UFS INTERNATIONALISATION STRATEGY 2023-2028

1. Editorial

Intertwined cross-cutting challenges characterise the fast-changing global environment in which the UFS seeks to impact society. The implementation of the UFS Internationalisation Strategy will strengthen the university's global impact. It will ensure that all UFS students and staff benefit from internationalisation and contribute as global citizens to address the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Fair, mutually beneficial global engagements will result in knowledge co-creation and global recognition for ideas emanating from the UFS.

Globally and in South Africa, internationalisation has become accepted as one of the critical processes advancing the core business of universities. In 2020, the South African Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) finalised the 'Policy Framework for the Internationalisation of Higher Education in South Africa' (DHET, 2020), which is meant to "guide and regulate the activities that relate to internationalisation of higher education by higher education institutions and other role players in the sector in South Africa" (DHET, 2020 p. 2). It adopts a vision of comprehensive internationalisation and is likely to shape internationalisation in South African higher education for years to come.

The UFS adopted its Vision 130 in 2022. It aspires to be a research-led, student-centred, and regionally engaged university that contributes to development and social justice through the production of globally competitive graduates and knowledge. Internationalisation is seminal to the UFS strategy, and it intends to infuse international dimensions in all aspects of its being. It is committed to developing curricula that are locally relevant, globally competitive, and connect to multiple knowledge paradigms. It emphasises research internationalisation and commits the university to expanding researchers' international networks, with a special focus on the African continent.

The UFS is a highly internationalised university and has a proud record of international engagements. For example, in the five-year period April 2016-March 2021*, UFS researchers co-authored 5 792 publications with 2 534 collaborating institutions. The university has more than 70 formal high-quality and productive institutional collaborations with universities and institutions around the world. Research collaboration, staff and student mobility, as well as other projects are implemented under their umbrella. More than 1 000 international students were registered at the UFS for the 2021 academic year, and more than 100 international postdoctoral fellows contributed to research and innovation.

This Internationalisation Strategy was revised through a consultative process, based on the strategic direction of the university. An appreciative inquiry informed the policy-revision process. The Internationalisation Strategy positions comprehensive internationalisation as a critical driver for institutional transformation and anchors the process in the university's strategic plan. The commitment to comprehensive internationalisation means that the university strives to internationalise its entire being, including its management processes and support services.

Social justice is one of the fundamental values of the UFS and underlies the entire UFS internationalisation process. We expect that the revised Internationalisation Strategy will advance the international positioning of the university and further contribute towards synergising the existing rich international activities into one intentional, comprehensive internationalisation process.

The revised 2023-2028 Internationalisation Strategy is based on the successfully implemented 2018-2022 UFS Internationalisation Strategy. In response to current developments, the revised Internationalisation Strategy includes a new goal relating to digitalisation of internationalisation, which will assist the university in intentionally canvassing the opportunities afforded by the digitalisation process. Besides, it includes new foci areas, namely scholarship of internationalisation; internationalisation in society; and entrepreneurship in the context of internationalisation. It adapts other goals as required by developments in the sector and at the university and strengthens the notion that internationalisation should contribute to global citizenship education.

* Scopus information excerpt on 30 March 2022

2. Executive Summary

Guiding Principles
The UFS adopts a vision of comprehensive internationalisation, with a specific focus on research and innovation. The university strives for an Africa-imbued internationalisation process, which advances Africanisation and decolonisation. The university integrates international and intercultural dimensions in all aspects of its core business and service functions. It specifically focuses on the international visibility, impact, and connectedness of research and innovation. It strives for excellence in all aspects of its internationalisation process, including support for international students and staff. Interdivisional cooperation is seminal to the success of internationalisation, and a particular focus is placed on advancing transdisciplinary international research.

Internationalisation, Africanisation, and decolonisation are considered complementary processes. In line with the South African policy priorities, the internationalisation process at the UFS includes a focus on the Southern African Development Community (SADC), Africa, BRICS, and the Global South. Nevertheless, the university continues to strengthen and expand its relations and partnerships with the Global North. The internationalisation process has been structured to connect the university with previously disregarded knowledge paradigms. The UFS takes a glocal approach to internationalisation, which connects the Bloemfontein and Qwaqwa regions and communities with the world. It considers its diverse university community as a core resource to incubate intercultural and international competencies and produce new knowledge. It strives to preserve and grow staff and student diversity and to attract bright minds from across the globe to join its university community. The internationalisation process is based on what the UFS has to offer the world. Its specific research expertise, particularly in the South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARCHI) fields, and other beacons of research excellence such as the Afromontane Research Unit (ARU), are leveraged to advance internationalisation. The Sustainable Development Goals will become a thematic focus for internationalisation in the future. The university is committed to enhancing the societal impact of internationalisation.

Goal 1: Research Internationalisation

Internationalisation connects the university with global knowledge and is a critical driver for research and innovation. Through research collaboration, knowledge from Africa and the Global South can be shared with the Global North. Besides, it allows for the integration of knowledge and practices emanating from different world regions and provides opportunities for co-creation of knowledge. The university focuses resource allocation and support for international research in its areas of strength and distinctiveness. It encourages publications in international high-impact journals, and joint publications with highly regarded international scholars. It strives to enhance the international impact and visibility of its research and endeavours to attract excellent international researchers and research students to its university community. The international exposure of researchers is considered critical. Strategies to achieve this will include encouraging staff members who are pursuing or have completed their doctoral degrees to spend time at universities outside South Africa. Besides, participation in international research networks is actively promoted. International postdoctoral fellows and research fellows are important drivers for the research internationalisation process.

Goal 2: Internationalisation of Learning and Teaching

The internationalisation process will be structured to prepare students as local, regional, and global citizens and imbue them with locally relevant skills. The development and availability of strong international collaborative degree programmes at master's and doctoral level is the central intervention aimed at internationalising postgraduate research and education. All forms of postgraduate student mobility are encouraged, provided that there is a reasonable cost-benefit relationship. Internationalisation of the curriculum is considered an important part of curriculum transformation and is intertwined with curriculum Africanisation and decolonisation. To support the internationalisation of undergraduate programmes, international exchanges of undergraduate teaching staff and the development of staff capacity in internationalisation are prioritised. The university will integrate support for COIL and other forms of virtual exchange into existing UFS structures. COIL development will be championed in specific faculties, where certain pilot programmes and modules will be identified, strategies implemented, researched, and refined towards a larger roll-out and further policy and strategy development. COIL and other virtual exchange pedagogies will be integrated into the UFS curriculum renewal processes, which inter alia, focus on decolonisation while at the same time developing students as global citizens. The development of regional student exchanges will be considered.

Goal 3: Supporting the Core Business through Partnerships and Collaborations

Mutuality, trust, equality, ethical principles, reciprocity, and informed consent are guiding principles for UFS international partnerships. A limited number of strategic partnerships will be identified and specifically supported, while the diversity of collaborative activities of faculties, departments, centres, and academics will be encouraged. The focus of partnership management is on leveraging the impetus emanating from faculty, and supporting partnerships rooted at the grassroots academic level. The UFS is committed to equity in its partnerships. Together with its partners, it seeks to develop fair collaborations.

Goal 4: A Diverse International Student Body

The value of attracting excellent international students is recognised, especially to support internationalisation at home. A diversification of the international student body is urgently required, while the continuing role of educating students hailing from Lesotho is recognised. All processes relating to international students have been structured to be socially just and inclusive. The UFS recognises the role of its international alumni, including their role in international branding and marketing.

Goal 5: Internationalisation at Home

The UFS recognises the critical importance of developing its students' international and intercultural competencies through internationalisation at home. It adopts a vision whereby each student will have an international experience during UFS studies. The university promotes and organises interdivisional celebrations of cultural diversity, including the celebration of Africa Day, Heritage Day, and national independence days relevant to university community members. To advance internationalisation at home, international adjunct staff and research associates will be sought.

Goal 6: Enabling Institutional Internationalisation

The Office for International Affairs (OIA) collaborates with Faculty and Campus Internationalisation Coordinators to enable internationalisation. The OIA renders specialised services to international students, and it coordinates the university's international partnerships. Appropriate reporting structures and measurement mechanisms for internationalisation at the UFS are being developed, as it is critical to create a narrative of the UFS as a highly internationalised university. Each Faculty, as well as the Qwaqwa and South campuses, compile its own Faculty Internationalisation Plans, which define actions relevant to the specific campus or Faculty context.

Goal 7: Achieve Financial Sustainability of Internationalisation

Internationalisation demands the commitment of substantive funding. Limited budgets mean that the acquisition of external funding is of seminal importance. Income-generating activities, such as short learning programmes or incoming study abroad programmes, may be developed to generate responsible income for internationalisation.

Goal 8: Digitalisation of Internationalisation

Digitalisation is providing manifold opportunities for internationalisation. The university will leverage digitalisation of internationalisation to advance the internationalisation process. The UFS understands it to encompass five dimensions, namely digitalisation of

- internationalisation of learning and teaching;
- research internationalisation;
- internationalisation administration;
- international student recruitment; and
- internationalisation at home.

Goal 9: Scholarship of Internationalisation

Internationalisation is not only a higher education process, but also an emerging academic field. The university endeavours to contribute through research to theory, knowledge, methodology, and practice relevant to the field, and use it to strengthen our UFS processes.

Goal 10: Internationalisation in Society

The university aligns itself with the contemporary notion of 'internationalisation in society', which enunciates that internationalisation should benefit the wider community – at home or abroad – through international or intercultural education, research, service, and engagement'. The university strives for societal impact of all its internationalisation activities and cherishes the knowledge and wisdom of the communities in which it is embedded.

3. Institutional Understanding of Internationalisation

3.1 The 'Policy Framework for the Internationalisation of Higher Education in South Africa' (DHET, 2020) defines internationalisation as "an intentional or steered process to integrate or infuse intercultural, international and global dimensions in higher education; to advance the goals, functions and delivery of higher education and thus to enhance the quality of education and research" (DHET, 2020 p. 9). The UFS agrees with the general understanding of internationalisation and will, through an inclusive process, strengthen its own institutional understanding of internationalisation.

3.2 The UFS adopts a vision of comprehensive internationalisation, with a specific focus on research and innovation. This means that the university will ensure that international and intercultural dimensions permeate its core business and service functions. It specifically focuses on the international visibility, impact, and connectedness of research and innovation. Internationalisation will be fully integrated in the strategic, financial, and operational planning processes of the university.

3.3 Internationalisation, Africanisation, and decolonisation are considered as complementary processes by the UFS. A deep institutional understanding of the interconnectedness of the distinctive but related processes is required, and the UFS encourages the institutional conversation to define what this means and how the principle is put into practice.

3.4 The Sustainable Development Goals will become a thematic focus for internationalisation in the future. Besides, a global citizenship approach will be infused in the internationalisation process, which will ensure that our students are equipped with globally competent and locally relevant skills.

3.5 The process of internationalisation is inextricably intertwined with the university's transformation process. The quest for social justice underlies the UFS internationalisation process.

3.6 In line with the South African focus, the internationalisation process at the UFS will continue to strengthen the focus on the Southern African Development Community, Africa, BRICS, and the Global South.

3.7   The UFS strives for an Africa-imbued internationalisation process, which advances Africanisation and decolonisation. Strengthening the university's footprint on the African continent is an integral part of the university's internationalisation process.

3.8   Nevertheless, the university will continue to foster its relations and partnerships with the Global North.

4.   Guiding principles

4.1   The UFS model of internationalisation supports its goal of becoming one of the leading South African universities. The internationalisation process is structured to support the positioning of the university in global, continental, and national university rankings and will be fully integrated in its core business. One of the central outcomes of internationalisation at the UFS is increased continental and global distribution and visibility of knowledge produced at the UFS.

4.2   The UFS strives for excellence in all aspects of its internationalisation process, including support for international students and staff and internationalisation initiatives.

4.3   The UFS considers its diverse university community as a core resource for incubating intercultural and international competencies and producing new knowledge. It strives to produce graduates who are well-rounded global citizens and to grow staff and student diversity. It endeavours to attract bright minds from across the globe to join its university community.

4.4   The focus of the UFS on social justice, which underpins the character of the UFS as a caring university, is accentuated in the international arena. High-profile strategic internationalisation activities that advance social justice will be utilised to brand the institution and to advance social cohesion.

4.5   The overarching principle of social justice is considered when structuring the internationalisation process. Suitable interventions are developed to overcome the participation gap in internationalisation activities, and particularly in outgoing mobility.

4.6   The university endeavours to offer every student an international experience during studies. To achieve this, curriculum internationalisation – including COIL and other virtual exchanges and co-curricular internationalisation at home activities – are prioritised.

4.7   The internationalisation process considers what the UFS has to offer to the world. Its specific research expertise, particularly in the South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARCHI) and other beacons of excellence in research, such as the Afromontane Research Unit (ARU), will be leveraged to advance internationalisation. The unique research contexts that the UFS has to offer, e.g. the indigenous knowledge embedded in the community of the Qwaqwa region, and the central location of Bloemfontein, are among the other strengths used to portray the UFS to the world.

4.8   The internationalisation process is leveraged to support the development of the Qwaqwa and South campuses. On the Qwaqwa Campus, the international research hub in the ARU is

promoted to profile the campus internationally. Research on indigenous knowledge may be considered as an additional means of attracting international interest to the Qwaqwa Campus.

4.9 Internationalisation should connect the UFS to previously disregarded knowledge paradigms. The focus will be on connecting the UFS to African philosophy and knowledge paradigms, as well as those of other regions in the Global South. One of the possibilities is to foster the exchange of indigenous knowledge embedded in communities where the UFS campuses are located and other African and global indigenous knowledge paradigms.

4.10 The internationalisation process is structured to develop the institutionally defined graduate attributes, including intercultural and global competencies. The UFS strives to develop graduates who are global citizens contributing to a just society. A particular focus is on empowering students to engage with the world with a sense of agency, pride in their own culture and heritage, and respect for the cultural heritage of other African countries.

4.11 A glocal approach is taken to internationalisation, which requires the university to act as a catalyst to connect the Bloemfontein and Qwaqwa regions and communities, including industry and business communities, to the world.

4.12 In the structuring of internationalisation interventions, interdivisionality is emphasised. Interdisciplinary as well as transdisciplinary international research is encouraged. The university recognises that the internationalisation process may be structured differently in the respective faculties and business entities.

4.13 Suitable incentives to advance internationalisation at the UFS will be developed, which may include annual awards for excellence in different categories of internationalisation, e.g. research internationalisation or the development of intercultural competencies in students.

4.14 Appropriate reporting and measurement mechanisms for internationalisation at the UFS are critical to create a narrative of the UFS as a highly internationalised university, to determine progress with the process of internationalisation, and to respond to new reporting requirements relating to internationalisation.

4.15 Governance of internationalisation takes place through the Internationalisation Committee (IC), in which all faculties and other critical stakeholders are represented.

4.16 The Office for International Affairs (OIA) functions as the principal enabling office for internationalisation. Dedicated support at faculty level is provided by Faculty and Campus Internationalisation Coordinators. Jointly, the OIA and Faculty/Campus Internationalisation Coordinators strategically and operationally support comprehensive internationalisation at the UFS. The OIA is responsible for coordinating reporting on internationalisation.

5. Institutional Positioning

5.1 The UFS' internationalisation process is structured to enhance its visibility in rankings, globally and locally.

5.2 Criteria relevant to international university rankings are extrapolated, and institutional data as well as information are presented and made available to reflect positively in university rankings.

5.3 Suitable interventions are developed to establish the UFS brand internationally and to grow recognition of the UFS for its contribution to the development of the African continent.

5.4 The visibility of internationalisation activities is critical to develop the international profile of the university. All stakeholders, including the UFS Department of Communication and Marketing, Student Recruitment Services, and the OIA work together to strengthen internal and external communication about the process of comprehensive internationalisation at the UFS, and specifically international research.

6. Research

6.1 Through research collaboration, knowledge from Africa and the Global South can be shared with the Global North. Besides, it allows for the integration of knowledge and practices emanating from different world regions and provides opportunities for co-creation of knowledge.

6.2 Internationalisation connects the university to global knowledge and is a critical driver for research and innovation. Insights gained through international research are leveraged to develop learning and teaching as well as other aspects of the university.

6.3 The university focuses the allocation of resources and support for international research in its areas of strength and distinctiveness, given the unique context it has to offer the world. It advances research internationalisation through the identification and specific support of internationally relevant, interesting, and competitive research niches and research hubs.

6.4 The university recognises the importance of international postdoctoral researchers and strives for excellence in all academic and administrative processes relating to them.

6.5 The university leverages international research fellows, and endeavours to provide excellent support to them.

6.6 Staff members who are pursuing or have completed their doctoral degrees are encouraged to participate in international doctoral programmes, attain collaborative degrees, participate in exchange studies, or work for a limited time as postdocs at universities outside South Africa. The university will strive to develop a conducive policy environment for such activities.

6.7 The UFS strives to produce research outputs of the highest global standard. The university encourages publications in international high-impact journals, and joint publications with highly regarded international scholars. It encourages its researchers to measure themselves against the best in the world. This will be reflected in research funding and measurement criteria for research internationalisation.

6.8 The UFS endeavours to attract excellent international researchers and research students to its university community. Dedicated support structures will be strengthened to ensure that international researchers and research students have a positive experience at the UFS.

6.9 The university strives to enhance the international visibility of its research. Interventions include special issues of journals guest-edited by prominent international scholars, encouraging its experts to join the editorial boards of international high-impact journals, establishing the UFS as a preferred host for high-profile international conferences and workshops, and developing suitable web-based platforms to present research and knowledge produced at the UFS to the world. To protect the integrity of research, suitable measures are put in place to protect researchers from exploitation by international predatory journals and other predatory research platforms, such as predatory international conferences.

6.10 International exposure of researchers is critical. Within the available financial resources, the UFS will improve support for international research visits by its researchers, international research conferences and workshop attendance by its staff, and participation of its staff in international research-capacity development initiatives. Preference will be given to externally funded or co-funded opportunities.

6.11 Engaged research involving the communities in which the university is embedded, is considered critical. The university values the involvement of international partners in engaged research and strives to safeguard the interests of communities when conducting engaged research with international partners.

6.12 The university supports involvement in international research networks and partnerships, as well as the mobilisation of international research funding. Internal stakeholders who provide relevant support include the Directorate: Research Development (DRD) and the OIA.

7. Postgraduate research and education

7.1 The development and offering of strong collaborative international degree programmes at master's and PhD level is a central intervention aimed at internationalising postgraduate research and education.

7.2 Co-supervision of postgraduate students at PhD and master's level is strongly encouraged.

7.3 International collaboration in training workshops for postgraduate students is encouraged.

7.4 International external examination of both master's and PhD theses handed in at the UFS, and scholars acting as external examiners for reputable universities outside South Africa are strongly encouraged.

7.5 All forms of postgraduate student mobility are encouraged, provided that there is a reasonable cost-benefit relationship. Preference is given to doctoral mobility and mobility that allows access to research instrumentation and research contexts required to complete postgraduate research projects. Within available resources and where relevant, postgraduate students are encouraged to undertake international internships, such as the International Court of Justice judicial fellowship programme.

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7.6 The international postgraduate student administration process will be renewed to create a streamlined and user-friendly experience.

8. Undergraduate Learning and Teaching

8.1 The internationalisation process will be structured to prepare students as local, regional, and global citizens. The university strives to decolonise its curriculum as part of the curriculum renewal process, and to incorporate scholarship from Africa and the Global South. Curricula should reflect global standards and be structured to empower students to contribute to overcoming colonial and apartheid-rooted societal structures.

8.2 The purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments is prioritised. Curriculum internationalisation is considered an important part of curriculum renewal and is intertwined with curriculum Africanisation and decolonisation. One of the focus areas will be to construct a curriculum that is responsive to the developmental needs of the African continent.

8.3 The UFS is aware that many of its students are first-generation students who had little exposure prior to their university education and need to be affirmed in developing the competency to engage outside their own context. It structures internationalisation interventions, and specifically internationalisation of the curriculum, taking cognisance of this dynamic. Students from disadvantaged communities will be empowered to take pride in their identity and culture, which is an important prerequisite for successful intercultural and international engagement.

8.4 To support internationalisation of undergraduate programmes, international exchanges of undergraduate teaching staff, 'Collaborative International Online Learning' (COIL), and other forms of virtual exchanges will be prioritised. The university will integrate support for COIL and other forms of virtual exchange into existing UFS structures. COIL development will be championed in specific faculties, where certain pilot programmes and modules will be identified, strategies implemented, researched, and refined towards a larger roll-out and further policy and strategy development. COIL and other virtual exchanges should be integrated in the UFS curriculum renewal processes, that inter alia, focus on decolonisation while developing students as global citizens. The development of staff capacity is considered critical. The development of regional student exchanges will be considered.

8.5 Undergraduate student exchanges will only be supported in special circumstances and in case of strategic interventions. Supported programmes may include those that can be structured cost-effectively with neighbouring countries, or those that are predominantly funded externally or form an integral part of an international programme involving a large number of students, e.g. mobility of a select number of students involved in a COIL module.

9. Partnerships and Collaborations

9.1 To support internationalisation, the UFS strives to be involved in relevant international and institutional networks and organisations and to partner internationally.

9.2 In expanding and deepening its partnerships, the focus is firstly on the Southern African Development Community, secondly on the rest of Africa, thirdly on BRICS, fourthly on the Global South and the developing world, and finally on the rest of the world. A special focus should be on Lesotho – a country closely connected to the UFS. However, the university will continue to foster its partnerships with the Global North.

9.3 From the existing partnerships and collaborations, a limited number of strategic partnerships will be identified and specifically supported.

9.4 The UFS is committed to equity and equality in its partnerships. Together with its partners, it endeavours to develop fair collaborations. It will seek partnerships where collaborators make equally meaningful contributions – considering the partner's context – and where partners achieve their priorities to the same extent. It will assure inclusive and non-discriminatory participation in all partnership activities and practise open and transparent communication and decision-making. The university will work with its partners to overcome any hegemonic, colonial, or paternalistic tendencies in the collaboration.

9.5 The focus of partnership management will be on leveraging the impetus emanating from academics, and supporting partnerships rooted at the grassroots academic level. Existing active partnerships and collaborations will be supported and will only be terminated in exceptional circumstances.

9.6 The university will improve its reporting structures regarding activities taking place under the umbrella of its institutional partnerships, as well as other forms of international collaboration.

9.7 Mutuality, trust, equality, ethical principles, reciprocity, mutual benefit, and informed consent are guiding principles for UFS international partnerships.

9.8 International partnerships and collaborations with international non-university stakeholders form part of the UFS partnership portfolio and are encouraged when they support the core business or profile of the university.

9.9 The university develops a partnership management model that leverages existing collaborations and informal networks of its academics and other university community members.

10. International Students

10.1 The value of international students is recognised, especially to support internationalisation at home (i.e. the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students in domestic learning environments). Excellent international students enhance the quality of teaching and learning at the UFS.

10.2 A diversification of the international student body is urgently required; the majority of international students currently hail from Lesotho. In the future, international students should be recruited from a cross-section of African and other world regions. However, Lesotho should remain recognised as a special catchment area for UFS students, considering the proximity and connectedness of the country to the university.

10.3 The focus of international student recruitment should be on attracting academically outstanding students with leadership potential to the UFS. In response to the SADC Protocol on Higher Education, at least 5% of enrolments should be from countries in the SADC region other than South Africa.

10.4 Excellence in international student experience is paramount to attracting high-quality international students. In line with the 'Policy Framework for the Internationalisation of Higher Education in South Africa' (DHET, 2020), international students must be specially catered for to ensure that they enjoy rewarding social and educational experiences. The university develops and maintains dedicated support services for incoming and outgoing international students, including exchange students. The OIA coordinates the full value chain of services relating to international students and is responsible for compliance with relevant legislation. Adherence to the Code of Good Practice for Outbound and Inbound International Mobility is maintained by the UFS, and dedicated support for incoming and outgoing student mobility is provided by the OIA.

10.5 The UFS is committed to introducing enrolment planning for international students at programme level.

10.6 All processes relating to international students are structured to be humanising, socially just, and inclusive. International students should receive the same service quality and treatment in all university processes, unless their non-South African nationality requires a differentiation.

10.7 The UFS will consider the introduction of language-support programmes for incoming international students who have not been using English as medium of instruction before.

10.8 To advance the development of international and intercultural competence in local students, the social integration of international students is paramount. Suitable programmes for the social integration of international and local students, such as mixing in residences, an international student buddy programme, and cultural events will be structured.

11. International Student Recruitment

11.1 International student recruitment will be further strengthened to stabilise and increase international student numbers. International student recruitment is a cross-cutting responsibility, with Student Recruitment Services having the primary responsibility for its implementation. For postgraduate student recruitment – in which Student Recruitment Services plays an essential role – faculties, the Centre for Graduate Support, and the Office for International Affairs are critical stakeholders.

11.2 The UFS considers alumni as critical ambassadors of the university. It may consider establishing international alumni chapters in countries where international graduate numbers justify this, e.g. Lesotho. Country-based organisations, including all stakeholders who have a connection with the UFS (e.g. former academic staff members and partner universities), may be developed to support international marketing and branding.

11.3 Student Recruitment Services drives international virtual open days and other events to attract international students. These events, including Edu Fairs and trade exhibitions, are held in strategic source countries – participation will be intensified.

11.4 The university is exploring innovative ways to strengthen postgraduate international student recruitment. Tailor-made doctoral programmes for staff members of African universities, online information sessions for international academic staff and alumni sharing the international student offer of the UFS, and the targeted recruitment of excellent undergraduate students from African partner universities that do not have a complete postgraduate academic offer to the UFS, will be considered.

11.5 Specific focus is placed on attracting high-quality international research students; the UFS research profile is utilised to this end.

12. International Staff

12.1 The UFS strives to attract international staff with expertise not otherwise available to the institution. It strives to attract the brightest minds to the university and encourages the national diversity of its academics.

12.2 The UFS supports its international staff members with excellent advice and administrative support for immigration processes. Dedicated support is rendered by the Department of Human Resources, and relevant strategic matters are considered together with the OIA.

12.3 Staff exchanges are encouraged. The preferred format for staff exchanges is that a UFS staff member visits a partner institution for a period and is replaced during this time by a staff member from the partner institution.

13. Internationalisation at Home

13.1 A critical aspect of internationalisation is the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all UFS students in the domestic learning environments.

13.2 The UFS adopts a vision whereby each student will have an international experience during UFS studies. This can be achieved through engagement with international students at the home campus, and other curricular or co-curricular activities such as COIL modules, involvement of UFS students in international summer/winter schools, and other forms of virtual mobility.

13.3 The university promotes and organises interdivisional celebrations of cultural diversity, including celebrations of Africa Day, Heritage Day, and national independence days relevant to university community members.

13.4 The university actively supports the social integration of local and international students and organises structured programmes to advance this.

13.5 To advance internationalisation at home, international adjunct staff and research associates will be sought.

14. Enabling Institutional Internationalisation

14.1 The Office for International Affairs (OIA) collaborates with Faculty and Campus Internationalisation Coordinators to enable internationalisation.

14.2 Every Faculty, as well as the Qwaqwa and South campuses, compile their own Faculty Internationalisation Plan, which defines activities relevant to the specific campus or Faculty context, based on this Strategy.

14.3 The OIA is the principal enabling office for internationalisation at the UFS. It is a strategic office that renders advice on internationalisation. It supports the international activities of internal UFS stakeholders, and specifically supports research internationalisation.

14.4 The OIA facilitates international partnerships, advises internal stakeholders on partnership processes, and coordinates information and reporting on international partnerships.

14.5 The OIA coordinates the full value chain of services relating to international students and is responsible for compliance with relevant legislation. It handles international student admissions under the oversight of the International Student Admissions Committee, which reports to the Senate Enrolment Management Committee.

14.6 The OIA structures co-curricular Internationalisation at Home activities, such as cultural diversity celebrations and activities supporting the social integration of international students.

14.7 The OIA is responsible for institutional reporting on internationalisation and creating an institutional narrative of internationalisation.

14.8 In its activities, the OIA takes an interdivisional approach, which includes collaboration with the SRC and international student representations.

14.10 The OIA actively forges stakeholder relationships with

- funding agencies (foundations, technical support agencies, specific international HE-funding and scholarship agencies);
- embassies/high commissions;
- international and national organisations advancing internationalisation;
- relevant South African government departments, including the Department of Home Affairs, the Department of Science and Technology, the Department of Higher Education and Training, and the Office of the Premier, Free State Province;
- international offices at other universities; and
- medical-aid service providers for international students.

15. Reporting on Internationalisation

15.1 The UFS has developed a reporting structure for internationalisation that is aligned with the 2020 Policy Framework for Internationalisation of Higher Education in South Africa and implemented through the OIA. Internationalisation reporting includes the publication of an annual internationalisation report.

15.2 Targets for internationalisation are integrated in the Annual Performance Plan of the university and reported in its Annual Report.

16. Financial aspects

16.1 Internationalisation demands the commitment of substantive funding. Limited budgets mean that the acquisition of external funding is of seminal importance.

16.2 Responsible income generation through internationalisation is encouraged. Summer/winter schools and study-abroad programmes are among the programmes that could be structured to generate funding for internationalisation initiatives, e.g. to support staff exchanges, doctoral student mobility, COIL modules, and social integration programmes for international students and other internationalisation-at-home activities.

16.3 A further differentiation of fees should be considered to accommodate students from lower and mid-income countries and the rest of Africa outside the SADC region. Competitive fees should be charged for students hailing from high-income countries.

16.4 The UFS implements administrative levies for specific incoming exchange student programmes where this is appropriate in terms of the underlying legal framework of student exchange. The levy is utilised to support outgoing student exchanges.

16.5 Administrative levies on international degree students will be utilised exclusively for international student services. For SADC students, this is required in terms of the SADC Protocol on Higher Education.

17. Institutional Development

17.1 In view of the funding restraints experienced in higher education, the mobilisation of international funding for institutional development is a high priority. The UFS endeavours to leverage externally funded international capacity-development projects, with a specific focus on the Qwaqwa and South campuses.

17.2 To support institutional development, international benchmarking for programme and process development and revision is encouraged. However, such activities should be structured in a cost-effective manner, and desktop-based initiatives and the use of electronic communications are the preferred options for conducting such activities.

18. Digitalisation of Internationalisation

Digitalisation is providing manifold opportunities for internationalisation. The university will leverage digitalisation of internationalisation to advance the internationalisation process. The UFS understands it to encompass five dimensions, namely digitalisation of the following:

18.1 Internationalisation of learning and teaching
This will include Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), other forms of virtual exchange, virtual guest lectures, and other forms of online collaboration.

18.2 Research internationalisation
International co-supervision of postgraduate students through virtual means and utilisation of technology for the international co-authorship of scientific papers are among the focus areas.

18.3 Internationalisation administration
Digital technology will be utilised to improve partnership management and international student administration.

18.4 International student recruitment
Virtual open days and other virtual ways to participate in international student recruitment activities are among the digital opportunities that will be explored by the university.

18.5 Internationalisation at home
Virtual co-curricular activities with international partner universities and virtual engagements between local and international students are among the digital internationalisation at home interventions that will be strengthened.

19. Scholarship of Internationalisation

Internationalisation is not only a higher education process, but also an emerging academic field. The university endeavours to contribute to the development of the field by advancing theory, knowledge, and methodology relevant to the field. Scholarship of internationalisation also informs the UFS practice of internationalisation, ensuring that it is evidence-based, drawing e.g. from data analytics to ensure continued innovation in its internationalisation activities. The university will develop an Internationalisation Research Hub in its Office for International Affairs, which will work closely with faculties and invite academics from across the UFS to be involved in its activities.

20. Entrepreneurship in the Context of Internationalisation

The university will intentionally advance the internationalisation of entrepreneurial activities. It will infuse international dimensions into entrepreneurial activities where appropriate and practicable. It will also strive to leverage its international network to gain funding and skills development opportunities for entrepreneurs who are members of its university community and support its entrepreneurs in exploring international opportunities.

21.   Internationalisation in Society

21.1 The university aligns itself with the contemporary notion of 'internationalisation in society', which enunciates that internationalisation should benefit the wider community – at home or abroad – through international or intercultural education, research, service, and engagement.

21.2 University-community relations will be structured for mutual benefit. The university will amplify knowledge and wisdom embedded in communities.

21.3 The university will prioritise the societal impact of its internationalisation activities.

22.   Naming of places

Naming of select spaces should reflect international diversity, with an emphasis on the African and Global South outlook of the university.

Reference

Department of Higher Education and Training [DHET] (South Africa). (2020). Policy Framework for Internationalisation of Higher Education. Government Gazette no. 43872. Pretoria: Government Printer.   Also   available   on   the   internet   at https://www.dhet.gov.za/Policy%20and%20Development%20Support/Policy%20Framework%20for%20Internationalisation%20of%20Higher%20Education%20in%20South%20Africa.pdf
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