



**International
Office**

Internationalization at Home at the FernUniversität in Hagen

I. Background

The phrase *Internationalization at Home* is used to describe university activities that provide students and academic and non-academic staff alike with opportunities to gain international experience and knowledge as well as intercultural skills and language skills, to a certain extent, without the need to go abroad.

This experience can enrich international perspectives for both research and teaching. The intercultural and international skills acquired in this way are also a key skill for graduates and early career academics. In addition, both foreign students and foreign scientists bring with them a wealth of experience and knowledge about other higher education and scientific systems, from which the FernUniversität can benefit in countless ways.

The development of intercultural skills through *Internationalization at Home* serves not only to broaden participants' horizons in preparation for stays abroad or international activities at a later date, but also to improve interaction with foreign students and staff at the university and thus to develop a comprehensive welcoming culture.

What does this mean for the FernUniversität?

The FernUniversität's unique teaching and learning system means that *internationalization at home* takes on a different significance than at traditional face-to-face universities, whose internationalization is strongly influenced by mobility, stays abroad and life on campus.

Digitally supported, international teaching is an important pillar of international study experiences at the FernUniversität and enables both FernUni students and prospective students from partner universities worldwide to participate in the FernUni system.

II. Enabling international experience at home during your studies

Many aspects of studying at the FernUniversität are already international. Usually seen as a complementary measure to student mobility, Internationalization at Home at the FernUniversität is designed to meet the unique needs of its student body. Through internationally oriented (also short-format), primarily digital teaching and learning formats, the FernUniversität offers its students – especially those who may be less mobile due to personal circumstances – several options for gaining international experience during their studies. These can include, for example, summer schools and internationally oriented collaborative modules in addition to virtual mobility options.

The German Rectors' Conference recommends that universities make use of existing international cooperation for the internationalization of curricula to bring about a change of perspective in teaching through the increased involvement of international students. In addition, all students should be given the opportunity to acquire general and specialist foreign languages and this should be firmly anchored in the study programs.

» **Goal: To establishment virtual mobility or Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) offerings in all degree programs**

Building on the University Board's recommendations to the faculties from September 2020, all students at the FernUniversität are to be given the opportunity to gain international experience during their distance learning studies without a physical stay abroad via exchanges with international students and to experience international perspectives in teaching. There are various models and options available for this that each have different characteristics:

- **Virtual mobility:** Through international cooperations, students can complete modules at partner distance-learning universities, with successful examination results eligible for credit transfer to their home degree program.
- **Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL):** Students learn in mixed teams in international, digitally supported courses developed by lecturers from different universities. These may be Summer/Winter Schools, individual courses or complete modules.
- **English language courses:** Courses at the FernUniversität may be conducted in English even independently of international partner institutions. Visiting lecturers and guest speakers can further enrich the curriculum. At the same time, English-language courses facilitate the participation of foreign students and exchange students from partner universities.

To this end, degree programs should be structured in such a way that facilitates and supports international cooperation and English-language offerings in teaching by removing formal hurdles.

Supporting measures:

- **Embedding international modules** in the degree program and credit transfer: Compulsory elective modules in the degree program facilitate student exchange and the integration of international teaching projects into the curriculum, as they allow for more flexible credit transfer within international collaborations.
- **English Moodle environment:** Course environments should be designed in English wherever possible to make it easier for international students to participate.

- Appointment of **internationalization officers** within the faculty: Internationalization officers serve as key contacts for matters related to international students and partnerships, helping to streamline and support associated processes.
- The **English Editing Service** provided by the International Office offers assistance with editing English-language study materials and translating website content.
- The **Guide to International Digital Teaching** published by the Community of Practice of International Teachers and the International Office at the FernUniversität provides practical advice and tips for international teaching.
- Considering **intercultural dimensions** in the development of international, collaborative courses.
- Linking courses with the [English Learning Support](#) team at the FernUniversität

III. Building International Experience and Skills at the University

Administrative and technical staff, as well as academic departments at the FernUniversität, require additional skills to integrate international perspectives into teaching. This helps to streamline relevant processes and foster a deeper understanding of the framework conditions and challenges associated with internationalization at the institutional level.

» Goal: Increasing international exchange through staff mobility / staff weeks

The mobility of academic and non-academic university staff not only supports the personal development of university employees but also promotes collaboration with international partners and strengthens the institution's overall appeal and welcoming environment for international students and academics.

The aim is to increase the exchange of colleagues from the Central University Administration (ZHV) and the key institutions of the FernUniversität with corresponding institutions at other universities, especially abroad.

» Goal: Publicizing and offering further training and support services

Support services and further training can help to sensitize employees to international issues at the university and build up corresponding skills. These can be language courses appropriate for the respective field of activity as well as intercultural training. Some offers (internal training, DAAD training programs, offers from the [SUNY COIL Center's](#) Global Network) are not particu-

larly well known, or employees may be unaware of the need or potential benefit for their field of activity. Participating in certain thematic exchange forums with the FernUniversität's international partners also helps staff to gain new perspectives, recognize the added value of international exchange and establish useful contacts with people at other universities.

Supporting measures:

- As part of the Mobile Administration concept, university employees can take advantage of various **job shadowing** opportunities or **staff weeks** at one of the FernUniversität's partner universities.
- The **English Club** is a joint project organized by the FernUniversität and its partners at the Universidad Oberta de Catalunya and Jyväskylä University and offers staff an opportunity to practice everyday conversation in a relaxed setting together with international colleagues.
- Publicizing the **internal training programs** "English for University Employees," evaluating and, if necessary, expanding to other, target group-specific offers.
- Announcement, participation and, if necessary, initiation of **thematic roundtables** (such as eAssessment, study advice) with the partners (with the International Office as the central coordinating contact).



FernUniversität in Hagen

International Office

FernUniversität in Hagen
Universitätsstraße 27, Building 5
58097 Hagen

international@fernuni-hagen.de
www.fernuni-

**Internationalization
at Home**