

Action Plan

2021-02-22

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Action Plan Internationalisation

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Introduction

Mid Sweden University's 2023 vision and strategy is to become a regionally engaged, global university where we conduct research and provide education for all purposes in life. Our objective is to nurture strong academic environments that take on global challenges. Our global operations support and sustain regional development. Our learning and working environments attract students and employees who contribute to global and regional development. Simultaneously, using flexible higher-education opportunities and technology-enhanced learning, we provide more people with lifelong access to knowledge.

The organisation we operate, whether or not we actively define it as such, is international by nature. Today, both research and higher education and cooperation are borderless and multilingual. However, internationalisation consists of more than geographical location and language. Mid Sweden University applies the national definition of internationalisation, defined as comprehensive in SOU 2018:3, *En strategisk agenda för internationalisering*, meaning:

'Integrated internationalisation is an undertaking to actively introduce international and comparative perspectives into all academic training, research, and collaboration. It shapes the fundamental values and outlook of the institution and covers all aspects of the higher education institution's operations. It is important that the initiative is welcomed by the institution's management, its governance structure, instructors, researchers, students, and support staff. It is an institutional necessity, not merely a desirable one.

Integrated internationalisation not only effects campus-based activities, but all of the institution's external frames of reference, partnerships, and relationships. The global reconfiguration of economy, trade, research, and communications, and the effect of global forces on the local level, clearly demonstrate the urgent need for integrated internationalisation, and the purpose and objective of its implementation.'

Based on this definition, internationalisation should shape the governance of a higher education institution. This requires the development of a strategic approach to the integration of internationalisation. This also requires a well-established system for the follow-up and evaluation of internationalisation efforts.

As a part of our present strategy, internationalisation provides Mid Sweden University an opportunity to improve the quality of our institution, make it more sustainable, and more attractive to both present and prospective students, employees,

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and external partners. Internationalisation also provides us with a tool for ensuring our institution's relevance in an increasingly globalised world.

International cooperation brings with it an increased need to consider the ethical questions raised by The Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education (STINT) regarding so-called 'responsible internationalisation' (see Definitions).

By accepting the national definition of internationalisation as integrated and taking into consideration a responsible approach to internationalisation and international cooperation, the internationalisation process can simultaneously address questions of development and institutional excellence. In this way, we as an institution can further the objective that 'international operations of each university shall improve the quality of education and research, and contribute nationally and globally to such sustainable development that universities are mandated to pursue.' (SOU 2018:3, p. 21).

This action plan is based on the vision and strategy developed by our institution for 2023, and follows the same timeframe. Thus, the action plan is forward-looking and goal oriented. Nevertheless, it is important to note that our primary objectives are challenges that our institution will collectively strive to achieve by 2023, while our secondary objectives are targets that are possible to pursue on different levels and in different parts of our organisation within the scope of these primary objectives.

Secondary objectives provide space for university, faculty, and institutional management, the creation of centres, research groups, administration, but also individual researchers, programme directors, administrators, heads of subjects, individual employees, students, etc. to identify *their* respective present situations and, based on this, explain how *their* circumstances permit achievement of the various secondary objectives. This means that we, within our organisation, prioritise those objectives that contribute most to our immediate tasks, from the adoption of this action plan until such time as a new strategy and vision are put in place. Within the administration, professional support is available to specify those activities that will further our objectives, taking into account these priorities. It is important to note that not everyone will work with all secondary objectives. The reason for this is the diverse experience and differing circumstances of our organisation's members, as regards internationalisation, and our differing progress up to this point. Among our secondary objectives are those that can and should require cooperation between several parts of our organisation, as well as those requiring a centralised, university-wide perspective. The objective is that the sum total of contributions made by various secondary objectives will, in time, bring Mid Sweden University as a whole closer to the primary objectives.

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Primary Objective 1: Our academic environments are strong and take on global challenges

Mid Sweden University's internationalisation process shall, as a part of our strategy and vision, contribute to higher-quality education, research, and cooperation, as well as increased sustainability. These secondary objectives aim to secure our organisation's relevance in an increasingly globalised world, while contributing to global development and solutions for global challenges.

This task includes creating conditions for increased international understanding, intercultural literacy, and comparative points of view, while also being of widespread use. This includes relevant and responsible cooperations, and that we improve our ability to make our successes visible, while also identifying those respects in which we can learn from ourselves and others. Reaching our primary objective requires that we ensure that we systematically remove existing obstacles and hindrances to mobility for students as well as employees. In this way, different aspects of internationalisation also become important indicators in our evaluations and quality assurance processes.

Secondary objectives

- All students are given the opportunity and resources necessary for the development of international understanding and intercultural literacy, as well as tools for applying international and comparative points of view, as part of their education.
- All employees are given the opportunity and resources necessary for developing positive international experience and strong international networks within the context of their position or residency within our institution.
- Ensure that junior researchers have the necessary resources to connect with existing international networks, while also creating their own.
- Develop and implement proposals focusing on how international experience and internationalisation may form the basis for qualification or otherwise qualify as objective grounds, proficiencies, or other skills in accordance with the employment procedures
- Promote the allocation of time for international exchange and internationalisation, in the individual development and academic plans of university employees.

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- Develop higher education learning practices for teaching employees, with a focus on working in international environments.
- Create possibilities for the presentation of international and comparative perspectives in intended learning outcomes in syllabi and programme syllabi, wherever this is possible.
- Ensure that the university's institutional partners as a whole contribute to qualitative and global collaboration and exchange possibilities, for employees as well as students.
- Develop synergies between international collaboration in research and in education.
- Strengthen learning environments and international visibility through participation in strategic collaboration, as well as international cooperative programmes and networks (such as the European Universities Initiative).
- Encourage co-publication with international researchers or other international collaborative partners.

- Publicise positive examples of internationalisation within our institution, while also creating possibilities for internal and external benchmarking (see Definitions) of how we develop the work and learn from each other and others.

- Draw up working practices for each of the institution's areas of operations, detailing how to realise and create expertise for managing various ethical questions arising from international cooperation within education, research, and collaboration
- Deepen and further implement the institution's work to actively resist threats to academic freedom and protect researchers at risk

- Develop and increase international research communications

- Develop sustainable solutions to shape the institution's financial conditions for internationalisation

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Primary Objective 2: Our global operations sustain and support regional development

Mid Sweden University's vision and strategy is to be a global university engaged on a regional level, where our operations on the global level support and sustain regional development. Our students and employees contribute to global, regional, but also national development, while also creating lifetime access to knowledge for more people. The 'Inquiry on increased internationalisation of higher education institutions' recommends that marketing Sweden as a strong knowledge nation should not be seen as an end in itself, but rather the expression of the certitude that increased Swedish competitiveness, but also our welfare system, requires that we attract students and researchers from other countries. The production and transfer of knowledge are central components of the Swedish export strategy, and this demands that our institution develop positive conditions for increased strategic, international collaboration.

The following secondary objectives are therefore intended to connect our institution's various operations at the national, regional, and international levels, making our institution a more effective actor for regional development. They also aim to create the necessary conditions for our institution to realise the outcome of Primary Objective 3, and the recruitment of students and employees made possible thereby. The goal is for these recruited students and employees to connect to, or chose to reside in, the region, thus contributing to regional skills supply.

Secondary objectives

- Ensure that through the recruitment of international researchers, teachers, doctoral students, other employees, and students, the institution itself becomes a natural part of the effort to strengthen Sweden's development as a knowledge nation in general, and in our regions in particular.
- Develop and make accessible existing tools and techniques to encourage employees and students from other countries to remain in Sweden, or maintain long-term contact with Mid Sweden University as international alumni and ambassadors for our institution.
- Ensure that international students are put into contact with employers and the local community.
- Develop and deepen cooperations on national, regional, and international levels, for coordinated regional action.

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- Expand our work with internationalisation at home (see Definitions) to include a regional perspective by, for example, including regional actors in the knowledge exchange regarding globalisation, global perspectives, and international and comparative perspectives.

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Primary Objective 3: Our learning and working environments attract students and employees that contribute to global and regional development

Mid Sweden University's strategy states that our learning and workplace environments shall attract students and employees. For most Swedish universities today, this mandate includes attracting not only regional and national students and employees, but also international ones. The goal is to guarantee skills supply while increasing our capacity to conduct education and research on a greater scale and in a wider context. The following secondary objectives are aimed at identifying those measures that will strengthen or increase our opportunities for attracting, keeping, and creating long-term relationships with international students and employees. The secondary objectives are also aimed at ensuring equal treatment, and equal conditions, for all students and employees.

Secondary objectives

- Ensure that the announcement of research and teaching vacancies reach a broader international audience.
- Implement relocation services (see Definitions) in order to utilise this resource to a greater extent for new employees from other countries.
- Ensure the quality of our enrolment process and continual support for employees and students from other countries to guarantee the circumstances necessary for the completion of their term at Mid Sweden University.
- Strengthen cooperation with relevant agencies of foreign governments, and the Swedish Institute, to make visible Mid Sweden University's national and international operations.
- Make it easier for individuals from other countries, such as recent immigrants or new citizens, to approach the university as prospective students.
- Achieve a higher rate of diversity among international and national students in our courses and programmes of study, both at first-cycle, second-cycle, and doctoral levels.
- Develop conditions for the supervision of doctoral candidates within international cooperation with developing countries.

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- Ensure equal treatment of non-Swedish speaking employees and students, for example by providing relevant information, policy documents, and decisions in English.
- Develop and implement language training and support (in Swedish and English) for employees and students.
- Evaluate our course and programme offerings in English, and develop relevant, high-quality offerings that will make us nationally and internationally competitive.
- Develop and implement a model for how our institution can work across administrative and departmental divisions to contribute to higher-quality education through strategic planning of our internationalisation efforts.
- Develop proposals as to how our institution can create strategic collaborations for contract education, as well as the sustainable recruitment of international students to higher education programmes and research programmes.

- Develop and implement a model for the strategic reinvestment of revenue from student fees into our operations, over a period of three to five years.

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Primary Objective 4: The University is a leader in digitalisation, technology-enhanced learning, and virtual mobility

Mid Sweden University is at the forefront nationwide regarding the use of digital tools and technology-enhanced learning. Conditions at our institution favour further exploitation of our expertise in this area, in order to make our operations and knowledge globally accessible. For example, this can happen by enabling high-quality virtual mobility during an educational unit or course. This could also mean the use of digital tools to create and strengthen international networks.

The following secondary objectives are aimed at ensuring that we have the necessary digital tools to maintain development and positioning in this area. They also aim to ensure that the support for these tools enables us to find the qualitative, creative, and pedagogical conditions necessary for our employees to maintain cutting-edge positive development. With the help of active digital interaction, we can supplement physical travel and thus contribute to a more sustainable and effective international exchange and relationship building. Via virtual mobility, we can help to develop understanding for diverse international and comparative perspectives, while making them more widely accessible for employees as well as students. Sustainable international relationships are based on both in-person meetings and continual dialogue and interaction over time. In this sense, the digital and physical meetings work in tandem, neither superseding the other.

Secondary objectives

- Ensure that the organisation has the proper digital tools for virtual mobility, while also contributing to the development thereof.
- Develop and make accessible support for the use of digital tools in the internationalisation process, the use of combinations of tools for the delivery of qualitative instruction, and the implementation of diverse pedagogical arrangements.
- Ensure how we might better use digital tools, and virtual mobility, to strengthen internationalisation at home.
- Develop and make accessible international contact networks for employees and students by strengthening possibilities for virtual mobility.
- Develop and implement a model for how research and education areas with low rates of international collaboration can access internationalisation through virtual mobility and digital collaboration.

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- Make international digital experiences and mobilities accessible to on-campus and remote students.

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Definitions

Responsible internationalisation

Concerns employing strategies, values, and ethical considerations in international collaboration with institutions and partner organisations in other countries.

Benchmarking

A tool for the comparison of organisations, where the object of comparison (external or internal) is considered to be a leader in some area, or otherwise merits our attention as an example from which to learn. To grow by learning from others' successes and mistakes.

Internationalisation at home

A concept that has developed over the course of more than twenty years, nationally as well as internationally. The concept originally described internationalisation measures for students that did not involve mobility. Per the Inquiry on increased internationalisation of higher education institutions, this now requires 'a meaningful integration of international and intercultural dimensions in the formal and informal teaching of all students in the educational environment' (SOU 2018:3, 266).

Relocation

A function or service providing support for persons relocating from one country to another, helping with practical issues (such as organising childcare and schooling, opening a bank account, and finding housing), as well as with the overall experience of relocating to a new country and culture.

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