

International Relations Strategy 2030 University of Duisburg–Essen

INHALT

Preamble	3
1. Global engagement	4
2. Convivial Campus Culture	5
3. Visibility and impact	6
4. Measures	7
5. Endnote	11

PREAMBLE

The University of Duisburg-Essen is situated in the culturally plural and economically dynamic Rhine-Ruhr region in the heart of Western Europe. Our academic excellence is anchored in the diversity of our region and in alliances with leading international universities that share our commitment to research that is excellent and relevant. In four strategic research areas – Water Research, Biomedical Sciences, Nanoscience, and Transformation of Contemporary Societies – we generate solutions for the global challenges facing our planet and global societies. Degree programmes at UDE are research-based and aligned with our commitments to educational justice and equal opportunities. In the 20+ years since our establishment, we have built infrastructures to support professional and academic advancement for all within an expanding network of regional and international partnerships.

The International Relations Strategy 2030 builds on the aims and achievements of the Internationalization Strategy published in 2015 by foregrounding three overriding visions for UDE as an international research university:

UDE is engaged globally in education, research and transfer that is excellent and matters.

UDE is a place where international and local students, researchers, technical and administration staff flourish together.

UDE is internationally visible as a globally engaged research university that advances sustainability and equity through scientific achievements and research-based education.

The International Relations Strategy 2030 translates these visions into three strategic action fields: Global Engagement, Convivial Campus Culture, and Visibility and Impact.

This vision is the basis for the three arenas of strategic action formulated in the International Relations Strategy 2030.

1. Global engagement

The strategy for 2030 aims to intensify research and educational activities and alliances with partners around the world and to more closely align global engagement with the strategic priorities in education, research and transfer outlined in the University Development Strategy. In pursuing global engagement, UDE will foster awareness of the challenges of and utilise the opportunities posed by geopolitical changes in the world.

Specific goals are to:

- strengthen our commitment to our European University Network Aurora
- define and identify University-wide strategic partnerships
- diversify international cooperation partners
- activate strategic partnerships across educational, research and transfer activities
- raise awareness regarding research security
- engage in science diplomacy

University-wide **strategic partnerships** are those that contribute to any of the following: the educational, research, transfer and service activities of UDE; institutionalising large-scale and long-term research collaborations of the faculties and Inter-Faculty Research Centers; achieving the goals and implementation of the University Development Strategy; the Research Alliance Ruhr Research Centers and College as well as the international activities of the UA Ruhr.

The responsibility for decisions regarding University-wide strategic partnerships lies with the Rectorate. Responsibility for activating cooperation with strategic partners lies with the Vice-Rector for University Culture, Diversity and International Relations, supported by the International Office.

Going forward, global engagement will be promoted by **diversifying strategic partnerships** across activities and world regions. This goal aligns with the new internationalisation strategy of the German Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs enacted in 2024, which also calls for the diversification of the international relations of universities. Diversification in partnerships will focus on building partnerships in Sub-Saharan Africa through the Ghana-NRW University Alliance established in 2023 and in Latin America through the UA Ruhr Liaison Office Latin America established in 2025 and coordinated for the UA Ruhr by UDE.

Activities in the context of University-wide strategic partnerships play an important role in the global engagement of faculties and Inter-Faculty Research Centers as part of the internationalisation of their educational and research activities. The goal is to **activate strategic partnerships** through better information resources and communication about existing partnerships, support and funding sources, and to use incentives and coaching to increase the numbers of funding applications. Activating strategic partnerships means consciously maintaining and developing activities at all levels of the University, from University leadership through to individual researchers at various qualification stages. Strategic partnerships will be activated by improving coordination and information-sharing between the Vice-Rector, International Office, faculties and Inter-Faculty Research

Centers, with a coordinating and supporting role played by the International Office. In Europe, research and educational cooperation will be intensified within the Aurora network to develop innovative forms of educational exchange and research initiatives. Communication and coordination will be improved with the UA Ruhr liaison offices to better utilise this important resource for international recruitment, exchange and cooperation in research and education.

In the context of a changing geopolitical environment, cooperation partners may not always share our values and interests. The possible uses and misuse of research and educational cooperation is a growing concern, especially with partners in academic systems less committed to academic freedom and university autonomy, and where national and military interests intervene to direct the course and use of scientific cooperation. Political intervention into the course and use of science is also on the rise in some of the longest-standing democracies in the world. **Promoting awareness about research security** among researchers and faculties, and assessing reputational risks at the level of University leadership will be intensified alongside the already well-established administrative compliance procedures.

Engaging in science diplomacy will advance our commitments to academic freedom and university autonomy around the world. Through its global engagement, UDE endeavours to support the freedom and autonomy of individual researchers at risk and to ensure, where relevant, that research findings contribute to democratic transformations, sustainable development and the protection of human rights. This goal aligns with the National Security Strategy published by the German government in 2023, which envisions a role for academics as civil societal actors in diplomacy in the service of freedom and democracy, and will be driven by utilising the science-based resources developed by the DAAD Centre for International Academic Cooperation (KIWi).

2. Convivial Campus-Kultur

The International Relations Strategy 2030 promotes a convivial¹ campus culture where persons from different backgrounds develop a sense of belonging and flourish through their interactions with each other in educational and research activities. A convivial campus culture will enhance the attractiveness of UDE as a destination for foreign students and researchers. Campus services for international mobility give local and international students and researchers the support they need to make international exchanges fruitful experiences, and develop competences important for their future professional lives.

Specific goals for further development are to:

- expand international recruitment
- expand mobility at all qualification stages
- promote international and intercultural competencies
- innovate hybrid international mobility options for students and researchers
- internationalise further qualifications

In our efforts to expand **international recruitment**, we differentiate between goals and measures designed for foreign students and those focussing on international researchers.

The **recruitment of foreign students** will be enhanced by expanding attractive international degree programmes. The flexibility that resulted from the Bologna reforms in terms of designing interdisciplinary and creative curricula at the MA level will be an especially important factor driving improvements in the attractiveness of UDE degree programmes for foreign students. Offerings will include programmes delivered in English (or other languages), especially at the master's level; bilingual and double degree programmes; the integration of English-language modules into German-language degrees; blended intensive learning formats; and internationally relevant microcredentials.

As the number of internationally attractive degree programmes on offer grows, attention will focus on marketing and facilitating the recruitment of foreign students. The network of strategic partnerships, liaison offices and alliances around the world, including Aurora in Europe, already provides an infrastructure for publicising UDE programmes and for supporting marketing and recruitment activities. Programmes like the Studienbrücke of the Goethe Institute and relations with German schools abroad are helpful for recruiting talented foreign students. Possible administrative changes to facilitate early admissions decisions and ease the enrolment process for international students are to be explored in this context.

The **recruitment of international researchers** encompasses both the recruitment and onboarding of researchers abroad, and the recruitment and retention of researchers with qualifications from German universities and scientific organisations. Highlighting innovations in postdoctoral qualifications achieved as part of the UDE Research Strategy will improve the image of UDE as a destination for advancing academic qualifications. University-wide strategic partnerships and UDE/UA Ruhr liaison offices around the world will disseminate advertisements for funded doctoral and postdoctoral positions internationally.

The International Office will expand its role in coordinating and supporting knowledge-sharing in the **recruitment of international students and researchers**.

Many of the measures designed to expand recruitment also contribute strongly to expanding **student mobility**. The more bilingual, double degree, blended and English (or other) language degree programmes UDE has in place, the better it can prepare its own students to study abroad and also attract students enrolled at Erasmus+ partner universities and partners in our international networks and alliances. The Aurora network as well as closer collaboration between the International Office and the faculties will play a key role in expanding mobility. At the faculty level, mobility is to be promoted through, for example, the development of international content and adapting the language of instruction, by an infrastructure of support staff, and by changes in curricula that will enable mobility without exceeding the standard period of study. The faculties will require more support from central units in operating international master's degree programmes, as these introduce new complexities in recruitment, registration, onboarding and mentoring, not all of which is discipline-specific. The goal is for all degree programmes to have a module taught in English (or another language), mobility windows and regular staff assigned the task of supporting international exchanges, at least with a certain proportion of their positions.

Incoming and outgoing mobility requires a concerted 'all-University' strategy – in the faculties and research centers, in the International Office and the Science Support Center, in University leadership, and in the administration and service units. Strategic partners are an important resource for activating both incoming and outgoing mobility in teaching and research. The International Office is well-equipped to take on a coaching and mentoring role for faculties and research centers in preparing funding applications and facilitating contacts with international partners.

The **mobility of researchers** encompasses regular participation in international meetings and conferences, as well

¹The concept of conviviality, originating in the Spanish term *convivencia* to describe the plurality of cultures and confessions living together peacefully in medieval Spain, is used today in academic research on post-migration multicultural societies to think through the structures and supports required to promote a constructive mode of togetherness

as funded research stays abroad as part of advancing the individuals' research and qualification. The Science Support Center with the GC Plus offers an attractive programme providing further training and support for local and foreign researchers to advance their qualifications and research independence under the umbrella of the Research Academy Ruhr. The Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities (KWI) and the UA Ruhr Research Centers and College recruit internationally accomplished senior researchers, thus contributing significantly to the development of an international research campus. UDE supports early career researchers in acquiring prestigious international fellowships. The University's administrative services provide comprehensive English-language information and can perform administrative processes in English, thus enabling international researchers to manage their research independently.

The global content of degree programmes and the global reach and impact of research at UDE will continue to improve the attractiveness of the University for international students and researchers and empower members at all stages of qualification to take on international roles in academia and beyond. UDE/UA Ruhr liaison offices around the world are resources to be used by all UDE faculties and Inter-Faculty Research Centers for recruiting students, enabling and supporting exchanges, and ensuring that information about open positions reaches potential applicants abroad.

The successful Internationalisation@Home activities remain an important resource for improving the **international and intercultural competencies** of all groups in supporting a convivial campus culture. These activities can be expanded to equip local students for international exchanges and to support close and cooperative exchanges

between international students and researchers. Internationalisation@Home and the Welcome Service will coordinate more intensively with the Diversity Support Center in anti-discrimination, equal opportunities and family* support activities to maintain an environment where diverse students and researchers can appreciate their differences, cooperate and learn from each other.

UDE is continuously enhancing the attractiveness of its degree programmes and research by **innovating digital and hybrid forms of mobility** in line with the digitalisation strategy. Efforts to build a virtual campus and improve the international context and the relevance of our degree programmes for international partners will be driven by Aurora and University-wide strategic partnerships. Blended and short-stay programmes will intensify researchers' contact with peers elsewhere in the world.

Providing the support students and researchers need to attain further professional and academic qualifications is of high strategic importance for recruiting talented people, in order to both ensure excellent research at UDE and to train the professionals needed in the labour market. The GC Plus is the primary provider of support for **doctoral candidates and early career researchers pursuing qualifications** both for academic advancement and for research careers outside academia. In addition, best practices in international recruitment established in the International Studies in Engineering and other English-language and bilingual degree programmes are to be transferred to other faculties and programmes. Innopreneurship activities integrate an international component into training and support for start-ups and facilitate knowledge exchange with practitioners in the region and around the world, thus contributing to the UDE innovation and transfer strategy.

3. Visibility and impact

The International Relations Strategy 2030 includes measures designed to enhance the visibility of research excellence and research-based degree programmes, as well as their impacts on advancing sustainability and equity in the region and throughout the world.

Specific goals are to:

- intensify communication regarding international activities and achievements both within UDE and internationally, utilising all relevant media
- identify and utilise international forums, networks and rankings to enhance the visibility and recognition of UDE as a leader in international education and research

International activities and achievements will be publicised more widely through internationally oriented communication formats.

UDE will strategically use international forums and rankings to secure visibility and recognition in international education and scientific communities.

The impact of the International Relations Strategy 2030 will be monitored continually, and progress reported regularly.

4. Measures

Global engagement

No.	Measure	Implementation
1.1	Create transparency regarding existing international programmes and strategic partnerships <i>Vice-Rectorate for University Culture, Diversity and International Affairs (PR UDI), International Office, ZIM, DTAC</i>	Expand the coaching and mentoring role of the International Office to facilitate international cooperation and exchange Establish a central database with all relevant data on existing international cooperations, mobility opportunities, funding calls and programmes for easy intranet access (using MoveOn as the basis)
1.2	Establish regular contact (in person and virtual) with representatives of strategic partners and German academic representative organisations abroad <i>Rectorate, coordinated by PR UDI, Inter-Faculty Research Centers, International Office, SSC</i>	Set up delegation visits with the participation of University leadership Participate in DWIH activities and report on them regularly Establish contact between researchers at UDE, the Ghana-NRW University Alliance and the UA Ruhr Latin America Office as well as strategic partner universities Organise a UDE International Day with international partners; focus on achievements in international collaboration with UDE, exchange ideas (best practices) and gather input for improvement Establish a UDE International Research Week focussing on global challenges
1.3	Create an effective and sustainable international alumni network as part of InfiniUDE <i>Marketing Office, International Office, UA Ruhr liaison offices</i>	Include international alumni in the InfiniUDE alumni network Increase the visibility of international alumni Activate international alumni as ambassadors Hold regular regional alumni meetings (connected to delegation visits)
1.4	Support engagement with strategic partners <i>PR UDI, Faculties, ZWEs, International Office</i>	Include engagement in international funding calls in target and performance agreements (ZLV)
1.5	Promote awareness of research security. <i>PR UDI, International Office, Research Funding Department</i>	Improve support for faculties and Inter-Faculty Research Centers Establish a binding monitoring process of UDE's cooperation with critical partners and/or partners who lack academic freedom Participate regularly in German support networks for research security (HRK, DAAD, KIWI); members of UDE leadership and faculties should attend

Convivial Campus Culture

No.	Measure	Implementation
2.1.	Develop internationally attractive programmes for incoming and outgoing students <i>Faculties, PR UDI, Vice-Rectorate for Studying, Teaching and Education (PR SLB), International Office, ZHQE</i>	Create a support structure for faculties to help with the creation of English or bilingual study programmes, BIPs, CO-ILs, microcredentials, etc. Incentivise faculties to include at least one goal related to the creation of internationally attractive study programmes in their ZLV: English/bilingual MA and double degree programmes, English-language support for existing degree programmes Establish at least one English (or other) language module in every degree programme Establish mobility windows in all degree programmes Exchange on best practice models among faculties regularly Evaluate possibilities to enable international mobility in examination regulations
2.2.	Facilitate the admission and enrolment of international students <i>PR UDI, PR SLB, International Office, ZIM, Admissions and Enrolment Office</i>	Explore administrative changes for fast-tracking admissions decisions and facilitate easier and timely enrolment from abroad
2.3.	Promote a convivial campus culture <i>International Office, Studierendenwerk, Facility Management Division, Central Events Office, Personnel and Organisation Division</i>	Enhance administrative staff's intercultural skills through targeted training programmes and the promotion of staff exchange programmes Develop a microcredential on international competencies Further internationalise language, communication and documentation in administrative services Provide English versions of relevant legal documents in order to attract and support early career researchers Internationalise University events to improve international members' sense of belonging Make guest houses with flexible occupation available on both campuses to support mobility and residence as well as international centres/rooms for socialising Maintain the availability of student residences for international students
2.4.	Maintain documentation regarding international cooperation on the decentral level (faculties and Inter-Faculty Research Centers) (see also 1.1) <i>Faculties, Inter-Faculty Research Centers, Research Funding, DTAC</i>	Assign staff with permanent contracts (e.g. managing directors) in every faculty/Inter-Faculty Research Center to take responsibility for international matters including onboarding, supporting international exchanges, collecting data and maintaining databases on strategic partnerships on the central and decentral levels
2.5.	Increase mobility and international activities of students and researchers, including innopreneurship and Aurora <i>PR UDI, Vice-Rectorate for Transfer, Innovation and Digitalisation (PR TID), International Office, SSC</i>	Further develop measures to strengthen students' international and intercultural competencies Use UDE's global alliances with strategic partnerships to promote student entrepreneurial activity Coach units/areas with low numbers of international activities on international mobility fellowships Improve dissemination of international partners' programmes and calls (UA Ruhr liaison offices, Ghana-NRW desk, DWIH, Aurora)

2.6.	Improve support for international career paths in research <i>PR UDI, ZHQE, SSC</i>	Analyse and follow up on diversity monitoring and career development of researchers
2.7.	Intensify efforts to ensure timely registration of foreign students and researchers with the municipal immigration offices <i>PR UDI, Welcome Service</i>	Set up meetings between University leadership and immigration offices or city representatives every semester
2.8.	Develop a virtual campus <i>DTAC, PR SLB, PR TID, International Office</i>	Give students across all Aurora universities seamless access to the teaching and learning resources offered by UDE Further develop and expand Erasmus Without Paper to achieve fully digital and seamless administration of the Erasmus+ programme Enable hybrid and virtual participation of students in teaching and learning opportunities offered by partner universities

Visibility and impact

No.	Measure	Implementation
3.1.	Develop an international student recruitment strategy	Collect and analyse relevant reports (e.g. BinHo, Wissen-schaft Weltoffen, OECD), establish and monitor quantitative benchmarks Define strategically relevant target groups, regions and study programmes as well as the most important communication channels for each group/region/programme Commission target market research via GATE-Germany/DAAD to learn more about target countries/regions Reassess recruitment activities that are currently underutilised or lack clear outcomes Understand mechanisms behind student journeys and apply them to international recruitment, e.g. via student surveys Actively promote study programmes offered in English in a timely manner, especially courses with low enrolment
3.2.	Develop an international researcher recruitment strategy and a system for sharing knowledge	Systematically publish all UDE job announcements in English on international platforms/through international networks, alliances and offices Ask visiting scholars to list UDE as their second affiliation in publications via hosting agreements Understand mechanisms behind researcher journeys and apply them to recruiting
3.3.	Expand international marketing	Establish effective web tracking in order to target advertising Create international marketing material (presentation, promotional videos, data sheets and flyers in English) and keep English-language information material on UDE's research profile and strategic research areas up to date Establish a central repository for English-language documents and content blocks to generate marketing material

3.4.	Improve the UDE international homepage and English language web presentation	Rework the most important UDE webpages to improve their appeal for non-German-speaking viewers Implement the use of AI translation programs for UDE websites under the supervision of our central translation unit Publish more bilingual (English/German) news articles and social media posts on international activities, English first Publish a UDE Style Guide to standardise English texts Increase communication on outcomes of international activities
3.5.	Assess and monitor international rankings <i>Rectorate, DTAC</i>	Systematically collect data on UDE's current positions in international rankings and develop a strategy to improve them
3.6.	Monitor implementation and report progress of International Relations Strategy 2030 <i>PR UDI, International Office</i>	Integrate a tool for tracking implementation in the website presentation of the strategy Report annually on progress in achieving goals in university commissions and senate Include goals and reports on progress in the quality management system

5. ENDNOTE

The International Relations Strategy 2030 is the result of a series of workshops involving UDE members engaged in teaching, research, transfer and administrative services, supported by the active engagement of the Rectorate and International Office.