

Internationalisation at the University of Applied Sciences Emden/Leer

1 Internationalisation framework

The university views the ever-increasing internationalisation as one of its most important tasks. In the current context of globalisation, this is, on one hand, a case of preparing students for the challenges which accompany it. On the other hand, there is a growing demand for research associations in an international context.

The University of Applied Sciences Emden/Leer is well positioned regarding internationalisation: An efficient International Office with 5 employees (3 full-time) supports local students (outgoing students), full-time and visiting students from overseas, advises the university staff on teacher or staff mobility, looks after over 145 university partnerships, raises and manages third-party funding, for example, from the DAAD, and holds events at the university such as the International Staff Training Week. In terms of research, the Knowledge and Technology Transfer Center (WTT) supports academics in initiating and applying for international research projects, especially in the lines HORIZON EUROPE and INTERREG, among others, with an EU consultant (1 full-time employee / project funded until mid-2022). The close collaboration between the International Office and WTT effectively utilises synergy effects, and enables the university's internationalisation to be further developed by both departments together.

In all faculties, there are also responsible coordinators for international contacts, both at a professorial level and also, predominantly, at a staff level. The international student advisors at the university meet at least once per semester and define the core focuses of their work for the coming semester. The faculty staff entrusted with international affairs also meet regularly to discuss current developments, exchange information about ongoing activities and to network within the university. Of course, the university institutions also offer their advice and services to students planning a semester abroad, or to overseas students (e.g. the family service for students with children and/or disabilities).

The university has also founded a language centre in order to support internationalisation. The staff working there should participate in the expansion of our study programmes offered in foreign languages, provide language certifications, carry out projects and secure third-party funding.

2 The basic understanding behind internationalisation

The mission statement of the university affirms: “An international atmosphere and culture can be experienced at our university of applied sciences”. This is seen to include the “Internationalisation at home” approach: The university is considered an internationally aligned campus which creates offers, expands the intercultural competences of students and staff, and prepares both for the requirements of globalisation, but which also makes space for free academic discourse with people and institutions of different origins.

International research projects are a significant part of this, as they strengthen both the subject-related and intercultural contacts of all participants within the research associations.

As well as this, international cooperation in research, study and teaching is another important building block of our mission statement.

The university focuses on the exchange of students and staff, and encourages international aspects in the study programmes. It continuously expands the foreign-language and intercultural competences of students and staff.

Here, digitisation unveils opportunities for promoting internationalisation. As well as Open Educational Resources, virtual conferences and online seminars, the tools which are particularly helpful are those which enable the networking of teachers, researchers and staff, and which do this continually without necessitating expensive travel activities.

3 Strategic goals and strategies in study and teaching

The university has specified five strategic goals for internationalisation:

1. Expanding international study offers
2. Promoting exchange
3. Increasing international competences
4. Creating an international campus
5. Becoming more visible internationally

These strategic goals form the basis of the long-term internationalisation strategies. These describe our fundamental route to achieving these goals.

3.1 Strategy for expanding international study programmes

In recent years, the university has expanded its offer of international study programmes. As well as the study programmes which have been around for a long time (Bachelor of International Business Administration, Bachelor Industrial Business Systems and Engineering Physics (in cooperation with the University of Oldenburg)) there are now new programmes offered which are aimed at international full-time and exchange students. These are:

- Joint Master's Maritime Operations with the university in Haugesund, Norway
- International post-professional Master's Technical Management
- English-language specialisation in the Master's Industrial Informatics as well as Master's Applied Life Sciences
- Double-Degree Master's Industrial Informatics
- The introduction of an English-language year of classes in Maritime Technology and Shipping Management, and giving the study programme an English title
- A considerable increase in the number of English-language modules in the study programme "Sustainable Energy Systems" in order to offer incoming students a course of study which is fully compatible with the study programmes at international partner universities, for two semesters at first.

- Together with Continental AG: Setting up a so-called “Conti Class”: Chinese students spend one year abroad at the University of Applied Sciences Emden/Leer, and complete an accompanying practical training programme in a Conti facility.

The university has also improved the framework for teaching staff in order to make it easier to expand international study programmes and English-speaking courses. In this way, English courses for staff were introduced at the Centre for Further Education. These courses tie up with prior knowledge of the language and the requirements of the teaching staff. In addition, a general agreement was struck with a translation office in Oldenburg to give teaching staff the possibility of having extensive materials (such as scripts, slides etc.) translated into English.

In recent years, the university has succeeded in attracting increasing numbers of international full-time students and has been able to increase the rate of overseas students from 3% a few years ago to the current 9%. As a consequence, the university is in the middle range of smaller universities of applied science in Germany in this regard. The following focus points shall be set in the years to come:

- The university supports the expansion and introduction of further internationally aligned study programmes, especially the introduction of double-degrees and joint degrees.
- It will undertake the further arrangement of existing study programmes to ensure that they are more suitable for international exchange, for example, by increasing the English-language modules in individual study programmes.
- It will support the efforts of the individual faculties in offering study programmes entirely in English.
- It will support the continued expansion of international, dual, cooperative offers such as the Conti Class.
- It will give adequate consideration to the efforts made by professors when establishing and expanding internationally oriented lectures, in particular those conducted in a foreign language, when making salary level determinations.

3.2 Strategy for encouraging exchange

The university has made considerable endeavours in recent years in terms of exchange among students and staff. For example, the International Office organises an “International Staff Training Week” every two years. International (project) weeks take place every year in the Faculties of Business Studies and Social Work and Health. The Faculty of Business Studies has also established a so-called “English Programme” in its Bachelor study programmes. This covers a fixed canon of lectures which are offered in English every semester. This ensures that visiting overseas students can take part in a sufficient offer of lectures which are not taught in German. In the Faculty of Social Work and Health, there is also an exchange programme for international students (“Supporting families, children and youths in their environment” – 30 ECTS).

The University of Applied Sciences Emden/Leer also offers study programmes which include a stay abroad as a mandatory part of the curriculum, such as International Business Administration, International Business Systems and Early Childhood Education (as internships).

The International Office also regularly provides information about student and teaching staff exchange options in the form of informative letters and events.

Some faculties also support outgoing students in the recognition of the achievements which must be attained according to the Learning Agreement by defining central points of contact for clarifying the recognition of these. There is also a high degree of willingness within the university to recognise achievements attained at overseas universities. In addition, there are international partnerships and supported projects which involve study exchanges in the broader sense. These include the project “grenzenlo(o)s Talent”, or “boundless talent” during which the students complete active internships and final dissertations near the Dutch border. The university also supports families and persons with disabilities to enable them to participate in a stay abroad or finish their studies successfully.

Finally, the university would like to make more use of the opportunities afforded by digitisation in order to support international networking with its partners in all areas (study, teaching, research and administration).

We intend to continue along this route in the years to come. To do this, we will set the following focus points:

- The university would like to establish international exchange programmes (International Week, or English Programmes) in other faculties as well.
- Participation in international tenders and raising third-party funds is to be stepped up.
- The offer of German as a foreign language is to be expanded.

3.3 Strategy for increasing international competences

Internationalisation and exchange as part of a course of study are not ends in themselves. Rather, they serve the intercultural competences of the students and staff, and consequently increase important qualifications for their activity in an increasingly international, globalised employment market and for their responsible conduct as citizens.¹

The University of Applied Sciences Emden/Leer supports activities which aim at increasing international competences in various ways. For example, the center MyCampus was created, where students are given training in key competences on an extra-curricular basis. This institution also has a few offers for increasing international competences.

Furthermore, the International Office supports students who aspire to overseas study or who wish to complete an internship abroad. In doing so, it offers the students support regarding the financial and organisational aspects of a stay abroad. In addition, the International Office enables students to come into direct contact with overseas students at “International Evenings” or by using the “Buddy Programme”.

¹ Cf. Scientific Council: *Empfehlungen zur Internationalisierung von Hochschulen* [Recommendations for the internationalisation of universities], Munich 2018, p. 5

MyCampus and the International Office also issue a Certificate of Intercultural Competences if the students can demonstrate they have attended events or participated accordingly with regard to intercultural training, a stay abroad, increasing foreign-language skills and intercultural dedication/international experience.

Some faculties also offer events in the areas international management or intercultural management (for example, the Faculty of Business Studies is responsible for the event “International Strategic Leadership” or the Faculty of Technology, Mechanical Engineering: “International HumanResources Management”).

This also includes foreign-language offers. For the expansion of these, the university founded a language centre which attends to the development and expansion of foreign-language courses, as well as the quality assurance of these. Finally, the proportion of courses taught in English in numerous study programmes in all faculties has been increased considerably in places.

We intend to continue to expand these activities in the years to come. To do this, we will set the following focus points:

- The university is to expand its extra-curricular intercultural offer. To this end, a corresponding category or label will be introduced under MyCampus, and the university will ensure that this results in an adequate offer.
- The language centre will make regular enquiries as to the needs for extra-curricular language courses, and expand its language offer accordingly.

3.4 Strategy for creating an international campus

According to the approach from the university’s mission statement: “An international atmosphere and culture can be experienced at our university of applied sciences”, there is a series of activities which allow the campus to become a place of international exchange. These activities include the international evenings which are hosted each month by the students of one nation. The International Office also organises an orientation programme for the different groups of overseas full-time and visiting students.

The university is proud that each semester, vast numbers of local students agree to become so-called “buddies” for the overseas visiting students and help them to find their way on the campus, with the authorities, and in their studies.

As well as this, there are offers which are specifically geared towards the local students: This was why the “Certificate of Intercultural Competences” was introduced. This provides the students with proof of their exceptional intercultural activities.

In the coming years, we will set the following focus points for expanding the international campus:

- Student-for-student activities: The establishment or expansion of offers for international students by or in cooperation with the student body of the University of Applied Sciences Emden/Leer.

- The establishment or expansion of a “MyCampus International” offer which is aimed at international students and which covers the teaching of inter-disciplinary and extra-curricular competences to this target group.

3.5 Strategy for increasing international visibility

The university currently demonstrates its offer of study programmes predominantly via publications in the relevant brochures and platforms, in particular the DAAD database GATE-Germany, “International Programmes in Germany”. In contrast, there is no active promotion of German-language offerings beyond the country's borders. The website is also starting to get old. Numerous webpages are not available in English. In order to achieve a standardised language here, a German-English glossary was created, containing the essential terms.

In addition, the university participated in the HRK peer-to-peer audit with a focus on “International Visibility”.

The university also engages directly in attracting overseas students by participating in information events at German schools, especially outside of Europe, for example, German schools in Cairo or South America.

The following tasks are to be addressed with priority in the years to come:

- English webpages and an English-language glossary: The university's entire website has been revised. 100% of the webpages relevant to the students are to be available in English.
- Expansion of our participation in international fairs and network conferences, as well as the preparation of information materials geared towards specific target groups, especially with the focus of raising awareness of the German-language study programmes abroad.
- Establishment of partnerships with German overseas schools.

4 Strategic goals and strategies in research

Through its research and transfer activities, the university sees itself as making a contribution to the sustainable development of the region's economy and society. Also internationally, the stepping up of research activities is desired and has become a great deal more important in recent years. International research collaborations open up significant funding options and increase the visibility of the university and its academics. At the same time, international research projects increase the visibility and appeal of the university for international students. In addition, the partnerships with international universities provide an interesting perspective of cooperative doctoral work.

For further internationalisation regarding research, the university is pursuing three strategic goals:

1. Increased participation in European research programmes
2. Supporting the European network of researchers
3. Strategy for increasing communication and visibility

4.1 Strategy for stronger participation in European research programmes

Thanks to our geographic location at the heart of Europe and our direct proximity to the Dutch border and the skills profiles of our researchers, the University of Applied Sciences Emden/Leer is predestined for international partnerships, especially at a European level. The Knowledge and Technology Transfer Center (WTT) at the university has already been supporting researchers over recent years by offering funding advice and support with applications, and thus expanding participation in international research. The WTT department also plays a part in ensuring that researchers make use of the support programmes for funding applications and increasing their mobility. Among other things, this will also facilitate an EU consultant employed for this purpose, with the project funding in place until mid-2022. The long-term establishment of a research consultant position beyond the project is desirable in order to keep us on target for our strategic goals in the future.

The following focus points shall be set in the years to come:

- The introduction, expansion and establishment of a dynamic, scalable support system for advice and support with regard to international research proposals
- The holding of information events relating to the potentials and possibilities of EU funding
- The expansion of cooperative doctoral projects with overseas universities

4.2 Strategy for supporting the European network of researchers

By maintaining and expanding relationships with research institutes at international partner universities, the academics are actively networked in the international research landscape. The establishment of networks is an important tool for both disseminating one's own results, and for expanding one's own competences by opening up new perspectives. Many researchers already have valuable contacts with international institutions and organisations which they must maintain intensively and gather centrally in case these networks are to be extended. We intend to continue along this route in the years to come, and in doing so, also support transdisciplinarity and interdisciplinarity in an international context. Here, the focus will be on the following:

- Inter-faculty collaboration in international research projects to establish new interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary contacts

4.3 Strategy for increasing international communication and visibility

Increasing international competences is a direct result of active participation in European projects. An important goal here is to indicate to researchers the corresponding prospects and development options for project participations. As well as specific advice via the WTT department, the organisation of internationally oriented meetings, conferences, workshops and other events can also lead to intense inter-campus exchange. Here, individual academics are able to strengthen their competences relating to international research, as well as internal communication and networking via workshops and webinars. The communication of research findings from international projects to targeted public groups can also take place as part of project conferences for ongoing and upcoming international research projects, and at specialist conferences. Publication as specialist literature, in international journals or databases does not merely increase recognition of the research; it also increases the acceptance of the university in top-level international committees and project consortia. These activities increase the international visibility of the University of Applied Sciences Emden/Leer, and therefore also the probability of new partnerships reaching beyond the country's borders. The following focus points shall be set, among others, with a view of increasing communication and visibility:

- The organisation of international workshops and specialist conferences and the presentation of project findings at international conferences and specialist fairs
- The creation of transparency regarding faculty-specific or individual research strengths
- An English-language website for the research field to present projects, among other things