

# › The University of Münster Internationalisation Strategy

## A - UNDERLYING CONCEPTS

The concepts underlying the internationalisation strategy of the University of Münster are an expression of the University's self-image and an articulation of its expectations for all its members.

### Self-image

Academia is international. International engagement is an essential component of research and teaching. It forms the backbone of **excellence** and **competitiveness** and enhances the **attractiveness** of the WWU as a place of research, study and employment. Moreover, internationalisation contributes to intercultural dialogue and global understanding. In pursuit of achieving these key objectives, the University wishes to fulfil its responsibilities toward society.

The University of Münster sees itself as an **international community** comprised of current and former students, researchers, lecturers, administrators and technical staff.

The University regards internationalisation and diversity as the expression of **cosmopolitanism** put into practice and its global **responsibility** toward research and society.

All University members should treat each other with **mutual respect**. The University is an intercultural meeting place where internationalisation is practised every day. **Diversity** with regard to origin, nationality and life plans is intrinsically valuable and enriches academia, research and teaching to an equal degree.

By undersigning the **Magna Charta Universitatum**, the University of Münster has declared its commitment to fundamental values and principles of university research and teaching.

## Magna Charta Universitatum

1. The university is an autonomous institution at the heart of societies differently organised because of geography and historical heritage; it produces, examines, appraises and hands down culture by research and teaching.  
To meet the needs of the world around it, its research and teaching must be morally and intellectually independent of all political authority and economic power.
2. Teaching and research in universities must be inseparable if their tuition is not to lag behind changing needs, the demands of society, and advances in scientific knowledge.
3. Freedom in research and training is the fundamental principle of university life, and governments and universities, each as far as in them lies, must ensure respect for this fundamental requirement. Rejecting intolerance and always open to dialogue, a university is an ideal meeting-ground for teachers capable of imparting their knowledge and well equipped to develop it by research and innovation and for students entitled, able and willing to enrich their minds with that knowledge.
4. A university is the trustee of the European humanist tradition; its constant care is to attain universal knowledge; to fulfil its vocation it transcends geographical and political frontiers, and affirms the vital need for different cultures to know and influence each other.

These principles represent an important societal and historical achievement, and it is therefore paramount that they be upheld and safeguarded. It is an important aim of the University to put them into everyday practice.

## Governance

In accordance with the principle of **subsidiarity**, all internationalisation activities are conducted in the **non-central units** of the University as far as possible, i.e. in the faculties, their departments and institutes as well as in research consortiums (e.g. Excellence Cluster, SFB etc.) and teaching programmes (e.g. Erasmus Mundus, joint programmes etc.). This internationalisation strategy formulates common and overarching aims for the University as a whole while respecting the internationalisation priorities and activities within the context of the respective faculties or non-central units. All decisions concerning the aims, types, extent and organisation of the internationalisation activities of the non-central units are taken by the units themselves. Within the context of development planning, they contribute their priorities and focuses to the university-wide development of internationalisation.

The **University management** provides an overarching framework of orientation and development by ensuring a professionally and efficiently organised infrastructure, appropriate funding (e.g. the Internationalisation Fund) and the reduction of obstacles. The internationalisation strategy is an integral part of the overall strategy of the University as laid out in the University Development Plan (HEP), which shall be examined, adapted and developed further on an ongoing basis. The continued development of the WWU's internationalisation strategy will be carried out in cooperation between central and non-central stakeholders. In this way, the University management and the central units shall assume institutional accountability towards the faculties and their respective departments.

Although internationalisation is anchored within the scope of Rectorate responsibility, shared responsibility and interfaculty references exist in all areas of the central administration and central University facilities. Most **central units** support the non-central units in their internationalisation efforts. To this end, they carry out necessary internationalisation measures and programmes of their own (e.g. internationalisation for the technical and administrative staff) in line with the WWU internationalisation strategy. They concentrate on overarching issues and measures, support the faculties and non-central units, and initiate and coordinate university-wide, cross-disciplinary internationalisation activities. The measures of the Rectorate and central units aim to strengthen the impact of non-centrally implemented measures and strategies.

In this process, the **Rectorate Committee for Internationalisation (RKI)** functions as the institutional link between the non-central units and the University management, central facilities and the administration.

With the development and continuation of the university-wide internationalisation strategy, the WWU is working to achieve two fundamental goals:

- Goal 1: To explicitly define the philosophy, principles and values of its internationalisation strategy and actively communicate these within and outside the University
- Goal 2: To structurally anchor internationalisation at all levels (central and non-central) and establish regular dialogue regarding the goals and measures of internationalisation

The specific aims of the internationalisation strategy are described in detail in an *action programme* comprised of five closely interconnected *fields of action*.

## B ACTION PROGRAMME

### Field of action 1: International research

The University of Münster understands that excellent research and international academic **dialogue** and **partnerships** are essential for achieving a greater **international reputation** and increased **visibility**.

The WWU promotes **international research projects and initiatives**, working to continually improve international **research conditions** and **career opportunities** for its (junior) researchers. To this end, it encourages international academics and research alumni to participate in its – largely non-centrally administered – partner networks and strategic internationalisation activities.

The faculties and their members are broadly and diversely networked at the international level. In addition to individual international research activities, numerous faculties have set up cooperation-based research structures (priority topics, research clusters etc.) which, for the most part, are internationally oriented. The faculties provide favourable research conditions for their international guests.

The WWU has already created various infrastructures for providing research projects with information, coordination and advice. The Department of Research Affairs consults and supports researchers with initiating, financing and carrying out research projects, including applying for third-party funding. The internationalisation of research is promoted via network-based structures, each with a specific focus. The goal of the WWU Centre for Europe is to strengthen the University's position within the EU funding landscape and make it more visible to the EU Commission. The Brazil Center supports researchers in their efforts to network and collaborate with Brazilian partners.

The Welcome Centre, managed by the International Office, provides support, information and advice on international academic mobility at the WWU (incoming and outgoing), coordinates measures for endangered academics and carries out projects devoted to developing and testing

international research marketing concepts. The goal of these is to attract international researchers to the WWU and retain them in the long term.

The Graduate Centre offers a qualification programme for junior researchers at the WWU which addresses the requirements and needs of academic and non-academic career development.

Optimising the framework conditions for internationally oriented research at all levels aims to sustainably increase the attractiveness of the WWU as an outstanding research location.

## Goals

Goal 3: To further expand the attractiveness of the WWU as an outstanding research location

Goal 4: To optimise the University's research support structures

## Field of action 2: International teaching

Teaching at the WWU has an international and intercultural dimension. The University is committed to pursuing the overarching goals of creating **diversity**-oriented curricula and offering a sufficient range of courses in English and – depending on the subject-related context – in other languages as well.

The WWU promotes the **international mobility** of students and instructors, as well as the internationalisation of its study programmes to make them equally attractive to German and international students (i.e. both exchange and regularly enrolled students). The programmes offered at the WWU enable students to apply their international and intercultural experiences and perspectives while completing their required coursework.

The WWU practises forms of **authentic dialogue** between researchers, instructors and students; it explicitly considers the concerns and experiences of its international students when evaluating and further developing its courses and programmes. Ensuring their academic success is a top priority.

The faculties and/or their departments are responsible and authorised to make decisions concerning their offered courses. The scope of international **courses** varies from faculty to faculty depending on the respective context.

The University is presently establishing and expanding international programmes that augment or replace current ones (e.g. degree programmes taught exclusively in a foreign language). In order to promote further internationalisation of teaching activities, instructors are given

opportunities to obtain further qualification in the area of international teaching; the respective seminars are offered, for example, by the Centre for Teaching in Higher Education (ZHL).

**Teaching degree programmes** comprise a significant proportion of study programmes offered at the WWU; their special conditions for internationalisation are addressed in the strategy.

The percentage of undergraduate students at the WWU who take advantage of **study abroad opportunities** varies from faculty to faculty. Though their focus and character may vary, internationally oriented courses and support structures are essential elements of successful student exchange. As partnerships are based on the principle of reciprocity, it is important to reduce the structural surplus of outgoing students in favour of incoming students. To this end, the University must identify and systematically plan for the additional effort required to develop courses with an international orientation.

The WWU offers an extensive range of **advice services** for international students in the faculties and their units, as well as the International Office, Careers Service and the University Centre for Teacher Education (ZfL). These are regularly supplemented by intercultural training seminars, information services and faculty-targeted events.

The international perception of the WWU and its study programmes is strengthened by target group-oriented **information and communication measures**, as well as personal guidance for incoming students from initial contact to enrolment. The University plans to regularly evaluate those processes related to commencing study in order to continually improve them and thereby enhance their international visibility.

## Goals

Goal 5: To integrate internationality and interculturality into the degree programmes of the WWU

Goal 6: To create the necessary study conditions and academic framework to ensure that national and international students have equal prospects of achieving academic success

## Field of action 3: International partnerships

Based on its research and teaching profile, the University of Münster is working with its faculties to establish and expand **international partnerships** that serve to implement its central academic and internationalisation goals. This primarily includes systematically developing and increasing the quality of research and teaching through international cooperation with trusted partners, as well as strengthening its international research and teaching profile. Through strategic partnerships, the WWU aims to steadily increase its attractiveness both domestically and abroad as a globally connected hub of higher education and research.

**Cooperation models for international partnerships** can be variably designed depending on the activity (research, consortiums, study, teaching, global responsibility), target region (country-specific, regional, global) and level (individual, institute/faculty, university). Establishing an overview of existing international partnerships is key to arriving at a **university-wide concept** which integrates various needs-based cooperation models. Productive academic collaborations are not usually institutionalised; their visibility can and should be increased by integrating them into the overall strategy.

### Centres and networks

The University of Münster is actively engaged in or independently operates **regionally oriented centres** which support collaborations in research and teaching and promote them at the institutional level. These include, for instance:

- WWU Centre for Europe (branch office in Brussels)
- Brazil Center (branch office in São Paulo)
- Participation in the China-NRW University Alliance (office in Beijing).

The centres serve to factually document regional focus areas, each with its own thematic focus, with respect to the position of the WWU and its research in the EU funding sector (WWU Centre for Europe), research partnerships and networking (Brazil Center), and teaching partnerships and student mobility (China-NRW University Alliance).

Currently, the WWU is not a member of an **international university network**. To close this gap, strategic partnerships will be used as an instrument at cross-faculty level to promote networking



and the international exchange of expertise with fellow institutions, to participate in calls for tender, and to strengthen the University's international visibility and profile-building efforts.

The WWU wishes to promote **institutional networks at the faculty level** in the context of larger-scale research projects, e.g. as part of establishing research centres, hosting international academic conferences and jointly drafting teaching programmes. These networks shall mainly operate at the faculty level but will also be integrated and/or coordinated in conjunction with central structures such as the WWU Centre for Europe and the Brazil Center. These will be augmented by a diverse array of often informal international contacts which already exist and will continue to be cultivated by the faculties and their members.

In order to identify the various partnership models and their corresponding goals at different levels and integrate them into an overall strategy, it is vital to remain in constant dialogue with the faculties. Only in this way can the University identify needs of faculty-managed partnerships for central support and coordination (e.g. financial and administrative support services). Central structures can also support faculty-level models (such as the *Visiting Faculty Programme* in certain faculties), and if suitable, integrate them into university-wide models.

The goal is to optimise the **documentation** of existing individual and institutional partnerships. The WWU aims to define what exactly constitutes an international partnership and then create a register of such partnerships in a centralised database (CRIS).

## Goals

Goal 7: To specifically expand international partnerships based on the research and teaching profile of the WWU which can achieve its central and faculty-level academic and internationalisation goals

## Field of action 4: International visibility and profile-building

The University of Münster is honing its **international profile in research and teaching**, thereby enhancing its **positive reputation** around the world. It reports on its international activities in research and teaching internally and externally in a transparent and appropriate form. The WWU is using its accomplishments in research and teaching to further strengthen its **international visibility** and attract excellent foreign partners who will join its international network. Building on the experiences of the faculties and other facilities, the WWU will continue developing its

**recruiting concept** to attract international researchers, students and staff from Germany and abroad.

This process is supported by the continued development of a professional and contemporary **PR and communication concept**. The strategic goal is to present coherent communication to the public in which the content provided by the faculties and central websites is coordinated. The **international visibility** of the WWU and its profile-building efforts represent a strategic task which must incorporate the experiences gained by the non-central units (i.e. faculties).

The research information system **CRIS** enables the WWU to document crucial information on its research activities and latest findings. The aim is to develop it in such a way that it enhances the University's public image and serves as a tool for external science communication.

The **international science communication and public relations activities** of the WWU require ongoing modification to meet international standards and the changing communication needs of the various target groups. In order to maintain the position of the WWU in the increasingly expanding global higher education market, it is necessary to assess what resources are required and to better coordinate the faculty-based and central communication activities of the University.

## Goals

Goal 8: To strengthen the University's international visibility

Goal 9: To increasingly attract "bright minds" to the WWU from around the world

## Field of action 5: International WWU in administration, services and infrastructure

The University of Münster is committed to addressing the **concerns and interests of its international members** within the University and in public. The services provided by central units and faculties help international members to **integrate into the University's academic community**.

The administrative structures of the WWU correspond to those of an international community. Bilingualism (German/English) in research, teaching and administration is a central element of integration and communication. The WWU supports **intercultural sensibility and bilingualism** in both internal and external communications. It supports multilingualism in accordance with the

requirements and competence of its members and helps them develop and advance their language proficiency. To this end, the WWU is systematically developing and professionalising existing structures to promote its internationalisation efforts in research, teaching and administration, e.g. by developing a concept on multilingualism.

To achieve these goals, the University must regularly evaluate the infrastructures that are integral to internationalisation, prioritise the corresponding measures, and establish and expand communication structures. An important milestone is the creation of an integrated **target group-oriented service catalogue** which describes services with respect to the perspectives, living situations and needs of the addressees, and lists the contact details of the responsible units.

The WWU must work simultaneously to further **institutionalise the internationalisation efforts at the faculty level** (Vice-Dean for Internationalisation, teams responsible for internationalisation issues, faculty strategy for internationalisation). To strategically accompany this process, the WWU will hold structural development meetings to gain an overview of the faculty structures already in place or currently in development.

Despite significant efforts by the WWU, i.e. the International Office, the administration, the Student Support Services (*Studierendenwerk*) and the city of Münster, the dire shortage of affordable **housing** for international students and academics with families poses a massive, structurally unresolved societal problem and negatively impacts the internationalisation efforts of the WWU and its faculties. Arranging adequate childcare is also a major challenge for families. The University is committed to continuing and further improving the ongoing dialogue with the responsible internal and external representatives in order to solve these problems.

## Goals

Goal 10: To promote multilingualism and interculturality in accordance with the needs of its members

Goal 11: To encourage cooperation between the central units and the faculties in support of internationalisation efforts

Goal 12: To help international members integrate into the (academic) community at the University and in Münster by offering target-oriented and coordinated services

Goal 13: To recognise individual commitment to internationalisation and dismantle obstacles

Goal 14: To advocate for more affordable accommodation for its members and thereby assume social responsibility