

Internationalization Strategy

2025 to 2028

1. Preamble

Vision

The international approach to research and teaching is a key feature of the University of Mannheim. This international approach derives directly from the objectives set by the university¹. Fostering strong future leaders and carrying out excellent research can only be achieved through international exchange. On the one hand, many of the societal challenges future managers and executives will be facing originate from our globalized world. Digitalization, sustainability, global economic systems and artificial intelligence are just some of the major societal topics that fall under this umbrella. On the other hand, cutting-edge research per se is based on international networks, global exchange and collaboration among experts, that manifests in international publications, research organizations and conferences.

Against this backdrop, the University of Mannheim attributes great importance to international exchange in teaching, research and university management and actively promotes collaboration in these areas with universities and partners around the world. This collaboration is based on both physical and virtual international exchange of insights among students, doctoral students, teachers, researchers and administrative staff. At the same time, implementing these exchange programs requires us to consider other university goals, such as sustainability and equality. The University of Mannheim prides itself on providing an environment where internationality in research, teaching and university administration is ubiquitous and practiced on a daily basis, thereby actively demonstrating knowledge-driven approaches to global challenges to future generations.

International facts and figures

The University of Mannheim has around 760 cooperation agreements with around 450 partner universities worldwide, 510 of which are agreements with European partners. This allows around 1,100 Mannheim students annually to engage in a study-related semester or year abroad, currently leading to an impressive 35% of graduates having completed a study-related stay abroad. In return, the University can welcome around 1,100 international exchange students to Mannheim for a period of one or two semesters. With around 1,100 international degree-seeking students enrolled in Mannheim degree programs, international students account for about 18% of the university's student body. The international draw is strengthened by a vast array of master's programs conducted in English, with an estimated 1,400 English-taught courses available annually, which represents close to 40% of the total courses offered in both basic and advanced levels across all schools. The university's Service und Marketing GmbH, which includes the German as a Foreign Language (DaF) department, provides a wide range of German language courses. More than 1,000 prospective international students are enrolled, with over 900 taking the German language examination for university entrance (DSH). Complimenting this profile are nearly 20 double degree programs with international partner universities as well as various international specialized and certificate programs. Approximately 21% of the doctoral student body at the University of Mannheim consists of international scholars, averaged across all schools and departments. In this regard, the internationally focused doctoral programs offered by the Mannheim Graduate School for Economic and Social Sciences (GESS) are particularly noteworthy. Moreover, the University of Mannheim has managed to raise its share of international academic staff members to 17% in the past few years.

¹ See https://www.uni-mannheim.de/media/Universitaet/Dokumente/Leitbild_en.pdf

European University Alliance ENGAGE.EU as an incubator

As a medium-sized university with a clear-cut profile, the University of Mannheim must actively engage in strong networks across Europe and internationally to ensure its goals and interests are effectively represented. As initiator and organizer of the *ENGAGE.EU* alliance – *The European University engaged in societal change*, the University of Mannheim is boosting its internationalization efforts through structural collaboration across Europe, a project that has been supported by the European Commission as part of its European Universities initiative since 2020. In line with the university's distinct focus on economics and social sciences, ENGAGE.EU provides a platform to enhance international collaboration across all university sectors while experimenting with innovative approaches in teaching, research, knowledge transfer, and university administration in an international context. Drawing on its expertise in social transformation, the University of Mannheim works together with other ENGAGE.EU partner universities to combine their experiences. The alliance provides a platform for university researchers to enhance the impact of economic and social sciences on contemporary political developments, especially within Europe, by providing national and international research funding. In addition, the University of Mannheim, serving as the coordinator for the ENGAGE.EU alliance, is taking the initiative to prompt the European Commission into action, thus supporting the continuous advancement of the necessary conditions for a sustainably integrated higher education system in Europe. This implies active involvement in selected working groups at the European, national, and local tiers in order to drive the legislative changes necessary to realize the aims outlined in the fields of action.

Network activities to enhance international visibility

In 2024, the University of Mannheim has joined the *European University Association* (EUA)². This membership represents additional steps by the university to boost its profile in the European academic arena and to expand its engagement in international collaborations. The priorities outlined by the EUA largely correspond with the university's objectives: Participation in designated teams will help to address ongoing questions in the development of the European higher education area.

Beyond the European context, the University of Mannheim is a founding member in the *U7+ Alliance of World Universities*, established in 2019, and is, for instance, actively participating in the *Presidential Steering Committee*. Along with the currently 54 universities in the alliance, the University of Mannheim intends to bolster the position of higher education institutions as international participants in the G7 process, specifically providing impulses to governments of the G7 states to tackle big challenges such as societal and technological change, civic involvement, and climate action.

² The EUA seeks to enhance EU policies related to higher education, research, and innovation by providing expertise in these areas through consultations with the European Commission on matters concerning (science) policy, such as the development of research framework programs.

Addressing international challenges in an interest-driven, value-conscious, accountable and risk-reflective way

Establishing international networks is particularly relevant in the context of complex scientific relationships in a multipolar world. For this reason, the University of Mannheim will seek to initiate international scientific cooperations that are based on its unique interests. In developing its international relationships, the university is dedicated to upholding the principles of the German Basic Law (GG), the European Union, and its global responsibility in line with the UN's sustainability goals, while also being vigilant about potential geopolitical security threats for its own institution.³

³ Based on: DAAD-Perspektiven (Juli 2022): Außenwissenschaftspolitik für eine multipolare Welt – Systemrivalität, Konfrontation und globale Krisen.

2. Strategic Focus Areas and Measures

Strategic Focus Area 1: Internationalization Abroad

In cooperation with its international partnership network, the University of Mannheim provides its members with international and intercultural educational and career opportunities in the domains of academic study, teaching, research, and university management. Preferably, these opportunities occur abroad and in-person but can also be conducted or augmented online for sustainability and inclusion reasons.

All members of the university should be given the opportunity to broaden their international perspectives through study-, teaching-, research- or work-related physical stays abroad, through virtual collaboration or, ultimately, through active participation in, for example, study groups within international networks. Hence, the practical experience acquired there can be profitably applied in their own work at the University of Mannheim. These activities enhance the visibility and impact of research and teaching services globally, while also fostering the international competencies of students educated at the University of Mannheim as well as researchers, skilled professionals and managers. Consequently, the active maintenance and quality-driven expansion of the international network of partner universities and institutions is vital for laying the groundwork for many of the measures that follow.

Measures

A) Students (bachelor's and master's levels, *degree-seeking* and *credit mobility*, respectively)

- **Enhancing the variety of the program portfolio:** By engaging in proactive discussions with international partner universities, *outbound* students from Mannheim will have the opportunity to participate in exclusive programs at these institutions, free of charge, if possible, in addition to the previously arranged semester or year-long study abroad opportunities and dual degree options. These include programs such as *Summer Schools*, *Virtual Exchange*, *Virtual Mobility*, *Blended Intensive Programs*. Additionally, more such programs are set to be designed and implemented in the future, including collaborations with partner universities, taking cues from successfully implemented programs like *IBEA*⁴ and the *Global Innovation Challenge*⁵. Programs developed through ENGAGE.EU can act as incubators, such as the *Joint Program in Digital Transformation* or the virtual mobility offered as part of the *Online Exchange Initiative*.
- **Establishing and expanding professional advice, service and university management structures:** At both central and decentralized levels, it is necessary to have structures that provide staffing, financial, and technical resources to promote the diversification of the program portfolio, develop and implement information and support measures for *outbound* students and to ensure the quality-driven maintenance and expansion of the international partner network.

⁴ The *International Business Education Alliance* study option allows students enrolled in the bachelor's program in business administration to incorporate three international locations over the course of eight semesters into their studies. Alongside five standard semesters at the University of Mannheim, students develop their subject-specific and intercultural skills at top business schools in the United States, Singapore, and Brazil.

⁵ The *Global Innovation Challenge* provides Mannheim Master in Management students with the opportunity to participate in courses and projects as part of their standard curriculum alongside peers from eight other leading international business schools, all within a condensed time frame.

b) Scholars (teachers and researchers of all career levels)

- **Developing and, if needed, expanding target group-oriented professional advice and service structures for educational strategies and technical approaches:** The Center for Teaching and Learning (ZLL) serves as a central service institution, assisting teachers in the adoption of digital teaching and learning methods within virtual mobility options (for instance, through services related to Collaborative Online International Learning and assistance with video production and editing).
- **Expanding physical mobility options for teaching staff and researchers:** Existing partnership networks, whether bilateral or multilateral, including initiatives by the Land of Baden-Württemberg, will be actively enhanced to expand mobility options for these target groups.
- **Boosting advisory services pertaining to funding measures at the national, European, and international levels for both short-term and long-term research and teaching stays.**

c) Staff members in university management and administration

- **Creating and enhancing an international and intercultural continuing training program:** Staff members should receive strong encouragement and support from their supervisors to engage in international continuing training programs (e.g. Erasmus program), for instance in the form of *Erasmus staff* mobilities or individual *staff visits*. New incentives for participation will be established, for example in the form of a university-issued certificate in the area of personnel development.
- **Developing and expanding avenues for engagement in international task forces:** Employees should be encouraged and supported to share their insights with international working groups both in virtual and physical mobilities and to expand these insights through collaboration. One way to achieve this is by engaging in ENGAGE.EU alliance working groups focusing on a range of subjects.

Strategic Focus Area 2: Internationalization@Home

The University of Mannheim is an open and inclusive environment for teaching, learning and research which actively promotes the integration and success of all university members from diverse backgrounds. This serves to enhance its international appeal and reputation, sending a strong signal to exceptional students, teachers, and researchers from around the world. Given the high and growing number of international students, doctoral students, teachers, and researchers, the university fosters global contacts and perspectives for each university member in their everyday life on campus, thereby creating an attractive environment and network.

The strategic focus area [Internationalization@Home](#) is closely tied to the first strategic focus area, as partner universities typically provide their offerings only when the partnering institution presents sought-after alternatives in exchange. Consequently, it is important that the University of Mannheim positions itself as an attractive international partner. This attractiveness is rooted in both its curriculum as well as in the spirit that the organization embodies.

Through an open and inclusive university culture offering special welcoming, integration, as well as support and success measures in particular for its international students, doctoral students, researchers, teachers and staff members while also providing opportunities for enhancing the English-language communication skills and intercultural competencies of its members on campus, the University of Mannheim fosters an environment where integration is a collective effort and diversity is practiced in all its aspects. Through the German and English language skills along with the intercultural perspectives acquired through everyday campus experiences, students and researchers during the early stages of their careers have the opportunity to become responsible professionals and leaders in an increasingly interconnected and globalized labor market encompassing sectors such as business, politics, society, and science—particularly when physical mobility abroad is not feasible. Consequently, the aim is to offer staff members at the University of Mannheim an attractive workplace that features a variety of international continuing training opportunities, both at the institutional level and for personal development. As a basis for implementing many of the following measures, it is essential to continue to break down language barriers across campus: As a matter of principle, all campus communication is to be bilingual (German/English). Every target group is to be given the tools to achieve this, if needed. The translation services department (SfÜ), serves as a pivotal support player, particularly through its effective introduction of a *corporate English language* concept. Fostering intercultural competencies of all target groups is to instill and promote mutual openness among all university members. This attractive open environment further enhances the already excellent reputation of the university worldwide, which is crucial for recruiting top-tier academic talent.

Measures

a) Students (bachelor's and master's levels, *degree-seeking* and *credit mobility* respectively)

- **Enhancing the variety of the program portfolio:** Besides the standard semester or year-long study abroad opportunities and dual degree programs, the university will design and offer *in-coming* international students from partner universities around the globe both in-person and virtual exclusive programs, such as *Summer Schools*, *Virtual Exchange*, *Virtual Mobility*, *Blended Intensive Programs*, *Faculty-led Programs*, *Microcredentials*, and *MOOCs*. The programs developed within the ENGAGE.EU framework can serve as incubators and in the medium term are to be gradually expanded to include partnerships beyond the European university alliances network, both within Europe and internationally.

- **Establishing and potentially expanding professional advice, service and university management structures:** In order to advance the diversification of the university's program portfolio, it is essential to have the required personnel and resources, like IT infrastructure or funding, at both central and decentralized levels. Furthermore, these elements are essential for developing and implementing information, recruitment, advice, and integration measures for *incoming* international students. This includes offerings like German language courses, initiatives for academic success, mentoring programs, social integration events, and labor market training, among others. This may also be done in collaboration with external partners.
- **Maintaining the existing range of subject-specific German language classes:** The university's Service and Marketing GmbH houses the German as a Foreign Language department, which offers prospective international students a comprehensive array of German language courses. The objective is to generate strong interest for the University of Mannheim among applicants at an early stage.
- **Maintaining the current extensive array of courses offered in foreign languages, with a focus on English-taught courses:** The already substantial number of these courses is a result of the English-taught master's and doctoral programs. Furthermore, a vast array of elective courses taught in English is currently available within the German-taught academic programs across all schools. Both play a significant role in recruiting both international short-term as well as international *degree-seeking* students, as well as in recruiting teachers and researchers. This fosters the foreign language skills of university members in their academic or professional contexts.
- **Expanding the selection of digital courses and examinations that aligns with the demand:** On the one hand, the objective of virtual courses as part of an exchange is to promote the establishment of joint special programs and provide additional options for international students participating in exchange programs. On the other hand, this kind of course selection might be extended to assist international *degree-seeking* students in preparing for their studies. Moreover, every student group profits from this inclusive opportunity to join in and participate in courses regardless of location and time should the situation call for it. Students are supported in using digital courses and examinations through advice and various other services.

b) Scholars (teachers and researchers of all career levels)

- **Developing an incentive system to establish international collaborative courses and programs:** To achieve this goal, the ENGAGE.EU alliance with its additional temporary resources serves as an incubator for testing out innovative formats that, if they prove effective, will be adopted for additional joint activities with international partners.
- **Relocation service:** The Welcome Center serves as a central point of contact for international (visiting) scholars (including doctoral students), and, where necessary, their families, offering advice and support in collaboration with the human resources department and the respective host at the university, both prior to and throughout their stay, particularly regarding administrative matters.
- **Suitable accommodation:** The University of Mannheim provides temporary accommodation at its guest houses to facilitate the arrival of international (visiting) scholars (including doctoral students) and their families.
- **German language course selection:** The German as a Foreign Language department, hosted at the university's Service and Marketing GmbH, offers a comprehensive array of German language courses for international staff members and researchers, as well as their families, if needed, to ensure they can successfully navigate life and work both on- and off-campus.

c) Staff members in university management and administration

- **Removing language and cultural barriers:** All campus communications is to be conducted in both German and English as a matter of principle. University management staff members are to be provided with specialized continuing training opportunities, such as courses focused on language skills and intercultural awareness, to be equipped to support the integration of international students, teachers, and researchers into everyday university life through clear English-language and intercultural communication and actions.
- **Implementing continuing training opportunities for staff members from international partner universities on the Mannheim campus:** This can take shape in the form of *staff weeks* or *staff visits*, which promotes two-way exchanges.

Strategic Focus Area 3: European University Alliance ENGAGE.EU

In teaching, research, university administration and transfer ENGAGE.EU serves as an incubator for all internationalization efforts.

The ENGAGE.EU alliance – *The European University engaged in societal change*, founded in 2020 and funded by the European Commission serves as a model for institutional internationalization, with the University of Mannheim overseeing its coordination. While the European higher education alliances prioritize studies and teaching, ENGAGE.EU has been intentionally designed to have an impact on the whole university. Consequently, ENGAGE.EU can serve as an incubator for innovative structures, processes and tools in research, university administration and transfer. ENGAGE.EU considers itself a real-world laboratory that creates possibilities for collaboration with leading European partners in specific formats. ENGAGE.EU fosters *mutual learning* across every level of the organization and throughout all areas of the university. Through this, ENGAGE.EU is able to play a vital role in the broader context of internationalization, simplify access to European funding for teaching and research programs, and consequently elevate the University of Mannheim's attractiveness to exceptional international researchers and students seeking an outstanding international research and educational environment.

Measures

a) Student affairs and teaching

- **Expanding and further developing international digital teaching and learning opportunities:** Students and doctoral students at the University of Mannheim have the opportunity to participate in a wider array of digital courses, thanks to the additional digital courses of ENGAGE.EU partners, as well as the introduction of new digital formats designed by alliance teachers. In this context, teachers have the chance to test out new digital and blended teaching and learning approaches, working alongside colleagues from ENGAGE.EU partners in delivering courses. To facilitate this, teachers and students can make use of central support services provided by the University of Mannheim (cf. strategic focus area 2).
- **Expanding ENGAGE.EU study programs:** In undergraduate and graduate programs, innovative, research-oriented study formats are being explored to enhance traditional study programs. Notably, the certificate program *ENGAGE.EU Joint Programme in Digital Transformation* and the *ENGAGE.EU Global Sustainability Management* master's program provide the groundwork for the continued development of international study programs.
- **Developing and expanding various short-term mobility programs:** The creation of the *ENGAGE.EU Summer/Winter Schools*, along with the *ENGAGE.EU Expeditions*, aims to establish innovative short-term mobility schemes that are set to be implemented at the University of Mannheim in the long term.

b) Research

- **Developing an ENGAGE.EU doctoral program:** In pursuit of establishing a joint doctoral program, different approaches to alliance-driven cooperations are being explored for doctoral programs that incorporate mobility. Thereby, doctoral students at the University of Mannheim enjoy a variety of international courses that incorporate newly established, innovative approaches beyond the GESS. Furthermore, they get to explore more chances to acquire international teaching experience, try out innovative teaching and learning formats, and independently broaden their international network.
- **Developing and expanding the ENGAGE.EU Think Tank:** The ENGAGE.EU Think Tank is a platform for alliance researchers to engage in intense academic exchange regarding societal changes that extend beyond traditional limits of their disciplines. Additionally, a variety of cooperative research initiatives are supported, particularly involving stakeholders from society, as well as cross-disciplinary collaboration within the ENGAGE.EU alliance. Looking ahead, there are prospects for joint efforts with the planned *Center for Advanced Studies* (CAS) at the University of Mannheim.

c) Transfer

- **Expanding study and learning opportunities aimed at an international target group, engaging partners from outside the research community in teaching:** Through the ENGAGE.EU alliance, innovative teaching and learning methods centered on transfer are being tested and further improved in an international setting.
- **Continued enhancement of *ENGAGE.EU Labs for Co-Creation Teams* as a key priority for ENGAGE.EU:** Within open and dynamic innovation environments, diverse groups of students, researchers, businesses, society members, and policymakers come together to test out various teaching approaches using real-life case studies as their foundation. This offers a platform for participants to work on actual societal challenges and develop and expand their professional networks.
- **Developing continuing academic education for (international) *professional learners*:** A variety of life-long education programs are grouped together in Mannheim under the *Executive Education* division of the Mannheim Business School gGmbH (MBS). The *professional education* area, on the other hand, benefits from multiple centrally coordinated programs and offerings provided by the University of Mannheim and the University of Mannheim Service und Marketing GmbH. In this pursuit, ENGAGE.EU serves as an incubator for international programs for *professional learners*.

Strategic Focus Area 4: Internationalization Efforts in Research

The University of Mannheim has excellent international connections and is firmly integrated in international research collaborations. Engaging in international exchanges is a standard practice across all career levels.

Building on its core competencies in teaching and research, the University of Mannheim is significantly broadening its transfer activities at the European level.

The visibility of individual research on an international scale and the institutional internationality of research are interdependent: A cornerstone for international research is the international orientation of the researchers themselves. To attract outstanding individuals with international experience across various career stages, it is crucial for institutions to have a strong international presence. At the level of doctorates, the GESS in particular plays a key role in facilitating this international visibility. The structured doctoral programs attract international doctoral students in business, economics and social sciences, allowing them to participate in international cooperation and pursue research stays at partner universities. Maintaining consistent visibility in the international research community necessitates not just promotion of remarkable individual research, but also development of established international partnerships and networks by the institution. The University of Mannheim cannot guarantee success in international competitions for research funding; however, it creates conditions that elevate the chances of achieving favorable results.

The measures of internationalization mentioned in the following focus on the individual support of researchers. Further structural measures are addressed in the research strategy of the University of Mannheim.

Measures

a) Amplifying participation in international research cooperations

- **Establishing a system to monitor global research endeavors:** The University of Mannheim is creating a dependable data pool to enhance the analysis and support of its members' international research endeavors. The monitoring system includes details regarding individual collaborative research efforts, stays, and research publications involving researchers with international affiliations.

b) Increasing international activities at the postdoc career level

- **Promoting international networking opportunities for postdocs:** Following their doctorate, researchers receive guidance and opportunities to build their international networks. Specifically, they receive assistance in securing funding for extended research stays and are strongly motivated to engage in international exchange formats, like the ENGAGE.EU Think Tank.

c) Increasing transfer activities

The University of Mannheim has set itself the goal of strengthening its contribution to solving societal challenges across national borders and recognizes transfer as a significant aspect of its internationalization strategy. The University of Mannheim's transfer activities are grounded in its core competencies in research and teaching, improving these areas in the process.

- **Expanding advisory expertise regarding transfer activities** as well as consolidating this expertise.
- **Expanding the incentive and support structures for researchers** to actively contribute to transfer activities within the ENGAGE.EU alliance framework (refer to strategic focus area 3).

3. Monitoring and governance

Achieving the established goals requires consistent evaluation of progress, along with an assessment of potential challenges and necessary modifications to objectives, strategies, and timelines.

Consequently, an annual monitoring system utilizing both internal and external data sources will be implemented. To this end, the departments in charge of their particular strategic focus areas, namely the International Office, the Division for Research Affairs, and the ENGAGE.EU office, will team up with the Department of Quality Management to create an annual data report. This will be presented to the Vice President for International Affairs first and then sent to the internal stakeholders of the university, including the President's Office, the Dean's Offices, as well as to heads of divisions and departments, at the close of each academic year.

Following this, the outcomes will be evaluated internally at the university in conjunction with other pertinent progress reports on the formulated measures, and necessary changes and future actions will be identified from these evaluations. A proper framework of governance involving all stakeholders and committees will be established.

Before the end of the term of this internationalization strategy, a new proposal will be drafted by the teams of the International Office, the Division for Research Affairs, and the ENGAGE.EU office. This proposal will then be presented to the schools for feedback and subsequently submitted to the Senate by the Vice President for International Affairs for approval.