

› The University of Münster  
Internationalisation Strategy  
2012-2018

## Status Quo

With almost 40 000 students, the University of Münster (WWU) is one of the largest and most tradition-steeped universities in Germany and has a unique, extremely broad array of subjects and an established interdisciplinary focus. It is the University's aim to achieve a top position amongst the world's leading universities through top-level research, high-quality teaching and excellent support of young academics. An international orientation of both teaching and research as well as global networking are therefore fundamental principles of the University.

The University of Münster maintains intensive contacts to universities and non-university academic institutions in many different countries. Together with high-ranking partners the University is integrated in a far-reaching network of research cooperations and exchange programmes.

Thus the University can pride itself on numerous excellent international activities:

- Around **3 500 international students** are enrolled at the University at different levels (various exchange programmes, Bachelor, Master and doctoral degree courses).
- The broad array of study programmes at the University includes **English-taught programmes as well as degree courses** which are offered in cooperation with partner universities abroad.
- **Internationally-oriented Junior Research Groups and Graduate Schools**, of which four are organised together with partner institutions abroad, offer German and international doctoral students the possibility of completing a PhD in an internationally orientated environment.
- Research at the University has, as a matter of course, always been inherently international. The University of Münster is well-positioned within international academia and is continually expanding this position, as can be seen through the large and constantly **increasing number of international cooperations** with universities and other academic institutions worldwide.
- Central university institutions such as the **International Office**, the **international meeting place "Die Brücke"**, the **University's own guest accommodation** as well as the **WWU Graduate Centre** and the **Language Centre** with its extensive programme of language courses provide support for international activities in research and teaching and are points of contact for international students, (junior) academics and staff.

## Mission Statement

The University of Münster continually strives to increase its degree of internationalisation. This task concerns the full cross-section of the university: it permeates all areas – teaching, research, further education, administration and staff development – and actively involves all levels – faculties, administrative departments and university management – as well as the university members concerned in accordance with the University's mission statement *living.knowledge*. Internationalisation is no end in itself but contributes to the University's profile and competitiveness in the core areas of university teaching and research. Thus it is a key element toward achieving the aim of becoming a top-ranking university. This strong international position is continually being strengthened and consolidated through measures to

- increase the attractiveness of the University for qualified international undergraduate and postgraduate students as well as for researchers, lecturers and non-academic staff;
- encourage the mobility of students and researchers
- expand the University's international presence and networking;
- optimise internal structures, services and framework conditions.

# Strategic Aims – Internationalisation as a Programme

The University of Münster considers internationalisation to be both a management task which takes into account the varied needs and the academic freedom of the faculties and a cooperative task which involves all partners on equal footing. Internationalisation is therefore incorporated institutionally into the University management, in the faculties and in the administrative structures.

Internationalisation is an ongoing, continuous process, defined by a strategy and an implementation programme. The central internationalisation strategy of the University aims to

- define strategic targets and framework conditions for the internationalisation process,
- support the prioritisation decisions of faculties and institutes and thus the diversity of implementation measures within the strategic framework conditions,
- create synergies through the coordination and combining of individual measures,
- set incentives for achieving the strategic development goals set by the University.

To achieve this aim the University of Münster focuses both on the preservation and strengthening of existing, successful international activities as well as on the development of such activities both within and outside of the University.

To develop its internationalisation further the University of Münster has therefore defined the following strategic aims:

## 1. Studying without Borders: Increasing the Internationalisation of Teaching and Studies

International and intercultural experiences are to be regarded as important elements of a modern university education. The University of Münster meets its responsibilities towards all of its students and graduates, whether German or international, by offering international experiences and intercultural exchange within degree courses. The following points indicate the main focus areas of the internationalisation of teaching and studying:

The University of Münster encourages *incoming and outgoing mobility* in order to increase students' international and intercultural competence. The University already has manifold existing options (agreements with partner universities, possibilities for academic supervision), which are well utilized by students (annually approx. 900 outgoing and 450 incoming students). In particular, the University aims to improve the quality of student mobility and to incorporate student mobility in the curricula of Bachelor's and Master's degrees as well as to achieve more of a balance in the numbers of incoming and outgoing students.

Not all students are able to take up options of international mobility; therefore the University also intends to offer its students opportunities to acquire international and intercultural competence without the need to go abroad. Under the heading *Internationalisation at Home* the University encourages activities both within and outside of study programmes.

The University aims to increase the *internationalisation of study programmes* on all levels (Bachelor, Master, PhD). In addition to the support of academic staff exchanges for teaching purposes (e.g. ERASMUS Staff Mobility), a focus will lie on the creation of international and/or intercultural elements to be incorporated within study programmes so that the teaching of subject-related international and also intercultural competence will become a natural part of study programmes. Increasing the number of non-German (and in particular English-language) and international study programmes is a further goal within the internationalisation of teaching as such programmes are

particularly well suited to imparting both international and intercultural competence. At the same time, these measures also attract international students.

The ***integration of international and German students*** is a further element of the internationalisation of teaching and studies. The so-called *International Classroom*, in which students of different nationalities with different cultural backgrounds meet, develops competencies amongst all students. Integration also, and in fact mainly, takes place outside of the actual classroom situation. The University encourages a climate of openness and creates possibilities for German and international students to meet, in particular during extra-curricular activities. The international meeting place for German and international students, „Die Brücke“, plays a central role.

## 2. Global Academia: Expansion and Optimisation of Support Structures for International Research

Significant research insights are often gained at disciplinary interfaces and in transdisciplinary contexts. Interdisciplinarity has always been an important part of the University's self-understanding and manifests itself, amongst other things, in the establishment of *academic centres* within the University. The systematic support of inter- and transdisciplinary structures also facilitates and encourages excellent research in an international perspective: through ***specific thematic networking and proactive support of pioneering topics and cooperations***, new synergies and economies of scale are created which serve as a catalyst for internationally competitive activities.

Through an ***improvement of the international visibility*** of the total extent of its research achievements and also through the proactive presentation of its inter- and transdisciplinary competence, the University increases its attractiveness as a place of research and also extends its research potential by attracting internationally mobile leading academics.

Each year the University of Münster confers between 700 and 800 doctoral degrees: supporting junior academics from the beginning of their research careers during their doctoral degrees right up to executive university positions is a central element for developing excellence and also a guarantee for a future capacity to act. The University recognizes junior academics as a separate group and specifically supports them through the ***establishment of a WWU Graduate Centre***. Functioning as an umbrella structure, it offers flexible support and service structures for all forms of doctoral projects; as a point of contact especially for international junior academics it helps increase the visibility of the University in the competition for attracting outstanding young researchers.

## 3. Global Network: Strategic Orientation of International Relations and Partnerships

The University of Münster encourages the ***creation and expansion of international networks and partnerships*** as well as the international mobility of its members. The partnerships at university level are chosen and oriented in such a manner as to supplement the strategic aims of the University concerning teaching and research and are supported by intensive academic cooperation at faculty level. According to the vision of the development of the University through “directed evolution”, these strategic partnerships are regularly reviewed and underlie ongoing development.

The number of university cooperations is concentrated on ***selected core partnerships in the form of networks and partner institutions with strategic target countries or regions***. In order to utilize synergies, the linking of different University activities in the target countries and regions is of especial importance.

Current strategic ***focus countries and regions*** are:

**Europe:**

The University of Münster works together with other European universities within the framework of the *International Research Universities Network (IRUN)* on improving the quality of research and teaching at the participating universities and is represented in the *European University Association* and other European organisations via this network, too. In addition, Europe is both the main region of origin and the target region for student and staff mobility at the University of Münster. A particular focus of both student exchanges and also academic cooperations lies in the ***German-Dutch border region between Germany and the Netherlands***.

**Asia:**

The main focus countries in Asia are ***China, Japan*** and ***India***. On account of the many excellent research and teaching cooperations at university and faculty level the University of Münster is a leader in international networking in these countries. Together with other universities from North-Rhine Westphalia, the University also operates a liaison office in Beijing as part of the *China-NRW University Alliance*.

**South America:**

In South America, ***Brazil*** is the focus country. With its more than 20 intensive and in part long-standing contacts to Brazilian partners, the University of Münster has the closest ties to Brazil of all German universities. Since 2010 all activities concerning Brazil have been brought together under the roof of the University's Brazil Centre. The Centre advises on possibilities of cooperation and supports activities in research, research transfer, teaching and studying. Through its representation in the *German House of Science and Innovation (DWIH)* in São Paulo, the Centre has also intensified its support structures in Brazil itself.

**North America / Australia:**

The University maintains partnerships with US, Canadian and Australian universities in order to further student and staff exchanges as well as bilateral research cooperations. On account of the University's research excellence these partnerships also focus on equally high-ranking partner universities and institutions.

In addition to university-wide partnerships, in particular contacts at the level of individual academic exchange as well as content-based cooperations with partners abroad are an important foundation of a vibrant and successful internationalisation culture. The University of Münster thus supports its members in maintaining and expanding cooperations at the faculty, institute or individual academic level through providing information, advice on possibilities and funding of international activities as well as through the support of international mobility to and from Münster for academic and non-academic staff.

#### **4. Excellent Minds from all over the World: Active Recruitment of Students and Staff from Abroad**

The University of Münster predominantly owes its reputation as an internationally attractive study and research location for students and scholars to its achievements in ***attracting excellently qualified students and scholars from abroad***. The active recruitment of the best helps ensure the quality of teaching and research as well as the development of intercultural competence of all members of the University. In addition, the recruitment of students and staff from abroad will also

continue to gain importance in light of the demographic development in Germany and the increasing pressures of international competition.

At the University of Münster, a systematic, strategically oriented international marketing concept and international recruitment are still being developed. Creating the category *International* on our website and overhauling our entire English-language online presence are important steps for the public profile and international visibility of the University. Furthermore, the University aims to establish a specific ***marketing and recruitment concept***, tailored to various target groups, which combines and integrates university-wide and faculty-specific measures to thus increase the University's attractiveness for an international market.

It is part of the self-understanding of the University of Münster as an internationally orientated research and study facility that students and academic staff from abroad are welcomed into the University community by receiving all information and service offers necessary for a successful start as well as ongoing support throughout their stay at the University. The University already has diverse, highly successful centralised and de-centralised advice and support packages for the different international target groups in the phases before and during their stay at the University. These include advice before arrival in Münster and at the beginning of the stay as well as assistance in finding accommodation suitable for families as well as numerous social and cultural activities in the International Office, the University-owned guest accommodation and in the international meeting-place „Die Brücke“. With its information fair ‘*Connecta International Münster*’, the University offers its international undergraduate and postgraduate students a tailored package, unique in Germany, for the transfer from university to a career by enabling them to come into contact with potential employers and international organisations.

The University aims to further expand and coordinate its support services within the joint roof of a ***University of Münster International Centre***. It is to bring together, communicate and connect all of the welcoming services the University has to offer its international target groups. Furthermore it will offer support and advice from a single source to all international guests of the University during their stay and serve as an interface to other institutions within and outside of the University (central university administration, Graduate Centre, the City of Münster, Foreigners‘ Registration Office etc.), in order to facilitate both their academic and social integration into university life and also into city life in Münster efficiently and successfully.

Additionally, the University of Münster aims to maintain long-term connections and good cooperation with its former members in Germany and abroad through the *University International Centre* in conjunction with the University's alumni activities.

## 5. International Services: Creation of an Attractive Environment for Internationally-orientated Research and Teaching

To support the internationalisation of research and teaching, the University of Münster is promoting the founding and expansion of an internationally-orientated administrative and service structure. Important prerequisites for this are international thinking and acting on all levels, including, of course, the dealing with the needs of the University's international members and guests. Furthering an increased international focus of the University is thus also a task for all areas of the University administration. The aim is to create an actively practised internationalisation culture in all parts of the central administration and the faculties.

### Advice and Support for the Faculties:

The University supports the faculties in activities aimed at making teaching and research more international through a range of customised advice and service structures offered by the International Office, the Language Centre and other central institutions as well as the different departments of the central administration.

**Concerns of the International Target Groups:**

When analysing and implementing administrative procedures, the University pays particular regard to the special interests of the various international target groups in order to make their access to the University as smooth as possible and in order to facilitate their integration into the day-to-day of academic studies as well as the academic and work-related University community.

**Language:**

An open and direct communication with international students and academics all over the world forms part of the support of an international orientation of teaching and research. The University of Münster therefore supports a multi-lingual approach within internal and external communication in the areas research, teaching and administration.

**Dialogue:**

Furthermore, the University's internationalisation activities are the result of an ongoing open dialogue between central service institutions and faculties on the one hand and the exchange of experience amongst the faculties on the other. Incentives for a further expansion of de-central internationalisation activities are also created.

**Ongoing Quality Control:**

The implementation of the measures, the further development of internationalisation targets as well as the process of internationalisation will be integrated in established instruments of ongoing quality control already used by the University and in new quality control instruments specifically tailored toward the internationalisation targets. In order to achieve these targets, both target and performance agreements can be formulated by the parties concerned in accordance with the guidelines formulated in this strategy.

## 6. Implementation

This central strategy forms the framework for the further elaboration of the University's overall internationalisation targets for the period 2012-2018. The concretisation of the targets in the form of measures and their implementation will be carried out in coordination with the University management, central institutions and faculties.

On the basis of the five target areas of internationalisation, namely teaching and research, strategic partnerships, acquisition of international students and staff, and internationally orientated administration and service structures, the faculties are first of all encouraged to formulate their own internationalisation strategies and priorities in line with the overall strategic orientation and prioritisation of the faculty.

The strategic internationalisation targets will be broken down into specific subtargets. Specific measures and activities will be formulated on the basis of SWOT-analyses. The ensuing prioritisation of the measures will reflect both the central internationalisation strategy of the University and also the priorities of the faculties. The implementation of the measures will be carried out in the form of yearly action plans in close cooperation between central institutions and faculties (e.g. task forces for the development of proposals for the implementation of the measures).