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Salahaddin University-Erbil (http://www.su.edu.krd)

International Strategy of Salahaddin University-Erbil (2020-2024)

Salahaddin University – Erbil (SU) is based in Erbil, the capital of Kurdistan Region - Iraq, established in July 1981. The university is considered the oldest and largest Higher Education Institute in Kurdistan Region. It is a comprehensive university with over 16 Colleges covering 78 scientific programs that have engaged 25,000 plus undergraduate students, 1,000 Master and PhD students and about 2,200 academic staff.

The Goals: Internationalization, Student/ Staff Exchange, Academic Grants (scholarships and post doctorates) and improving quality of education.

SU Mission:

The mission of Salahaddin University-Erbil is to educate the future professionals who are creative, innovative and striving for continuous improvement of their knowledge and professional skills. Develop industry leaders by providing excellent learning   programmes and experiences to graduates, post-graduates and professionals and build up extensive learning centers using the latest technology .

SU Vision:

Salahaddin University-Erbil has been challenging and developing great minds for more than 38 years. Salahaddin University-Erbil success is characterized by a tradition of innovation, research which has broken new ground, pushed forward the boundaries of knowledge and made a great impact on people's lives. We continue with our tradition and have ambitions through our internationalization strategy to put Salahaddin University-Erbil on global higher education excellence map. Furthermore, the university strives to be an internationally recognized university, leading regional higher education, research and academic collaborations with other global institutions worldwide for the purpose of academic excellence and mutual achievements and to be a leading university for creative and professional practice inspired by innovation and enquiry.

Future Plan

Salahaddin University leadership objectives are building of a single, state-of-the-art university campus that includes major colleges for better integration and collaboration. This will allow for the possibility to offers the opportunity for increasing capacity to serve larger student numbers. The goals of internationalization of the university are to produced highly qualified graduates capable to find employment in local and international markets, to engage actively in developing the country and to lead in market-driven higher education programs.

In line with the general goals, mission and vision, the international strategy of Salahaddin University-Erbil is to become a university with high international recognition in the areas of education and research;to train qualified individuals with good competitive standards in the world of science, art and business at national and international level; to support international partnerships, collaboration and projects; to increase student and staff mobility; to internationalize the curriculum and research initiatives; to establish on- and off-campus international undergraduate and postgraduate joint programs and to establish a multicultural and international campus environment for students and staff.

How to achieve this?

To achieve its mission, Salahaddin University-Erbil aims to provide an internationally recognized innovative educational platform and internationally recognized research centers for developing innovative research. It will educate industry leaders by providing excellent accredited programs and training to undergraduates, graduates, post-graduates, builds up extensive learning centers using the latest internationally recognized technology and advances knowledge and contributing to the regional economy. SU is continuously developing a reliable, responsible and reputable academic community for all stakeholders, decentralizes the administrative work of the university to enable SU faculty staff to pursue the mission statement adopted by the university and transforms the desire of its academic community and other stakeholders through excellence in practice-based education, research and knowledge transfer to shape the purpose-based future professionals.

Accordingly, the actions to achieve the goals of the international strategy of Salahaddin University can be divided into three categories:

1. Education and Multicultural / International Campus:

In order to enhance the international and multicultural quality of the campus and education, Salahaddin University-Erbil

> A.   Supports student and staff exchange in study, teaching, training, research and development activities within inter-institutional agreements,

> B.   Develops joint academic study programs at undergraduate and postgraduate level with qualified international universities,

> C.   Updates curricula to provide students & graduates with skills appropriate to the needs of international science and the world of business. Salahaddin University promotes multicultural education and interdisciplinary programs,

D. Re-designs the curricula to increase its international recognition and comparability,

E. Conducts efforts to improve the capacity of academic staff to teach in a foreign language,

F. Ensures the employment of qualified academic and administrative staff and encourages the staff to participate in training in order to gain the required qualifications,

G. Supports programs and activities to increase the international experience of academic and administrative staff,

H. Supports the intake of international undergraduate and graduate students,

I. Supports the recruitment of international academic staff,

J. Makes arrangements in providing the social, cultural, sportive and psychological needs of international students.

K. Supports increasing the number of courses in a foreign language and integrating them into the curriculum.

In order to achieve this, the university plans to develop & upgrade the curriculum of its programs and apply new up to date teaching methods which allow for modern technology in teaching. The university is advocating for using the English language at all levels of education, recruits international academic staff for teaching and research and conducts trainings and workshops on modern teaching methodologies.

To raise the level of study at the Salahaddin University-Erbil to international standards, we plan and work hard to achieve the following:

1- Open doors to international students regardless of their educational cultural backgrounds;
2- Plan to have suitable tuition fees according to the financial capability of the community;
3- Recruit international academic staff and professors to work at SU;
4- Encourage international students and academic staff to visit SU for both short & long term visits to stand on the latest academic & scientific positions at SU;
5- Reward academics who conduct joint research with international staff & universities;
6- Provide accommodation to international students and academics who visit SU free of charge;
7- Facilitate visa procedures for international students and academics in collaboration with the local authorities.

Pedagogical Training for Professional Teacher Development

Recently, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research - Kurdistan Regional Government (MHE-KRG) has increased its admission to pave the way for smoother internationalization of the Higher Education in the Kurdistan Region. In this line, the MHE aims to implement the Bologna Process to modernize higher education, by implementing the

European standards, to improve the quality of education and recognition of qualifications as well as to allow for students' mobility. This means

8- Establishing the three-cycle system in higher education,
9- Aligning the credit systems (e.g. the European Qualifications Framework EQF and credit system ECTS),
10- Improving the quality of education with internal quality assurance (assessed by Quality Assurance Agencies),
11- Enhancing the relevance of learning and teaching (the world of work connections, fostering the employable and transferable skills) and
12- Providing flexible, innovative learning approaches and delivery methods by exploiting the new technologies to enrich and support personalized learning.

For teachers as a part of the internationalization of the university, this means that they are required to go through continuous academic development and match their professional competence with new frameworks.

As part of its strategic plan, and to support Kurdistan Regional Government in this process, the university staff members participate in international pedagogical trainings for teacher development, especially the training on the Finnish experience in higher education pedagogy in which Salahaddin staff members participated and continuously participate through the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research of the Kurdistan Region.

The Pedagogical Training for Professional Teacher Development in Finland will be the basis for an international Professional Development Certificate for the teachers. The training is designed to support Kurdish universities' vision of building a professional teacher academy in the future. The training program is a part of a larger international development framework in the Kurdistan Region in HEI's system. At the core of the development will be the improvement of education and teachers' competences at different levels. The intensive training program in Finland will be designed to include visits and observations in learning environments such as schools and companies within the region. The end of the Finnish part of the programme crystalized the knowing, doing and being into an entity, teacher identity and pedagogical competence that can be applied back in Kurdish higher education institutions.

EU Erasmus+

Erasmus+ is the European Union's program to support education, training, youth and sport all over the world. Erasmus+ provides opportunities to study, train, and gain experience everywhere. It has opportunities for a wide variety of individuals and organizations. Erasmus+ has opportunities for helping people to develop and share knowledge and experience at institutions and organizations in different countries. Erasmus+ has opportunities for a wide range of organizations, including universities, education and training providers, research organizations, and private sectors.

Salahaddin University has been involved in the Erasmus program since 2011. The aim is to use Erasmus+ activities to contribute to the international strategic plan of Kurdistan for growth, jobs, social equity and inclusion, as well as the aims of a strategic framework for education and training sustainable development in the field of higher education in Kurdistan.

Salahaddin University currently participates in 11 Erasmus+ projects coordinated by European universities and those in neighboring countries. Strategic participation of Salahaddin University in Erasmus+ allows for improving this situation.

Salahaddin University wants through Erasmus+ to

13- Further develop partnerships through Erasmus+ with universities and non-HE organizations in program and partner countries in order to produce innovative outputs or exchange best practices,

14- Acquire experience of the European countries the development and upgrading higher education programs in order to raise the level of teaching, education and research into international standards, as an important step to internationalize the university.

15- Engage in a number of development and networking activities, such as international strategic improvement of the professional skills of the academic staff, higher education capacity building,

16- Facilitate the learning mobility opportunities for students, academic staff, trainees, volunteers, youth workers and young people

17- Increase the capacity to operate at international level,

18- Improve management methods,

19- Access to more funding opportunities and projects,

20- Increase the ability to prepare, manage, and follow-up projects.,

21- Provide a more attractive portfolio of opportunities for learners and teachers.

The broader outcomes and results of the participation in the Erasmus+ program shall be

22- reduced unemployment, especially among young people,

23- promoting adult learning, especially for new skills and skills required by the labor market,

24- Encouraging young people to take part in the processes and supporting innovation, cooperation and reform.

SU intends to measure these aims and results under section 1 by the following indicators:

Result	Indicators per result	Benchmark
1 Open doors to international students regardless of their educational cultural backgrounds;	1 Number of countries represented among the international students	2020: 5; 2021: 10; 2022: 20
2 Plan to have suitable tuition fees according to the financial capability of the community;	2 Existence of a tution fee table normalised according to UN and Worldbank income data per country	yes
3 Recruit international academic staff and professors to work at SU;	3 Annual increase in percentage of international academics employed at SU	5% p.a.
4 Encourage international students and academic staff to visit SU for both short & long term visits to stand on the latest academic & scientific positions at SU;	4a Increase % of international students among all p.a. 4b Increase % of international academics among all p.a.	4a 10% p.a. 4b 5% p.a.
5 Reward academics who conduct joint research with international staff & universities;	5 Existence of a reward system	yes

6 Provide accommodation to international students and academics who visit SU free of charge;	6a % of international students who can live in a dorm 6b % of international scholars who can live in a dorm	6a 80% 6b100%
7 Facilitate visa procedures for international students and academics in collaboration with the local authorities.	7a % of int. Students satisfied with visa support 7b % of int. academics satisfied with visa support	7a 90% 7b 90%
8 Establishing the three-cycle system in higher education,	8 System established	yes
9 Aligning the credit systems (e.g. the European Qualifications Framework EQF and credit system ECTS),	9 ECTS installed	yes
10 Improving the quality of education with internal quality assurance (assessed by Quality Assurance Agencies),	10 Satisfying assessment by external QA agency	at least "good" (level 3 out of 4)
11 Enhancing the relevance of learning and teaching (the world of work connections, fostering the employable and transferable skills) and	11 % of students that feel that they have acquired necessary employability skills through international experience	80%
12 Providing flexible, innovative learning approaches and delivery methods by exploiting the new technologies to enrich and support personalized learning	12 % of degree programmes with New technologies and methods	2020: 20% 2021: 40% 2022: 60%
13 Further develop partnerships through Erasmus+ with universities and non-HE organizations in program and partner countries in order to produce innovative outputs or exchange best practices,	13 Increase in number of partnerships	2020: 20% 2021: 30% 2022: 40%
14 Acquire experience of the European countries the development and upgrading higher education programs in order to raise the level of teaching, education and research into international standards, as an important step to internationalize the university.	14a % of academics that feel that they have acquired this knowledge 14b % of administrative staff that feel that they have acquired this knowledge	14a 30% 14b 30%
15 Engage in a number of development and networking activities, such as international strategic improvement of the professional skills of the academic staff, higher education capacity building,	15 number of activities	5
16 Facilitate the learning mobility opportunities for students, academic staff, trainees, volunteers, youth workers and young people	16a increase in mobility placements for students 16b increase in mobility placements for academics 16c increase in mobility placements for trainees 16d increase in mobility placements for volunteers 16e increase in mobility placements for youth workers 16f increase in mobility placements for young people	each indicator 10% p.a.
17 Increase the capacity to operate at international level,	17 perception of the leadership that the capacity has increased	at least "increased" (level 3 out of 4)
18 Improve management methods,	18 % of staff that thinks the management methods have improved	50%
19 Access to more funding opportunities and projects,	19 Increase in external funding	20% p.a.
20 Increase the ability to prepare, manage, and follow-up projects	20 % of staff that thinks the ability to prepare, manage and follow up on projects has increased	50%
21 Provide a more attractive portfolio of opportunities for learners and teachers.	21a of academics that think SU improved the portfolio 21b of learners that think SU improved the portfolio	both 60%
22 reduced unemployment, especially among young people,	22 decrease in unemployment rate	2% p.a.

23 promoting adult learning, especially for new skills and skills required by the labor market,	23 increase in number of adult learners	20% p.a.
24 Encouraging young people to take part in the processes and supporting innovation, cooperation and reform.	24 share of people under 30 involved in the internationalisation process	2020: 30% 2021: 40% 2022: 50%

2. Research-Development Activities:

In the scope of increasing the international quality of the research area; Salahaddin University-Erbil

A.   Works to increase cooperation agreements with international HEIs,

B.   Supports the implementation of international joint projects for research and development activities with both HEIs and international companies.

C.   Encourages activities to enhance the international recognition of research projects in terms of outputs such as publications, licenses and patents.

D.   Ensures the necessary arrangements and agreements to obtain the necessary internal and external resources to increase the number and quality of international research and development activities.

E.   Promotes and supports short or long term research activities of internationally qualified researchers at Salahaddin University.

To achieve this, Salahaddin University-Erbil actively

1-   Creates an opportunity for the existing academic staff to peruse and conduct postdoctoral research abroad;
2-   Establishes academic and scientific cooperation with international universities and research centers;
3-   Encourages and rewards university staff who publish research papers in international journals with high impact factors;

Salahaddin University-Erbil intends to measure these aims and results under section 2 by the following indicators:

Result	Indicators per result	Benchmark
1- Create an opportunity for the existing academic staff to peruse and conduct postdoctoral research abroad;	1 % of academics involved in at least 1 int. research project	2020: 10% 2021: 20% 2022: 30%
2- Establish academic and scientific cooperation with international universities and research centers;	2 % increase of research projects with at least 1 international partner	2020: 10% 2021: 20% 2022: 30%
3- Encourage and rewards university staff who publish research papers in international journals with high impact factors;	3 System established	yes

3. University-External Stakeholder Cooperation:

Along with different institutions and organizations, to cater to the culture of University-External Stakeholder Cooperation, SU plans to

A.   Implement agreements with national and international public and private institutions,

B.   Carry out activities to increase the number of agreements,

C.   Support the activities carried out to increase the number of externally supported international projects.

D.   Support training opportunities for students within the university or other enterprises.

To achieve this, SU

1-   Activates and implements signed MOU's with international universities and institutions;
2-   Encourages and attracts enterprises, research institutes & private sector to invest at Salahaddin University-Erbil;

SU intends to measure these aims and results under section 3 by the following indicators:

Result	Indicators per result	Benchmark
1- Activates and implements signed MOU's with world universities and institutions;	1 % increase in number of MoUs	20% p.a.
2- Encourages and attracts enterprises, research institutes & private sector to invest at Salahaddin University-Erbil;	2a % increase in number of enterprises that invest in SU research 2b % increase in research budget from enterprises	2a 20% p.a. 2b 30% p.a.

Besides these concrete activities, Salahaddin University-Erbil also supports the internationalization strategy through a set of structural actions.

4. International University Accreditation (ASIC)

"International university accreditation is a voluntary, non-governmental process that gives recognition to institutions that meet established quality standards. The purpose of accreditation is to assure the public, students, parents and other stakeholders as to the quality of an institution and its commitment to high standards through a system of continuous improvement.

The accreditation process is based on surveying the full range of provision and supporting activities, together with a detailed consideration of the institution's documentation. The ASIC accreditation confirms commitment to internationalization and, in particular, commitment to supplying exemplary services to international students.

Our attempt to conduct international accreditation process consists of a set of key performance indicators split into 8 main areas, namely:

1. Quality Assurance and Enhancement (to increase the visibility of the University and applying a paperless system)

2. Learning, Teaching and Research Activity through the application Bologna process

3. Student Welfare

4. Premises, and Health and Safety

5. Governance, Management and Staff Resources

6. Awards and Qualifications

7. Marketing and Recruitment of Students

8. Systematic Regulations according to international standards

Accreditation by ASIC will boost the profile of the university and confirm that it meets high standards of education, welfare and good practice. The international accreditation will reassure students, parents and agents that the university is a good choice, and that will provide them with professional teaching, valuable qualifications and a positive learning experience.

Accreditation by ASIC will help to raise the profile of institutions both within their own countries and worldwide as it confirms that they conform to internationally accepted standards in education.

International accreditation with ASIC is not a one-time process. ASIC believes in developing partnerships with its accredited institutions and will assist in activities such as ongoing quality assurance, ethical recruitment, working with agents, and the drafting of policies, procedures and codes of practice. On-going development with accredited institutions will also incorporate training programs on topics such as the use of high quality and ethical recruitment methods, monitoring the work of agents, the implementation of admission systems, the drafting and implementation of ethics policies and the creation of staff and student files." (text taken from the ASIC website: https://www.asic.org.uk).

In addition to the accreditation process, SU seeks assistance with internationalization plans through networking with international bodies such as UKNARIC, WEBA and other relevant organizations especially regarding the development of academic partnerships worldwide.

Salahaddin University-Erbil intents to measure the results by the following indicator:

Result	Indicator per result	Benchmark
1 Full international accreditation of Salahaddin University by ASIC	1 International accreditation achieved	Yes (by 2024)

5. Information Technology & Communication (ITC)

Salahaddin University believes in the e-Smart strategy of the modern university and strives to create a well IT-enabled academic community. The internationalization strategy governs the desire to have a better visible presence on global platforms which enables our community to transfer knowledge and create a comparative link with partners and winder stockholders. In this case, our students will be more comfortable when they interact with other students in different parts of the world and it is the same for international collaboration and academic exchange on all levels. Empowering IT in the university will assist students to use all the advantages of new technologies in their education such as, up to date courses, international training, higher education opportunities, and better connections with prompt communication. However; the first step toward internationalization is the application of Information Management System (IMS) and Learning Management System (LMS) at Salahaddin University.

SU intents to measure the results by the following indicators:

Result	Indicator per result	Benchmark
1 Implementation of Information Management System (IMS)	1 IMS developed and implemented	Yes (by 2024)
2 Implementation of Learning Management System (LMS)	2 LMS developed and implemented	Yes (by 2024)

6. International Relations Office

The International Relations Office plays a crucial role by informing, enabling and implementing the international aspirations of Salahaddin University-Erbil and its academic community thus bringing tangible benefits to our students, colleagues, and campus here in Erbil-Kurdistan.

Its tasks include overseeing international partnerships and collaboration, managing the University's study abroad and exchange program, promoting, and coordinating international scholarship activities and developing the university's international profile by directing the design and implementation of the university's international strategy and conducting the strategic review of the institution's global engagement.

Salahaddin University-Erbil intents to measure the results by the following indicators:

Result	Indicator per result	Benchmark
1 Overseeing international partnerships and collaboration	1 Mechanism for overseeing international partnerships and collaboration developed, and implemented	Yes (by 2020)
2 Managing the university's study abroad and exchange program	2 Mechanism for managing the university's study abroad and exchange program developed, and implemented	Yes (by 2020)
3 Promoting, and coordinating international scholarship activities	3a Mechanism for promoting, and coordinating international scholarship activities developed, and implemented 3b Number of promoting activities conducted per year	3a Yes (by 2020) 3b 3 p.a.
4 Directing, designing and implementing the university's strategy	4 Mechanism for directing, designing and implementing the university's strategy developed and implemented	4 Yes (by 2020)

| 5 Conducting strategic review of global engagement | 5a Mechanism for conducting strategic review of global engagement developed and implemented
5b Number of strategic reviews conducted and reports issued | 5a Yes (by 2020)
5b 2 p.a. |

7. Academic Services

Academic Services are at the heart of education and research at Salahaddin University-Erbil. They inform and influence the development and delivery of a range of international activities throughout the staff and student lifecycles and provide support and advice to all staff and to students, enabling them to undertake their responsibilities effectively. Additionally, they seek to deliver on a range of international transformational projects across the University and ensure that the international activities of the University are conducted in accordance with the University's own procedures and regulations and in compliance with external legislative requirements.

Salahaddin University-Erbil intends to measure the results by the following indicators:

Result	Indicator per result	Benchmark
1 development and delivery of a range of international activities throughout the staff and student lifecycles	1a % of staff that have participated in an international activity developed by the Academic Services 1b % of students that have participated in an international activity developed by the Academic Services	1a 25% 1b 2.4%
2 provide support and advice to staff and to students	2a % of students advised 2b % of staff advised 2c overall satisfaction of students and staff advised based on surveys conducted with students and staff advised	2a 1% 2b 5% 2c satisfaction at least "good"
3 deliver a range of international transformational projects across the University	3 Number of international transformational projects delivered	14 (by 2024)
4 ensure that the international activities of the University are conducted in accordance with the University's own procedures and regulations and in compliance with external legislative requirements	4a Mechanism for ensuring regulatory and legal compliance developed, and implemented 4b % of activities in compliance with regulations and legal requirements	4a Yes (by 2020) 4b 100%