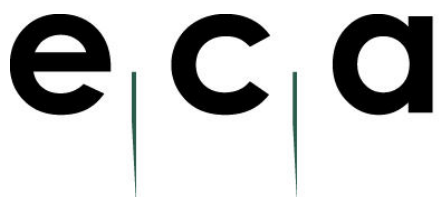


# A Guide to Assessing the Quality of Internationalisation



Axel Aerden



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V4

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ECA OCCASIONAL PAPER

ISBN/EAN: 978-94-90815-06-6

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This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

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## 1. Introduction

Internationalisation is a complex phenomenon and is strongly influenced by the context in which it takes place. As a multidimensional concept, the realisation of internationalisation widely varies in different higher education settings. This means the context and the varied ways in which it is operationalised need to be taken into account when assessing internationalisation.

But what then is internationalisation of higher education? Definitions of internationalisation have changed and might continue to do so in the future. While the colonial-era projection of higher education to zones of influence was once considered a form of internationalisation, most would now hesitate to do so. And while international student mobility steadily developed as an important instrument for internationalisation, it has also become clear that internationalisation is much broader than cross-border activities.

The most commonly referred to definition of what is meant by internationalisation was coined by Jane Knight in 2004: “The process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education”<sup>1</sup>. It incorporates a system-level perspective and includes a focus on teaching and learning. Betty Leask has further characterised internationalisation by focusing on the curriculum: “The incorporation of an international and intercultural dimension into the preparation, delivery and outcomes of a program of study”<sup>2</sup>. When assessing the quality of internationalisation we therefore focus on teaching (the preparation and delivery) and learning (the outcomes).

Around the world, in particular in the USA and Europe, several instruments have been developed over the past ten years to assess the quality of internationalisation.<sup>3</sup> These

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<sup>1</sup> Knight, J. (2004). Internationalization remodeled: Definition, approaches, and rationales. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 8(1), 5-31.

<sup>2</sup> Leask, B. (2009). Using formal and informal curricula to improve interactions between home and international students. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 13(2), 205-221.

<sup>3</sup> For an overview of these instruments: Aerden, A., Frederiks, M., van den Heuvel, E. (2013). The Evaluation of the Quality of Internationalisation: European and National Approaches. *Internationalisation of Higher Education - An EAIE Handbook*, A 2.2-4.

focus mainly on indicators and use more or less the same categories. The vast majority of these initiatives take place on the institutional level and none of them are standard-setting.<sup>4</sup> Together with internationalisation experts, the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO, [www.nvao.net](http://www.nvao.net)) designed an instrument to quality assure internationalisation at programme level using predefined assessment standards. In higher education, quality assurance should be regarded as a process of establishing stakeholder confidence that a higher education programme and/or institution is fit for purpose and measures up to predefined requirements. The accordingly developed methodology was tested in 21 procedures and positively assessed by the higher education community.<sup>5</sup> Since 2010, NVAO started offering the assessment of internationalisation to the programmes and institutions in The Netherlands and Flanders (Belgium). There, it is mainly regarded as an add-on to regular external quality assurance in that the quality of the programme or institution and the quality of internationalisation are assessed in one procedure. As a result of sizeable interest from other countries, a consortium of quality assurance agencies and internationalisation bodies was established to develop a methodology that – once finalised – can be used by all these quality assurance agencies to assess and reward quality in internationalisation.

This goal of this guide is mainly to complement the Frameworks for the Assessment of Quality in Internationalisation. It does not prescribe or endorse any particular internationalisation approaches or activities. By showing how the elements that make up the assessments standards are to be interpreted and by presenting elements that can be used to substantiate realisations, this guide intends to guide the (self-)assessment of the quality of internationalisation.

Between Autumn 2013 and Spring 2014, twelve assessment procedures will be undertaken to test the proposed methodology. Based on the lessons learned and feedback received, a new version of the Frameworks for the Assessment of Quality in Internationalisation and of this guide will be made available by the end of 2014.

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<sup>4</sup> **Aerden, A., Frederiks, M., Van den Heuvel, E.** (2012) The evaluation of the quality of internationalisation: European and national approaches. *Internationalisation of Higher Education - An EAIE Handbook*, A 2.2-4.

<sup>5</sup> **Aerden, A., De Decker, F., Divis, J., Frederiks, M., & de Wit, H.** (2013). Assessing the internationalisation of degree programmes: experiences from a Dutch-Flemish pilot certifying internationalisation. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 43(1), 56-78.



## 2. Assessing programmes

Since internationalisation is contextual, its quality should be assessed in the context of the programme's internationalisation goals. By setting standards, these goals are expected to be meaningful. They should have an effect on the learning outcomes intended by the programme, on the student group composition and on the students' internationalisation experience. The intended international and intercultural learning outcomes provide the context for the assessment of graduate achievement, teaching and learning, staff and services.

### 1: Intended internationalisation

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The programme's internationalisation goals are regarded as its intended internationalisation. Three elements define the intended internationalisation: the support for the programme's internationalisation goals, the use of verifiable objectives to monitor achievement of these goals and the measures for improvement a programme has implemented.

#### 1a: Supported goals

*The internationalisation goals for the programme are documented and these are shared and supported by stakeholders within and outside the programme.*

The ambition level of the programme is considered to be the starting point for all internationalisation activities. This ambition level is referred to in the framework as the programme's intended internationalisation and is identified through internationalisation goals. These goals need to be documented; they ought to make clear what is intended by the programme's internationalisation.

Sometimes a programme's internationalisation goals can originate from internationalisation goals at institutional or faculty level. Institutional or faculty level goals are, however, not sufficient for internationalisation at programme level. It needs to be explained why and how these goals relate to the programme.

In higher education, a stakeholder is a person or organisation with a legitimate interest in the operation of a programme or institution. Stakeholder may be among many others a

student, staff, management, and representatives of the relevant professional field. The stakeholders are usually identified by the programme managers themselves.

With regard to sustainability and effectiveness it is important that the programme's internationalisation goals are shared and supported by its stakeholders. Shared means that all stakeholders can identify the programme's intended internationalisation; supported means that all the stakeholders in some way contribute to its achievement.

### **1b: Verifiable objectives**

*Verifiable objectives allow monitoring the achievement of the programme's internationalisation goals.*

Having a certain internationalisation ambition goes hand in hand with setting objectives. These objectives will guide the proper implementation and evaluation of the programme's internationalisation goals.

Monitoring may include benchmarking. A benchmark is a point of reference against which something may be measured. Benchmarking is then a process of identifying benchmarks in order to distinguish and understand good practice in order to better understand, maintain and improve performance.

Objectives are understood to be reasonable, challenging and oriented towards the overall internationalisation goals. A programme should be able to describe the correspondence between these objectives and the formulated internationalisation goals. Such transparent correspondence facilitates the continuous monitoring of the correspondence.

Verifiable objectives can be qualitative and quantitative. An objective becomes verifiable once a quantity (how much?) and/or a quality (How well? With which specific characteristics?) is included. To be complete, a timeframe must be set. Usually a set of objectives relates to the same timeframe although different timeframes per objective can provide more flexibility in a higher education context.

An example of an objective could be: Increasing the mix of cultural backgrounds in the classroom. Does this objective have a real quantitative and/or qualitative aspect? The use of the verb "increase" certainly denotes a quantitative aspect. This is not satisfactory though, since +1 can also be conceived of as an increase. As such, this objective isn't appropriately verifiable. Therefore the goal could read: Increasing the mix of cultural

backgrounds in the classroom by limiting the fraction of national students to 60%. This objective would then have to be supplemented with a timeframe.

A qualitative dimension would be added by defining specific cultural backgrounds: Increasing the mix of cultural backgrounds in the classroom by including x% African and y% Asian students.

To be complete, the objective should be supplemented with a timeframe.

**1c: Measures for improvement**

*As a result of periodic evaluations of the programme's internationalisation, the successful implementation of measures for improvement can be demonstrated.*

Those responsible for the programme are also responsible for the quality of the programme's internationalisation. This means that they should evaluate the programme's internationalisation periodically. These evaluations can cover goals, plans and activities. There are different approaches to carry out these evaluations and the timeframes in which these take place. These choices should be justifiable.

Evaluations lead to measures for improvement: either an improved implementation or a revision of the goals, plans and/or activities. These measures for improvement are essential information for stakeholders within and outside the programme. An outline of improvement measures in the course of the last three years should be readily available.

Evaluations can be organised in various ways and can for example be part of the institution's internal quality assurance system. The evaluations that regard programme level should however always be explicitly identifiable.

**2: International and intercultural learning**

The international and intercultural learning relates to a programme's international and intercultural learning outcomes. Three elements play a role here: the learning aimed for as demonstrated by the intended international and intercultural learning outcomes, the appropriate way in which learning is assessed and the actual achievement of the intended international and intercultural learning outcomes by the programme's graduates.

## **2a: Intended learning outcomes**

*The intended international and intercultural learning outcomes defined by the programme are a clear reflection of its internationalisation goals.*

In European higher education, learning outcomes are considered the most transparent way to present a programme's aims and objectives. In line with the Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area, a programme's intended learning outcomes make clear what a student is expected to be able to know, understand and demonstrate after having successfully completed the curriculum.

Those responsible for a programme are also responsible for clarifying the aims and objectives for the programme by means of learning outcomes. This includes clarifying the international and intercultural dimensions of the programme's learning outcomes, in short: the intended international and intercultural learning outcomes. This of course implies that they are an integral part of the programme's general learning outcomes.

Intercultural learning outcomes enable effective and appropriate communication with people of other cultures. They include strategies as well as practical and cognitive skills for living and working in other cultures, for cooperating and building relationships with people from different cultural backgrounds, for cross-cultural interaction, etc.

International learning outcomes enable effective and appropriate functioning outside one's national or regional subject-specific environment. They may include cognitive and cultural subject-specific flexibility, subject-specific socio-economic geography, sociability, comparative civics, etc.

These international and intercultural learning outcomes should of course be the result of the internationalisation goals for the programme. This means that a correspondence can be demonstrated.

## **2b: Student assessment**

*The methods used for the assessment of students are suitable for measuring the achievement of the intended international and intercultural learning outcomes.*

Student assessment comprises the total range of written, oral and practical tests, examinations, projects and portfolios that are used to evaluate a student's progress after a

period of learning. Two types of student assessments can be distinguished: formative (progress-focused) and summative (end-performance) assessments.

Assessments should determine whether students achieve the learning outcomes a programme aims for. All types of assessments can be taken into account, such as interim assessments, final examinations, final projects, research assignments, theses and performance evaluations. They should, however, be suitable to assess the achievement of the intended international and intercultural learning outcomes. Particular attention should therefore be paid to the inclusion of international and intercultural competencies into assessment forms and/or templates.

Standard assessments are not always able to capture the international or intercultural learning outcomes. They often need to be amended or extended to test for the students' understanding of the intended international and intercultural learning outcomes of the programme. To this end, ways of gathering direct (performance-oriented) or indirect (learner-perspective) evidence must be demonstrated. In this context some assessment approaches, like multiple-choice questionnaires for example, require additional substantiation.

## **2c: Graduate achievement**

*The achievement of the intended international and intercultural learning outcomes by the programme's graduates can be demonstrated.*

Suitable student assessments can transparently demonstrate whether the graduates of the programme actually achieve the international and intercultural learning outcomes the programme is aiming for. All the assessments used within the programme can be a direct demonstration of graduate achievement.

Additionally an indirect demonstration of graduate achievement may be presented. Most popular indirect demonstrations are alumni and labour market appraisals of what the programme's graduates know, understand and demonstrate. These indirect demonstrations, however, cannot replace direct demonstrations. They merely provide additional information.

There is a common misconception that a period abroad more or less automatically leads to acquiring a certain level of international and intercultural learning (outcomes). It is known

from research, however, that this is not the case if the study period abroad did not purposefully aim to achieve this. In order to purposefully aim for the achievement of the international and intercultural learning outcomes, those responsible for the programme first need to identify which of the programme's intended learning outcomes will be (partly) achieved through the period abroad and inform the outgoing students accordingly. Second, the students' achievement of international and intercultural learning outcomes should be assessed during and/or after their stay abroad.

### **3: Teaching and Learning**

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Teaching and learning relate to setting in which the students should be able to achieve the learning outcomes. Three elements play a role here: the curriculum, the teaching methods and the learning environment. These elements should explicitly correspond with the intended international and intercultural learning and thus provide the means to achieve these learning outcomes.

#### **3a: Curriculum**

*The content and structure of the curriculum provide the necessary means for achieving the intended international and intercultural learning outcomes.*

A curriculum is understood to be the coherent and structured set of educational content (courses, modules, etc.) covered by a programme and, when completed successfully, leading to a degree. The curriculum should provide students with the necessary learning opportunity to achieve the intended international and intercultural learning outcomes.

If for instance the graduates of a Bachelor of Nursing are supposed to *be able to teach, supervise and assess junior colleagues in professional practice*, the curriculum should cover (and assess) this type of teaching, supervising and assessing. An easy way to document correspondence is a matrix with on one axis the intended international and intercultural learning outcomes and on the other axis all the courses, modules, etc.

The same type of correspondence should also exist between the intended international and intercultural learning outcomes and both the teaching methods and the learning environment. Curriculum, teaching methods and learning environment constitute the

teaching-learning setting in which the students should be able to achieve the intended international and intercultural learning outcomes.<sup>6</sup>

### 3b: Teaching methods

*The teaching methods are suitable for achieving the intended international and intercultural learning outcomes.*

From a teacher's perspective the teaching methods refer to the principles and methods of instruction and to the ways of presenting teaching materials or conducting teaching activities. Commonly used teaching methods may include demonstration, lecturing, recitation, memorisation, or combinations of these. The choice of the teaching method or methods to be used depends mainly on the intended learning experience, but it may also be influenced by the aptitude and interest of the students. If the graduates of a Master of Arts in History are expected to *be able to participate in group work productively and to take the lead on occasion by presiding over debates and discussions in an international or multicultural group*, this should also have repercussions on the teaching methods. In this case the teaching methods need to enable class participation and provoke discussion. It should include work in smaller and mixed groups, where the teacher may coach students to chair groups or preside debates.

If a programme is intended to provide an even wider global perspective, the work situation in different settings could be simulated and the assessment method adjusted accordingly. Teachers in a physiotherapy programme for example simulate the setting of a rural hospital in a developing country. Students are given the tools and resources available in those hospitals and are required to run diagnostic tests and propose treatment. The proposed treatment takes into account whether the patients will be seen again and whether the patient will have to take care of the treatment him or herself. The programmes intentions are to take students out of their comfortable environment and provide a hands-on approach in teaching them a global perspective on diagnostic testing.

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<sup>6</sup> The learning outcomes included under Standard 3 are actual programme learning outcomes reproduced in **Lokhoff, J. & Wegewijs, B.** (Eds.). (2010). *A Tuning Guide to Formulating Degree Programme Profiles Including Programme Competences and Programme Learning Outcomes*, Bilbao: University of Deusto.

### 3c: Learning environment

*The learning environment is suitable for achieving the intended international and intercultural learning outcomes.*

From a student's perspective learning environment refers to the entire range of conditions and activities which determine the learning process; it consists of an enabling context, adequate resources and a set of tools. It is the sum of the internal and external circumstances and influences affecting the learning process. The learning environment can consist of international classrooms, computer-supported systems, virtual environments, student placement abroad, etc. If the graduates of a Doctorate in High Energy Physics are supposed to be able to work in large international groups appreciating different national and cultural traditions and ways of working, this should have repercussions on the learning environment. In this case the setting in which learning takes place needs to accommodate working in large international groups. Additionally, the students' activity in these large groups ought to be versatile, paying tribute to different cultural traditions.

Another example comes from the field of visual arts. In order to provide students with a stronger international learning environment, programmes have been connected across borders. In the case of documentary filmmaking, students work on a project with a colleague in another programme abroad, most often in another continent. In some cases, they are asked to give feedback on each other's work; in other cases, they are obliged to present one final project. In the learning environment arising issues (or sometimes even provoked issues) are discussed with respect to cultural differences and the impact these have on cross-border cooperation. In addition, different professional requirements for the graduates (e.g. mass media versus independent filmmaking) are used to provide an international perspective on field production techniques.

### 4: Staff

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The quality of education and student performance strongly depend on the staff. Both the teaching and the administrative staff provide an essential contribution to a programme's internationalisation. Three elements play a role here: the composition of the staff involved, the experiences and competences of the staff and the services that are provided to the staff.



**4a: Composition**

*The composition of the staff (in quality and quantity) facilitates the achievement of the intended international and intercultural learning outcomes.*

The composition of the academic and administrative staff contributes in an important way to the overall quality of a programme. Quantity of staff refers to the number of staff deployed in the programme. Quality of staff refers to their qualifications in a broad sense. It does not only refer to their subject-/discipline-specific knowledge, but also refers to their teaching skills and experience. These may be demonstrated through their curriculum vitae or portfolio.

**4b: Experience**

*Staff members have sufficient internationalisation experience, intercultural competences and language skills.*

Differences in the composition of the staff may support differentiation between programmes in the same subject area. The international (and intercultural) experiences and competences of the deployed teaching staff essentially determine whether a programme will enable all students to achieve its international and intercultural learning outcomes. The further development of higher education and research takes place in a global context. An international experience improves the staff's competency to consider and include these developments and, more importantly, the international aspects of their discipline.

**4c: Services**

*The services provided to the staff (e.g. training, facilities, staff exchanges) are consistent with the staff composition and facilitate international experiences, intercultural competences and language skills.*

In the beginning of their teaching career staff members cannot be expected to embody all the relevant international experiences and/or intercultural competences. On the other hand experienced staff members should be allowed to update the acquired international experiences, intercultural competences and/or additional language skills. In both cases the institution should provide opportunities for staff members to acquire these competencies. Such services can be offered in various forms and should, in some cases, be mandatory.

Most services are offered reactively, to address concerns or to deal with competency gaps. These services can also be offered proactively by offering them in advance of anticipated demand or in anticipation of potential changes in the teaching and learning setting. In this way, these services actively provide support to staff in order to better meet the programme's international and intercultural activities and/or aspirations.

## **5: Students**

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Internationalisation should have a direct impact on students learning (standard 2 and 3) but also on the students' study experience. Three elements play a role here: the composition of the student group, the internationalisation experiences of the students and the services that are provided to the students.

### **5a: Composition**

*The composition of the student group (national and cultural backgrounds) is in line with the programme's internationalisation goals.*

The composition of the student group will shape the way individual students can gain international and intercultural experiences. The student group however does not have to be in any way mixed. Both student bodies with students from all continents and national student bodies can provide opportunities for international and intercultural teaching and learning. It depends on the programme's internationalisation goals, however, at what level this is the case. The student group composition must therefore correspond with these internationalisation goals. Internationalisation at home is, for example, an important internationalisation goal of many institutions and programmes. Here the focus is not necessarily on different nationalities or cultures in the classroom but on creating the best environment for the student group. Some popular examples that might be important for the student group are virtual mobility, collaborative (online) international learning and integration of students from immigrant backgrounds.

**5b: Experience**

*The internationalisation experience gained by students is adequate and corresponds to the programme's internationalisation goals.*

The internationalisation experience is here understood to be all the experiences a student has in which international and intercultural competences can be practiced and further developed. An internationalisation experience does not necessarily imply that students have to spend time abroad. Mandatory and optional periods abroad (student exchange, research projects, internships, etc.) can, of course, lead to an internationalisation experience. But there are other ways to gain such experiences. A programme can organise international collaborative learning in its classroom, can ask students to engage in the activities of an institution's international student body and can organise virtual mobility of staff or students.

In all cases the international experience of the student group must correspond with the programme's internationalisation goals.

**5c: Services**

*The services provided to the students (e.g. information provision, counselling, guidance, accommodation, Diploma Supplement) support the programme's internationalisation goals and correspond to the composition of the student group.*

Services provided to students should be interpreted as broadly as possible and can thus be both curricular and extra-curricular. The development of services should be the result of the programme's internationalisation goals. However, the range of services that should be offered depends on the student group composition. A homogenous national student group mainly involved in virtual mobility requires different services than a heterogeneous multinational student group with mandatory periods abroad. In any case, all students (national and international) should be able to make use of a broad range of integrated services before, during and after their studies. These services can be offered reactively, when demanded by students, but also proactively, in advance of demand and to ensure better students' use.

A wide range of extra-curricular services can support the programme's internationalisation goals. Red-tape-to-red-carpet initiatives are an example of how the admission phase can

be streamlined for international students. A buddy system is an example of how new students can smoothly be welcomed into both the institutional and societal fold.

A demonstration of how the programme meets the demand of its student body is of course required. Here, feedback and surveys can provide the necessary information.

### 3. Assessing institutions

Since internationalisation is contextual, its quality should be assessed in the context of the institution's internationalisation goals. By setting standards, these goals are expected to be meaningful. They should have an effect on the institution's plans for action in several dimensions. The implementation of internationalisation, here regarded as the realisation of action plans must, of course, be demonstrated. Internationalisation should, additionally, be directly included in the institutional quality assurance system. Finally, the institution's governance must prove to be enabling the coherent implementation of all elements related to institutional internationalisation.

#### 1: **Intended internationalisation**

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The institution's internationalisation goals are regarded as its intended internationalisation. Three elements define the intended internationalisation: the support for the programme's internationalisation goals, the use of verifiable objectives to monitor achievement of these goals and the measures for improvement a programme has implemented.

##### 1a: **Supported goals**

*The internationalisation goals for the institution are documented and these are shared and supported by stakeholders within and outside the institution.*

The ambition level of the institution is considered the starting point for all internationalisation activities. This ambition level is referred to in the framework as the institution's intended internationalisation and is identified through internationalisation goals. These goals need to be documented; they ought to make clear what is intended by the institution's internationalisation.

An institution's internationalisation goals may originate from goals at another (e.g. national) level. These can only serve as a reference point, however. An institution needs to explain why and how these goals relate to and specifically suit the institution.

With regard to sustainability and effectiveness it is important that the institution's internationalisation goals are shared and supported by its stakeholders. Shared means that all stakeholders can identify the institution's intended internationalisation; supported means that all the stakeholders in some way contribute to its achievement.

**1b: Verifiable objectives**

*The institution has formulated verifiable objectives that enable it to monitor the achievement of its internationalisation goals.*

Having a certain internationalisation ambition goes hand in hand with setting objectives. These objectives will guide the proper implementation and evaluation of the institution's internationalisation goals. Monitoring may include benchmarking.

Objectives are understood to be reasonable, challenging and oriented towards the overall internationalisation goals of the institution. An institution should be able to describe the correspondence between these objectives and the formulated internationalisation goals. Such transparent correspondence facilitates the continuous monitoring of the correspondence.

Verifiable objectives can be qualitative and quantitative. An objective becomes verifiable once a quantity (How much?) and/or a quality (How well? With which characteristics?) is included. To be complete, a timeframe must be set. Generally a set of objectives relates to the same timeframe although different timeframes per objective can provide more flexibility in a higher education context.

An example of an objective could be: *Increasing the mix of cultural backgrounds in the student body*. Does this objective have a real quantitative and/or qualitative aspect? The use of the verb "increase" certainly denotes a quantitative aspect. This is not satisfactory though, since +1 can also be conceived of as an increase. Therefore the goal could read: *Increasing the mix of cultural backgrounds in the student body by limiting the fraction of national students to 60%*.

A qualitative dimension could be added by defining specific cultural backgrounds: *Increasing the mix of cultural backgrounds in the student body by including x% African and y% Asian students*.

To be complete, the objective should be supplemented with a timeframe.

**1c: Measures for improvement**

*As a result of periodic evaluations of the institution's internationalisation, the successful implementation of measures for improvement can be demonstrated.*

An institution should evaluate its internationalisation. This can be done through periodically evaluating its internationalisation goals, action plans and activities. There are different approaches to carry out these evaluations and the timeframes in which these take place. These choices should be justifiable.

Evaluations lead to measures for improvement: either an improved implementation or a revision of the goals, plans and/or activities. These measures for improvement are essential information for stakeholders within and outside the programme. An outline of improvement measures in the course of the last three years should be readily available.

Evaluations can be organised in various ways and can for example be part of the higher education system's quality assurance system. This would then provide additional information about prevailing assumptions and the manner in which the institution's internationalisation is supported within its higher education system.

Over the last decade, institutions have, for example, evaluated their international network and particularly their bilateral partnerships. How do these partnerships support their internationalisation goals and/or activities? How actively are these partnerships used in the institution's activities? These questions lead to essential elements that contribute to deciding which partnerships should be continued and discontinued, i.e. measures for improvement. These elements can in turn be used to improve the overall approach towards partnerships in the future and contribute to a level of predictability in the development of future partnerships.

**2: Action plans**

The institution's action plans demonstrate the actual work in progress. Three elements define the appropriateness of these action plans for the intended internationalisation: the fitness for purpose of the action plans, the dimensions covered by the action plans and the instruments and resources available to support the action plans.

## **2a: Fitness for purpose**

*The institution's internationalisation plans warrant the achievement of its internationalisation goals.*

The institution's intended internationalisation is supposed to be actual work in progress. An institution should therefore have internationalisation plans (action plans) in place that are fit for purpose: they are designed in such a way that achieving the intended internationalisation seems realistic. In some cases, institutions include these action plans in the documentation describing their internationalisation goals.

These plans should outline the steps to be taken, or activities to be performed. If these steps are taken and/or these activities are performed as planned, it should be assumed that the institution is making progress towards the achievement of its internationalisation goals.

Sound internationalisation plans also include the following elements. First, they define specific tasks outlining what will be done and by whom. Second, they comprise a timeline indicating when measures will be taken. Third, they allocate specific resources for specific activities.

## **2b: Dimensions**

*The institution's internationalisation plans appropriately include at least the following dimensions: "international and intercultural learning outcomes", "teaching, learning and research", "staff" and "students".*

The institution can demonstrate that its internationalisation plans cover a specific set of dimensions. These dimensions relate directly to the teaching and learning environment created by the institution. Consequently specific attention must be given to international and intercultural learning outcomes. These are important because they clearly demonstrate the impact of internationalisation on the quality of the education provided and consequently prove the relevance of the institution's internationalisation for students, graduates and the labour market.

It may be noted at this point that the dimensions covered by internationalisation plans should not be limited to the dimensions of teaching and learning. Depending on the profile of the institution, these plans may also refer to research and service to society. Universities



will, of course, cover internationalisation of research in their action plans as well. And, as mentioned above, the links between the institution's internationalisation plans and its internationalisation goals should be explicit.

**2c: Instruments and resources**

*The institution's internationalisation plans are complemented by specific institution-wide instruments and adequate resources.*

Action plans require appropriate support. An institution provides support through specific institution-wide instruments and through adequate resources. These must be allocated in such a way that the internationalisation plans can be implemented effectively. Instruments and resources may vary but will comprise time, funds, support systems, equipment and services.

In an institutional context, the international office is probably the most visible institution-wide instrument for internationalisation. It should be clear to the (internal) stakeholders how the international office is instrumental in implementing the institution's internationalisation plans in concrete ways. This requires explicit links between the action plans and (the activities and resources of) the international office.

**3: Implementation**

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The proof of the pudding is in the eating: the actual implementation of internationalisation. The following elements are essential to demonstrate implementation: a functional management information system, information driven management of internationalisation and the demonstration of realisations through documented outcomes and results.

**3a: Information system**

*The institution has a functional management information system which enables it to collect and process relevant information regarding internationalisation.*

To fulfil its internationalisation goals and plans, it is essential to have the necessary information. But where does the information regarding internationalisation activities come from? An institution needs to be able to collect and process relevant information and therefore a functional management information system is essential. These systems provide

information needed to manage their internationalisation activities efficiently and effectively. The focus is on having a system in place, not on its use. (Its use is dealt with under [3b. Information-driven management](#)) Management information systems are distinct from other information systems in that they are used to analyse and facilitate strategic and operational activities. Most of the management information systems produce reports based on the institution's activities and primary data sources.

The management information system must cover the relevant areas of the institution's internationalisation plans and should therefore not be limited to internal data and information. Relevant information should therefore be interpreted first as internal and external information and second as relevant for the institution's goals and action plans.

### **3b: Information-driven management**

*The institution makes use of processed information for the effective management of its internationalisation activities.*

A management information system is a useful tool only insofar as it supports management in an effective way. The purpose of a management information system is to generate synthesised and processed information. In order to successfully manage internationalisation activities, an institution needs to make good use of the processed information. The focus is on making use of the information (produced by the management information system) to effectively manage internationalisation activities, i.e. information driven management, and thus not on just having information. (Having information and an information system is dealt with under [3a. Information system](#).) The information needs to be used in such a way that the management of internationalisation activities is effective and thus has the intended and expected outcomes.

Information driven management can demonstrate how the information provided by the management information system is made use of and how this supports the effective management of internationalisation activities.

### 3c: Realisations

*The institution can demonstrate the extent to which its internationalisation plans are realised through documented outcomes and results.*

Institutions should document realisations, such as (intermediate) outcomes and results of their internationalisation plans. A transparent outline of an institution's realisations in the field of internationalisation reinforces internal and external stakeholder support. Here, it is important to connect plans and realisations directly: which realisations are direct outcomes of internationalisation plans. In the same way, institutions can improve their internationalisation goals, plans and implementation by analysing how outcomes which are not the result of its plans have come about.

The institution needs to demonstrate that the management information system (in addition to other sources) can be used to show to what extent the internationalisation plans are realised. These are however not the only outcomes and results that can be used. Other sources can also be presented to demonstrate the extent to which internationalisation plans are realised.

## 4: Enhancement

A quality culture (in internationalisation) can be developed and stimulated by focussing on enhancement. The following elements characterise the overall enhancement of internationalisation: an internal quality assurance system which covers internationalisation, the use of internationalisation approaches in that system and the involvement of stakeholders.

### 4a: Internal quality assurance

*The institution's internal quality assurance system covers all internationalisation dimensions and activities.*

The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area state that institutions should commit themselves explicitly to the development of a culture which recognises the importance of quality, and quality assurance, in their work. To achieve this, institutions should develop and implement a strategy for the continuous enhancement of quality. This also extends to an institution's internationalisation activities. The action plans and internationalisation activities should then be an integral part of the

institution's strategy for continuous enhancement of quality. The internal quality assurance system should therefore at least cover the following internationalisation dimensions: "international and intercultural learning outcomes", "teaching, learning and research", "staff" and "students".

Student mobility is a very visible example of an internationalisation activity and most institutions already have methods to ensure and enhance the quality of mobility. Institutions regularly use quantitative indicators, such as course completion rates or credits earned ratios. Qualitative approaches, such as the international or intercultural competences gained, are not that common although several instruments have been developed and are still under development.

#### **4b: Approaches for enhancement**

*The institution utilises internationalisation approaches as part of its regular quality assurance and enhancement activities.*

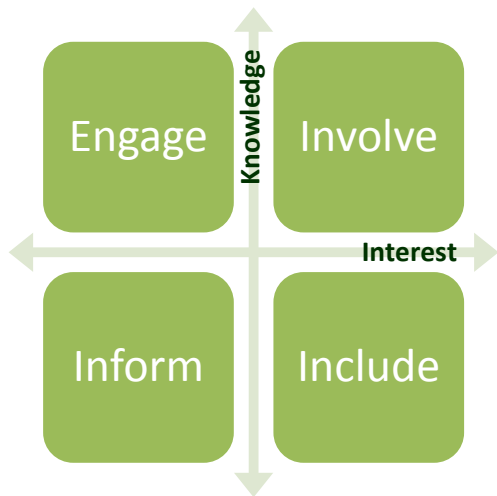
Internationalisation of the institution also influences its internal quality assurance system. It provides additional opportunities for quality enhancement in all the institution's activities. An institution can be expected to make use of these opportunities and include these approaches into its regular internal quality assurance system. Most common approaches are international benchmarking and peer learning. These types of enhancement activities are thus not limited to internationalisation; they are common approaches in the fields of education, research and service to society as well.

Internationalisation approaches can be essential building blocks of an institution's internal quality assurance system and then they become essential elements. They can however also be used only once or very irregular and then they are regarded as supplementary activities.

#### **4c: Stakeholders involvement**

*The institution actively involves its internal and external stakeholders in its quality assurance and enhancement activities regarding internationalisation.*

An institution with internationalisation goals should have identified its specific stakeholders, both national and international. These stakeholders can play an active role in the institution's enhancement activities.



Stakeholders can be roughly identified by the level of their knowledge and experience (cf. the information they can contribute) and by their interest in the institution (cf. the likeliness that they will actively contribute):

- Knowledgeable and interested: these are the stakeholders that an institution should fully **involve** in its quality assurance and enhancement activities;
- Knowledgeable but less interested: these are the stakeholders that require an additional effort from the institution to **engage** them in its quality assurance and enhancement activities;
- Less knowledgeable but keenly interested: these are the stakeholders that an institution should **include** in a satisfactory way (for both parties) in its quality assurance and enhancement activities, mainly as a safeguard from major issues;
- Less knowledgeable and less interested: these are the stakeholders that an institution should monitor and **inform** about its quality assurance and enhancement activities, mainly as an open invitation to join in.

The members of the institution’s international network can, for example, be identified as knowledgeable and interested stakeholders. These institutions should then be involved in the institution’s critical enhancement activities.

The issue here is about all stakeholders and their specific contribution to quality assurance and enhancement activities regarding internationalisation. For example, incoming exchange students who are leaving or have left the institution can be regarded as knowledgeable about certain aspects of the institution’s internationalisation but they are probably less interested to contribute. An institution needs to actively engage them, reach out to them in order to get feedback on the institution’s services and facilities for international students.

## 5: Governance

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Good governance ensures the continuity of internationalisation plans and activities. Three elements define the appropriateness of institutional governance for internationalisation: clearly defined and allocated responsibilities regarding internationalisation, an effective organisational structure, decision-making processes and leadership, and responsiveness to input from within and outside the institution.

### 5a: Responsibilities

*The responsibilities regarding the institution's internationalisation (goals, plans, implementation and enhancement) are clearly defined and allocated.*

Governance is the act of governing, it is what a governing body does or governing bodies do. Governance and management are not necessarily interchangeable concepts.

Any formal organisation needs to define and allocate responsibilities. Here, an institution needs to define all responsibilities regarding internationalisation and then allocate these responsibilities to the appropriate positions or bodies. These responsibilities are documented; the individuals, groups and bodies to which these responsibilities are allocated are aware of their duties. This means it is transparently clear who makes which decisions regarding internationalisation but also who is actually accountable.

An easy way to document responsibilities is a matrix with on one axis all identified responsibilities regarding internationalisation and on the other axis all relevant institutional positions or bodies.

### 5b: Effectiveness

*The organisational structure, decision-making processes and leadership (regarding internationalisation) support the realisation of the institution's internationalisation goals and action plans.*

Organisational structure, decision-making processes and leadership all have a bearing on the degree to which the institution's internationalisation goals will be achieved as well as on the successful implementation of its internationalisation plans. Leadership in particular supports the realisation of internationalisation goals and action plans when prioritising efforts, allocating resources and delegating responsibilities.

Effectiveness means “organising the right thing” to realise the institution’s goals and plans. Efficiency would refer to “organising things right” and includes the cost-minimising allocation of time and resources. The focus here is on effectiveness. Efficiency is of course also important but more contextual and harder to grasp in the course of a regular assessment.

“Organising the right thing” means that the organisational structure, decision-making processes and leadership regarding internationalisation are clearly linked to the goals and action plans. Institutions can demonstrate through measures taken and approaches used how their governance successfully supports the realisation of these goals and action plans.

### **5c: Responsiveness**

*The institution can demonstrate that it readily reacts to input from within and outside the institution regarding internationalisation activities.*

In the governance structure of higher education, internal and external stakeholders play a critical role. However, it is not their participation which is the issue here. Rather it is the institution’s responsiveness to input from within and outside the institution. This is an important aspect for the sustainability of the institution’s internationalisation.

Responsiveness depicts the manner in which the institution responds to input and may take many forms, such as proactively gathered information, direct feedback and complaints.

Responsiveness may be a feature of formally organised structures in which stakeholders (such as students, staff, representatives from the professional field, etc.) participate. It may likewise refer to the processing of input that arrives informally, via, for example, international networks, the institution’s website and social media. Regardless of the inputs’ origin, an institution should carefully consider whether it needs to limit its reactions and/or responses to the originating audience or to convey reactions and/or responses more widely.

An institution can demonstrate responsiveness most effectively if it can identify inputs and appropriate responses to these inputs. These responses can be towards the relevant stakeholders and, in addition, through improvement measures.

## 4. Conclusion

Although this publication mainly endeavours to present how the quality of internationalisation can be assessed, the overall intention has been to demonstrate that internationalisation can take many different forms and entails much more than singular activities. This also means that there is no comprehensive guidebook to internationalise higher education. This guide therefore also needs to be regarded as contextual.

From assessing the quality of internationalisation, we have learned how creative institutions and programme are in developing internationalisation approaches. The wide scope of these approaches and the self-evident way in which internationalisation takes root in all sectors of the higher education community, tells us that the end of internationalisation (or “the conclusion of internationalisation”) is not near. In this sense, this chapter should have been labelled “Inconclusion”.





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