

Case Title: Identifying Relevant Academic Stakeholders for Industry–Academia Engagement

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1. Industry Context

1.1 Industry Overview

The Quality Management and Organisational Excellence industry focuses on improving organisational performance through quality systems, process improvement, innovation, operational excellence and continuous learning. In recent years, the sector has increasingly recognised the importance of collaboration between industry and academia for research, knowledge exchange, skill development and innovation.

Industry–Academia partnerships enable organisations to access specialised academic knowledge while allowing educational institutions to understand practical industry requirements. With the emergence of Quality 4.0, artificial intelligence, analytics, automation and other digital technologies, organisations increasingly require access to specialised expertise. Consequently, identifying academic institutions and individuals whose expertise aligns with specific organisational requirements has become an important aspect of effective Industry–Academia engagement.

1.2 Key Industry Issue

A significant challenge in Industry–Academia engagement is identifying the **right institutions and stakeholders for a specific purpose**. Institutional reputation or ranking alone may not indicate whether an institution possesses expertise relevant to a particular requirement.

Academic institutions often have specialised departments, research centres and faculty working in areas such as operations management, quality management, digital manufacturing, analytics, innovation and technology. Therefore, an institution that appears broadly relevant may not necessarily have the specific expertise required for a particular engagement.

Another challenge is identifying the appropriate individual within the institution. A Vice-Chancellor, Dean, Director, professor or centre head may have different responsibilities and levels of relevance to a proposed collaboration.

This creates a need for a more focused approach based on **institutional expertise, stakeholder roles, existing industry linkages and potential contribution**.

2. Company Context

2.1 About IFQM

The **Indian Foundation for Quality Management (IFQM)** is an industry-led organisation focused on promoting Quality, Innovation and Organisational Excellence. Its activities include knowledge sharing, learning initiatives, case studies, industry engagement and Industry–Academia collaboration.

The Industry–Academia pillar focuses on strengthening interaction between industry and academic institutions through areas such as **internships, case studies, courses and Quality Clubs**. As part of the preparation for the IFQM Symposium 2026, the Industry–Academia team was required to identify suitable academic institutions and stakeholders who could contribute to the symposium and related engagement activities.

2.2 Key Organisational Issue

For IFQM, identifying academic stakeholders required more than preparing a list of well-known institutions. The Industry–Academia team needed to identify institutions and individuals whose expertise could contribute meaningfully to IFQM's objectives and the Symposium 2026 theme.

A single institution could have multiple departments, centres and senior academic leaders, making it necessary to determine which stakeholder was most relevant for a particular engagement.

During the SIP, institutional research involved reviewing official institutional websites, leadership profiles, faculty information, centres of excellence, research areas and industry-collaboration initiatives. Institutions including **IIM Mumbai, Indian Statistical Institute Bengaluru, IISc, NIT Warangal, MAHE and VIT** were examined based on their areas of expertise and potential relevance.

The central challenge was therefore to convert extensive institutional information into a **focused and actionable stakeholder list**.

3. Problem Identification and Analysis

3.1 The Problem

The primary challenge identified during the SIP was the absence of a simple, one-dimensional criterion for selecting academic stakeholders.

Institutional reputation could initially appear to be an obvious basis for selection. However, further research demonstrated that relevance depended on the institution's **specific expertise as well as the role and responsibilities of individual stakeholders**.

For instance, an institution may have strong capabilities in operations management, statistical quality control, digital manufacturing, innovation or industry collaboration, but the relevant expertise may be concentrated within a particular department, research centre or group of faculty members.

Consequently, the stakeholder identification process required multiple levels of analysis:

- Identifying relevant institutions
- Understanding institutional areas of expertise
- Locating relevant departments or centres
- Identifying appropriate stakeholders
- Reviewing their designations and areas of work
- Assessing their potential relevance to IFQM's objectives

The process also required continuous verification of information and comparison across institutions. The experience demonstrated that **expertise-based stakeholder identification is more informative than relying solely on institutional reputation**.

3.2 Stakeholder Identification Framework

The research was organised around a structured set of criteria:

Selection Criterion	Purpose
Institutional Relevance	Identify institutions aligned with IFQM's objectives
Area of Expertise	Match expertise in quality, operations, innovation, technology and related areas
Stakeholder Designation	Identify suitable Deans, Directors, faculty members or centre heads

Industry Linkage	Assess potential for Industry–Academia interaction
Engagement Potential	Determine suitability for symposium participation or future collaboration

This framework helped convert extensive institutional information into a more structured stakeholder identification process. The research was based on institutional profiles and publicly available information, supporting an expertise-based approach rather than selection based solely on rankings or general reputation.

4. Strategies and Possible Solutions

4.1 Proposed Approach

IFQM can strengthen its stakeholder identification process by developing a structured **Industry–Academia Stakeholder Database**. In addition to basic contact information, the database could capture:

- Institution and department
- Area of expertise
- Stakeholder designation
- Research interests
- Industry linkages
- Previous engagement with IFQM
- Potential areas of collaboration

Stakeholders could also be categorised according to specific IFQM themes, allowing the organisation to identify relevant contacts more efficiently for future programmes and events.

Periodic verification of institutional websites and stakeholder profiles would help keep the database updated. A standard stakeholder-mapping template could also reduce repetitive research for future symposiums and improve consistency in the identification process.

These measures could support **more targeted invitations, structured engagement planning and the development of long-term Industry–Academia relationships**.

5. Key Learning

This case demonstrates that effective Industry–Academia engagement begins before the communication or invitation stage. Identifying the right institution and the right individual requires **research, relevance assessment and structured stakeholder mapping**.

The internship experience showed that a large amount of institutional information becomes useful only when it is systematically analysed and connected to a specific organisational objective.

For the researcher, the project provided practical exposure to institutional research, stakeholder mapping, information verification and structured data management. It also demonstrated the importance of moving from a broad institution-based approach towards a more **expertise-driven and purpose-oriented approach to stakeholder identification**.

Conclusion

Effective Industry–Academia engagement depends not only on the number of institutions or stakeholders contacted but also on the relevance of those connections.

An expertise-based stakeholder identification framework can help organisations better understand academic capabilities, identify appropriate individuals and create more focused opportunities for collaboration. For organisations such as IFQM, developing a structured and continuously updated stakeholder database can provide a foundation for more systematic Industry–Academia engagement in future programmes and initiatives.