ehs Internationalization Strategy

Introduction

Evangelische Hochschule Dresden - University of Applied Sciences for Social Work, Education and Nursing (ehs) perceives itself not only as a place of learning, teaching and research but also as a place for encounter. At ehs, people with different cultural backgrounds come into contact with each other, exchange views and develop new perspectives together. International relations are a key element of the University’s broad and diversified networking activities. We enable ehs students and staff to gather experience abroad, extend a warm welcome to students and staff from other universities and countries and contribute to international academic discourse. To this purpose, we cultivate partnerships with universities and practical training institutions in at present 16 European countries, run education and research projects in cooperation with our partners, organize study excursions and stage international congresses. This all enhances the visibility of ehs as an internationally proactive university.

The objective of the Internationalization Strategy presented here is to maintain and expand the University’s international and intercultural orientation. Building on the University’s international work so far, specific priorities and targets have been defined and are explained below. Internationalization is understood in this context as a cross-cutting task and ranges from various forms of individual support to aspects of structural integration. To this purpose, strategies and measures are implemented at the levels of teaching, research and administration as well as staff development and additionally at the level of structural cooperation with other universities.

The overarching objectives of the ehs Internationalization Strategy are to:

- (Further) develop the intercultural skills of all University members
- Foster a welcome culture for international students and staff as well as guests
- Support the inclusion of people with a migrant background
- Ensure the University’s ability to tie in with international academic discourse
- Encourage international partnerships in research, teaching and further training
- And thus
- Upgrade international perspectives for University members and graduates

The starting point for the Internationalization Strategy are the fields of study of Social Work, Early Childhood Education, and Nursing, which together make up the academic profile of ehs. When developing measures and partnerships, its specific characteristics in an international context are taken into account.

Its location in the border triangle of Poland-Czech Republic-Germany is the reason why the University places a special focus on Central and Eastern Europe. This will be continued in the shape of special university places, alumni activities and new partnerships. At the same time, the University is networked throughout the whole of Europe through a large number of different partnerships and is also establishing links to universities and other institutions outside Europe.
We believe that through our University’s Protestant orientation we have a special duty to assume social responsibility. The dialogue on ethical, religious and intercultural topics is therefore an important facet of the University’s intramural and extramural internationalization. In this context, ehs creates opportunities for people with different origins and orientation to meet at both an academic as well as an artistic and creative level. This focus is an integral part of the University’s profile and impacts on its public presence and vibrancy.

**Mobility and cooperation**

International exchange is an important source of inspiration for the development of new academic and personal perspectives. That is why ehs on the one hand encourages students and staff to spend periods abroad at other universities as well as with its partners in the area of practical training. On the other hand, ehs intends in future to further increase its attractiveness for international students, teaching staff, researchers and practical training partners.

Already today, about 5% of the University’s students come from abroad. This includes both Erasmus+ exchange students as well as non-mobile foreign students and foreign students from abroad who are completing their entire study programme at ehs. All three groups are making a significant contribution to the further development of international perspectives at ehs.

The goal is to increase the number of exchange students as well as to improve study opportunities at ehs for people with a migrant background. Measures related to specific study programmes as well as measures which overarch all programmes will be developed to this purpose. In addition, this objective will also be taken into account in the context of the new and further development of Master’s degree programmes.

**Support for stays abroad**

The partnerships which ehs maintains with other universities open up many options for student and staff mobility. We foster not only university partnerships but also international contacts to partners in the area of practical training. Students’ stays abroad are closely linked to the objectives of their respective study programme and take into consideration both the compatibility of programme content as well as supervised practical training. Stays abroad by teaching and research staff are part of the University’s personnel and organizational development policy.

**Specific objectives:**

- In future accreditation procedures, mobility windows will be integrated in all study programmes in order to raise the appeal of going abroad.
- In addition, ehs will develop strategies for more extensive stays abroad which combine studies with practical training and thus go beyond a regular Erasmus+ semester abroad.
- ehs will help students to prepare and follow-up their stay abroad thoroughly and work closely together with its partner universities in the supervision of students.
- With regard to exchanges in the area of practical training, the University will compile an inventory of international practical training providers, differentiated according to field of study. The ultimate goal is to link such practical training providers with our university partnerships.
Periods abroad by teaching and research staff are facilitated by creating a suitable framework and financed from external funds (especially Erasmus+) as well as university resources if applicable.

The internationalization of non-academic personnel is fostered through non-teaching staff mobility, language courses and opportunities for intercultural awareness raising.

**International students at ehs**

ehs enables people from other countries to undertake full-time studies or a short-term period of study at ehs. Measures coordinated by the International Office already ensure that the supervision of international students is outstanding in terms of quality. The aim is to safeguard and further enhance this high quality in the long term.

Individual support for students provided in the framework of the programme “Special University Places for Applicants from Central and Eastern Europe” (*Sonderstudienplätze für Bewerber_innen aus Mittel- und Osteuropa (MOE)*), which has been in place since the University’s foundation, will be continued and extended to other target groups.

To maintain and expand the opportunities available for foreign students, ehs uses a variety of initiatives and programmes (see Annex 1). It is not least ehs students themselves who make an important contribution through the tutoring programme and the “ehs international” student committee to high-quality support for international students.

**Specific objectives**

- Study opportunities at ehs for international students will be publicized at international level.
- Existing support measures for international students (see Annex 2) will be guaranteed on a permanent basis, in terms of both organization and finance, and continuously adapted to the requirements of the respective target groups.
- The University will continue to make available 10% additional places for applicants from Central and Eastern Europe in the framework of its special programme (MOE, see above) on each undergraduate programme. The University will help students to return to their home countries.
- ehs will make special places available on the undergraduate programmes and the in-service study programmes for people who have fled to Germany.
- In addition, ehs will explore, in cooperation with other institutions, whether and in what form applicants from crisis-hit countries can also be allocated a special place.
- Where necessary, ehs will assist international students with scholarship applications.

**University partnerships**

ehs works closely together with universities abroad in all areas. Alongside numerous European universities, these also include selected universities outside Europe. The criteria for the selection and further development of such partnerships are subject-related requirements and cooperation opportunities, possibilities to link theory and practice as well as a preference towards universities and countries/regions where language barriers are not so pronounced. In addition, ehs plays an active role in the educational landscape in Central and Eastern Europe by continuing to engage in partnerships and projects with universities, practical training providers and the relevant adminis-
trative bodies and by working in close cooperation with organizations in this region which operate at international level.

A further intention is to establish a close working relationship in each of the fields of Social Work, Early Childhood Education, and Nursing, which will allow lively cooperation in the areas of teaching, staff mobility, research, further training, vocational practice/internships and doctoral studies which goes beyond student mobility. Such a close working relationship already exists with the University of Vilnius in the field of Social Work.

Specific objectives
- Existing university partnerships will be expanded, in particular in the framework of Erasmus+.
- The University’s partnerships with German-speaking universities as well as with universities and regions where German is also used as a language of instruction will be further extended.
- In order to achieve a balanced ratio in the University’s partnerships in all fields of study, more partnerships will be developed above all in the area of Nursing.
- The University will upscale its partnership with the University of Vilnius in the field of Social Work.
- Similarly close partnerships will also be developed for the fields of Early Childhood Education and Nursing.

Alumni activities
The University works closely together with its international alumni and this important element of its overall alumni activities will be maintained and further expanded. Regular alumni congresses serve to establish networks and support further training. They are also a platform for academic and practice-oriented exchange at international level.

Specific objectives
- The Alumni European Congress will continue to take place each year.
- ehs will help international alumni to qualify as practical training instructors.

Teaching and university life

Interculturality and internationality in teaching
ehs ensures that its study programmes tie in with international and in particular English-language academic discourse. Intercultural and international aspects are of fundamental significance in all fields of study at ehs and anchoring these in all its study programmes is therefore an ongoing task. This is accomplished by means of high quality standards in teaching, student and staff mobility, the active integration of students’ and staff’s international experience into study programmes, opportunities for intercultural learning as well as language courses.

In addition, visits by guest lecturers from abroad in the context of both teaching staff mobility as well as joint international research projects are also a way to internationalize teaching. This also includes lectures and courses held in English. International cooperation in research and teaching is also facilitated by means of modern forms of eLearning, e.g. joint internet-based courses or research colloquia.
Specific objectives:

- Opportunities for intercultural learning, at an artistic and creative level too, will be firmly anchored in the teaching syllabus.
- Specialized courses held in English will be a regular component of the University's General Studies programme.
- Guest lectures (international lectures) held in English as well as annual international workshops will bring international perspectives to ehs.
- ehs will support guest visits by researchers from other universities to ehs and foster an exchange of lecturers planned for the long term.
- ehs will develop a concept for possible study programmes with English as the language of instruction which is intended for international Erasmus students as well as interested ehs students.
- ehs will establish the technical provisions necessary for international cooperation in the area of eLearning and integrate these learning and exchange formats into its teaching.
- The library will be given a more international profile through the acquisition of English-language literature and online resources.
- ehs will encourage a wide and varied range of opportunities for learning foreign languages for all groups at the University through partnerships, e.g. with the adult education centre, Hochschule für Technik und Wirtschaft Dresden - University of Applied Sciences and TU Dresden.

Public relations

Its international work is one of the focal points of the University’s general public relations activities and ehs seeks to display its internationality and interculturality both at intramural and extramural level. This includes multi-language information material, a continuously growing English-language website and not least multilingualism in everyday university life. The University’s internationality is also visible in its academic, social, artistic and creative activities and events which are open to the general public.

Specific objectives

- The University’s internationality and interculturality will be a fixed component of its public relations work.
- General information about the University will be made available in several languages.
- Basic information on study programmes at ehs as well as possibilities for guest visits and Erasmus+ exchanges will be retrievable in English.
- Important ehs website content will be available in English.
- Signs in English will help guests to find their way around ehs.

Refugees and people with a migrant background

ehs believes that it has a responsibility to contribute to the development of a positive coexistence for all people. The increasing number of refugees and the special situation in Saxony poses new challenges for ehs and our society in general. This requires not only sensitivity from the new arrivals towards the local situation but also sensitivity on the part of society towards people who come to Saxony. These issues, as well as the importance of experience with migration, are a regular topic in teaching as well as in practice-based and research projects at the University.
Education and career development for people with a migrant background are supported through visiting student programmes, special university places and other measures. In addition, ehs participates in practice-based and research projects as well as networks concerned with the situation and integration of refugees and thus provides an academic foundation for objective discussion as well as effective measures.

As a Protestant university, ehs bears special responsibility for acting in a manner which is sensitive towards religion and for encouraging inter-religious dialogue. An important aspect in this context is the confrontation with Islam and Islamophobia but also with other religions in a predominantly non-religious society. In addition, ehs works together with other universities at national and international level in order to open up new perspectives for intercultural coexistence.

Specific objectives:

- Specific aspects of working with refugees will be integrated to a greater extent into the academic content of all study programmes at ehs.
- Refugees and asylum seekers will be allowed to attend ehs as visiting students. Such visiting students will be given organizational assistance as well as language and general academic support.
- ehs will develop further approaches which enable refugees to complete a study programme at ehs and attain a university qualification.
- ehs will seek an exchange with academics who are refugees or have a migrant background and develop suitable meeting formats to this purpose.
- ehs will participate proactively in networks dedicated to the development of new strategies, concepts, measures and projects for the integration of people with a migrant background.

Research

For research universities, internationality is indispensable. This requires close alignment of research and internationalization strategies.

Through the University’s cooperation with the Zentrum für Forschung, Weiterbildung und Beratung an der ehs Dresden gGmbH, a centre at ehs engaged in research, further education and advisory services, it is ideally positioned for the expansion of its European and international research partnerships. The University also aims to participate on a greater scale in European and international research projects and to secure corresponding funding. Thematic priorities will be derived from the University’s fields of study and its core research topics to date.

Specific objectives

- ehs will align its research and internationalization strategies.
- ehs will consolidate its international links in the area of research through participation in international research networks and alliances. ehs will nominate members of staff responsible for each department at ehs.
- The international visibility of the University’s research achievements will be raised through participation in international conferences, publications and reports on research results on the ehs website.
- The University will create structures for the development, acquisition, financing and implementation of EU projects.
Administration and finance

To achieve the objectives defined in the Internationalization Strategy, the University will make available personnel as well as financial, structural and material resources. Many of the international measures and activities undertaken by universities are financed from third-party funds. The basis for this is, however, the effort made by a university’s administrative staff, who must have at their disposal the resources required to implement these tasks. The International Office plays a key role in this context. Other administrative units at the University are also involved in many ways in tasks related to internationalization. The basis for continued successful work in this area is an increase in and the long-term safeguarding of the respective posts as well as the necessary technical infrastructure.

Specific objectives

- Internationalization activities will be financed from the university budget.
- In order to re-finance these tasks as well as to finance special projects and initiatives, ehs will continue to participate in the calls and programmes in support of internationalization of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and other providers of external funding (see Annex 1).
- The International Office will receive permanent support in the shape of personnel as well as financial, structural and material resources, in line with its growing task portfolio.
- The University will support the participation of administrative staff in further training measures which enable them to acquire the skills required for international work.
- To consolidate its international work in the long term, ehs will also play an active role in networks such as the Working Group of the International Offices in Saxony (Arbeitskreis der Sächsischen Auslandsämter) and the International Affairs Working Group of Church-maintained Higher Education Institutions of Applied Sciences in Germany (RKHD) and aims in the medium term to become a member of the DAAD.

Institutional internationalization, participation and decision making

The Internationalization Strategy of ehs is a core element of the medium and long-term University Development Plan. Its implementation and further development is a joint endeavour of all members of the University. International work will be undertaken and supported through suitable institutions and committees at ehs (see Annex 3). This work will be continuously documented and evaluated. The Internationalization Strategy will be regularly reviewed every three years by the Ausschuss Internationale Kontakte (AIK), the University’s international relations committee, revised if necessary, discussed within the relevant committees, if and where applicable, and adopted by the University Council.

Annexes

Annex 1: Third-party Funding Programmes for the Support of International Work at ehs

Annex 2: Support Measures for International Students at ehs (Incoming Students)

Annex 3: Institutions and Committees for International Work at ehs

1 Membership of the DAAD is conditional first of all on membership of ehs in the German Rectors’ Conference.