



Management summary

Internationalising students in the home country¹

The internationalisation of higher education is a key priority for the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. This report provides input for a new vision on internationalisation, to be submitted to the Lower House before the summer of 2014.

In addition to informing and advising the Ministry, this report also provides insight into the broad potential of internationalisation in terms of developing the international and intercultural competencies of higher education students. This study focuses on the development of these competencies in the home country, also referred to as *internationalisation at home*.

The study aims to directly or indirectly contribute to the further internationalisation of Dutch higher education and the intercultural competencies of students - an objective formulated by both the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and many higher education institutions.

Context

This report provides an overview of current higher education institution policies in the area of internationalisation at home. The actual implementation of internationalisation at home activities will be the focus of a second report set to be published this autumn. ResearchNed is also preparing two reports on internationalisation at home: an analysis of the policies applied in other countries and a survey amongst students and teaching staff. The study consists of four parts, which will be completed in the autumn of 2014. The conclusions and recommendations outlined in this report will be elaborated in further detail in the final report.

The study is largely based on desk research on the basis of policy documents from various higher education institutions, Erasmus Charters for Higher Education (ECHE), institutional websites and other relevant sources in institutional policy. The analyses' underlying framework is based on an existing categorisation of the MINT framework² and relevant literature. Over the course of the study, the analysis framework was supplemented with various additional categories on the basis of analysed data.

Key research results

How many institutions have prepared an internationalisation policy at central level?

Close to 76% of all institutions assessed as part of the study apply a specific internationalisation plan at institutional level or are currently working to develop one. Seven institutions (15%) participating in this study do not have a separate internationalisation plan, but have incorporated their internationalisation policy in their institutional plan. Only four of the institutions assessed as part of the study (9%) have not formulated an internationalisation policy at central level.

¹ Gaalen, A. van, Hobbes, H.J., Roodenburg, S. and Gielesen, R. (2014). Studenten internationaliseren in eigen land, The Hague, Nuffic. <https://www.nuffic.nl/bibliotheek/studenten-internationaliseren-in-eigen-land.pdf>

² Mapping Internationalisation, Nuffic web tool: www.nuffic.nl/mint

Which international and/or intercultural competencies do institutions wish to instil in their graduates?

International competencies are competencies relevant to interaction with people from other countries. Similarly, intercultural competencies are defined as 'social skills and forms of behaviour relevant to interaction with people from other cultures' (NVAO, 2011).

Many institutions tend to describe these competencies in general terms, specifying that further elaboration is to take place at programme level. Examples of such competencies include:

- an attentive and inquisitive attitude;
- intercultural effectiveness and communication;
- knowledge of foreign languages;
- flexibility and the ability to apply knowledge, and
- innovation according to international standards.

This serves to demonstrate that internationalisation can also yield standard learning outcomes - such as professional knowledge or personal skills - in addition to international and intercultural outcomes.

Which forms of internationalisation at home aimed at improving the international and/or intercultural competencies of students are mentioned in the various institutional policy plans?

Institutional policy plans mention many forms of internationalisation at home, such as deploying foreign lecturers, participating in international projects, offering intercultural skill modules and tailoring components of the study programme to the international comparison of a specific topic. Terms such as *international classroom*, curricular internationalisation and international campus are also used to denote a combination of various activities. Few policy plans mentioned student involvement in development cooperation projects or virtual mobility.

With so many available forms of internationalisation at home, institutions and study programmes can choose a form that accurately reflects their own objectives, profiles and context. Institutions view internationalisation at home and mobility as complementary forms of internationalisation.

What are the obstacles to implementation of internationalisation at home?

- inadequate English language skills amongst students and employees;
- difficulties integrating the various cultural backgrounds in an international classroom;
- insufficient focus on the development of employee competencies required for successful implementation of internationalisation at home activities;
- lack of time and financial resources.

How can we increase yields from physical mobility?

Assessment of the various institutional policies shows that preparation and the quality of partners and work placement host companies are key to improving the quality of student mobility. However, the policy documents showed insufficient focus on supervision during the stay and a lack of substantive discussion of the student's learning experiences after the end of the stay.

Conclusions

The second part of the study (autumn of 2014) will assess the extent to which internationalisation at home is actually being implemented in and explore its practical elaboration. Based on the preliminary study results, this report offers recommendations on the basis of the following conclusions:

In a positive development, most higher education institutions proved to have formulated internationalisation policies and communicated the importance of international and intercultural competencies to their students.

Institutions tend to opt for a programme-specific approach and are cautious when it comes to the implementation of a centralised institutional policy. Internationalisation policies are more effective when they accurately reflect the education practice at the relevant study programme. This makes it difficult to develop generic incentives for entire institutions at a national level.

As the MINT framework demonstrates, there is a great wealth of internationalisation at home forms. All these forms are mentioned in the analysed policy documents provided by Dutch higher education institutions. Institutions do not regard internationalisation at home as a literal alternative to mobility, but tend to view the two issues as complementary.

A limited number of institutions apply virtual mobility, the application of international students' knowledge and involvement in development cooperation projects as a means of developing the international and intercultural competencies of their students.

Institutional policies devote insufficient attention to the development of competencies amongst their lecturers and staff in preparation for the implementation of various forms of internationalisation at home.

Many institutions take measures to prepare their students in order to improve the quality of student mobility. According to the analysis results, institutional policies are not sufficiently focused on providing substantive support during the student's stay or subsequently helping students to effectively round off their learning experience.

Recommendations

The conclusions serve as a basis for recommendations on various policy levels, aimed at promoting the development of international and intercultural competencies amongst graduates. Effective harmonisation between the various policy levels will be crucial in optimising the effectiveness of applicable policies.

Recommendations at institutional and programme level

1. Internationalisation at home could become a standard component of the Basic Teaching Qualification (BKO) and lecturer professionalisation programmes. This would offer lecturers insight into the potential and learning experiences offered by internationalisation. Determining which aspects of internationalisation are relevant to the course content will be crucial in motivating lecturers to internationalise their education.
2. The optimisation of internationalisation activities.
 - a. The presence of international students will yield better results if institutions consciously create controlled situations that lead to intercultural collaboration and the utilisation of students' specific knowledge. Such measures will help the institutions to make optimal use of the international classroom's added value.
 - b. Promoting student participation in ongoing development cooperation projects involving the institution can help provide students with important learning experiences.
 - c. The yields of improved mobility can be further increased when institutions actively supervise students during their stay abroad and help consolidate their learning experiences after the end of the stay by means of self-reflection assignments and testing.

3. Institutional policies can be adjusted to include a provision specifying that all available study programmes must incorporate relevant international and intercultural competencies. The appropriate method of testing these competencies must also be determined and recorded in the institutional policies. Policies can be further elaborated by defining terms such as curricular internationalisation, internationally oriented curricula and international classroom.

Policy recommendations at national level

1. Internationalisation policies will be more effective if they accurately reflect the core tasks of higher education institutions.
2. Policies can establish a framework that offers institutions the necessary direction, means and methods. These frameworks should offer sufficient freedom, allowing study programmes to learn which forms are most suited to their specific situation on the basis of experimentation.
3. The 2012 policy regulation on higher education efficiency can be further elaborated in terms of the guidelines for institutions offering part of a study programme abroad.
4. An emphasis could be placed on the far-reaching integration of internationalisation and development cooperation policies.
5. The focus on students' international and intercultural competencies could be further intensified by encouraging study programmes and institutions to apply for a distinctive (quality) feature for internationalisation from the NVAO.