



UNIVERSITÄT
DUISBURG
ESSEN

Open-Minded

The UDE Internationalization Strategy

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The UDE Internationalization Strategy

Preamble

The education and research that take place at a university are only thinkable in an international context. As a place of research and learning, the University of Duisburg-Essen (UDE) is active and visible on an international scale. In its internationalization strategy, the University documents the key principles underlying its international outlook and approach. It presents its understanding of the work in internationalization that has been done so far and still remains to be done, and it reaches out beyond the groups represented at the University to a broader public. It is only by positioning itself internationally that the UDE can meet its mandate in teaching and research, provide students with a good education, and offer academics and researchers attractive working conditions.

Internationalization Guidelines

- The unity and quality of research and teaching with due regard for equality of educational opportunity and social inclusion are central objectives of the UDE. The internationalization of research and teaching should work towards achieving these objectives and assist the UDE in strengthening its position and profile by national and international comparison.
- Fostering international dialogue and exchange in research, teaching and academic study is centrally important for internationalization and is accounted for in the international perspective of the University's appointments policy, diversity management and human resource development.
- The UDE does not see internationalization as an end in itself but looks to the development of higher education in general and asks how international activities can support the central goals of higher education development at the UDE. For every international project, thought must be given to who will benefit from its realization and how far it goes towards securing the general strategic goals of the UDE.
- "Open-Minded", the UDE's motto, is the standard for all teaching and research at the University and calls for unprejudiced thinking beyond national boundaries and cultures. As an active member of the European and global knowledge society, the UDE considers transnational communication to be essential in advancing scientific and academic knowledge and improving the quality of scientific exchange.
- The UDE sets out to give its students the best possible education and prepare them for an increasingly international and globalized labour market. It aims to systematically develop the international skills of its students with a range of instruments while respecting and integrating the valuable intercultural resources the students possess.

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- International cooperation is built on close scientific, academic and personal contacts and arises out of the work of the researchers and scholars at the UDE. Their work and contacts are the basis on which geographical focus regions can be developed and profiled throughout the University and international networks established.
- The UDE welcomes all international researchers and academics and all international students to its campuses and the entire university environment. Every effort is made to ensure that a culture of welcome exists and is practised at the UDE.

Building International Networks and Strategic Partnerships

The UDE takes a bottom-up approach to maintaining and growing international cooperation. It welcomes the international orientation of researchers, and thereby teaching faculty, at the UDE and endeavours to support it wherever possible. Entering into cooperative agreements with foreign institutions is considered to make sense where the initiative comes from teaching faculty and is based on shared areas of interest in teaching and research.

Wherever possible and feasible, the UDE wishes to ensure that its students also benefit from such teaching and research-based cooperation, whether as part of international mobility opportunities or internationally oriented projects on the home campuses. This refers in particular to the development of international master's programmes, including and especially those based on the UDE's existing main areas of research.

Among the centrally implemented internationalization projects with a more top-down structure are the international research universities network AURORA, which was set up by the UDE and eight other European universities, and the offices of the University Alliance Ruhr (UA Ruhr) in New York, Moscow and Latin America, which are operated by the UDE as part of the UA Ruhr. The activities developed within these projects, such as acquiring scholarships and the international components of the UDE Student Excellence Programme, initially relate to teaching and the students. Joint projects between researchers under AURORA and the UA Ruhr Offices are strongly welcomed where they are consistent with the established research interests.

The UDE supports projects and cooperation on this basis in particular in the following regions and networks:

- The UDE is committed to the European education and research area and in particular to European cooperation in research and teaching.
- The UDE and its partner universities in the UA Ruhr, Ruhr-University Bochum and TU Dortmund University, cooperate particularly closely internationally in relation to North America, Eastern Europe and Latin America through the jointly operated UA Ruhr Offices in New York, Moscow and Rio/Sao Paolo.

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- The UDE is a member of the international research universities network (AURO-RA) and considers the other universities in this network to be particularly suitable cooperation partners.
- The countries of East Asia and South East Asia have been priority regions for the UDE based on numerous partnerships that have grown up over decades and on the regional focus of IN-EAST.

Regional focus within the internationalization strategy depends on research-based networks and personal academic contacts, which is why it can only be steered to a certain extent and is dynamic by nature. The UDE accounts for this circumstance by putting flexible service structures in place centrally to support the faculties in their internationalization work if administrative and management expertise at central level proves more effective.

Areas of Internationalization Activity at the UDE

The UDE's internationalization efforts are concentrated on four areas of activity according to the principles and geographical framework described:

1. European and International Research Area
2. International Mobility in Research and Teaching
3. A Culture of Welcome
4. Internationalization at Home (I@H)

1. European and International Research Area

Science and research have long taken place across borders and internationally. Internationalization in research was and still is dominated by a bottom-up process: most researchers have connections to colleagues in their fields through conferences and meetings, and institutional networks foster further exchange. The internationalization of research funding has brought considerable changes to the conditions for competing for research funds in recent years:

- Nationally funded research programmes are becoming more international (e.g. greater international cooperation in approved collaborative research centres).
- European research funding is playing an increasingly important role.

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The internationalization of research programmes is not just apparent in the increase in international collaboration, however, and many projects are now evaluated internationally.

This process of internationalization is accompanied by a process of Europeanization in which political conditions play a more influential role. Europeanization is primarily geared towards developing a common European research and economic area and therefore represents an institutionalization of international cooperation in Europe and its cooperation partners.

The launch of the European Research Area (ERA) marked the beginning of a process in which research funding is becoming steadily more international. This is not just in terms of growth in the European framework programmes; in national research funding, too, and particularly in the German Research Foundation (DFG) and Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) funding programmes, the international component is growing constantly. The establishment of the European Research Council and its much sought-after research prizes has also resulted in excellent international funding opportunities in basic research.

The UDE is committed to European cooperation in research and teaching and makes the European research and educational area one of the focal points of its internationalization strategy. The intention is to continue strengthening the UDE's cooperative research activities in international and European research programmes. This applies to international DFG research training groups and collaborative research centres/Transregios. The UDE will also be more heavily involved in the new EU framework programme Horizon 2020 in the "Excellent Science" and "Societal Challenges" funding lines. The UDE as part of the UA Ruhr has joined the Vision 2020 research network among other things for this purpose. Cooperation in this network, which brings together the strongest higher education institutions from the various European countries in the European framework programme to date, underscores the UDE's commitment to the European Research Area. By visibly participating in European excellence programmes, the University is demonstrating its great potential and taking specific steps towards developing new international projects. The aim in particular in relation to early career researchers is to win young scientists and academics as ERC grant holders.

The main research areas at the UDE are increasingly engaged in the "Societal Challenges" field (health, energy, transport, resource efficiency, reflective societies), thereby expanding their international portfolio. The members of the UDE are supported in their efforts with professional advice, assistance with proposal submissions and a comprehensive range of services in administrative project management by the Science Support Centre and the External Funding Administration. The services and provisions are evaluated regularly and constantly developed in line with the researchers' requirements and adjusted to meet new formal conditions under the funding programmes.

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2. International Mobility in Research and Teaching

The European dimension is apparent not just in the EU framework programme but also in the European mobility programmes, which additionally contain an international component that extends beyond Europe and present opportunities for cooperation beyond the realm of higher education.

All the groups at the University are important to the UDE where international mobility in research and teaching are concerned. It concentrates in particular on the early career stage and the students, but it also takes all researchers, teaching faculty and members of the technical and administrative staff into consideration.

Early career researchers play an important part in internationalizing research. Incoming young scientists and academics with international experience are welcomed at the UDE, helping to maintain international connections and raise the level of internationalism on the home campuses. On the outgoing side, the UDE supports its young scientists in their international networking efforts by enabling them to spend time abroad. It is only with this internationalism and experience that the researchers can pass on their motivation to gain experience abroad to the students.

The UDE therefore participates in numerous international mobility schemes and excellence programmes for early career researchers and academics.

With the special composition of its student body in mind, the UDE sets out to ensure that equality of educational opportunity and social inclusion are also achieved in relation to international mobility and to counteract the mechanisms of social selection in the familiar exchange programmes. The UDE, which has a disproportionately high number of students from a non-academic background, pays particular attention to ensuring that participation in education extends to participation in exchange programmes.

Students who are the first in their family to go into higher education are disproportionately more likely to have little money and therefore no real access to work or study abroad. What is more, students from a migrant background have experience that makes them especially well-equipped for an exchange or work placement abroad. It is therefore important that the advice given to students includes information on financing issues and recognition of academic achievements abroad. At the same time, it is also important to take into account and do justice to the diverse mixture of motivations and prerequisites for study. At central level, the International Office is responsible for international student mobility and cooperates closely with the relevant advisory bodies at faculty level. The UDE has firmly established service and other support offerings in place for the group of students who come from diverse backgrounds, which reflects its awareness of diversity and commitment to the equality of educational opportunity. This commitment applies especially to the first-in-family group of students and equally to international mobility among students with a disability and students with children.

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The UDE is increasing the number of students who gain international experience by studying or completing a placement abroad. It makes specific efforts to encourage international mobility, e.g. by systematically increasing placement opportunities or structured offerings for individual degree programmes. A stay abroad as a mandatory component of teaching degrees in foreign-language disciplines and targeted scholarship programmes likewise help to raise the number of students taking advantage of international mobility. The University of Duisburg-Essen's approach to the recognition of academic achievement abroad is based on the same principle as the Lisbon Convention, i.e. fairness to the student.

Teaching faculty, researchers, and technical and administrative staff are supported in their efforts to spend time abroad and in gaining and intensifying their international skills. They have a well-established range of information and advisory services at their disposal to help them with content, organization and financing, and additional support is available from the international offices of the UA Ruhr should they need it. The UDE also provides appropriate training opportunities to encourage teaching faculty, researchers and other employees to continue building their international skills and experience.

3. A Culture of Welcome

A special part of the UDE's concept and identity is a constantly evolving culture of welcome. The main focus in research is on the group of visiting researchers. The UDE aims to continue raising the number of international visitors in the coming years. Like for early career researchers, this refers to the programmes of the DFG, the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and the European Research Council (ERC Advanced Grants).

The UDE provides its visitors with an attractive environment that takes their requirements into account and wherever possible reduces the bureaucratic burdens on them. This way, visiting scholars and researchers are free to concentrate on their work at the UDE. By creating the right environment to make that possible, the UDE is increasing both its attractiveness and its competitive position.

The high proportion of current international students and an equally high proportion of international students among its graduates place the University of Duisburg-Essen among the top ten in this area nationwide. Students coming to the UDE from abroad are greeted by a strong culture of welcome. The UDE creates opportunities for international students and those with a domestic educational background to meet, for example in the Tutor Service Center (TSC) of the International Office. The UDE is aware that a high proportion of international students alone cannot automatically make the University and campus life more international, and considerable efforts must be made to tap this source of internationalizing potential. Activities relate to integrating international students, creating opportunities for students to meet, regardless of their origin or background, and internationalizing the German students, the overwhelming majority of whom come from the university cities themselves or from the surrounding region. True to its mandate of "taking care" of students at the University, the university-wide mentoring

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system incorporates international and intercultural elements for international students to make integration easier from the early stages and secure their success throughout their studies. The UDE also turns its attention towards prospective international students and provides a comprehensive and well-structured range of information and advisory services to help prepare them for their studies and build a connection with the UDE from the application stage onwards. The teaching faculty at the UDE come from increasingly diverse backgrounds, possess a high level of diversity skills and are sensitive to the position of new international students and the demands placed on them linguistically, interculturally and in terms of labour law and residency requirements. In these areas the UDE offers its staff members regular training courses, seminars and support for specific target groups to help develop their skills.

4. Internationalization at Home (I@H)

One of the core tasks of internationalization in the eyes of the UDE is to create an international and intercultural environment on the home campuses. The cultural diversity of its students and members of staff is seen as a source of potential for the UDE's long-term internationalization and an opportunity to learn from and with one another at the University. Because a high number of international students does not automatically mean a meeting of and cooperation between the cultures, the UDE creates various opportunities for this to take place.

Internationalization at Home (I@H) is an initiative to build and impart international and intercultural skills. The aim is to ensure that everyone who graduates from the UDE has gained international experience systematically, and preferably with accreditation, on the home campus during his or her studies and in the process acquired and/or shared international and intercultural knowledge and skills. The opportunities offered by Internationalization at Home are brought to the students in many different ways, for example in the initial study stages through the mentoring system.

An important component of internationalism on the campus is the internationalization of academic teaching. The UDE recognises the importance of internationally oriented teaching for the long-term internationalization of the University. Through internationalization, students become qualified for international competition. Specific activities – such as integrating international visiting scholars into the curriculum, incorporating international case studies, teaching in English, and supporting students in their heritage languages – make it possible to reach as many students as possible through the curriculum and impart international knowledge and intercultural skills for life and work in a globalized environment. Because disciplinary communities and requirements differ, it is left to the faculties to decide which measures make sense for internationalizing their relevant study programmes. The UDE focuses in particular on building and extending international, bilingual or English-language bachelor's and master's degree courses (with double degrees).

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Another important part of I@H is human resources development among technical and administrative staff. Because these employees are increasingly coming into contact with international students and faculty, they too require an increasing level of intercultural and language skills. The UDE supports them by providing targeted training events and staff mobility opportunities.

Service and Resources

Internationalization at the UDE extends to all parts of the University, its faculties and research facilities as well as administration and other service units, and to all its members, the academics and researchers as well as the technical and administrative staff. Like faculty members, service facility employees are also working in an increasingly international context and are responding with a high level of intercultural, language and diversity skills. Careful recruitment and ongoing training in the competency areas mentioned earlier are essential to guarantee this service quality. Human resources development that meets these requirements and is committed to internationalization applies to the entire University and all its members.

The UDE campuses are a multilingual environment as a matter of course and principle.

That means, among other things, respecting the many languages spoken by the University's members and the extensively bilingual (German and English) nature of its internet presence and all information and advisory services, whether in person or virtual.

Extensive resources are put into supporting internationalization at both central and other levels of the University. The faculties are provided with their own advisory and support capacities for internationalization work, and services relating to international mobility, scholarships, external funding and contract management are provided with the close and constructive cooperation between different organizational levels that is integral to the UDE.

In internationalization as elsewhere, the UDE is committed to continually improving the relationship between tasks performed at central and other levels in line with the most effective management of resources.