

# International Network University 2020: Internationalization Strategy for Freie Universität Berlin

Strategy Paper by the Executive Board  
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## 1) Introduction

Freie Universität Berlin is one of Europe's leading research universities with global aspirations. To the same extent that internationality has constituted an important element in the university's research and teaching, it has shaped the everyday lives of all university members and formed part of the university's remarkable history since its founding in 1948. As one of the most international universities, Freie Universität Berlin, situated in Germany's rapidly growing capital in the heart of Europe, contributes significantly to the global visibility of the Berlin science region. In doing so, Freie Universität Berlin seeks to collaborate intensively with partners in all regions of the world.

Freie Universität Berlin considers itself an educational institution which not only assumes responsibility on regional and national levels, but also on a global scale, pursuing and applying its founding principles of "Veritas, Iustitia, Libertas" by training young international scientists; by campaigning for a global development that is both sustainable and socially just; by scientifically engaging current global challenges; by integrating global perspectives into research and teaching; and by taking action to support persecuted and refugee academics. Freie Universität Berlin deliberately realizes its founding principles and values in its collaborations.

Freie Universität Berlin is a cosmopolitan institution: People from more than 100 nations study and work at the university, its alumni (often as scientists) make an impact across the globe, and, for many students and almost all researchers, stays abroad are natural constituents of their education and activities, respectively. International cooperation is practiced, on a daily basis and at every level, in research projects and international graduate schools, in institutes and departments. Therefore, lending effective support to all researchers' international and intercultural endeavors, whether through funding or in the form of training opportunities, is integral to Freie Universität Berlin's philosophy. In order to prepare them for both non-professional and professional life in a globally connected world, Freie Universität Berlin places particular emphasis on helping students gain international experiences.

The main priorities of the university's internationalization measures are, firstly, to greatly contribute to further societal developments in Berlin, Germany, and the world, and secondly, to permanently position the university among the world's best in the global competition in education and research. To these ends, the university will systematically be developed into an institution at which research, teaching and management are shaped by and act according to global considerations ("global campus"). At this institution, an attitude explicitly recognizing cultural diversity as an asset in collaborations will also permeate the fields of research and teaching, e.g., through exchanges with partner universities. Over the last ten years, Freie Universität Berlin has made great progress in international affairs, supported in particular by the International Network University concept and funding from the Excellence Initiative, respectively.

Therefore, this internationalization strategy aims at building on past achievements when further developing existing strengths and setting new emphases in future initiatives. It always seeks to continuously improve research and teaching, deepen global engagement, and enhance the effectiveness of those measures that support research and teaching in their international dimensions. These internationalization efforts apply to the whole university, though their actual implementation will respect the various departments' cultures and profiles as well as the university's various status groups. In this context, it is particularly noteworthy that Freie Universität Berlin pursues internationalization at varying pace and that it will consequently continue to be shaped in many different ways, depending on the individual departments and administrative units.

## 2) Further Development Based on Existing Achievements

Based on a favorable starting point, the Excellence Initiative has provided far-reaching stimuli for a quantitative and qualitative evolution of Freie Universität Berlin, particularly with regard to international affairs. This strategy paper cannot replace a comprehensive survey on indicators reflecting and measures advancing the university's internationalization, yet some of the unique strengths of Freie Universität Berlin can be illustrated as follows:

- The university is highly **attractive to outstanding talent** from all over the world, exhibited in an above-average number of international students, PhD candidates and researchers, whose capacities are particularly reflected in the high share of competitive scholarship recipients (DAAD, AvH etc.). Developing university-specific fellowship programs and structures for international exchanges has further added to this particular strength.
- **Transnational research** has systematically been supported by creating and developing joint projects and publications, and has manifested itself in the sustainable international orientation of focus areas and graduate colleges, the establishment and extension of thematic networks with international partners, and the introduction of schemes such as joint postdoc programs with select partners. One of the university's unique features is that its research transcends academic disciplines and regional boundaries in virtually every field.
- The ongoing, **systematic expansion of Freie Universität Berlin's international network** is illustrated by strategic partnerships with prominent universities around the world, intensified cooperation with alumni abroad, the vigorous employment of liaison offices in seven strategic target regions, and by a resulting increase in third-party funds and publications with an international component.
- Teaching at Freie Universität Berlin is characterized by an **awareness of internationality**, which, depending on the department, manifests itself in compulsory semesters abroad, integrated international course contents, bilingual and multilingual teaching formats, joint study programs with international partners, and, moreover, in the introduction of study programs in the context of capacity building.
- In **administration and management**, the International Council advises the university's Executive Board, which, in order to further enhance the skills of staff members at the International Network University, has systematically developed programs fostering administrative exchange and expanded schemes improving language skills and enhancing intercultural and diversity-related sensitivity, respectively.

In the future, an annual **internationalization report** will provide detailed information on the status of internationalization at Freie Universität Berlin and will serve to monitor this strategy.

### 3) Strategic Goals and Measures by 2020

The future targets and measures that are sketched in this paper and which seek to complement and strengthen rather than compete with existing activities are based on the achievements to date, particularly with respect to the variety of internationalization efforts at Freie Universität Berlin and its individual departments. Successful thematic and structural measures, which have thus far sustained internationalization at Freie Universität Berlin, will be continued:

- The **network of liaison offices** with locations in Brussels, New Delhi, Cairo, Moscow, New York, Beijing, and São Paulo has proven to be the backbone of internationalization and brings additional regional expertise to Freie Universität Berlin. In the future, and based on an assessment completed in 2016, the liaison offices' services should be further differentiated. In addition to refining the current service portfolio, liaison offices, on a case-by-case basis, should evolve into regional centers of competence – in the long run, also in underrepresented regions.
- The **strategic partnerships** model – currently in place with The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, St Petersburg State University, Peking University, the University of California, Berkeley, the University of British Columbia, and the University of Zurich – has proven to be a particularly dynamic driver to test innovative cooperation formats. In the foreseeable future, the network of strategic partnerships is to expand and include two or three more partners.
- Through graduate schools and colleges, clusters, collaborative research centers, research groups and associations funded by the EU and DAAD, Freie Universität Berlin is already represented in numerous **multilateral thematic networks**. In the future, the university seeks to support and promote such networks even more strongly than before and aims at integrating new research alliances into these frameworks.
- Complimentarily to its liaison offices and partnerships, Freie Universität Berlin has developed an international hub, the **International House**, at Campus Dahlem, which serves as a point of contact for partner universities (currently: University of California, Berlin Consortium for German Studies/Columbia University, German Studies Center/Peking University). The number of participating institutions is to increase even further.

## 3.1 Research

The university actively supports international research collaborations based on the conviction that worldwide scientific teamwork on ideas, with items and equipment, and in laboratories and libraries, is important to reflect one's own aspirations, improve international scientific standards, and attract greater attention to, and enhance and sustain a high level of recognition in, one's own discipline. To this end, Freie Universität Berlin partners with the world's most important institutions in each particular field of research, and, through scientific collaboration and the circulation of knowledge, improves its very own performance, reach and efficacy.

### *The specific objectives for this area are:*

- ➔ Attracting renowned international scientists more systematically in order to hone the research profile of Freie Universität Berlin, to sustain the university's level of performance, and to further grow research areas collaboratively;
- ➔ Enhancing the quality of research as well as quality standards continuously through cooperation with international institutions, particularly those with complementary strengths, in order to increase scientific impact;
- ➔ Strengthening research on certain regions by intensifying research with partners in these regions and by emphasizing global diversity;
- ➔ Promoting and supporting research on global challenges;
- ➔ Reinforcing and consolidating the funding and support of multilateral, thematic networks with outstanding international research institutions worldwide.

### *The following measures will be taken to achieve these goals:*

- ➔ By 2018: Developing a "Global Faculty Program" with international partners to use complementary strengths both at a thematic and personal level (e.g. a transnational research college for Latin American Studies, which offers international researchers associate status at Freie Universität Berlin). As a first step, a comprehensive plan will be devised, which is to include references to potential funding sources.
- ➔ By 2019: Supporting the internationalization of research by establishing a regular visiting professorship in the field of higher education research with a focus on internationalization; to this end, DAAD funds will be sought.
- ➔ Introducing a Tenure Track Model for appointments, which, in addition to the conventional appointment process, appeals to a differentiated international market, and, as a result of its recognition value, makes Freie Universität Berlin more competitive on a global scale.
- ➔ By 2019: Expanding services for international researchers and PhD students by introducing a Welcome Center as a "one-stop shop".
- ➔ Expanding mobility options for research staff and PhD students as part of their academic qualification and in order to support non-professorial academic staff.

## 3.2 Teaching

By further internationalizing the curriculum in both its formal (academic content) and informal (additional offerings) dimensions, Freie Universität Berlin seeks to prepare all students for a future in a globalized (and professional) world. This internationality should be tangible irrespective of an academic program and is not solely experienced through stays abroad. Rather, internationality should start on Freie Universität Berlin's campus, whose composition of students and academics will become even more diverse in the future.

### *The specific objectives for this area are:*

- ➔ Enabling all students of Freie Universität Berlin to have a substantial international experience during their studies, which may be achieved by, but is not limited to, stays abroad;
- ➔ Establishing as many specific international formats in teaching as possible in order to consolidate Freie Universität Berlin's reputation as a university offering study programs with "global reach";
- ➔ Expanding course options for non-German-speaking students and enhancing all students' multilingual competences;
- ➔ Deliberately using the existing diversity on campus to further enhance teaching and academic programs by systematically integrating the perspectives of international students and researchers.

### *The following measures will be taken to achieve these goals:*

- ➔ Developing a concept to internationalize study programs and teaching, including guidelines for departments which will outline how to best introduce such international formats in alignment with system accreditation requirements.
- ➔ Expanding joint digital course options with international universities (e.g. MOOCs), for instance, with strategic partners.
- ➔ Developing services and trainings related to the intercultural and international aspects of teaching as a means of support in teaching.
- ➔ Developing a concept across disciplines on "international competence", which, in the framework of the general interdisciplinary professional skills courses (ABV), will pool language formats, intercultural skills and specific trainings in preparation for an international job market etc.

### 3.3 Administration and Management

Administrative and service staff, too, are to be empowered and further trained with regard to their international skills. To this end, Freie Universität Berlin will deliberately foster its staff members' linguistic and intercultural competences and their understanding of the global interdependencies in which the university operates.

*The specific objectives for this area are:*

- ➔ Raising a broad awareness of internationality as a central cross-sectoral topic at Freie Universität Berlin;
- ➔ Harnessing staff members' existing international and intercultural experiences and skills;
- ➔ Empowering staff members at any level of administration and management to actively shape internationalization.

*The following measures will be taken to achieve these goals:*

- ➔ Fostering a better understanding of internationalization and its implications among administrative staff through suitable training on general topics (e.g. "What is internationalization"), in foreign languages, and on intercultural issues.
- ➔ Facilitating practical experiences through short-term staff exchange programs with other universities.
- ➔ Enhancing language skills, especially with respect to the English language.
- ➔ Ensuring that websites, documents and forms are consistently provided in both German and English.

## 3.4 University Culture

Freie Universität Berlin conceives of itself as an international university, an understanding that must be made tangible for and conveyed to all members of the university as well as society. Along these lines, and in respect to “internationalization at home”, the physical campus is to evolve into a truly international place, distinguished by its global perspective, its cultural and linguistic diversity, and a liberal spirit of tolerance. Freie Universität Berlin’s alumni are encouraged to adhere to these principles beyond graduation and after completion of their research projects, respectively. Freie Universität Berlin should also increasingly regard itself as an international brand, which will allow for an international positioning that reflects its nationally recognized status.

### *This includes:*

- ➔ Recognizing the diverse experiences of all university members as assets and fostering such diversity through targeted measures;
- ➔ Promoting Freie Universität Berlin’s sense of identity as the International Network University more strongly through intensified communication and outreach, both internally and externally;
- ➔ Advocating for and further promoting the academic ideal of freedom, reaching beyond the borders of the university’s campus via suitable regional and international networks (research institutions, schools, industry, administration etc.);
- ➔ Using the worldwide network of alumni and sponsors more effectively as global university ambassadors.

### *The following measures will be taken to achieve these goals:*

- ➔ Extending the welcome and support services for international students, scientists and PhD candidates.
- ➔ Supporting activities in countries where university structures and programs are still being developed by conceptualizing a specific strategy for this field of capacity building.
- ➔ Devising a concept to step up efforts promoting internationality and diversity as characteristic features of Freie Universität Berlin.
- ➔ Expanding the international alumni network and using alumni as brand ambassadors.