Such constraints hinder students from participating in global academic discussions and gaining exposure to diverse perspectives.

Insularity also may limit a student's "voice," especially if the student-supervisor relationship is not grounded in interactions that are inclusive or appreciative of new ideas. Moreover, the identity in flux constantly reconsidered by a doctoral student (Carter *et al.*, 2021) is highly influenced by a limited number of individuals shaping the student's thinking and scholarly positioning. IB, as a research field with an inherent appreciation for diverse identities, perspectives and interpretations, can be enhanced via the development of and participation in broad social networks. Doctoral training dependent on a limited number of individual scholars diminishes the possibility of achieving the intended learning outcomes of IB doctoral education and objects the chance to celebrate the "identities-in-difference" (Bhaskar, 2008), i.e. the multilayered view of individuals, cultures and social phenomena where individuals can perceive and be perceived as having various identities at the same time. As an outcome, IB scholars still largely apply uniform cultural and economic models on core IB phenomena that promote biased international management practices (cf., Šilenskytė *et al.*, 2022). Moreover, scholars remain with adopting methodologies that possess limited interpretive power (Delios, 2017a).



Third, a key element of faculty life is teaching. Unfortunately, most doctoral programs do not provide strong preparation for this aspect of an IB scholar's career. For instance, [McLead et al. \(2021\)](#) found that only 31% of reported programs include a mandatory requirement for teaching preparation. This is consistent with functional area work, which has also noted the limited teaching exposure provided in doctoral education (e.g. [Griffith, 1997](#); [Lewicki and Bailey, 2016](#)). This issue is critical as excellence in IB teaching and knowledge on andragogy, i.e. adult education practice and theory, is necessary for a healthy, sustainable and impactful academic career as well as the IB discipline overall.

Further, skills in providing education allow scholars to achieve the ultimate impact with their research work, especially when addressing the grand challenges. [Chandra \(2017\)](#) suggests that the primary goals of higher education institutions have traditionally been to develop citizenship, a love for learning and a professional skillset. While only the latter has been extensively implemented, the two former goals were largely overlooked. The same critique has been echoed by other prominent business and IB scholars (e.g. [Ghoshal, 2005](#)), especially concerning the business schools' ability to develop skills needed for responsible management ([Azmat et al., 2023](#)), or those that would help address environmental changes ([Kovoor-Misra, 2020](#); [Krishnamurthy, 2020](#)). With limited teaching preparation provided for those in doctoral programs, and little if any IB coursework, a significant opportunity presents itself for enhancing doctoral education in the field of IB.

These limitations of IB education have laid foundations for innovative doctoral training formats, such as collaborative doctoral programs to emerge. The collaborative IB doctoral education has been practiced through national, regional and recently global level initiatives; however, its ability to support the nature of the IB discipline and address the unique 3Cs requirements for IB scholarship, stemming from the disciplinary demands, have not yet been investigated. To address this, we next engage in an examination of collaborative IB doctoral programs.

### 3. Collaborative IB doctoral education programs

Given the scarcity of the academic discussion on the topic, we worked to identify collaborative doctoral IB programs. We identified four programs based on the following criteria. First, we looked for programs that focus primarily on IB scholarly training. This meant that we excluded collaborative doctoral programs that may offer some IB content or some courses without the primary goal to support and foster IB scholarship. Second, we sought to bring forward the illustrations of collaborative IB doctoral programs with different geographical scope, i.e. national, regional and global. Third, we intended to discuss programs that are structured. As a result, in [Table 1](#) we present four distinct cases: the AIB-CIBER Doctoral Academy (global level), Nordic Research School of IB (regional – Nordics), Emerging Scholars from Emerging Markets Program (regional – emerging markets), and the Finnish Graduate School of International Business (national level) – elaborating on their features, such as purpose, format, duration, reach, and others.

All these programs presented in [Table 1](#) share some features, while differ in others. First, all programs are structured; they have a functioning governance mechanism and a very clear purpose to foster IB scholarship and address disciplinary demands. Some of the programs are very specific about their contributions to IB scholarship in addition to a general intention to foster IB as a discipline. For example, the ESEMP has a very strong emphasis on supporting scholars from emerging markets and their integration into the global IB scholarly community. The AIB-CIBER Doctoral Academy (ACDA) states that it intends to promote cross-country, cross-disciplinary collaborations reaching across the entire globe, encouraging the co-creation of scholars from very diverse markets and institutional

Table 1. Collaborative doctoral programs in international business

Features of programs	AIB-CIBER doctoral academy (ACDA)	Nordic Research School of IB (NORD-IB)	Emerging scholars from emerging markets program (ESEMP)	The Finnish Graduate School of International Business (FIGSIB)
Year established	2023	1999	2022	2008
Scope	Global	Regional (extended Nordic)	Regional (emerging markets)	Local (Finland)
Partners	A academy of International Business (AIB) (global), select CIBERs (MSU-CIBER, GSU-CIBER, FIU-CIBER, BYU-CIBER, Texas A&M-CIBER, Temple/FOX-CIBER, LMU-CIBER, University of Colorado-Denver/CIBER) (US), and the University of Leeds (UK)	Eight business schools in the Northern European Countries: Aalto University (Finland), BI Norwegian Business School (Norway), Copenhagen Business School (Denmark), Leeds University (UK), Mälardalen University (Sweden), University of Gothenburg (Sweden), University of Manchester (UK) and Uppsala University (Sweden)	The AIB emerging markets shared interest group (EM-SIG), financial support by center for emerging markets at Northeastern University (US)	University of Vaasa (current chair), Aalto University School of Business, University of Oulu, Hanken School of Economics, LUT University, Turku School of Economics, University of Turku, University of Eastern Finland, Åbo akademi
Alumni	The alumni network is currently emerging (cohorts 1 and 2), and the management structure of Alumni activities has been completed	Over 350 alumni, great research community, well established excellence (many award winners)	Alumni activities are partly coordinated, primarily directed to continuous engagement through the AIB emerging market shared interest group (EM-SIG)	Wide network, not actively managed
Teaching faculty	Top international business faculty including AIB fellows, Award-winning mentors	Top international business faculty	Top and mid-career international business faculty	Top and mid-career international business faculty from member institutions and beyond
Admissions	IB and non-IB doctoral students	IB only, priority given to students from partner institutions	IB and non-IB doctoral students and early career doctorate scholars from emerging markets affiliated with the university in low, lower-Middle or upper-Middle-income economies	No admission - organizes a doctoral tutorial and doctoral courses related to international business; gather together international business doctoral students and faculty from all member universities

(continued)



**Table 1.** Continued

Features of programs	AIB-CIBER doctoral academy (ACDA)	Nordic Research School of IB (NORD-IB)	Emerging scholars from emerging markets program (ESEMP)	The Finnish Graduate School of International Business (FIGSIB)
Fees	Fee \$3000; Stipends are available from the partners to defray the cost of registration and travel costs for in-person events. These stipends are awarded competitively	No fee, but students are required to cover their own travel, accommodation, and meal costs. Limited administration, each participating university has a lot of independence on their modules	No fee and participants are given AIB membership for the year they participate in ESEMP, delivered online	No fee
Duration	2 yrs	1.5 yrs		
Curriculum	Obligatory (core modules) and elective components, self-tailored to each student cohort demands. 8 modules: 3 core (The History and Evolution of International Business Discipline; International Business Theory and Future Perspectives in IB; Research Methods in IB), 3 electives, 2 building career modules (Teaching IB module; self-reported workshops). Mentoring program	6 modules: 1. IB Overview of the IB field. Research methods in IB, 2. What makes IB unique and interesting as a field, 3. The internationalization process – Network perspectives, 4. IB and political perspectives, 5. People-related issues in MNCs – Cross-Cultural Management, 6. Strategy – Thesis Proposal	6 workshops that cover theories and debates in international business with a view from emerging markets and the research process from framing the research topic, implementing different methodologies, to writing and framing contributions, and handling a manuscript in the journal's review process	Limited structure for program and courses Annually – the course “the Theories and Research in International Business.” In addition, other focused courses vary each year, e.g. Theories and Research in International and Global Marketing; the Theories and Research in International Entrepreneurships; and the Research Traditions in International Sales Management
Mode of delivery	Mostly online with some voluntary in person components	In person: students visit a different school for each module (total 30 ECTS)	Online	In person in Finland

**Source(s):** Authors' elaboration based on institutional website information

environments. This diversity in geographical, institutional and cultural contexts is a defining feature of collaborative doctoral programs, shaping the students' learning experiences and the ways knowledge is co-created across borders and systems.

Second, these programs differ in how they structure and balance formal and informal elements. For example, the Finnish Graduate School of International Business (FIGSIB) has no pre-determined structure and organizes courses according to the needs of the institutions within a country. The Nordic Research School of IB (NORD-IB) and ESEMP have very clear structures and flow of the courses to be completed. This structure comes from the intention to introduce a specific, Nordic perspective on IB and key contributions of the scholarship from the involved institutions (NORD-IB), and to ensure that scholars develop crucial, fundamental academic skills in IB (ESEMP). ACDA, on the other hand, has a modular structure which comprises of a fixed component (to capture key IB contributions known globally), an elective component (to help the cohort deepen specific IB knowledge of their interest), and a career development component (to enhance doctoral student possibility to succeed in various career paths). All of these programs have a very strong emphasis on the informal element having it embedded explicitly in the program (ACDA) or implicitly integrated within the formal modules and their way of delivery (NORD-IB, ESEMP, FIGSIB) or through activities of the alumni network (ACDA, NORD-IB, ESEMP).

The reach and engagement of these programs is somewhat defined by their geographical scope, however, the access to the knowledge and scholarly practices is not entirely limited by their geography. For example, some of the top-level IB scholars known globally have contributed across all programs, but at different capacities, with a different focus or framework of engagement. What is different, however, is their accessibility, which differentiate them rather substantially. ACDA and ESEMP are collaborative programs delivered entirely online, which, given access to the internet on the learners' side, are widely accessible for doctoral students regardless of their location. Yet, accessibility of the benefits provided by ACDA is defined by high academic performance requirements, while ESEMP defines their accessibility by belonging to a specific region, same as FIGSIB. NORD-IB and FIGSIB are two programs that require physical presence in the defined region or the country, using location and face-to-face course attendance to achieve the desired impact through this implicit informal element. Whereas ACDA, while delivered online, has a large number of deliberate formats that secure informal interactions to develop a student's social network (e.g. a mentoring program or interactive professional development webinars).

These variations emphasize how contextual differences, in terms of geography, culture, access to technology and institutional structures, significantly influence participation, engagement and potential impact in collaborative doctoral IB education. This aligns closely with the 3Cs framework's emphasis on the role of *context* as a defining feature of the IB field (Dau *et al.*, 2022). While traditional doctoral programs may risk a degree of insularity, collaborative programs offer mechanisms to expose students to diverse institutional and cultural environments not just as part of formal training, but also as a result of the program's pedagogical design. Each of the programs we examine illustrates a distinct configuration of contextual diversity. ACDA operates on a global scale, with an intentionally heterogeneous cohort and faculty structure that brings together students from various disciplines, national systems, cultural and ethnic backgrounds and academic traditions. ESEMP, while regionally focused, engages participants from underrepresented and often under-resourced contexts, addressing realities of conducting research in emerging markets and empowering scholars from this region to develop their "voice" globally. NORD-IB builds on a shared regional identity to reinforce structured peer learning within a coherent academic setting with a more focused regional context and emphasis on the Nordic values that appreciate diversity and

collaboration in research. While FIGSIB maintains a national orientation, it integrates international faculty and culturally diverse doctoral students to expand contextual perspectives. To varying degrees, these program designs aim to address the context dimension: through cohort diversity, geographic scope or modes of delivery, these collaborative programs work to cultivate global mindset, an essential competence for future contributors to the IB discipline.

All the programs offer voluntary socialization events during the main and/or regional conferences, fostering community spirit beyond the program's completion. For example, the NORD-IB network often organizes focused Alumni events at the European International Business Academy (EIBA) conferences, and it offers panels and special sessions to address various questions, including the impact of the program on IB scholarship. ACDA offers focused networking sessions for current and past students at the AIB annual meetings, special invitations for the current cohort students to attend various dinners for networking and panels or special sessions led by the current and past students together with senior IB scholars.

Students who join collaborative doctoral IB education often come from different disciplines. For instance, the inaugural 2023–2025 cohort of the ACDA comes from different business and economics-related disciplines as well as IB (i.e. nine other disciplines beyond IB, including marketing, management, entrepreneurship, political economy, strategy, organizational behavior, etc.). Each cohort becomes a natural hub for cross-disciplinary conversations and experimentation with multi-disciplinary research ideas and interpretations of the complex phenomena discussed. This approach aims to enable doctoral students to improve their learning outside the confines of their core program by engaging with both formal and informal training. It intends to prepare them to address complex, global challenges in IB not in isolation, but through embeddedness in academic communities that span geographies, institutions and roles.

While the expected impacts of these programs on IB scholarship are widely articulated, the evidence of the impact they make and the scope of their facilitation to address the IB disciplinary needs, captured through the 3Cs framework, remains anecdotal and illustrative. Considering the discourses around these programs, especially ACDA, NORD-IB and ESEMP, these programs seem to make a significant impact and are working to produce their desired outcomes. Some of the key outcomes often stated by the alumni of these programs are the feelings of belongingness to the scholarly community, the feelings of inclusion and network support and the ability to extensively engage with IB theories and methodologies.

The coursework and informal interactions in these programs seem to motivate the students to get back to the community and search for ways to address challenges observed through doctoral training in the cross-institutional setting. For example, after completing the elective module on sustainability, ACDA students contributed to policy-oriented reports, such as the Elite Quality Report 2025 (Casas I Klett and Cozzi, 2025), sharing their views on modern slavery inspired by a module with the program. Community activities (panels, workshops, social events) in the IB scholarly conferences are typically driven and often arranged by the students and alumni of ACDA and NORD-IB programs, further fostering community engagement and spirit.

The collaborative nature of the programs seems to break the documented loneliness of the doctoral study process and restore the power balance and “voice” of the doctoral students through secured community presence and engagement. In this regard, some programs, such as ACDA, stand out in their ability to capture the diversity of contexts and disciplines as students in one cohort have engaged with 26 faculty and leading experts in IB from 21 different universities worldwide, most of whom are AIB Fellows (AIB, n.d.) (Cohort 1, year

2023–2025). Both ACDA and NORD-IB seem to produce significant ongoing collaborations in terms of writing projects and community contributions. The ACDA has multiple such projects in mixed-scholarly-generations (students and senior scholars) and within the same generation (students from the same cohort) teams. The NORD-IB also has such projects within the same generation scholarly teams (scholars from participating institutions or students from the cohort working together).

Thus, the emerging illustrative evidence regarding the impacts of collaborative IB programs links back to the *connection* dimension of the 3Cs framework, which refers to how the IB field “bridges different disciplines, nations, and levels of analysis” (Dau *et al.*, 2022, p. 3). Across the four programs, we observe different ways in which such a connection is fostered. ACDA and ESEMP intentionally bring together students from a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds enabling opportunities for interdisciplinary dialogue. These settings position doctoral education as a platform for bridging knowledge domains, reflecting the cross-disciplinary nature of IB phenomena. In addition, these programs support institutional and generational linkages through structured peer interaction, mentoring activities (ACDA) and regional scholarly exchanges (ESEMP). NORD-IB and FIGSIB create sustained linkages across national institutions through coordinated doctoral training and academic mobility. These relational mechanisms contribute to the development of strong scholarly networks that extend beyond a single program or institution. In addition, this offers initial evidence that, while participating in collaborative IB training, doctoral students not only develop a solid foundation of explicit and implicit knowledge in IB, understand the meaning and power of engaging with interconnectedness, but also cultivate a strong scholarly network necessary for a successful international IB academic career.

In collaborative doctoral education, the dimension of *complexity* (Dau *et al.*, 2022) is implicitly embedded as a learning outcome and also as a pedagogical feature of program design. The diversity of academic backgrounds, research interests, institutional affiliations and countries, among cohorts and faculty, fosters exposure to diverse perspectives that help to inform complexity. For instance, the inclusion of faculty from various international institutions in ACDA, FIGSIB and NORDIC-IB, or the heterogeneity of ACDA and ESEMP cohorts, creates opportunities for students to engage with, debate and reconcile diverse scholarly perspectives and contextual interpretations. Rather than treating complexity as an abstract notion, these programs operationalize it through faculty/cohort composition and knowledge sharing jointly with curricular design and content. This dual-level exposure equips students to acknowledge IB complexity and approach phenomena in a nuanced and analytically sophisticated manner.

While collaborative IB doctoral programs offer advantages in relation to the 3Cs, over non-collaborative programs, they also face challenges. For example, while the ACDA is global in nature, it has seen challenges to address a wide diversity in the doctoral preparation leading to highly diverse skillsets and backgrounds of students who enter the program and teaching across different time zones, which leads to some regions suffering from the choice of synchronous sessions. NORD-IB and visits across the Nordic IB schools were challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic. Income inequality amongst students has remained a barrier when arranging travels for the primary and supplementary social events, and when handling fees (even if scholarship options have been developed and made available). These and other emerging challenges hint that while collaborative doctoral IB education has brought positive developments to IB doctoral training, further improvements should be considered to secure a more impactful and inclusive program, capable of addressing the unique needs of the IB discipline doctoral training in relation to the 3Cs of IB. Table 2 provides an overview how each of the four programs is reflected in the elements of the 3Cs framework.

In the next section, we discuss insights obtained from our examination of the identified collaborative IB doctoral programs, considering both the actions that are collaborative in nature and better help to address the disciplinary demands captured through the 3Cs framework, as well as further areas for development when setting collaborative IB doctoral training designs or when encouraging participation in such initiatives.

#### 4. Collaborative doctoral International business education for addressing disciplinary demands

The design of collaborative IB doctoral programs, as we have observed, is intended to address the critiques voiced in regard to the traditional, institutionally-centered doctoral training programs and the disciplinary demands captured through the 3Cs framework. Guided by our observations, we propose a set of recommendations for IB doctoral students, universities and higher education leaders working within them, and the IB community, to enhance the vision of IB doctoral education (see [Table 3](#)) and therefore be better equipped in addressing needs of and expectations raised for the IB discipline. We discuss three recommendations: (1) engagement in diverse knowledge exchanges, (2) building and utilizing scholarly community online and on site, and (3) developing the competencies for making a tangible impact.

Collaborative doctoral IB education programs have elements to enhance teaching innovation that, based on a slowly emerging set of evidence, have helped to address some of the limitations noted in our examination of doctoral education as related to the complex, connected and contextual nature of the IB discipline. It appears that collaborative training designs have attempted to balance both formal and informal elements this way, eliminating challenges in traditional doctoral training models. For instance, collaborative doctoral IB programs work to equip doctoral IB students with advanced skills and knowledge needed for conducting high-level research in IB that embraces the 3Cs, and, at least to some extent, some programs have additionally provided the resources/training to develop teaching competencies necessary for an academic career.

Collaborative IB programs appear to focus on delivering codified knowledge as well as tacit knowledge, developed through the development and engagement in broad scholarly social networks. By exchanging and engaging with leading authors, editors and community role-models in collaborative doctoral IB, the training format may help shape students' understanding of the IB research community's less explicitly outspoken aspects and can help them navigate their way to becoming insiders and active citizens of IB. In other words, these programs appear to create social networking opportunities and to foster a construction of scholarly IB identity through a diversity of views and perspectives, to differing degrees. These points echo the observations by [Kezar \(2005\)](#) who suggests that exposure to diverse perspectives and academic cultures through early networking is essential for professional and intellectual development, fostering innovation in research and teaching. This issue is also consistent with [Katz and Martin \(1997\)](#), who argue that establishing "cross-context" authorship teams and forming research communities with complementary expertise enhances collaborative outputs and broadens the impact of research.

Network development, in which the students of different cohorts in collaborative programs participate, works to support the creation of a sense of shared identity and belonging to the IB community. This works toward [Wenger's \(1998\)](#) concept of communities of practice, where participants collaboratively engage in shared learning processes on a regular basis. The inclusivity of such programs can also enrich the learning process, fostering exchanges that are relevant in IB education ([Laine et al., 2024](#)), which is inherently interdisciplinary ([Cavusgil, 1998](#); [Dunning, 1989](#)).

Table 2. Collaborative doctoral programs in international business examined against the 3Cs framework

3Cs	AIB-CIBER doctoral academy (ACDA)	Nordic Research School of IB (NORD-IB)	Emerging scholars from emerging markets program (ESEMP)	The Finnish Graduate School of International Business (FIGSIB)
Context	Global, inter-disciplinary and cohort-tailored; designed to flexibly support diverse doctoral backgrounds and foster international community-building. Cohort heterogeneity and faculty diversity expose students to multiple institutional and national research environments	Regional and disciplinary; offers a structured, regionally grounded curriculum that reflects Nordic research values and epistemologies. Physical mobility enables immersion in different national academic systems within a shared regional framework	Emerging market-specific; addresses inequities in research infrastructure and inclusion for scholars from emerging economies. Program content and participation embed real-world exposure to under-resourced academic systems. Aims to develop “voice” of scholars from emerging markets in research on emerging markets globally	National and institutional: responds to domestic academic and institutional contexts with flexible, co-organized modules and includes international faculty and diverse students to broaden perspectives
Connection	Global, multi-generational and cross-disciplinary connection: Strong emphasis on formal/ informal networking (horizontal (peer) and vertical (senior-junior) scholarly links), mentorship, cross-cohort collaboration. ACDA is exemplary for building <i>connections across boundaries</i> , especially by embedding networking formally into the program’s design	Regional, inter-institutional connection: Anchored in Nordic institutional ties, regular interactions and shared academic culture, NORD-IB fosters <i>regionally concentrated but deeply embedded</i> connections within a specific scholarly community led by appreciation for diversity and collaboration	Developmental and access-oriented connection: Prioritizes inclusion, integration and capacity-building for underrepresented scholars from emerging markets. ESEMP fosters <i>opportunity-bridging connections</i> , particularly in enhancing global research visibility and scholarly access	Institutional and domestic scholarly connection: Focused on national collaborations, with modest external connection-building. FIGSIB builds <i>national academic linkages</i> and offers limited global or intergenerational connection compared to the other programs
Complexity	Theoretical, methodological and interdisciplinary cognitive intercomplexity (deep, cross-disciplinary, cross-contextual). structured modular design (core, elective, career-focused); cross-disciplinary cohort; global mentoring; cross-institutional teaching based on a global pool of IB scholars	Theoretical and conceptual (Nordic-focused) complexity; structured module progression; strong emphasis on Nordic paradigms (networks, institutions); collective-supported research proposal development; cross-institutional teaching based on a wide pool of IB scholars connected to Nordic region	Methodological and contextual complexity (emerging markets, pluralistic methods); targets practical complexity relevant to underrepresented contexts; workshops on framing, methods, contributions; focus on emerging market scholarship and journal engagement; capacity building; teaching based IB scholars dedicated to develop the region	Moderate thematic, lower structural complexity; varies by year; less structured integration of complexity dimensions: some thematic IB subfields (e.g. international marketing, entrepreneurship); informal structure; teaching based on IB scholars connected to the country

Source(s): Authors’ own elaboration



**Table 3.** Collaborative doctoral ID education-informed actions for enhancing IB doctoral training to address disciplinary needs

Suggested actions	For the IB community	For higher education institutions	For doctoral students
Action 1: Engagement in diverse knowledge exchanges	Foster and support collaborative platforms and academics: Support collaborative programs that offer integrated formal and informal learning experiences involving multiple institutions and experts in different areas	Institutionalize multi-institutional partnerships: Form consortia and joint programs with other universities, research centers and think-tanks. Encourage doctoral student participation in collaborative doctoral programs	Proactively engage in knowledge and opportunity seeking beyond the home institution: Participate in multi-institutional consortia, doctoral academics and international conferences. Utilize the opportunities provided by modern technologies to participate in online training and programs offered by leading academics in the field, alongside peers from diverse global locations
Potential challenges to implement the suggested action	Institutional and mental models may limit motivation for such engagement	Institutional interests might limit knowledge exchange to secure own expertise	Doctoral students might be constrained by funding available or supervisor's readiness to support such participation
Expected impact of the action	Fostering identities-in-difference, inclusion of diverse thought, methods, approaches and interdisciplinarity. Better ability to reflect on grand Context and connection		
Link to the "3Cs" element			
Action 2: Building and utilizing scholarly community online and on site	Give back to the community by offering mentorship, courses, networking encounters with scholars at all career stages and from different geographies: Offer your time and efforts to engage with doctoral students and mid-career scholars/educators seeking to advance their competencies, network, knowledge and skills. Create and foster informal networks around various research or teaching interest areas within the discipline. Engage with mentoring programs and networks directed at supporting under-represented groups in academia (e.g. women, doctoral students or scholars from emerging markets)	Enhance support for mobility, exchange programs and external learning platforms: Provide time resources and, if possible, financial resources to facilitate doctoral students' participation in external programs and academics that complement and enhance research, teaching and publishing skills. Support and encourage their attendance at conferences, doctoral consortia and networking events online and/or on site. Establish formal and promote informal mentorship frameworks that promote associations between students and scholars globally (e.g. using alumni PhD networks), encompassing guest lectures	Utilize networks and mentorship: Actively form, participate and nurture peer and senior scholars' groups – both online and in-person – to exchange ideas and conduct reviews on each other's work. Offer mutual support to your peers throughout the doctoral journey. Establish a diverse, informal group of mentors from various institutions, research backgrounds, geographic locations and career stages to gain new insights and advice

(continued)

Table 3. Continued

Suggested actions	For the IB community	For higher education institutions	For doctoral students
Potential challenges to implement the suggested action	Without established programs or settings to develop social networks, giving back to the community and reaching those who need the guidance might be challenging	and inter-institutional dissertation committees. Implement mechanisms and evaluation criteria to acknowledge faculty members and students who engage in international collaborations and global community-building and research-related initiatives	Prejudice toward junior academics may limit engagement opportunities, as well as limiting funding and time resources
Expected impact of the action	Addressing the insularity concerns, securing the right of “voice” to all scholars regardless of their scholarly career stage or location. Improving inclusion of diverse scholars, ensuring tacit learning of “craftsmanship” in the discipline, building cross-disciplinary bridges to address complex problems in diverse author teams	Local scholarly traditions and regulations of education may limit the possibility of taking the suggested actions	
Link to the “3Cs” element	Connection and complexity		
Action 3: Developing competencies for making tangible impact	Join forces to uplift the quality and advancement of research and best teaching practices in IB: Develop internationally endorsed guidelines and benchmark criteria for IB doctoral programs, encouraging institutions to advance doctoral education. Curate a repository of open-access, high-quality teaching materials, case studies and syllabi from leading IB programs worldwide, especially those that excel in scholarly impact and interdisciplinarity, updating it regularly. Support HEI from developing and emerging countries with expertise and materials for IB courses and curriculum development. Encourage	Facilitate collaborative curriculum development: Incorporate global trends and region-specific insights into curricula, collaborating with professional associations to jointly create and implement learning modules. Exchange best practices and teaching innovations to advance teaching in IB skills development for doctoral students and post-doc fellows. Encourage and positively appraise industry-academia collaboration and collaboration with policymakers as a part of doctoral and further research projects	Be strategic in skills-for-impact development: Pinpoint areas where your methodological, analytical, communication skills and skills to collaborate with multiple stakeholders need improvement and keep you from making a wider impact with your scholarly work; actively seek out workshops, learning platforms and expert guidance to address these identified shortcomings. Develop skills in teaching and research communications to effectively “translate” research findings for diverse stakeholder groups who will benefit

(continued)

Table 3. Continued

Suggested actions	For the IB community	For higher education institutions	For doctoral students
Potential challenges to implement the suggested action	and appreciate industry-academia and policy-making-academia projects that have made a positive impact on industry, society and sustainability of different kind Different mindsets of communities might initially limit the possibility to set and start the collaborations	Traditional divide between teaching and research tracks and long-standing ways to measure impacts in local context may reduce the willingness to engage with such developments	from applying academic research in practice  Initial limited ability to engage with different contexts and approaches as well as differences in doctoral training may complicate and prolong these endeavors
Expected impact of the action Link to the “3Cs” element	Improved ability to conduct and present research making a positive impact at different levels. Improved ability to support others in developing the necessary skills to perform change toward sustainable development and sustainable business operations Context, connection and complexity		Improved research relevance and approaches needed to perform change toward sustainable
Source(s): Authors’ own elaboration			

Collaborative doctoral IB programs appear to work to foster strong engagement, aligned with observations by [Mueller and Schnurbus \(2023\)](#) who find that students who collaborate more with others during their PhD are more likely to act on their intrinsic motivation to pursue an academic career. The focus of these programs is to provide the benefits of social relationships, such as mentoring aimed at facilitating doctoral researchers' professional identity over mentoring mainly aimed at increasing their knowledge and skills, in motivating students to continue in academia. Moreover, they work to support the notion that networking with peers can lead to the formation of accountability partnerships, in which students motivate each other to meet writing goals, deadlines or conference preparations ([Boud and Lee, 2005](#)).

By fostering interactions among diverse scholars, the programs work to build a professional community that not only can strengthen participants' research capabilities and motivation but also can potentially enhance their sense of belonging within the global IB community. This can additionally contribute to a stronger personal commitment to the field of IB and motivation contributing to its development, creating a culture of "positive academia" ([Harzing, 2022](#)). For doctoral researchers, regionally or globally embedded, in a networked ecosystem where context and complexity are self-evident, these programs can help to prepare students for the international job market, where "your network is your networth" ([Brown and Tannock, 2009](#)). This can also provide insights into other academic systems from international peers offering a valuable understanding of different funding models, publication norms and teaching methods, enriching doctoral experience and job-market prospects ([Altbach, 2004](#)).

Drawing on our examination of collaborative doctoral IB programs, we suggest that going beyond the home institution locally, regionally and especially globally can further address the observed limitations in the current state of IB and many other doctoral programs. This effort can help doctoral students become change agents with the necessary knowledge, skillset and networks to tackle complex, connected and contextual issues present in the IB phenomena.

By recognizing and acting upon both formal and informal doctoral training in IB, we believe, both students and the broader community can facilitate a transformative shift in the development of future scholars, educators and practitioners. Collaborative IB doctoral programs are structured to advance the combination of both formal and informal components in IB doctoral education, and appear to have a strong, or at least equal emphasis of the informal element. This is likely to deliver significant value, have a global positive impact and enable educating future scholars to become "responsible public servants of scientific knowledge" who understand the critical relationship between scientific knowledge and society ([Mckiernan and Tsui, 2019](#), p. 310).

For doctoral candidates, this means actively seeking opportunities beyond their home institutions, whether by attending international workshops, engaging in cross-border research collaborations or soliciting mentorship from a wider network of senior scholars, can help build their understanding of the context, complexity and connection inherent in the field of IB. It also means prioritizing the development of teaching competencies early on, seeking opportunities to co-teach, shadow experienced educators or participate in teaching-focused workshops and courses specifically designed for the IB context. Similarly, there is significant opportunity in all collaborative programs to enhance student understanding of the practice of IB. In this sense, much like building mentors for research and teaching, programs should strive to build mentorship related to practice. This is an important next step that could be incorporated into collaborative programs to not only educate scholars and educators on the

practice of IB, but also as entering the practice of IB (e.g. taking business roles) is for many doctoral graduates their intended next step.

For the leaders in higher education institutions and the IB academic community, taking concrete steps to build more inclusive, networked and well-rounded doctoral programs should remain paramount. Institutions and their leaders could consider embedding structured international exchanges, digital learning modules or global mentorship networks into their curricula. Professional organizations (e.g. AIB or EIBA) and consortia can play a role by hosting doctoral symposia, offering formal teaching training sessions and developing robust platforms for ongoing interactions among doctoral students, faculty and industry partners. Furthermore, university leaders and administrators must actively work to eliminate institutional barriers that restrict enrolment and participation in such collaborative programs, especially for students from underrepresented regions or institutions with limited resources. This involves tackling funding inequalities, easing bureaucratic obstacles and supporting cross-border cooperation and mobility. Collectively, these efforts ensure that doctoral education surpasses the limits of individual institutions and thrives within a global academic ecosystem, providing scholars with access to diverse research agendas, theoretical perspectives and pedagogical approaches. The latter is likely to further enable appreciation for diversity of thought and academic freedom even in the regions where it is temporarily or permanently constrained.

To fully leverage the benefits of doctoral education in IB in the future, doctoral students need to engage and take the initiative. Rather than remaining confined to the structures and offerings of their home institutions, students need to seek opportunities that actively broaden their academic horizons. This involves looking beyond the comfort zone of local coursework and seminars to engage with offerings from international research communities. Such proactive outreach enables doctoral candidates to cultivate diverse intellectual perspectives, develop meaningful professional relationships and gain teaching experience that directly addresses the complexities and fluidity of global business.

In essence, the responsibility for extending one's reach beyond institutional boundaries partially rests on doctoral students' initiatives in making use of the driver's seat position of their learning journey, while the IB community needs to provide the necessary support and infrastructure to make those efforts meaningful and fruitful. The synergy of these actions is likely to foster a more dynamic, inclusive and forward-looking doctoral education. Through enhanced scholarly networks, improved teaching competencies and diverse intellectual exposure, doctoral graduates are likely to be better positioned to address complex global challenges and advance the field as both research innovators and educators in the global academic environment.

## 5. Conclusion

The purpose of this work was to examine the state of doctoral education in the field of IB, with a specific focus on collaborative IB doctoral programs examined against the demands and implications captured through the 3Cs framework (i.e. context, connection and complexity). Specifically, we examined four collaborative programs in doctoral education in IB (i.e. the AIB-CIBER Doctoral Academy, Nordic Research School of IB, ESEMP and the Finnish Graduate School of International Business) and how these programs prepare doctoral students to address disciplinary demands, since these programs have been overlooked in earlier works that aimed to develop doctoral education.

While the current evidence is only emerging and remains of an illustrative nature, it is sufficient to propose that collaborative IB programs are likely to enhance the development of skills, knowledge and scholarly practice needed to engage with the complex nature of IB

phenomena. Based upon our examination, we suggest that doctoral students, institutions and IB community are likely to benefit from extending both formal and informal components of doctoral programs, beyond home institutions of doctoral researchers. Formal and particularly informal aspects of doctoral training that offer cross-disciplinary, cross-institutional, geographically expanded scholarly interactions are likely to yield the ability to address contextual, complex global challenges in IB research and practice. We believe that further suggestions on how to develop collaborative nature of IB doctoral training, along with doctoral students taking ownership of their learning journey, present a promising future for collaborative doctoral education in IB and has the potential to add additional strength to the IB academic community. Further research, especially longitudinal in nature, is needed to evaluate the soundness of currently emerging evidence and the stated suggestions.

We also recognize that, the IB field, as well as the scholarly community, faces impending challenges from advancements in technology, such as artificial intelligence, as well as changes in higher education, such as limits to academic freedom, the decrease in tenure track faculty lines, increased cost pressure and laws banning collaborations with academics in specified countries. The effort to improve doctoral education is far from finished, and addressing these questions is crucial for ensuring that collaborative IB doctoral education remains relevant, resilient and adaptable to a rapidly changing world, shaping the future of IB doctoral education.

### Acknowledgements

Authors are listed alphabetically and equally contributed to the manuscript.

### References

- AACBS International Doctoral Education Task Force (2012), "The promise of business doctoral education", AACSB, pp. 1-82, available at: [www.aacsb.edu/-media/publications/research-reports/the-promise-of-business-doctoral-education.pdf](http://www.aacsb.edu/-media/publications/research-reports/the-promise-of-business-doctoral-education.pdf)
- Aguinis, H. and Gabriel, K.P. (2022), "International business studies: are we really so uniquely complex?", *Journal of International Business Studies*, Vol. 53 No. 9, pp. 2023-2036, doi: [10.1057/s41267-021-00462-x](https://doi.org/10.1057/s41267-021-00462-x).
- Altbach, P.G. (2004), "Globalisation and the university: myths and realities in an unequal world", *Tertiary Education and Management*, Vol. 10 No. 1, pp. 3-25, doi: [10.1080/13583883.2004.9967114](https://doi.org/10.1080/13583883.2004.9967114).
- Azmat, F., Jain, A. and Sridharan, B. (2023), "Responsible management education in business schools: are we there yet?", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 157, p. 113518, doi: [10.1016/j.jbusres.2022.113518](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2022.113518).
- Barnard, H. (2024), "Stepping stones across a fast-flowing river: supporting emerging scholars from emerging markets", *Critical Perspectives on International Business*, doi: [10.1108/cpoib-09-2023-0086](https://doi.org/10.1108/cpoib-09-2023-0086).
- Beugelsdijk, S. (2022), "Capitalizing on the uniqueness of international business: towards a theory of place, space, and organization", *Journal of International Business Studies*, Vol. 53 No. 9, pp. 2050-2067, doi: [10.1057/s41267-022-00545-3](https://doi.org/10.1057/s41267-022-00545-3).
- Bhaskar, R. (2008), *Dialectic: The Pulse of Freedom*, Routledge, London, doi: [10.4324/9780203892633](https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203892633).
- Boud, D. and Lee, A. (2005), "Peer learning' as pedagogic discourse for research education<sup>1</sup>", *Studies in Higher Education*, Vol. 30 No. 5, pp. 501-516, doi: [10.1080/03075070500249138](https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070500249138).
- Brown, P. and Tannock, S. (2009), "Education, meritocracy and the global war for talent", *Journal of Education Policy*, Vol. 24 No. 4, pp. 377-392, doi: [10.1080/02680930802669938](https://doi.org/10.1080/02680930802669938).



- Buckley, P.J., Doh, J.P. and Benischke, M.H. (2017), "Towards a renaissance in international business research? Big questions, grand challenges, and the future of IB scholarship", *Journal of International Business Studies*, Vol. 48 No. 9, pp. 1045-1064, doi: [10.1057/s41267-017-0102-z](https://doi.org/10.1057/s41267-017-0102-z).
- Carter, S., Smith, K. and Harrison, N. (2021), "Working in the borderlands: critical perspectives on doctoral education", *Teaching in Higher Education*, Vol. 26 No. 3, pp. 283-292, doi: [10.1080/13562517.2021.1911098](https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2021.1911098).
- Casas I Klett, T. and Cozzi, G. (2025), "*Elite Quality Index 2025: The Sustainable Value Creation of Nations*", Anthem Press, doi: [10.2307/jj.30488655](https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.30488655).
- Casson, M. and Li, Y. (2022), "Complexity in international business: the implications for theory", *Journal of International Business Studies*, Vol. 53 No. 9, pp. 2037-2049, doi: [10.1057/s41267-021-00495-2](https://doi.org/10.1057/s41267-021-00495-2).
- Cavusgil, S.T. (1998), "Internationalizing doctoral education in business: a call for action", *Thunderbird International Business Review*, Vol. 40 No. 1, pp. 77-85, doi: [10.1002/tie.4270400108](https://doi.org/10.1002/tie.4270400108).
- Chandra, P. (2017), "Building universities that matter: where are Indian institutions going wrong?", Orient BlackSwan".
- Dau, L.A., Beugelsdijk, S., Fleury, M.T.L. and Zaheer, S. (2022), "What makes international business unique and important as a field? The three Cs of IB", *AIB Insights*, Vol. 22 No. 2, doi: [10.46697/001c.33698](https://doi.org/10.46697/001c.33698).
- de Fontaines, N. and Côté, C. (2024), "Global education is essential, now more than ever", AACSB, February 7, available at: [www.aacsb.edu/insights/articles/2024/02/global-education-is-essential-now-more-than-ever](https://www.aacsb.edu/insights/articles/2024/02/global-education-is-essential-now-more-than-ever)
- De Meyer, A.C.L. (2013), "The future of doctoral education in business administration", *Journal of Management Development*, Vol. 32 No. 5, pp. 477-486, doi: [10.1108/02621711311328264](https://doi.org/10.1108/02621711311328264).
- Delios, A. (2017a), "The death and rebirth (?) of international business research", *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol. 54 No. 3, pp. 391-397, doi: [10.1111/joms.12222](https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.12222).
- Delios, A. (2017b), "Are you a 'truly international' scholar?", *AIB Insights*, Vol. 17 No. 4, doi: [10.46697/001c.16847](https://doi.org/10.46697/001c.16847).
- Dieleman, M., Šilenskytė, A., Lynden, K., Fletcher, M. and Panina, D. (2022), "Toward more impactful international business education: a teaching innovation typology", *Journal of Teaching in International Business*, Vol. 33 No. 4, pp. 181-202, doi: [10.1080/08975930.2022.2137279](https://doi.org/10.1080/08975930.2022.2137279).
- Dörrenbächer, C. and Gammelgaard, J. (2019), "Critical and mainstream international business research", *Critical Perspectives on International Business*, Vol. 15 Nos 2-3, pp. 239-261, doi: [10.1108/cpoib-02-2019-0012](https://doi.org/10.1108/cpoib-02-2019-0012).
- Dunning, J.H. (1989), "The study of international business: a plea for a more interdisciplinary approach", *Journal of International Business Studies*, Vol. 20 No. 3, pp. 411-436, doi: [10.1057/palgrave.jibs.8490371](https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.jibs.8490371).
- Eden, L. and Nielsen, B.B. (2020), "Research methods in international business: the challenge of complexity", *Journal of International Business Studies*, Vol. 51 No. 9, pp. 1609-1620, doi: [10.1057/s41267-020-00374-2](https://doi.org/10.1057/s41267-020-00374-2).
- Ghoshal, S. (2005), "Bad management theories are destroying good management practices", *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, Vol. 4 No. 1, pp. 75-91, doi: [10.5465/amle.2005.16132558](https://doi.org/10.5465/amle.2005.16132558).
- Griffith, D.A. (1997), "An examination of marketing educator training in U.S. doctoral programs", *Marketing Education Review*, Vol. 7 No. 2, pp. 81-95, doi: [10.1080/10528008.1997.11488596](https://doi.org/10.1080/10528008.1997.11488596).
- Harzing, A.W. (2022), "Positive academia", Harzing.com, available at: <https://harzing.com/positiveacademia> (accessed 15 May 2025).
- Katz, J.S. and Martin, B.R. (1997), "What is research collaboration?", *Research Policy*, Vol. 26 No. 1, pp. 1-18, doi: [10.1016/S0048-7333\(96\)00917-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0048-7333(96)00917-1).

- Kezar, A. (2005), "Redesigning for collaboration within higher education institutions: an exploration into the developmental process", *Research in Higher Education*, Vol. 46 No. 7, pp. 831-860, doi: [10.1007/s11162-004-6227-5](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-004-6227-5).
- Kovoor-Misra, S. (2020), "The transformative professor: adapting and fostering positive change", *Journal of Management Inquiry*, Vol. 29 No. 2, pp. 154-158, doi: [10.1177/1056492619870865](https://doi.org/10.1177/1056492619870865).
- Krishnamurthy, S. (2020), "The future of business education: a commentary in the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 117, pp. 1-5, doi: [10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.05.034](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.05.034).
- Kuhne, R.J. (1990), "Comparative analysis of U.S. doctoral programs in international business", *Journal of Teaching in International Business*, Vol. 1 Nos 3-4, pp. 85-99, doi: [10.1300/J066v01n03\\_06](https://doi.org/10.1300/J066v01n03_06).
- Laine, I., Pirrone, G., Phan, K.H.Q., Milotta, M., Väättä, J. and Hagen, B. (2024), "Integrating real-world entrepreneurship with international learning: insights from a blended intensive programme", *Journal of International Education in Business*, Vol. 18 No. 3, doi: [10.1108/jieb-08-2024-0112](https://doi.org/10.1108/jieb-08-2024-0112).
- Lewicki, R.J. and Bailey, J. (2016), "'A deeper dig: rejoinder to' isn't it time we did something about the lack of teaching preparation in business doctoral programs?", *Journal of Management Education*, Vol. 40 No. 5, pp. 516-523, doi: [10.1177/1052562916644835](https://doi.org/10.1177/1052562916644835).
- Mckiernan, P. and Tsui, A.S. (2019), "Responsible management research: a senior scholar legacy in doctoral education", *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, Vol. 18 No. 2, pp. 310-313, doi: [10.5465/amle.2019.0023](https://doi.org/10.5465/amle.2019.0023).
- McLead, H., Mescon, T., Iannarelli, J., Assimakopoulos, D., Hair, J., Jensen, H. S., Payen, N., Ulhoi, J. and Zsoka, A. (2021), "Mapping the global landscape of business doctoral programs", *AACSB & EDAMBA*, pp. 1-20, available at: [www.aacsb.edu/-/media/publications/research-reports/aacsb-edamba-doctoral-education-report.pdf](http://www.aacsb.edu/-/media/publications/research-reports/aacsb-edamba-doctoral-education-report.pdf)
- Mueller, E.F. and Schnurbus, J. (2023), "Heeding the call of science: what leads PhD graduates to pursue an academic career?", *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, Vol. 22 No. 4, pp. 681-701, doi: [10.5465/amle.2021.0216](https://doi.org/10.5465/amle.2021.0216).
- Schwendinger, F., Topp, L. and Kovacs, V. (2022), "Competences for policymaking: competence frameworks for policymakers and researchers working on public policy, edited by Schwendinger, F., Topp, L. and Kovacs, V", Publications Office of the European Union, available at: <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC129623>
- Šilenskytė, A., Kohtamäki, M. and Dhanaraj, C. (2022), "Strategy implementation in the transnational MNC: a critical realist investigation of European and Indian unit collaboration", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 152, pp. 276-289, doi: [10.1016/j.jbusres.2022.07.041](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2022.07.041).
- Sinkovics, N., Vieira, L.M. and van Tulder, R. (2022), "Working toward the sustainable development goals in earnest – critical international business perspectives on designing and implementing better interventions", *Critical Perspectives on International Business*, Vol. 18 No. 4, pp. 445-456, doi: [10.1108/cpoib-05-2022-0059](https://doi.org/10.1108/cpoib-05-2022-0059).
- Stanton Webb, M. and Allen, M. (2005), "A global survey of AACSB accredited doctoral programs-2004", *Journal of Teaching in International Business*, Vol. 16 No. 3, pp. 29-46, doi: [10.1300/J066v16n03\\_03](https://doi.org/10.1300/J066v16n03_03).
- Tolstikov-Mast, Y., Walker, J.L., Lemoine, P.A. and Rosser-Mims, D. (2021), "Internationalization of doctoral research education", *Handbook of International and Cross-Cultural Leadership Research Processes*, Routledge, New York, NY, pp. 409-426, doi: [10.4324/9781003003380-24](https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003003380-24).
- Trinh, A.N. and Conner, L. (2019), "Student engagement in internationalization of the curriculum: Vietnamese domestic students' perspectives", *Journal of Studies in International Education*, Vol. 23 No. 1, pp. 154-170, doi: [10.1177/1028315318814065](https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315318814065).
- Van Tulder, R., Rodrigues, S.B., Mirza, H. and Sexsmith, K. (2021), "The UN's sustainable development goals: can multinational enterprises lead the decade of action?", *Journal of International Business Policy*, Vol. 4 No. 1, pp. 1-21, doi: [10.1057/s42214-020-00095-1](https://doi.org/10.1057/s42214-020-00095-1).

---

WEF (2025), *Future of Jobs Report 2025*, World Economic Forum.

Wenger, E. (1998), *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

White, D.S. and Griffith, D.A. (1998), "Graduate international business education in the U.S.: comparisons and suggestions", *Journal of Education for Business*, Vol. 74 No. 2, pp. 103-115, doi: [10.1080/08832329809601671](https://doi.org/10.1080/08832329809601671).

Wright, A., Murray, J.P. and Geale, P. (2007), "A phenomenographic study of what it means to supervise doctoral students", *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, Vol. 6 No. 4, pp. 458-474, doi: [10.5465/amle.2007.27694946](https://doi.org/10.5465/amle.2007.27694946).

---

### Corresponding author

Aušrinė Šilenskytė can be contacted at: [ausrine.silenskyte@uwasa.fi](mailto:ausrine.silenskyte@uwasa.fi)