

Enter Int!

***Internationalization
in higher education***

***A Strategic Framework
for Nuffic***

From the margins to the mainstream

For those who want to see it, it's clear: internationalization in higher education has caught the wind in its sails. It's moving from the margins to the mainstream. The Bologna process is a clear indicator. And the growing number of international students studying at higher education institutions in the Netherlands is another one. Universities and other higher education institutions are already entering close partnerships with their partners in other countries and sometimes offer joint study programmes.

But there are other indicators too. The Dutch Education Council (*Onderwijsraad*) this year published an internationalization agenda for education, in which it was critical of the results of fifteen years of internationalization in higher education. The concern was that it has still not become an integral part of our education that we consider 'everyday'. There seems to be a shared realization that because internationalization has become the norm, there is a need to reshape it. But also that this is a task that we have not yet finished.

Nuffic is the Netherlands Organization for Internationalization in Higher Education. We are a service provider. Our mission states that '*Nuffic strives to be the intermediary between the education community of the Netherlands and the international community*'. But this only makes sense if, in doing so, we have something of value to offer to institutions, students and government bodies.

The changes and the complexities that occur in the higher education sector are reason for us to investigate what the added value of Nuffic might be. Our current tasks and the upcoming trends in the field of internationalization together provide the foundation of a strategic framework for 2010 in which we have set our goals and responsibilities for the future. The framework will guide Nuffic as we bring about improvements in the performance and positioning of our organization. This leaflet gives you a brief insight into the ambitions we have set for the coming years in relation to the recent trends in the field of internationalization. It also shows our internal agenda for 2006. Our entire strategic framework can be downloaded from www.nuffic.nl/pdf/nuffic/strategic-framework.pdf

Internationalization trends in higher education

Before we can set a course for Nuffic in the coming years, we have to identify the most recent trends in the field of internationalization of the higher education sector. Some of these trends are initiated by a chosen strategy, others are effects of less conscious choices. Internationalization is also something that just happens. Something that we are confronted with. A few developments leap out at us.

The emergence of a global market for knowledge and education is highly visible.

There is a global demand for higher education among international students. The supply comes from an ever-growing group of education providers who are operating in their national markets as well as internationally. In the global marketplace institutions of higher education need to work together with foreign partners in order to keep their education and research programmes good and competitive, to find good students, teachers and researchers, and more generally to give their programmes an international dimension.

Europeanization of higher education

In Europe, we are gradually moving towards a single European higher education area in the context of the Bologna process. Students will increasingly be freer to move around within this single area. Universities and other higher education institutions will increasingly be seeking partnerships with their European counterparts. The road towards a single international education area will, however, not be easy. We will need all sorts of initiatives to increase clarity in the still diverse landscape of European higher education.

Institutional cooperation and international networking

Institutional cooperation and international networks increasingly form the foundation of internationalization in higher education. At the universities, cooperation in institutional partnerships is being further strengthened by the link between learning and research, which has traditionally been an international one. Both the European authorities and the national Dutch government are factoring institutional cooperation into the design of their internationalization programmes.

Ambitions

Internationalization in higher education is a broad term. In recent years, the objectives that we have been striving for through internationalization, and the methods used, have become more and more diverse. Internationalization is used as a learning tool as well as a means to reach the global number one spot in the field of knowledge development. Borders are shifting and the move towards a single European higher education area can also be considered as a form of regionalization. Another form of internationalization can be found in the professionalization of development cooperation in higher education.

These various sorts of internationalization exist alongside each other, but they also intertwine and overlap. The challenge for Nuffic, more so than is currently the case, is to work from the realization that there are various forms of internationalization that require various forms of support, that lead to useful combinations.

Nuffic has set out five ambitions for the near future. Together, they are a blueprint of the added value we want to provide to the developments and the complexities that occur in the higher education sector.

1. We want to administrate international mobility programmes (fairs) and international cooperation programmes for the government.

Our ambition is:

- to attain and retain the position of 'best in class' in the administration of these types of programmes;
- to reduce the administrative burden that these programmes place on students and institutions, and to improve their user-friendliness;
- to utilize our sound knowledge of programme administration to advise the government on the issue of what programmes best match the substantive objectives to be achieved.

2. We want to gather, order and make available knowledge about higher education in other countries.

We do this for Dutch students who want to study abroad and for Dutch institutions who want to train international students or cooperate with international partners. This of course also includes information on opportunities for mobility and cooperation, as well as information on the qualifications of international employees. Our ambition is:

- to improve the coherence of the way we order information;
- to improve the validation of information;
- to improve and centralize the way we make information available electronically.

3. *We want to gather, order and make available knowledge about Dutch higher education for target groups in other countries.*

International students and institutions should be able to form a good picture of their study options in the Netherlands or their partnership opportunities with Dutch institutions. Our ambition is to work together with the government and with higher education institutions:

- to develop and present a consistent and appealing brand for Dutch higher education;
- to provide a coherent and identifiable description of the variety and quality of Dutch higher education;
- to support developments that help assure the quality of the education provided to international students;
- to centralize information delivery and to increase the amount offered electronically.

4. *We want to encourage transparency between education systems.*

At the individual level, this refers to credential evaluation. We also fulfil the public information role at the national level. In Europe, we work together with our European counterparts towards the development of new methodologies, agreements and conventions. Our ambition is:

- to take the lead in developing a single European diploma area in consultation with the government, the Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organization (NVAO) and the sector organizations;
- to develop and implement a PLAR toolkit that makes it possible to recognize and validate the formal (diplomas) and informal learning (work experience) of highly skilled foreign nationals for use by higher education institutions and in the labour market.

5. *We want to support Dutch universities and other higher education institutions with the internationalization of their education.*

The wishes and choices of the individual institutions will be leading, but the interests of the higher education sector as a whole are also important.

Our ambition is:

- to gather and offer information and knowledge about the development in the internationalization of higher education, and to develop a benchmark that will help institutions determine their position.
- to develop more practical products and services that support international cooperation in the Netherlands and abroad.
- to offer a platform to institutions where they can coordinate their activities, especially those that they undertake in other countries.

The agenda for 2006

Before we can achieve the ambitions that we have set in the strategic framework, there is a lot of work to do. Nuffic has to look towards the changing demand in the field and find methods to respond to those changes. The key priorities that we will be working on in 2006 are:

1. Improving our internal working processes

We are working hard to professionalize our organization, to introduce more clarity and to simplify working processes so that our competencies are a better match for the needs in the field.

2. Ordering and offering information electronically

The internet clearly has an important role to play in our services to students and institutions. Nuffic will invest heavily in improving its electronic communications. More products need to be made available through the website.

3. Improving programme administration and customer satisfaction

Programme administration and in particular the working processes that involve the institutions need to be simplified as far as possible through electronic innovation. What's also needed is the introduction of quality assessments, benchmarking and the systematic measuring and improving of customer satisfaction.

4. Demand-driven innovation of our products and services

Students, institutions and sometimes business and industry need new forms of support. We will organize our work in such a way that we can manage demand-driven innovation.

5. Strengthening cooperation with the sector organizations

In many respects, we have become an organization that operates at arm's length from the government. Our relationship with the higher education sector organizations, the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU) and the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences (HBO-Raad), has suffered as a result. In the coming year, we will investigate how we can intensify our cooperation with both organizations.

6. Developing the organization

With internationalization changing and becoming more complex, there is a need for new forms of support and knowledge demands. To achieve the ambitions we have set out in this Strategic Framework, we will need to look at the way Nuffic is organized and at our development in the coming years.

About Nuffic

Mission statement

Nuffic is a non-profit, professional organization aimed at making education accessible all over the world, especially in countries where the educational infrastructure is under-resourced. Education is crucial for fostering global socio-economic development, improving the quality of life, and increasing intercultural understanding. The role Nuffic plays is that of intermediary between the education community of the Netherlands and the international community.

Main areas of activity

Development cooperation

Nuffic helps to strengthen teaching and research infrastructure in developing and transition countries by facilitating international cooperation between higher education institutions. It supports national and organizational strategies for institutional and human capacity building by administering a series of cooperation and fellowship programmes.

Internationalization of higher education

Nuffic fosters the internationalization of higher education, with special emphasis on programmes for international student and staff mobility.

International credential evaluation

Nuffic facilitates access to national and international education and labour markets by helping to eliminate problems related to the international evaluation and recognition of diplomas and degrees.

International marketing of Dutch higher education

Nuffic provides up-to-date information about Dutch higher education. It promotes foreign participation in Dutch higher education and helps Dutch higher education institutions to compete on the world education market.

Nuffic, the Netherlands Organization for International Cooperation in Higher Education, was established in 1952. Nuffic's turnover in 2005 was approximately 17 million euros. At its head office in The Hague, a staff of approximately 190 men and women administer some sixty programmes and projects that have been entrusted to the organization. It has support offices located in China, Indonesia, Taiwan and Vietnam. In the near future support offices will be opened in Mexico, India, Russia, Brazil, Malaysia and Thailand.

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Netherlands organization for international
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Main areas of activity are:

Development cooperation
Internationalization of higher education
International credential evaluation
International marketing of Dutch higher education