

Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf – The International University

Young, dynamic and innovative, Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf (HHU) regards itself as a university that is open to other cultures, globally networked and ideologically unbiased. It nurtures its international networks and relationships in support of the university community, strengthening them to the benefit of that community and the Düsseldorf region in general. HHU is no ivory tower: As a citizens university ("Creating knowledge, sharing knowledge"), it makes a tangible impact on both the region as well as the whole of North Rhine-Westphalia and maintains strong links to external stakeholders from business, culture and society.

HHU's declared objective is to enhance its attractiveness for outstanding scholars, early career researchers and employees from at home and abroad in its faculties, central institutions and university administration. It also aspires to attract first-class domestic and international students and substantially raise the number of visits undertaken abroad by its members. A constant increase in the percentage of professors with international experience is another of HHU's prime goals.

At university level, HHU has entered into cooperation agreements with 21 fellow institutions, including renowned universities such as Tel Aviv University, University of California, Davis, and the Keio and Waseda universities in Tokyo. In the framework of the Erasmus programme, HHU has concluded over 300 inter-institutional agreements with about 190 universities in 28 European countries. Many further partnerships and agreements are in place at faculty and department level.

A. The Internationalisation Process

HHU has set out to expand internationalisation - a cross-cutting task for which all university members are co-responsible. Shaping its internationalisation strategy is understood as a continuous, dynamic and transparent process that brings on board all the relevant groups at the University. In order to engage more in research and teaching at international level, HHU will improve overall conditions for the university members involved, giving greater consideration and support to their ideas, motivations and personal contacts abroad. Optimising structures, contacts and communication channels in the faculties also serves to bundle and strategically align international contacts as well as create synergies for the University as a whole. HHU will empower its students to enter the international academic stage and co-shape an increasingly intercultural society in their home countries.

On the basis of the “Internationalisation of Universities” audit of the German Rectors’ Conference successfully completed in 2016, HHU has developed a strategic master plan for its current and future activities in the area of internationalisation that comprises the following strategic action fields: (1) Research, knowledge transfer and early career researchers, (2) Studies and teaching, (3) Advice and support, and (4) Marketing and communication.

B. Strategic Focus

Ongoing internationalisation is a process that is firmly embedded in HHU’s overall agenda and pursues the following objectives:

1. To further develop and improve conditions for internationally networked thinking and action in all core areas at the University (research, teaching, technical infrastructure and administration).
2. To further consolidate HHU as a welcoming university that fosters the intercultural skills of students, researchers, teaching personnel and technical/administrative staff by introducing measures to improve language proficiency, increasing receptiveness towards international exchange and encouraging a participative culture of welcome.
3. To enhance the visibility of HHU’s profile and strengths in an international setting and in so doing improve its position against the backdrop of global competition.
4. To expand international research and attract a greater number of internationally distinguished scholars for research and teaching.
5. To internationalise teaching curricula, upgrade study conditions for international students and improve the foreign language skills of German and international students.
6. To increase mobility in all groups and at all levels.

C. Strategic Action Fields and Measures

There are four strategic action fields at HHU in which the implementation of internationalisation measures is expedient:

1. Research, knowledge transfer and early career researchers
2. Studies and teaching
3. Advice and support
4. Marketing and communication

HHU has set itself specific goals in these areas and drawn up a corresponding time schedule and resource plan.

C.1 Research, knowledge transfer and early career researchers

In order to stimulate creative and visionary solutions through the exchange of ideas, knowledge, methods and technologies – across borders too - HHU fosters all types of research alliance. Pioneering research needs such exchange, since it not only traverses the borders between different disciplines but also those between countries and cultures.

Research at HHU is internationally networked in many ways and numerous partnerships exist at faculty and university level with other higher education and research institutions worldwide. In order to achieve greater sustainability at this level, HHU will dovetail individual activities more finely. Collaborative research will be better supported by making greater use of the programmes offered by the EU, the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation as well as other relevant foundations and sponsors. To this purpose, HHU will also expand the central support services in place to assist with funding applications as well as project implementation and management.

In order to remain competitive at international level, HHU will further internationalise its existing research priorities and gain access to new networks via existing partnerships. It will also actively recruit international scholars as well as doctoral and postdoctoral researchers. A constant increase in the percentage of professors with international experience is another of HHU's prime goals.

At present, a Welcome Centre with an extensive service portfolio is being established at HHU, which ensures that scholars from abroad can concentrate on research and teaching during their stay. The Welcome Centre hosted by the Junior Scientist & International Researcher Centre (JUNO) will in future provide information tailored to scholars' personal requirements and those of their families.

Finally, HHU will further develop its structured doctoral programmes, especially with regard to their international focus. One means to do so is to recruit early career researchers from abroad.

C.2 Studies and teaching

HHU is adopting a systematic approach to the further internationalisation of its teaching portfolio. The numerous international contacts that already exist at faculty level and university-wide are conducive not only to a university's research performance but also influence teaching methods and content.

That is why a common framework, binding for all university members, is to be developed for the internationalisation of teaching in order to further establish internationalisation as a hallmark of HHU. The intention is to introduce more mixed-language or foreign-language Masters programmes, whilst English or another foreign language should be offered as the language of instruction in 20 percent of teaching in Bachelor programmes (including former state examination programmes). HHU is actively seeking to appoint a larger number of international teaching staff. Digital teaching formats are also planned. Students will be empowered to move confidently in a global working environment or research context.

At present (as of the 2016/2017 winter semester), about 10 percent of students at HHU are foreign nationals, of which around 54 percent have gained their university entrance qualification abroad, the rest in Germany. In the coming years, HHU will rise to the challenge of recruiting top performers from abroad, focussing both on exchange students as well as those wishing to commence a regular study programme. An international student body is the best way to convince domestic students of the advantages of going abroad and to teach intercultural skills back at home. HHU views the diversity of a heterogeneous student body and in academia in general as both an opportunity and a source of potential for its further progress as an organisation that is open to the world.

To increase the number of HHU students going abroad, time windows will be earmarked in all study programmes in the medium term that make it easier for students to incorporate a period abroad in their regular syllabus. Customised foreign language courses at HHU play a particularly important role in this context. A further goal is to send 30 percent of all teaching staff employed at HHU to foreign universities within the scope of special programmes.

C.3 Advice and support

To be able to engage in research and teaching at international level, conditions for all the university members involved need to be improved and become part of an overall strategy. This means establishing a culture of mutual respect and acknowledgement as well as strategically aligning the University's international

contacts. Moreover, there is a need to organise and scale up internal communication processes as well as bundle existing structures, contacts and communication channels in the faculties. HHU will make its operational structure clearer and the interfaces between different stakeholders more transparent.

Staff's language and intercultural skills are an important platform for the internationalisation process at HHU. The aim is to further develop administrative personnel's foreign language proficiency and knowledge of other cultures and their working practices on a continuous basis. HHU also intends to send 30 percent of its technical/administrative personnel abroad in the framework of staff mobility programmes, so that they can familiarise themselves with work cultures and business processes at other universities.

Apart from expanding its culture of welcome, HHU has set itself the goal of intensifying its contacts within the region and anchoring its international network at regional level too. More professional fundraising (e.g. to provide better accommodation for visiting scholars and their families and a café as a central meeting point) is a further target.

C.4 Marketing and communication

Greater international visibility will give HHU its own individual positioning in the competitive higher education landscape worldwide, reinforcing the status of its students, graduates and researchers in the process. Corporate identity is an important communications interface in this context. Other instruments to enhance international visibility are rankings, in which the University will in future participate, as well as strategic partnerships that will primarily be determined by HHU's individual and distinctive research priorities. Japan is one of the most important countries for HHU, not least because of Düsseldorf's locational advantage: The Japanese community is the largest outside Japan and plays a significant role in shaping society, business and culture in the city.

In cooperation with the International Office, JUNO and the Press & Communications Unit, the Vice-President for International Relations will develop suitable marketing measures. Recruiting international students, early career researchers as well as teaching staff and also cultivating the University's relations with its international alumni are important factors in creating a lively international campus.

D. Outlook

Internationalisation at HHU is understood as a continuous, dynamic and participative

process and the strategy presented here is reviewed on a regular basis. Measures are not implemented rigidly, but instead monitored and then modified and adapted if proven unviable. The Steering Group is responsible for reviewing the strategy and regular reports on the status of the internationalisation process are submitted to the Senate and the University Council in the shape of relevant indicators.

Düsseldorf, 1 June 2017