



University of Sulaimani

## **Internationalisation Strategy**

### **1.1 The Vision of UoS**

UoS is willing to become one of the top universities in the region and a globally engaged university. UoS is aiming to prepare interculturally and globally competent graduates that take part in promoting knowledge and serving humanity all over the world; UoS strives to generate internationally recognized research and activities that address significant global issues. UoS fosters a strategic network of global partners.

### **1.2 The Mission of UoS**

UoS wants to be part of a close network of international research collaborations that are continuously expanded. UoS aims to prepare new generations to secure a bright future for Kurdistan as well as Iraq and the wider region. UoS tries to provide the best training for its students to become inventors and to participate in the processes of progress and development in this region by including international experience in their studies, be it abroad through mobility or at home through internationalisation of the curriculum. Among the principles of working in this university is to observe human rights, women's rights, children's rights, and to promote tolerance and democracy also in the Kurdish society. Internationalisation at UoS shall therefore strengthen these values amongst UoS scholars, staff and students while also educating the wider public to give them an international perspective.

### **2.1 Obstacles facing Internationalisation**

When establishing an internationalisation strategy, it is important to reflect on the existing shortcomings and obstacles. Among those are: inadequate foreign language skills, resistance of some elderly staff to amending the current system, lack of funds, visa difficulties for mobility of students and staff exchange, lack of resources, need for

amending rules by the government to allow international student recruitment and autonomy of the university, security advice by some foreign offices against travelling to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

## **2.2 International cooperation**

UoS builds its internationalisation on an already strong basis: it has signed cooperation agreements with nearly 100 universities around the world and currently has nearly 10 active projects. UoS has a leading centre in the region for Gender and Violence Studies in cooperation with university of Bristol, UK. UoS also has a Centre of Languages and Culture cooperating with IREX for English courses and Ferdawsi University of Mashhad, Iran, for Persian language courses. UoS is currently participating in three Erasmus+ projects including TIGRIS. UoS has student exchange with Karlsruhe University of Applied Sciences and Brandenburg University of Technology (BTU), Germany, a double degree PhD cotutelle agreement with the University of Göttingen, Germany, and several split-site PhD projects with other international universities.

## **3. Internationalization goals of UoS**

### **3.1 Improve the quality of education**

UoS believes that its very important to enhance the quality of education in order to produce better qualified generations, to keep up with international universities' standards, to fulfil the labour market needs, to attract local and international students, to improve the university's ranking and reputation, to assist the university financially by gaining more students and international funds/grants and to increase exchange opportunities for home students and staff.

In order to achieve this, UoS focuses on the university's relationships and activities with international partners, increasing student and staff mobility programs and opening up to new initiatives and partnerships. UoS also fosters internationalisation based on the strengths of the various departments and scientific centres, as well as academics and students. UoS plans to enhance the quality of education by updating the curricula supported by expert international academics in order to be compatible with the Bologna system; by sending staff abroad for training, holding local training for staff and improving staff's English language proficiency through language training courses. Furthermore, UoS plans to implement the Bologna system and ECTS, to bring modern technologies and materials into teaching and laboratories, to improve internationalisation at home by activities such as involving international teachers through online classes, webinars and to establish exchange agreement with well-established international universities.

As a result, more national and international students will be recruited, the university supplies the labour market with skilled graduates, better feedback from community, the number of international teaching staff is increased, and student and staff exchange numbers are also increased. UoS is expected to graduate more qualified students with higher employment chances through monitoring alumni and Career Development Centre data.

The results can be measured by both an internal Quality Assurance Team and independent external evaluators. The following indicators will be used related to actions and results:

<b>Actions/results</b>	<b>Results</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Benchmark</b>
UoS focuses on the University's relationships and activities with international partners,		increase number of MoUs with international partners annually	(+10% annually)
increase student and staff mobility programs and open up to new initiatives and partnerships.		increase number of exchange programmes	(+20% annually)
UoS plans to enhance the quality of education through updating the curricula in order to be compatible with the Bologna system by expert international academics;		implement Bologna consecutively in all programmes	(2020: 30%, 2021: 60%, 2022: 100%)
sending staff abroad for training,		increase number of staff sent abroad	(+10% annually)
holding local training for staff		increase number of staff trained locally	(+20% annually)
improving staff's English language proficiency through language training courses		Measure and compare English language improvement i.e. academic staff who took part at the English language training courses on average must improve by one level using the exam indicators set by the language experts	(UoS language centre consider each 0.5 degree of IELTS test score above 4 as one level of improvement e.g. progressing from IELTS or its equivalent of 4 to 4.5 means improving from elementary to pre-intermediate level (Minimum benchmark is IELTS test score of 4).
		UoS is aiming to have a minimum of intermediate level of English language	for 90% of its staff and students in 5 years
Implement the Bologna system and ECTS		implement Bologna consecutively in all programmes	(2020: 30%, 2021: 60%, 2022: 100%)
bring modern technologies and materials in to teaching and laboratories		increase in share of teachers involved in online classes and webinars	(+10% annually)
improve internationalisation at home activities such as involving international teachers through online classes, webinars		increase in share of teachers involved in online classes and webinars	(+10% annually)
establish exchange agreement with well-established international universities		increase number of MoUs with international partners annually	(+10% annually)

	more national and international students recruited	increase in enrolment of international degree students	(+10% annually)
	university supplies the market with skilled graduates	satisfaction rating of employers (survey) with graduates	at least "good"
	better feedback from community	satisfaction rating of social stakeholders (survey) with graduates	at least "good"
	number of international teaching staff increased	increase in number of international academics	(+5-10% annually)
	student and staff exchange numbers increased	increase in number of academics going abroad	(+5-10% annually)
		increase in number of UoS students going abroad	(+5-10% annually)
	UoS is expected to graduate more qualified students with higher employment chances through monitoring alumni and Career Development Centre data	improved reputation of graduates from employer's reviews (survey)	at least 70% say that the quality of graduates improved
		increase in number of successful international cooperation projects	(+5% annually)
		increase in the rate of attendance at international workshops, conferences, symposiums, training courses and cultural programs	(+5-10% annually)

### 3.2 Improve the quality of research

UoS considers enhancing the quality of research an important goal since the quality of research plays a crucial role in attracting industry funds and producing higher quality publications which in turn raise the international reputation of the university.

UoS wants to enhance the quality of research by signing more cooperation agreements with national and international partners, by conducting more joint research projects, joint postgraduate projects, and postgraduate student exchange, as well as by increasing funds for the split-site PhD program (in this program student has an external international supervisor); to enhance the quality of research further, UoS strives to sign more cotutelle agreements, to conduct more double and joint degree research programs, staff exchange, as well as training to improve staff research skills. UoS also aims to improve research visibility, to provide access to high quality journals for academic staff and to improve acquisition of national/ international funds. Finally, UoS will encourage academic staff to participate at international conferences through financial support e.g. travel grants and will provide modern equipment for quality researches.

UoS expects to increase the rate of publications at high ranked peer reviewed international journals, to increase exchange and dual degree programs with international partners, to improve the international reputation of the university and to attract more industry funds for researches.

The achievements can be measured by:

<b>Actions/results</b>	<b>Results</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Benchmark</b>
signing more cooperation agreement with national and international partners	increase exchange and dual degree programs with international partners	increase number of MoUs with international partners annually	(+10% annually)
conducting more joint research projects, joint postgraduate projects, postgraduate student exchange		increase number of joint research projects with international partners annually	(+10% annually)
increasing funds for split-site PhD program (in this program student has an external international supervisor)	increase exchange and dual degree programs with international partners	increase in fund for PhD program	(+10% annually)
sign more cotutelle agreements	increase exchange and dual degree programs with international partners	increase number of cotutelles with international partners annually	(+10% annually)
and conduct more double and joint degree research programs	increase exchange and dual degree programs with international partners	increase number of joint research projects with international partners annually	(+10% annually)
staff exchange		increase in number of academics going abroad	(+5-10% annually)
training to improve staff research skills		increase in number of academics in trainings	(+5-10% annually)
improve research visibility		increase share of publications in high impact journals	(+5 annually)
provide access to high quality journals for academic staff	UoS expects to increase rate of publications at high ranked peer reviewed international journals	increase share of publications in high impact journals	(+5 annually)
		increase in citation score	(+10% annually)
		increase in the average annual IF score by 0.5 to be considered as one level of improvement, e.g. increase in the	average annual IF of academic staff publications from 1.5 to 2
improve search for national/ international funds.	attract more industry funds for researches.	increase in fund for research	(+20% annually)
Encourage academic staff to participate at international conferences through financial support e.g. travel grants.	improve the international reputation of the university	increase in number of academics participating in int. conferences	(+20% annually)
Provide modern equipment for quality researches	improve the international reputation of the university	increase satisfaction of researchers with quality of equipment	(+30% annually until full satisfaction)

### 3.3 Prepare students for a globalising world

UoS believes that it is important to prepare students well for life and work in an intercultural and globalising world as it will enable the students to adapt better in other countries when doing internships or seeking a career abroad, as well as enhances their chance to find employment and succeed in future careers, especially international careers.

A crucial initiative will be to update curricula according to Bologna system standards and to design industry-oriented courses to prepare well-equipped and knowledgeable graduates while also increasing exchange programs to improve the students' experience. For this, UoS strives to create opportunities for mobilities and service learning abroad. Likewise, UoS will pay attention to internationalisation at home and of the curriculum through online courses, as well as by increasing the number of incoming international students and staff for interactions and sharing of experience.

The outcomes expected to show through more successful results from the exchange programs after evaluation from hosting institutions such as personality, achieved marks, intercultural competence measured by inventories; and also recording higher graduate employment rates.

Actions and outcomes will be measured by:

Actions/results	Results	Indicator	Benchmark
update curricula according to Bologna system standards and design industry-oriented courses to prepare well equipped and knowledgeable graduates		Increased implementation of Bologna in degree programmes	(+20% annually until 100% are reached)
increase exchange programs to improve student's experience. Create opportunities for mobilities and service learning abroad		increase number of exchange programmes	(+20% annually)
		increase in number of UoS students going abroad	(+5-10% annually)
		increase in number of UoS students going abroad on internships or service learning	(+5-10% annually)
Pay attention to internationalisation at home and of the curriculum through online courses		increase in online courses with international partners	(+20% annually)
		increase in students participating in online courses with international partners	(+20% annually)
increase the number of incoming international students and staff for interactions and sharing experience		increase in number of international academics	(+5-10% annually)
		increase in number of incoming international students	(+5-10% annually)

	also recording higher graduate employment rates	improved feedback from employers through the UoS's Career Development Centre	level at least "good"
	more successful results from the exchange programs after evaluation from hosting institutions such as personality, achieved marks, intercultural competence measured by inventories	Improved results in assessments through inventories	(+10% annually)
		Improved feedback by internship program personnel	at least "improved" as feedback

### 3.4 Enhance the international reputation and visibility of the UoS

It is important to improve the international reputation and visibility of UoS in order to increase student recruitment, to gain more national and international funds/grants, to take part in more international programs, and to attract more international students and staff for exchange programs.

UoS attempts to achieve this through various ways, including improving the university's website through sharing clear information, activities and contacts in different common foreign languages, by participating in international exchange programs, by increasing the number of double degrees with international partners and by producing higher quality publications.

As a result, the university's website will have more visitors while staff will have a better chance of getting in touch with international counterparts; furthermore, UoS's reputation will be improved regionally and internationally in the longer term, publication rates at higher Impact Factor journals are increased, more knowledgeable graduates from improved curricula are produced, more students are recruited, more international partners for joint projects are attracted and more students and staff will participate at exchange programs.

Actions and results will be measured by:

Actions/results	Results	Indicator	Benchmark
improving university's website through sharing clear information, activities and contacts in different common foreign languages	As a result, the UoS website will get more visitors and staff will get better chance of getting in touch with international counterparts	Monitoring the website visitors through Webometrics ranking,	
participate in international exchange programs	more students and staff will participate at exchange programs	increase in number of UoS students going abroad	(+5-10% annually)
		increase number of staff sent abroad	(+10% annually)
	more international students recruited	increase in number of international student recruitments	(+5-10% annually)

	more international partners attracted for joint projects	increase number of MoUs with international partners annually	(+10% annually)
increase the number of double degrees with international partners	more knowledgeable graduates produced from improved curricula	improved feedback from employers through the UoS's Career Development Centre	level at least "good"
produce higher quality publications	publication rates increased at higher Impact Factor journals	increase in citation score	(+10% annually)
	UoS reputation will be improved regionally and internationally in longer term	increase in the average annual IF score by 0.5 to be considered as one level of improvement, e.g. increase in the	average annual IF of academic staff publications from 1.5 to 2
		and student/staff mobility such as setting a benchmark of 5% increase as one level of improvement; as well as monitoring UoS reputation from independent international reviewers	(+5% annually)
		increase in rates of accomplished successful international projects	(+5% annually)

### 3.5 Provide better service to society and community

UoS believes that it is important to provide a better service to the society and to involve itself more in social engagement of the community through educating more qualified generations equipped with scientific and social skills, and with higher employment chance.

The university plans to increase internship programs locally (also for incoming international students) and internationally, to increase student/staff exchange with international partners, to improve skill levels through specially designed courses, to build international connections as internationalisation helps create lasting links into global networks, and to help in addressing the societal challenges. Furthermore, UoS will adopt service learning and community outreach activities by international scholars and international students, engage students in more community serving activities and volunteering activities. Finally, UoS will organize training, language and educating courses for the local public.

The expected outcomes are: Making the community more successful and advanced through increased employment rates and improved skills and languages of the local public, international scholars training, more connections with international communities achieved, solutions found for some of the community challenges, more local activities organized by international people through the university, engaging more research and organizations with the locals, more services provided to the local public by volunteering students and staff.

This will be measured by:

Actions/results	Results	Indicator	Benchmark
increase internship programs locally (also for incoming international students) and internationally		increase in number of internships for international students	(+20% annually)
		increase in number of international internships in NGOs for students	(+20% annually)
improve skill levels through specially designed courses	making community more successful and advanced through increased employment rates and improved skills and languages of the local public	improvement in skills level of participants, measured through online learning outcome survey	(+20% minimum)
build international connections as internationalisation helps create lasting links into global networks	more connections with international communities achieved	increase in number of service learning projects abroad	(+20% annually)
help in addressing the societal challenges	solutions found for some of the community challenges.		survey community satisfaction with services done with level 6-7 from 10 as minimum acceptable benchmark and comparing improvement from year to year
adopt service learning and community outreach activities by international scholars and international students		social engagement rates of academic staff and students, i.e. what percentage of scholars and students were engaged	(+5% annually)
engage students in more community serving activities and volunteering activities	more services provided to the local public by volunteering students and staff	social engagement rates of academic staff and students, i.e. what percentage of scholars and students were engaged	(+5% annually)
Organize training, language and educating courses for the local public	more local activities organized by international people through the university, engaging more research and organizations with the locals	increase in number of activities for local communities	(+20% annually)
	international scholars training	increase in number of int. scholars involved in public training	(+5% annually)

Beyond the direct internationalisation goals, UoS wants to link its internationalisation strategy to the university development plan through revising the development plan based on the agenda and international components integrated such as international mobility of home students and staff, international student recruitment, international strategic partnerships, double degree programs, offering more programs in non-local languages, internationalisation of home curriculum and the campus, international staff recruitments,

opening courses for developing international awareness and offering distance/online blended courses. The university plans to implement Bologna and ECTS system, hire some international academic staff, and promote staff and student mobility programs in order to support the internationalisation strategy. The international strategy of the university will revise the development plan and analyse for which general developmental goals of the Higher Education the international strategy could provide services.