

Erbil Polytechnic University

Internationalisation Strategy

2020-2024

Mission

Erbil Polytechnic University (EPU) is a public higher education institution which aims at equipping undergraduates and postgraduates with state-of-the-art knowledge and the necessary skills to meet the needs of the labour market. This can only be achieved by integrating internationalisation as a strong institutional instrument.

Strategy

To achieve internationalisation, EPU focuses on teaching, research and innovation, community engagement, and globalisation, thereby taking an advisory role in raising awareness of the significance of internationalisation, student and staff mobility and high-quality international research.

A crucial part in developing its internationalisation will be self-enhancement through collaboration with local and international organisations in order to play an important role in advancing knowledge and solving problems of the community. Overall, the internationalisation strategy of the university focuses on five core goals.

The **first goal** of the strategy is to enhance the quality of education through implementation of the Bologna process.

A fundamental requirement to achieve this is the enhancement of the quality of education in order to provide, at least, a similar quality of education that is provided by international educational institutions. This is important in order to prepare technical qualified students in the various specialties to meet the needs of the labour market, to develop human capacity and resources in technical fields for students as well as to support and implement

international standards of research. Moreover, high quality education directly serves the local community.

Activities:

Various internationalisation activities will support this general endeavour. To fully implement the Bologna process, the university will undertake the following activities in next five years:

- Finalise the guideline for the implementation of ECTS and tuning the Bologna process at EPU
- Further train at least 2 staff members per degree programme on the Bologna process and ECTS
- Implement ECTS and the Bologna process in a growing number of degree programmes

Outcomes:

The plan is expected to lead to the full implementation of ECTS and the Bologna process in three cycles.

Indicators for the above mentioned activities will be:

1. Level of introduction of ECTS in degree programmes (2020: 50%, 2021: 70%; 2022: 100%).
2. Level of introduction of the 3-cycle Bologna process in degree programmes (2020: 50%, 2021: 70%; 2022: 100%; first institutes: Shaqlawa Technical Institute and Erbil Technology Institute)
3. Number of staff who received training on ECTS and Bologna process is 20 per year.

This goal also needs actions in the areas of students' mobility, staff mobility and social engagement. Accordingly, the following actions are planned:

Activities:

- EPU plans to send an increasing number of students abroad for an average of 6 months in exchange programmes across the world.
- EPU will also send an increasing percentage of academics on short-term research and teaching stays abroad.

- EPU will especially invite partner universities to send students for 3-6 month placements; these students will then work under the supervision of EPU academics with local NGOs to help the community.

The indicators for these actions are:

1. % increase of EPU students going abroad (2020: 20%, 2021: 50%, 2021: 66%)
2. Share of EPU students (in %) going abroad (2020: 2%, 2021: 3%, 2021: 5%)
3. % increase of EPU academics going abroad (2020: 20%, 2021: 50%, 2021: 66%)
4. Share of EPU academics (in %) going abroad (2020: 2%, 2021: 3%, 2021: 5%)
5. Number of international students on social engagement placements at EPU (2020: 5, 2021: 10, 2021: 20).

The **second goal** aims to enhance the quality of research to solve problems facing industries such as oil, agriculture, electric generation as well as manufacturing industries and tourism. Solving problems in above mentioned sectors would undoubtedly lead to enhancement in quality of life and better services for the community.

Activities:

To achieve this goal, the university will recruit international researchers to conduct collaborative research with local staff. It will further continue to organise collaborative conferences in various fields with national and international universities and organisations, and provide financial incentives to any academic staff who participates in international conferences, and publishes research papers in high impact journals. The university will refund our academic staff who publishes papers in internationally recognised journals accredited by SCOPUS and Clarivate Analytics as well as refunding flight tickets and registration fee for researchers who present papers in international conferences.

Outcomes:

Hence, the expected outcomes of the plan are raising quality and quantity of published research in international recognised journals which is indexed in SCOPAS and Clarivate Analytics which both have high scientific quality impact.

Measurement:

The indicators for these actions are:

1. Increasing rate of staff who participate in short-term research such as fellowship (2020: 5%, 2021: 10%, 2022: 15%)
2. Increasing rate of international staff in our campuses (staff: 2020: 1%, 2021: 2%, 2022: 3%)
3. Increasing the number of international research projects conducted by academic staff of EPU (2020: 20%, 2021: 40%, 2022: 60%)
4. Share of research published by the academic staff in high impact journals (2020: 10%, 2021: 15%, 2022: 20%);
5. Number of obtained grants by the newly established Fund Raising Unit (2020: 2, 2021: 4, 2022: 6);
6. Share of newly recruited international staff at the university involved in international research (2020: 30%, 2021: 60%, 2022: 100%)
7. Share of financial spending on research related activities through providing incentives for researchers (2020: 5%, 2021: 10%, 2022: 15%)
8. Share of EPU academic staff that participates in international conferences and research publication (2020: 40%, 2021: 50%, 2022: 60%)

Well-prepared students for life and work in an intercultural and globalising world is **the third goal** of the strategy. Today, the world is interconnected and everyone is closely related and dependant on each other. The university has implemented a number of courses and programmes to prepare students for life in and outside of the region. In addition, preparing students to work and collaborate in a globalised world is an important factor to adopt to various environments and be able to live abroad without encountering cultural shock.

Activities:

To achieve this, the university has started and will continue to implement a number of programmes aiming at capacity building and internationalisation. The university is also in the negotiation process with a number of Middle Eastern and European universities to develop a mutual academic agreement to provide joint and double degree programmes for the next five years. The university through the exchange and summer training programmes will prepare qualified graduates who can work and collaborate with international organisations.

Outcomes:

1. Upon their graduation, the graduates possess a distinct international outlook that will enable them to apply for international job opportunities. They also gain soft skills which enable them to think globally and act locally, and by experiencing diversity and encountering cultural differences to manage those challenges.
2. Upon their return, the students have the opportunities to transfer the skills and knowledge gained to current students of the EPU through sharing their experiences and knowledge by presenting seminars to their peers and writing reports to the departments. In other words, the participation of students in the training courses abroad is not significant only for the students themselves but also to their peers that they share class with and the community they work with. Moreover, upon their return, they will establish international networking and attempt to collaborate with international organisations of policy making. For instance, the university has summer and cultural exchange programmes with universities from China, Egypt, Germany, and Palestine to send and receive undergraduates. Such programmes run since the last year and continue. Currently, the university is working with a number of international organisations such as UNHCR, SPARK, and HOPES to secure funds to admit international students at EPU. The funds have contributed to increase the number of international students at EPU.

Measurement:

1. Number of programmes aimed at capacity building (2020: 1, 2021: 2, 2022: 3)

2. Share of students involved in capacity building programmes (2020: 10%, 2021: 30%, 2022: 60%)
3. Evaluation of Kurdish students of opportunities for networking with international students and staff in terms of exchange of knowledge, research, entrepreneurship and communication skills in online survey (benchmark “good” (3 out of 4 points)
4. Number of collaborations with local and international organisations which employ our graduates (2020: 2, 2021: 5, 2022: 10)
5. Share of total number of students annually in summer training and semester courses (by 2020: 5%, 2021: 10%, 2022: 15%).

The **fourth goal** is to enhance the international reputation and visibility of the institution. A good international reputation will attract students to study at our university. Likewise, such reputation would attract international scholars to collaborate with our academic staff and seek recruitment at EPU. The increasing number of international students will lead to raise in the income of the university, which means the university works towards becoming financially independent, thereby increasing its autonomy. That means the ranking of the university might improve as well.

Activities:

There are several ways to achieve this goal.

1. It is planned to promote the university’s position globally through establishment of an international office. The office has three units which are Fund Raising, Cultural Relations, and Hospitality and Delegations.
2. The university plans to improve technology services to deliver the university’s missions and visions and promote our mission of reciprocal community engagement. This includes designing a new website in English language and setting up academic staff profile.
3. It further involves promoting and supporting international research and collaboration in different fields via the engagement of our researchers to raise ranking of the

university. Besides, the plan focuses on creating the necessary infrastructure to encourage and support multidisciplinary scholarship.

4. The university, through implementing ECTS in the academic year 2019-2020, offers undergraduates programmes in both fields of medical and engineering in English language.
5. The university is actively involved in the engagement of our alumni in Career Development Centre in order to assist them to persuit recruiment.
6. In addition, we will strive to establish a strong network between the alumni and our university.

Outcomes and Indicators:

The university set up several objectives for this goal which also serve as indicators:

1. Improve QS ranking of the university (top 1000 by 2023).
2. Create financial resources and leadership potential to the university to act as an independent entity. Most importantly, more funding projects shall be available to the university. (2020: 3, 2021: 6, 2022: 9)
3. The number of google citations of university staff shall improve yearly (benchmark +5% annually)
4. The university also intends to recruit increasingly more international staff until 2023 (benchmark: +5% p.a.).
5. Better reputation of recruitment services offered by Career Development Centre of the university (online survey result at least “good”)
6. Increasing financial and idealistic support from alumni (no benchmark).
7. Rate of published research in international peer reviewed journals and identify the number of citations via Google measurement tools (benchmark: +10% p.a.)
8. Increasing number of international projects (benchmark: +10% p.a.)
9. Increasing enrolment of degree-seeking international students (benchmark: +10% p.a.)
10. Annual evaluation of employability of our graduates (benchmark: at least “good” in online survey among alumni)

The **fifth and last goal** of the strategy is to provide service to society and to engage in community social engagement. It is important to support the society with labour force and address the issues the society faces. Likewise, there will be more job offers to our graduates who serve the society. At the same time, once graduated, the alumni can assist the university to establish solid ground for collaborative work.

Activities:

The activities to achieve this goal are diverse:

- Negotiating with the business sector to provide internships for our international incoming students;
- Conducting joint projects with private sector and international partner universities, approving establishment of scientific departments that can meet the needs of the market which should be approved by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in the Kurdistan region,
- Preparing qualified graduates to provide medical and technical services to the community by especially providing service-learning projects abroad and offering service learning projects for international students in Kurdistan,
- Conducting social activities that would improve the engagement of the university within the society, especially using international students and staff as well as university staff and students with experience abroad.

Outcomes:

Such plans shall lead to the following expected results. Due to close relationship between the university and the community, the university attempts to build a strong foundation with the community through initiatives such as organising conferences, seminars, symposiums, and workshops on a number of issues that face the society. Such issues include collaboration with local NGOs to raise awareness of the danger of cancer and encouraging good quality life style. The university has worked with NGOs to address potential risks of irregular migration. In addition, EPU signed an agreement with local Trade Chamber to recruit our national and

international graduates. Also, the Chamber provides training courses on how to set up own business. Besides, the interconnection between the university and society would undoubtedly boost the economy of the region and makes it more productive society.

Measurement:

These results will be measured through

- Share of student projects that address the issues facing society (2020: 5%, 2021: 10%, 2022: 15%)
- Feedback by the graduates who work in the local community on the quality of education (at least a “good” in a survey)
- Measuring the impact of the university on the local community via following up process and evaluation to amend the weak aspects of the process (at least a “good” in a survey)
- Share of participants of the local community in the social engagement programmes offered by the university by 2021 (at least 5%).

Linking the Internationalisation Strategy with the University Development Strategy

To enable the implementation of the activities defined above and to ensure the achievement of the expected outcomes, Erbil Polytechnic University will link the Internationalisation Strategy with its general University Development Strategy by officially adopting its goals, activities and indicators, thereby rendering internationalisation the key driver for the university's future development. As a result, Erbil Polytechnic University will render internationalisation a key priority in developing the university's infrastructure, educational programmes and scientific activities and will allocate significant human and financial resources to fulfil its vision to become a highly internationalised university.

For monitoring and assessing the strategy's implementation, its goals and achievements, Erbil Polytechnic University will create a dedicated committee to monitor and regularly report on the process of internationalisation. For this, a reporting framework will be developed enabling regular reports to the university's leadership and the University Council, which will have to approve of the reports and the progress made.