

Kurdistan Regional Government  
Ministry of Higher Education and  
Scientific Research

University of Raparin / Presidency  
Directorate of International  
Relations



حكومه تی هه ریمی کوردستان - عێراق  
سه روکایه تی نه نجومه نی وه زیران  
وه زاره تی خویندنی بالا و توپژینه وه ی زانستی  
سه روکایه تی زانکۆی راپه رین  
به رپوه به رایه تی په یوه ندیبه کان

## University of Raparin ( UoR)

### Internationalisation Strategy

Submitted by Araz Mohammed Ismail, Director of IRO

#### Vision

The University of Raparin is willing to become one of the leading universities in Kurdistan Region and Iraq as well as an internationally well-established higher education institution sustaining a comprehensive network of international partners, in turn enabling the university to conduct a substantial number of international collaborative projects in the area of education and research. This will enable the University of Raparin to provide high-quality education and training for its students and staff according to contemporary international standards, thereby not only ensuring that its graduates have the knowledge and skills necessary to excel in their field of work, but are prepared for working and conducting research in an international and intercultural environment, rendering them competitive in an increasingly international environment. As a public institution funded by the Kurdistan Regional Government, the University of Raparin is also committed to contributing to the public good by engaging society and using its knowledge and international expertise gained to help society in finding solutions for their most pressing needs.

#### Mission

The University of Raparin is a public Kurdish university committed to the following principles:

- **Internationalization**
- **Student-Centred Learning**
- **Staff and Faculty Professional Development**
- **Meaningful Use of Technology**
- **Outreach and Engagement**

The faculty and staff strive daily to ensure that students are respected, motivated and prepared for a place in the society and at the workplace. Academic excellence in teaching, research and service prepares our future alumni to impact Kurdish society as well as the regional and global stage. The University provides higher education curriculum for both scientific and professional interests. Students should be the center of the learning process in an academic environment, which can be achieved by doing academic research,

developing the educational and learning process, providing a productive environment and skilful lectures who are willing to keep up with the modern methods of teaching. The University of Raparin prepares students to be responsible citizens and effective individuals in their career to serve the country.

## **Goals of Internationalisation**

### *Improving the Quality of Education*

It is vital that the University of Raparin strengthens the quality of education for its students in order to provide the best education possible as well as to increase our graduates' competitiveness both on the national, regional and international level.

In turn, this requires from us to engage in fundamental change transforming and internationalising our institution by adopting international standards and best practices rendering the university able to compete with universities and research institutes first at a national level and later-on regionally as well as globally.

For this, the University of Raparin is committed to transforming the way we view higher education. We have initiated a shift away from teacher-centred learning towards student-centred learning introducing a new culture of teaching and learning in the Kurdistan Region thereby reshaping the future of higher education in Iraq.

The University of Raparin will use its internationalisation efforts strategically to support these activities by bringing in international experts for trainings at home and also sending staff on trainings abroad. For this, our newly established Continuing Professional Development Centre invites international experts but also works to organize trainings abroad for the teaching staff.

To further facilitate the paradigm shift in education, the University of Raparin has begun to modernise and reform itself according to Bologna standards by implementing the Bologna system and the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), currently focussing on five selected departments, while already having transitioned to a semester-based academic calendar institution-wide.

It is expected that adopting both the Bologna standards and ECTS will not only increase the quality of education, but will also foster cooperation with foreign higher education institutions due to increased compatibility and interoperability.

English is a core competence if the University of Raparin wants to internationalise. We are therefore requiring our faculty, staff and students to take English language courses to improve their level of proficiency and subsequently the quality of their instruction. Additionally, we have established English Conversation Clubs to create a space where our students can practice their English, increase their conversational skills and improve their overall language competency.

As a result, we expect our faculty staff and students to be better prepared for the jobs that they will better prepared for their present and future jobs. Our students will not be 100% reliant on the faculty for all of their learning but will learn to access new information from libraries, specialists and online, home and abroad, all of them also using sources in English. Students will be able to take advantage of semester and annual study abroad programs due to the compatibility of our semesters. The quality of English will be

increased and provide more opportunities for our faculty and staff to participate in conferences, workshops and research.

The results will be measured as following:

**Activity:** Conducting trainings for faculty and staff member by international experts on student-centred learning and modern teaching methods

- **Indicators:** 1) Number of trainings by international experts organised; 2) % of staff trained by international experts; 3) knowledge and competences of staff in implementing student-centred learning enhanced measured by self-evaluation questionnaire;
- **Benchmarks:** 1) three trainings each year, that is 9 trainings until 2022; 2) to have to have 80% of teaching staff trained by international experts until 2022. 3) at least 80% of staff trained think they have gained the competences and knowledge necessary.

**Activity:** Implementing the Bologna Process and ECTS

- **Indicators:** 1) % of study programmes with Bologna standards and ECTS implemented;
- **Benchmarks:** 1) to increase 25% of programmes according to Bologna standards and ECTS each year; 40% by 2020, 100% by 2022.

**Activity:** Faculty, staff and student participate in English language courses

- **Indicators:** 1) Staff and students reach B1 level (measured by established language testing methodology such as IELTS); 2) % of students and staff provided with language courses.
- **Benchmarks:** 1) 40% of students and 80% of staff reach B1 in the first three years; 2) 100% of students and staff will be provided with English language courses.

**Activity:** Increasing outgoing academic mobility for students and staff

- **Indicators:** 1) proportion of students and staff who have been on a mobility programme.
- **Benchmarks:** 1a) 5% of undergraduate students going on some form of mobility during their university life 1b) 25% of the teachers take training abroad by 2023.

### *Improving the Quality of Research*

It is important for the university to create a balance between teaching and research, given that they both feed into one another. We cannot only focus on the teaching side of the spectrum, but we also need to improve the quality of research especially through internationalisation. This will enable us to make joint research collaborations with well-established universities from abroad. Research also brings in income, which in turn can help further develop the university.

We plan to invigorate the Research Centre at the university by creating meaningful links with international research institutes; by offering research development skills courses at home by international experts and abroad and by providing financial and educational incentives to researchers with joint international projects.

This will enable long-term projects with international funding sponsors and private companies who would invest in respective areas of university research.

**Activity:** Offering research development skills courses by international experts at home as well as abroad

- **Indicators:** 1) Number of training courses by international experts organised at home per year; 2) % of researchers provided with training course at home; 3) % of researchers participating in a training course abroad;
- **Benchmarks:** 1) one training course at home and one abroad every year 2) 5% of researchers to take the training at home 3) 5% of researchers to take the training abroad.

**Activity:** Increasing international publications of faculty, providing financial incentives as well as release time for future research

- **Indicators:** 1) number of publications per staff member with an international partner; 2) increase in funding for publications p.a.; 3) % of staff who received release time for international research; 4) developing and implementing a financial incentive programme for researchers;
- **Benchmarks:** 1a) 15% increase in the number of publications with international partners every year; 1b) each member of the teaching staff will be expected to publish at least two publications with international partners every 24 months, one of those in an international impact factor journal with an impact value of at least 1.0; 2) funding for publications shall rise by 10% annually; 3) 40% of staff shall receive release time for international research over next 5 years; 4) financial incentive programme developed and implemented by 2021;

**Activity:** Support the acquisition of funds from international agencies or from national and international companies for joint international research projects

- **Indicators:** 1) the amount of funding for research projects will be increased
- **Benchmarks:** 1a) every department will submit 2-3 proposals for funding international research projects per year; 1b) funding shall rise by 20% annually.

### *Prepare Students for a Globalised World*

In a rapidly changing world, education is globalised as much as any other aspect of human life is; of course, if a university tries to be international, it is actually the students who need to experience another culture and another educational environment, at home in the sense of internationalisation at home and of the curriculum or abroad through mobility. The university plans to achieve a status where its students can go abroad with the confidence that they can follow their study without having to worry about their background education.

This can be achieved by promoting student-exchange programs, which enable them to be prepared for life and work in an intercultural world. It is also important to introduce subjects like cross-cultural communication, sociology and anthropology in the university core curriculum. This will better prepare our students for life and work in a multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-ethnic world. To this end, the university will establish collaboration with foreign, especially European, universities that will provide mobility opportunities for our students. Students will be encouraged to volunteer for service activities within their community as well as abroad.

The impact would be that graduates can go abroad to further study, but more importantly to look for a job. With the labour market becoming more and more demanding, such students can have a better chance of

finding a suitable job. Also, the students will learn to think globally but act locally to improve their surroundings. Students will moreover volunteer and meet a variety of people from different backgrounds.

**Activity:** Support participation in international study and exchange programs. Generate student volunteer opportunities abroad for Kurdish students and at home for int. students. Run activities and establish clubs with international students and returning Kurdish students to promote internationalisation. We also aim to receive then international students. This will help our internationalisation at home.

- **Indicator:** 1) number of cooperation agreements with European universities for student mobility opportunities; 2) % of students participating in volunteer opportunities abroad; 3) % of students participating in internationalisation information activities (club etc.); 4) increase in number of international students p.a.; 5) students that were encouraged and given incentives to take part in IaH activities;
- **Benchmarks:** 1) 5-10 MOUs in the next 3 years; 2a) at least 10 students going on a mobility programme abroad each year, with 10 more on local mobilities; 2b) at least 25% of our students will participate in an service opportunity outside of their home community; 3) at least 25% of our students will participate in internationalisation information activities (club etc.); 4) +5% increase in int. students annually; 5) each student shall have participated in at least one of those internationalisation activities at home.

### *Increase the Global Visibility of the University*

Working on the reputation and visibility of the university is essential to establish international collaboration in the fields of education and research such as joint-degree programmes, as well as joint research with other universities; it further enables the university to reach out to fundraising agents and sponsors who currently are not aware of the existence of the university in this corner of the world.

Increasing the university's visibility can be achieved through marketing, whereby we aim to publicise the university and make it more visible from the outside; registration with databases and organisations, which make us seen by other universities and institutes; improving the university website in a way that all important activities are seen beyond the university campus in Kurdish and English; signing, but also activating new Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs); applying for collaborative grants and contracts; participating in international collaborations such as TIGRIS and offering as much input as possible; participating in international higher education conferences and events.

This shall increase grant proposal submissions and awards with collaborating institutions and researchers, but shall also increase the number of likes and hits for our webpages and social meetings accounts (Facebook and Twitter).

**Activity:** Focusing on MoUs and grant applications

- **Indicators:** 1) increase the number of MoUs with universities that share priorities with us; 2) number of grants submitted p.a.; 3) increased web presence measured through Google Analytics to monitor;
- **Benchmarks:** 1) increase in MoUs by 15-20% each year 2) to submit 15-20 grants per year; 3) increase of visits to our website to double each year.

## *Support the Community Engagement*

The university is part of the society, and thus it is important that it provides services to the community; an active engagement of the university in societal affairs will prove beneficial for both sides. The university plans to do a need assessment of the community and provide the tools needed to accomplish these. The university will provide training seminars, symposia and campus visits for different focus groups of the community (medical, political, educational, and social).

Among these general social engagement activities, the university will pay special attention to the potential of internationalisation to help society.

In this sense, the university will host specialized training in the English language for those that need it, to promote social awareness about topics that are relevant like environmental awareness, gender-based violence and inequality, to offer language and computer training for the workplace, sensitivity training to police and military. Where useful, we will invite international experts to come to the university and train locals. We will also activate the experiences of university staff that went abroad in these trainings.

Our College of Nursing will provide guidance for public health issues like: dieting, exercise, nutrition, monitoring of medical care and prescription drugs, lifestyle adjustment for health burdens, home health care for homebound residents. The university will particularly invite international scholars and doctors who then, next to teaching and researching at the university, will help the College of Nursing to run these programmes for the public.

We shall see our students volunteer all across the Raparin region in the needed sectors. To support this, we will set up a small international volunteer programme trying to cooperate with European universities who e.g. use the European Voluntary Service programme.

Accordingly, we expect better relations with the community, which sees the university as a positive force if change. People will come to the university with their requests and needs. We will have more society related conferences that employ the best practices from academic research and practical application. Students' civil engagement at all levels of society will be promoted. We will see a decrease in gender-based violence, accompanied by greater respect for women. Our international scholars and students as well as the homecoming Kurdish students will also benefit from these social activities in the sense of a deepening of the social understanding.

**Activity:** University's civic engagement

- **Indicators:** Increase in number of community members participating in training seminars, symposia and campus visits;
- **Benchmarks:** the goal is a 20% increase of community members participating in such outreach activities.
- **Indicator:** surveys will be given to community leaders before and after the year to gauge their views of the university's civic engagement;
- **Benchmark:** The goal is for this to increase each year, branching out to other cities to be 50-60% satisfaction on a 1-10 base scale.
- **Indicator:** students and staff (international and local) will take surveys to test their satisfaction before and after a volunteer opportunity;
- **Benchmark:** desired score of 60-70% on a 1-10 base scale.

## Linking the Internationalisation Strategy and the University Development Plan

Finally, the internationalisation strategy should be linked to the university development plan, for part of the university development can be geared towards internationalisation. The university will develop its strategic plan in a way that boosts internationalisation. At the University of Raparin, we are now focusing on offering programs that go well with the overall internationalisation of the university. For example, as the university is developing, we are considering a Sociology and Anthropology program that fits in well with the overall goal of the TIGRIS Project.

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