

Internationalization Strategy (2015-2020)

Background

The University of Mannheim attributes great importance to international exchange in teaching and research, and promotes the cooperation with universities and other partners worldwide. As modern science and humanities have an international scope that not only includes global divulgation and discussion of research results, and involvement of international peer-reviews and publications, but also international exchange of students and professors, the university strives to be a place of international cooperation. The international orientation includes all aspects of university life: research, teaching and administration.

As at May 2015, the University of Mannheim has more than 450 partner universities across the world. With these partners, the university maintains a number of cooperations in research and teaching, including more than 620 programs for student exchange. The large number of international students, junior researchers and academic staff members in research, teaching, and university administration are proof of the internationalization that is becoming reality at our university.

The University of Mannheim places great value on "Internationalization", and the Internationalization Strategy that is detailed in the following emphasizes this. Moreover, it defines measures to expand and consolidate internationalization in research, teaching and administration.

Overall Objectives of the Internationalization Strategy

The University of Mannheim strives to increase public attention on an international level by "Internationalization Abroad" and to strengthen the international orientation within the institution at the same time through "Internationalization@Home". The objective of "Internationalization Abroad" accents the international position and reputation of the university with regard to high-profile research and teaching, research cooperations and the education of future scholars, specialists and managers.

"Internationalization@Home" is aimed at the University of Mannheim itself as a place of cultural encounters and cooperation in research and teaching. The university has set its sights on creating an open arms culture for its international members and its guests. Moreover, the university strives to convey an intercultural world view to all our members. To this end, the university takes account of its general objective to be a cosmopolitan place that shapes the concept of integration and educates students for an increasingly international labor market to become responsible leaders in business, politics, society and academia.

To accomplish these general objectives, the University of Mannheim has defined a number of long-term strategic goals and corresponding measures.

Strategic Goals

The strategic goals defined in this section do not only reflect existing goals and measures but also new initiatives and activities to achieve thorough internationalization.

- 1) Encouraging and supporting international mobilities for students, faculty and researchers
- 2) Promoting and supporting international research cooperations and research activities on an international level
- 3) Creating and expanding an "International (bilingual) Campus"
- 4) Fostering student success and degree completion among international students and doctoral candidates
- 5) Extending intercultural awareness within the university management

Measures to Achieve the Strategic Goals

Goal I: Encouraging and Supporting International Mobilities for Students, Faculty and Researchers

Promoting the international exchange of students and teachers is essential in preparing students for an international labor market and in conveying a cosmopolitan world view to all members of the university. On the one hand, the university needs to build an open arms culture for international members and guests of the university. On the other hand, it needs to reinforce the existing relationships and infrastructure at home and abroad to foster international exchange.

The concrete measures for promoting exchanges for students and teachers are the following:

- Providing a comprehensive support and advice system for international students and scholars. This comprises the existing service structures in the International Office and at the schools and departments, providing attractive and interesting courses in English and a reasonable amount of accommodation, offering German classes and promoting the expansion of the existing Coaching Program.
- Making sure that all of the university's students and academic staff members who plan to study or teach abroad receive top-level advice in academic and non-academic matters (e.g. regarding the recognition of coursework and examinations completed abroad)
- Selecting partner universities abroad according to quality standards that, firstly, are determined by the schools themselves (e.g. international reputation, accreditations, guaranteed recognition of coursework and examinations) and secondly, are determined by the International Office (e.g. smooth cooperation and corresponding support for Mannheim outgoing students)
- Implementing optional or obligatory mobility periods in the programs of study

- Establishing new, and expanding existing international degree programs (e.g. joint degrees, double degrees) in the schools
- Establishing new, and expanding existing English-taught (master's) programs
- Creating new, and expanding existing short-term programs such as international summer schools

Goal II: Measures to Promote and Expand International Research Cooperations and Research Activities on an International Level

The University of Mannheim aspires to become more visible in the international research community. Therefore, the university wants to draw on its excellent reputation as a research institution to increase the number of international research cooperations in order to further expand its leading position in research at an international level and making sure these developments are sustainable.

International research cooperations and research activities on an international level are being promoted by way of the following concrete measures:

- Supporting the establishment and expansion of international research cooperations and research projects with an international scope
- Increasing the number of internationally renowned collaborative research projects and individual fellowships, such as from the European Research Council (ERC) or the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation
- Intensive advising and proactive encouragement for researchers who want to apply for research programs and awards with an international orientation
- Encouraging researchers to assume positions in international research organizations or to assume editorship or membership on editorial boards of top-level international journals and publications
- Recruiting researchers of all career levels worldwide, and supporting them in the relocation process, such as in the search for suitable accommodation and dual career options
- Inviting and mentoring international (visiting) scholars and promoting long-term research cooperations, amongst other things, by means of the alumni program for international guests
- Supporting international (visiting) scholars and their families in the Welcome Center by providing tailor-made services during their stay in Mannheim
- Expanding the doctoral programs with an international orientation
- Supporting the organization of international academic conferences in Mannheim
- Encouraging young researchers from Mannheim to attend summer schools abroad

Goal III: Measures to Establish and Expand an "International (Bilingual) Campus"

Thanks to the successful and extensive internationalization efforts of the University of Mannheim, the number of international students, professors and researchers increases continuously. A number of new challenges arise with this very positive development. It is necessary to close the linguistic and cultural gaps that have emerged as a result of the growing group of international members of the university.

It is the university's goal to create an international campus that allows international students, researchers and staff members, and guests of the university to work, research and teach in Mannheim regardless of their level of German language skills. At the same time, the international campus is a competitive advantage for the University of Mannheim. To achieve this, the university promotes bilingualism in all areas focusing on providing essential information in English and proliferation of English as an international research language on campus.

The concrete measures to systematically promote English as a second lingua franca on campus are the following:

- Providing standardized English translations of official notifications, contracts, information materials, websites, online user interfaces and signage on campus through the central university administration. This includes information from the Studierendenwerk, the individual institutions of the university such as the Institute of Sports, the alumni organization AbsolventUM and the Center for Higher Education Didactics.
- Establishing and continuously expanding an English "Corporate Language" for the university in order to harmonize and standardize the use of higher education related English terminology within the University of Mannheim
- Promotion of the use of the English language in administrative processes
- Increasing the number of multilingual courses and programs of study, particularly those with English as a language of instruction

Goal IV: Measures to Foster Student Success and Degree Completion Among International Students and Doctoral Candidates

As an institution that strives to have an international campus and aims to offer equal opportunities to all members regardless of their personal background to foster their individual development, the University of Mannheim feels obliged to take responsibility for offering all students and doctoral candidates the best possible conditions for studying. In general, international doctoral candidates and students pursuing their degree in Germany have a demonstrably lower success rate in terms of completing their degrees than their German peers. Therefore, tailor-made advice and support for international students and doctoral candidates, and their integration in university processes are important fields of activity for the University of Mannheim.

In order to increase the success rates among international students and doctoral candidates, the University of Mannheim wants to improve the integration measures and the support and advice program with a special focus on this group.

In practice, the success rates are to be increased by the following measures:

- Intensifying the support program for international degree-seeking students and doctoral candidates for the entire duration of their respective degree programs. Support and advice will be offered through the university administration and through the respective departments and schools.
- Expanding the support and advice program by means of integrative measures such as coaching and mentoring programs, and the closer cooperation with academic staff members in these programs
- Offering an ample number of German language courses for international degree-seeking students and thereby supporting their integration in the German society and increasing the chances to place international academics on the German labor market
- Providing additional tailor-made services such as intercultural training, job interview training, and special tutoring sessions at the respective departments
- Establishing and supervising an internal monitoring system that documents the success of international students and doctoral candidates regarding their degree completion

Goal V: Measures to Increase Intercultural Awareness within the University Management

Along with the internationalization of research and teaching, all areas of the university management need to establish an infrastructure that is able cope with the demands of a campus that is becoming more and more international. Next to implementing English as a second lingua franca in campus management and administration, it is crucial to raise intercultural awareness among all members of the administrative staff who face a variety of international students and staff with a number of very different needs in their daily work.

An Internationalization Strategy can only be implemented sustainably and successfully if it is backed up by a well-positioned, open-minded university administration.

Intercultural awareness within the university management is increased by the following measures:

- Providing tailor-made opportunities for further education, such as language courses, intercultural awareness training and country-specific training
- Encouraging and partial funding of mobility periods and further education abroad, such as Erasmus Staff Weeks
- Systematic networking with partner universities and exchange of staff members of the university management according to their respective fields such as admissions, room management, academic advising and support, dual career, research support and infrastructure