



Umeå University's internationalisation strategy for education

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This document is a translation of the Swedish version. In the event that any question should arise about this version, the Swedish version is the authoritative version.

Umeå University's internationalisation strategy for education

This internationalisation strategy for education is to serve as support in prioritising, operational planning and formulating interim targets up through 2020. Its aim is for Umeå University to have Sweden's best international educational environment by 2020.

Umeå University has a strong international position as one of Sweden's leading universities. Our courses and study programmes are in the lead nationally and are respected internationally; high-quality research shapes our courses and study programmes at all levels. All our students gain international perspectives in their education. Incoming international students can be found in all our degree programmes and the number of outgoing students has increased through several attractive exchange agreements.

- After earning their degrees, Umeå University students will be very well prepared to handle international problems and questions, and have excellent qualifications for working in multicultural environments.
- Based on its programmes, Umeå University will attract outstanding collaboration partners and students from around the globe.
- Umeå University's international work will increase the quality of our education.
- Quality shall be prioritised over quantity. This means that quantity is not superior to quality in regards to mobility for incoming and outgoing students, teachers, and administrative staff. Exchange agreements with higher education institutions must be characterised by high quality, and we must work to obtain mutual exchanges.
- More students at Umeå University will be able to study abroad as part of their degree programmes.

Introduction

An international perspective should be a distinct part of all education at Umeå University. An international dimension strengthens quality and diversity in education, and it is important that it embrace all our students. The purpose of internationalisation work includes

- utilising the synergy effects that diversity provides
- achieving an increase in quality with international relevance
- strengthening Umeå University's competitiveness, nationally and internationally
- better preparing our students for an increasingly international future

Internationalising our education impacts several target groups. Our internationalisation strategy deals in particular with incoming and outgoing students—both exchange and “free-mover” students—and also with teacher and staff exchanges. It also takes up the significance of our internationalisation work for those students not travelling on exchange studies. Providing students with international experience at home is also of great significance for increasing the quality of our bachelor's and master's programmes. This entails measures such as preparing our students and training them in international problems and issues, intercultural communication and the exchange of thoughts and ideas with different cultural backgrounds as part of our programmes.

Purpose and starting point

Our internationalisation strategy is based on our vision document *Umeå University 2020 – Vision and objectives*. The purpose of our strategy is to indicate a direction for the internationalisation of education at Umeå University. It should also be the foundation of the new interim targets for the departments, university administration, and university library after 2015. This strategy replaces *Strategy for the internationalisation of education at Umeå University 2010–2012* (Reg Nr. 500-669-10).

This internationalisation strategy is divided into six general strategies:

- Strategy 1 – Improve our range of programmes
- Strategy 2 – Develop the campus into a distinctly international environment
- Strategy 3 – The bilingual university
- Strategy 4 – Develop the organisation based on an international approach
- Strategy 5 – Strengthen the Umeå University brand based on an international perspective
- Strategy 6 – Prioritised geographical areas

Background

Globally, there has been a major growth in university-level students for several decades. It has also become more common for young people to choose to study at a higher education institution outside their home country. In 2011, for example, a total of 4.3 million people studied outside their home countries (OECD, *Education at a Glance 2013*).

The predominance of English-speaking destinations is greatly increasing, reflecting the expansion of English as a world language (OECD, *Education at a Glance 2013*). This has led to a greater number of non-English speaking countries beginning to offer programmes in English.

The reasons that lead a student to study abroad vary depending, for example, on age and home country. In countries with a young population, such as in Asia and Africa, the educational systems are often of sub-optimal size, which leads to students being compelled to study abroad to get access to adequate education. For many students, however, the choice of studies abroad depends on the desire to live in a country with good opportunities for work and high wages.

For exchange students, a common incentive to study abroad is personal development, with an in-depth perspective and increased understanding of other cultures and languages. For free-mover students, the incentive is often access to the best education regardless of where in the world it is located. They normally intend to study an entire programme.

Students who study at another higher education institution for one or two terms and who participate in an international exchange programme are defined as exchange students. The world's largest mobility programme is the EU Commission's new *Erasmus+*, within which it is also possible to get an internship abroad. 200,000 students participate in the programme annually. A greater number of universities have an ambition to globally recruit

talented students. At Umeå University there are both European free-mover students and free-mover students from outside Europe (fee-paying students).

Internationalisation is a priority area in Umeå University's vision document for 2020. *Umeå University 2020 – Vision and objectives* states that the university's education and research must have a strong international dimension. Additionally, the interaction between research, education, and collaboration is emphasised, as is innovation that challenges limits and plays an important role in the development of the region. The ambition is to provide students, teachers, and staff with unique responsibilities for professional and personal development. The following directions for Umeå University – among other things – are presented in the vision document:

- Becoming nationally and internationally respected through offering attractive, high-quality education at all levels, characterised by national and international mobility.
- Increasing the number of incoming and outgoing students, in order to create a learning environment where internationalisation leaves its mark on our courses and study programmes.
- Offering working and learning environments with international dimensions so as to be able to increase the level of quality of our education and to be a more attractive higher education institution. International exchange for teachers and other staff creates a superb environment for both pedagogical and scientific development, as well as professional and personal development.

Strategy 1: Improve our range of programmes

- *Develop the English-language range of programmes.*
- *Survey how all degree programmes work to make the university's vision of internationalisation possible.*
- *Work towards being able to offer more scholarships to fee-paying students.*

Satisfied students are an important part of the work on student recruitment, and a high level of quality in our education is an essential prerequisite for our international work and student recruitment. Comprehensive work on strengthening the quality of the University's courses and study programmes is already currently in progress, but it is also important in the future to be able to point out good results in different types of rankings as well as in national and international assessments.

Develop the English-language range of programmes

In order for internationalisation to apply to the whole of Umeå University, it is important to develop the range of courses and study programmes so that internationalisation becomes possible at all levels. Currently only two bachelor's-level programmes are given in English, which means that it is difficult to reach out to potential international students at the bachelor's level. On the other hand, the situation at the master's level is significantly better; currently 32 master level programmes are given in English. To better succeed with international student recruitment, the English-language range of programmes must be attractive and cover large parts of the university. This also increases the opportunities for recruiting international doctoral students.

English-language courses	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Freestanding courses	452	457	680	692	722	653	597
Bachelor's-level programmes	1	1	2	2	2	2	2
Master's-level programmes	37	36	26	28	31	33	32

Table: Number of English-language courses and study programmes 2007-2013. (Source: SELMA education database.)

In accordance with the decision by the University Board, all programmes must contain a course given in English¹ by 2020 (UmU 100-394-12). This means that incoming students will have a larger range of courses to choose from. Even if the range of courses is relatively large, it will not cover the demand from various target groups. For those students who choose not to travel for study abroad, meeting international students is an important opportunity for internationalisation on home ground.

Survey how all degree programmes work to make the university's vision of internationalisation possible.

For the university to achieve its goal of increasing English-language course offerings, it is important that during 2014–2015, the university survey how all programmes work in order to make its visions of internationalisation possible. One of the aspects that should be highlighted is how students can earn credits during study abroad. It is important that the heads of programmes, Directors of Studies, and degree units are as generous as possible in counting them so as to facilitate mobility and internationalisation of education. A majority of the degree programmes should contain one term or a block where studies abroad are facilitated.

Over the longer term, steering documents should also be revised so that they provide more guidance for how internationalisation issues are to be reported.

As we attain increased globalisation, new demands will be imposed on Umeå University's courses and programmes; for example, intended learning outcomes should be formulated for internationalisation and course plans (syllabi)

¹ For certain programmes or courses, other languages may be of interest. Throughout this document, however, we have chosen to focus on English as there is a clear trend towards English becoming an increasingly official world language (OECD, *Education at a Glance 2013*).

adapted accordingly. After their degrees, more students will work in international organisations, businesses and contexts, and for that reason will need to be prepared for their future working lives.

Work towards offering more scholarships to fee-paying students.

In order to attract more free-mover students (fee-paying students) from outside Europe, it is important that Umeå University offer more scholarships. This could be done, for example, by prioritising programmes that could provide scholarships, in order thus to obtain a larger portion of State-funded scholarships. Umeå University should also expand its efforts in obtaining donations so as to be able to build up its own scholarship fund at the University.

Strategy 2: Develop the campus into a distinctly international environment

- *Improve acceptance of and services for international students.*
- *Identify more distinct target groups so as to be better able to determine where resources yield the greatest results.*
- *Improve communication with international students before they arrive in Umeå and information for outgoing students.*
- *Develop better international environments on university premises, together with other entities.*
- *Intensify the role of the University in dialogues about student residences.*

Even now, there are clear elements of good international learning environments at Umeå University, among students at both the bachelor's and master's levels. There is, however, still much to do so that we can better include our international students and staff.

Improve acceptance of and services for international students

For Umeå University, improving support and services for international students in the same way as for our Swedish students is important. International students expect similar levels of support. Newly arrived international students must be given good service and a good reception at the start of term. Even now, Umeå University maintains a high level of service towards its incoming international students; this is a level of service that yields competitive advantages and must be continually improved. This work should be pursued at the department, course, and university-wide level.

Every year, the University participates in the *International Student Barometer*, to which foreign students submit their opinions on how universities perform in a range of areas; Umeå University is at the top. Umeå University offers housing to exchange students and fee-paying students. During recruitment, it is crucial that the University is able to continue providing this service.

Service centres in Universum and in the University Library can be good; as would qualified service locations also for the international student target group. The service must be provided in both English and Swedish.

Identify more distinct target groups so as to be better able to determine where resources yield the greatest results

At Umeå University, there are students from some 60 nations. This means that the group of foreign students is multifaceted. Our international students are tremendously varied and have different needs depending on where they come from and what goals they have in their studies. As a university, we need therefore to more clearly identify the different target groups and their needs. Only when we have a good appreciation of the target groups' needs and interests can we properly concentrate our resources and achieve the results we want.

Improve communication with international students before they arrive in Umeå and information for outgoing students

Dissatisfaction from students is normally an issue of incorrectly formed expectations. Knowledge of what it is like to study in Sweden and at Umeå University must increase; the Swedish system of study needs to be communicated even before the students arrive. We therefore need to be better at communicating with the students before they arrive at Umeå University to study so that their expectations are at a level with what the University can offer. In the work on recruiting international students, communicating and making sure of incoming students' entrance qualifications is important.

Groups of outgoing students also have need of a high level of support and service in order to take this step, with everything that being an exchange student at a foreign higher education institution entails.

Develop better international environments in the university area, together with other entities

Meetings with other students, teachers and researchers from other cultures increases understanding of each other and each other's cultures. Consciously creating international environments for the purpose of increasing integration between different student groups is therefore important. Even the food and drink offerings on university premises need to be improved, varied, and communicated in English. Other entities besides Umeå University also need to be involved to create more such environments.

The goal should be a living campus year round. Even now, the University Library is open for the entire summer, but Lindell Hall and the Social Sciences Building should also be developed into an international environment in the summers as well. Through concentrating major portions of the summer courses there, the feeling of a cohesive university can also be created during the summers.

The international environment also reaches off campus. By collaborating more with club activities, and especially with the various "international communities" found in Umeå, students' experience of studying at Umeå University can be strengthened. Proper collaboration with Umeå Municipality and other entities in the region can therefore be

Intensify the role of the University in dialogues about student residences

Recruiting international students is nearly impossible if we cannot offer student housing. Umeå University must therefore pursue the issue of more residences for students together with entities on the housing market.

Strategy 3: The bilingual university

- *Increase staff skills in English.*
- *Encourage teacher and staff exchanges.*
- *Develop support and services for international students and increase translation of internal and external communications and documents into English.*

Increase staff skills in English

In order to keep our internationalisation work at a high level, it is important that Umeå University increase the skills of its staff as regards teaching in English. This can be done through internal professional development, through recruiting international staff and through encouraging international teacher exchanges.

Encourage teacher and staff exchanges

It is important that internationalisation involve the entire university. Here, the teachers' great significance in inspiring students to study abroad must be especially emphasised. Staff exchanges should also include other occupational groups. Umeå University's exchange agreements with foreign higher education institutions, and its international networks and collaboration, are tools for such development. further developed.

Develop support and services for international students and increase translation of internal and external communications and documents into English

Being able to develop support and services for international students in the same way as for our Swedish students is important for Umeå University. International students expect similar levels of support. The university therefore needs to work on these areas in parallel in order to succeed. One challenge will be meeting an increased need for translations of our internal communications, above all into English. It's a question of regulations, forms, important decisions and other news that concerns students and staff, and also material about equal treatment and security issues, and so on.

We also need to improve our external communications in connection with recruitment at the master's level and within doctoral programmes, in addition to information about Umeå and Sweden.

Strategy 4: Develop the organisation based on an international approach

- *Strategic decisions should be elucidated from an international perspective before they are made.*
- *Internal entities, tasks and responsibilities are clearly identified; the organisation and forms of collaboration correspond to the strategy and action plans.*
- *Infrastructure and support for faculties and programmes need to be developed in dialogue with departments and faculties.*
- *Internationalisation is taken into account in the work on steering documents, especially the Working Party for Interfaculty Courses and Study Programmes (FAKIR) and degree descriptions.*
- *Umeå University has a well thought-out support function for internationalisation that is clear to our operations.*

Strategic decisions should be elucidated from an international perspective before they are made

In order to be able to conduct proper internationalisation work, it is important that the university elucidate the issue from an international perspective in all strategic decisions. Any conflicts between objectives that could have consequences for our internationalisation work should already have been analysed before a decision is made. It is also important that internationalisation work at Umeå University be given the resources it needs to attain the high goals the university has for internationalisation in *Umeå University 2020 – Vision and objectives*.

Internal entities, tasks and responsibilities are clearly identified; the organisation and forms of collaboration correspond to the strategy and action plans

It is important that the university be adapted to increased international collaboration through the work being organised, so that internal entities, tasks and responsibilities are clearly identified, and the organisation and forms of collaboration correspond to the strategy and action plans.

Infrastructure and support for faculties and programmes need to be developed in dialogue with departments and faculties

Departments, the Umeå School of Education, and faculties, together with University administration and the University Library, are responsible for how successful our internationalisation work will be at our higher education institution. In administration, it is above all the Communication and International Relations Office that has great responsibility for our internationalisation work.

Our international support operations for faculties and programmes need to be improved. This must take place in dialogue with departments, the Umeå School of Education, and faculties.

Internationalisation is taken into account in the work on steering documents, especially FAKIR and degree descriptions

Internationalisation must also be taken into account when different types of steering documents are produced. In particular, the document *Handläggningsordning för att inrätta, ställa in, revidera eller avveckla programme och kurser* (Reg. Nr. 100-1523-13) should be mentioned here. The routines and guidelines presented in this register should take into account

- how the courses make it possible for incoming and outgoing students to travel on exchange
- how the degree description makes counting in exchange studies possible

Strategy 5: Strengthen the Umeå University brand based on an international perspective

- *Make use of national promotion and collaborate with other outstanding Swedish higher education institutions.*
- *Strengthen our resources and improve our websites and information on the Internet.*

- *Improve our own continual analyses and our international business intelligence.*
- *Strengthen international alumni operations, improved alumni associations and use these in recruitment, traineeships, placements and in writing papers.*
- *Use our students, alumni and staff as ambassadors; initiate and support region-specific networks.*

Umeå University is a strong brand in Sweden, where we are known among potential students and other target groups. In the global education arena, on the other hand, competition between higher education institutions is extensive, and it is only within a few subject areas that Umeå University is known. We therefore need to strengthen our brand based on an international perspective.

High-quality education and good hosting are the foundation for proper promotion, but this also needs to be supplemented with other efforts in order to have an impact. Something that strengthens our brand is good assessments in the university rankings, and awards received both in education and in research. The Umeå University brand, as with an attractive range of programmes in English, is of great significance for success in recruiting international students. Continually conducting our own analyses and compilations supplemented with international business intelligence is necessary.

Umeå University should also use its northerly location in its branding work. Distance, nature, winter and the Northern Lights are not only a challenge but also a success factor in reaching international students.

Make use of national promotion and collaborate with other outstanding Swedish higher education institutions

As a country, Sweden is a relatively unknown study destination, and Umeå University cannot reach out to different international target groups on its own. It is therefore important to make use of things such as the Swedish Institute's promotion of Sweden. In certain cases, it is also reasonable for Umeå University to collaborate with other outstanding higher education institutions in Sweden.

Strengthen our resources and improve our websites and information on the Internet

In most parts of the world, Internet information plays the most important role when free-mover students from abroad search for information on courses and study programmes. How websites are constructed and maintained, what information they contain, how easily navigable they are and how easy it is to contact the director of studies, study advisers, and heads of programmes or similar is therefore of great significance. Here is where our resources should be strengthened.

Strengthen international alumni operations, improved alumni associations and use these in recruitment, traineeships, placements and in writing papers.

Alumni operations should be enhanced and associations developed; international alumni should be allowed to play a greater role not only for recruitment purposes but also as links between Umeå University and the business world, the public sector and other organisations around the world. The opportunity to offer internship placements, degree projects and other kinds of activities that can take place in part outside academia is increasing; international alumni can be a great asset here. Umeå University has begun work on constructing a better organisation and more

active operations for international alumni. Among other things, three alumni organisations were recently established in Shanghai, Beijing and Seoul.

Use our students, alumni and staff as ambassadors; initiate and support region-specific networks.

International students, alumni and staff are the university's primary ambassadors; these people are a key resource in recruiting new students. Sweden's peripheral situation in the world, in combination with the country being relatively unknown as a study destination, makes using the university's ambassadors—who can spread good reports in their networks—important.

The work on developing ambassadors in student recruitment begins on the home front. Umeå University must therefore initiate and support certain region and country-specific networks. The bases in these networks are the staff—researchers and doctoral students, for example. An important part of this work is Umeå University staff also taking part in staff exchanges, or that they work internationally so as to obtain their own contacts and be part of international networks.

In the work on increasing the number of outgoing students, Umeå University must work actively so that outgoing exchange students become good ambassadors for studying abroad both during the time they are away on exchange and after they have come home.

Strategy 6: Prioritised geographical areas

- *Develop our work on strategic networks and partnerships.*
- *Exchange agreements, primarily with higher education institutions that have a large range of courses and study programmes in English.*
- *Established fields continue to have high priority – Europe, the United States, Canada, Australia and China.*
- *Newer geographic areas prioritised for further development are India, South Korea, and the Arctic region.*
- *Over the long term, develop the new geographic region of Africa.*
- *A particular focus on India as a result of chairmanship in Nordic Centre in India.*
- *Strengthen involvement in the Nordic Centre in China.*

In our work on attaining our vision and goals, Umeå University needs to choose a number of paths. One way of facilitating recruitment of potential students and increasing outgoing students is to focus on and prioritise certain areas, and make use of the university's students, teachers, and alumni as ambassadors. Umeå University also needs to improve its work on finding strategic networks and partnerships to achieve long-term success.

Exchange agreements, primarily with higher education institutions that have a large range of courses and study programmes in English

Umeå University's primary focus must be on English-speaking countries and on countries where English is viable. Exchange agreements should therefore primarily be developed with countries and higher education institutions that have a large range of courses and programmes with a good level in English. Recruitment of fee-paying students is prioritised through Umeå University's central resources.

Up through 2020, Umeå University needs to work on increasing the number of incoming international students (exchange students, fee-paying students and European free-mover students) but to an equally great degree make it possible for more Umeå students to study and intern abroad.

Established areas continue to have high priority – Europe, the United States, Canada, Australia and China

Europe. Europe is the region that most international collaboration partners—and incoming and outgoing exchange students—come from. Around 80% of all incoming exchange students today come from a European higher education institution. Europe is also important for teacher and staff exchanges. Collaboration and exchange take place, for example, as part of the new *Erasmus+* mobility programme, the EU Commission’s programme for higher education 2014–2021.

The purpose of the new *Erasmus+* mobility programme is to:

- give teachers, staff, and students opportunities for professional development and for exchanging experiences with other countries
- contribute to a greater understanding of education in other European countries

The activities the programme contains include student exchanges, internships abroad, teacher and staff exchanges and strategic partnerships.

In order to be able to take part in *Erasmus+*, Umeå University has an *Erasmus University Charter* that describes overall strategies for international work. Through active participation in the various parts of the programme, Umeå University has the opportunity to work on the goals set and development plans that the strategy contains.

European free-mover students are also a large group, and Europe must also have high priority in the future.

United States, Canada and Australia. English-speaking countries are popular among outgoing students and teachers at Umeå University. Exchange places in the United States, Canada and Australia are popular. Offering a large number of exchange places in these countries as well is therefore important in the future. Continued improvements in collaboration with strategic partner universities such as the University of Wollongong in Australia and the University of Manitoba in Canada are also important.

China. Umeå University has established two alumni associations in China: Shanghai and Beijing; these associations need to be maintained and developed. The number of prospective students from China is quite large, and alumni are particularly important for maintaining networks, recruiting students and as contacts for internships, placements and degree work.

Since 1995, Umeå University has also been a member of the Nordic Centre at Fudan University, which serves as a bridgehead to China. Involvement in the work at the Centre needs to be improved so as to strengthen Umeå University’s ambitions as regards the Chinese market.

The Arctic region. Comprehensive collaboration is under way between Umeå University and the University of Tromsø (Norway) in the Arctic region. The Arctic Centre at Umeå University (Arcum) is working on developing strong research environments within the region, with international impact.

Over the long term, develop the new geographic region of Africa

Africa. Africa is a continent that will play an ever greater role in our future internationalisation work. Even now, however, there are many examples of collaboration with African higher education institutions that have been in progress for years. Umeå University has, for example, experience with collaboration in Tanzania, Namibia and South Africa, but the range of programmes and need for education will also grow in pace with the improvement in growth and the economies in many African countries. English is current, or even the official language, in many African countries. Countries of interest for Umeå University include Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia and South Africa.

References

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