

Brandenburg University of Applied Sciences Internationalisation Strategy

Open to the world – Interconnected – Regionally embedded

Imprint

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Preamble

Brandenburg University of Applied Sciences (THB) is an internationally orientated university. This is reflected in the high proportion of international students and the great willingness to reach out to the world through international university partnerships.

Internationalisation contributes significantly to achieving the university's strategic goals as set out in the structure and development plan¹:

- Internationalisation contributes to modern and high-quality teaching and research at THB.
- Internationalisation is essential in order to remain sustainable and attractive as a university in an increasingly international university landscape.
- Internationalisation promotes the exchange of knowledge and ideas and connects students, academic staff, and stakeholders from the region with international partners.
- Internationalisation promotes the potential of international students as professionals for the region and contributes to developing the skills of all students in increasingly international work contexts.
- Internationalisation contributes to the university to fulfil its social responsibility in solving regional as well as global challenges.

In order to firmly and sustainably embed internationalisation in the *DNA* of THB, the following fields of action will be pursued: Studying, teaching, and research; partnerships and mobility; guidance and support for students; organisational structure and university staff; regional integration and practice.

Such a broad and comprehensive understanding of internationalisation makes it possible to address the specific characteristics and the guiding principles of the university and benefits it as a whole. Internationalisation is considered as a continuous process that is based on specific guiding core values.

¹ President of Brandenburg University of Applied Sciences: Brandenburg University of Applied Sciences – Regional, Practice-oriented, Modern. Structure and development plan 2021-2025, 03/02/2021.

Core values

The core values describe fundamental values and attitudes that are particularly relevant to internationalisation and are in line with the university's guiding principles². They are consistently taken into account throughout the development and implementation of strategic goals.

- **THB is open to the world.** Internationality and interculturality are defining constituents of the university. Discrimination and racism are clearly condemned and are not tolerated.
- **THB is fair.** The university recognises that international students have to overcome additional linguistic, cultural, and bureaucratic hurdles; that these students often have to build up international skills, firstly; and that internationalisation can mean additional workload for academic staff. Fairness also means offering support.
- **THB is learning.** Changes often require new ways of thinking and acting. The university is therefore open to creative ideas and cultivates a reflective and constructive approach to learning from experiences.
- **THB is sustainable.** Internationalisation is considered in the long term. So, that it succeeds today and in the future. This also includes taking financial, personnel, and ecological aspects into account and taking internationalisation way beyond the local campus borders.

Field of action: Studying, teaching, and research

Goal 1

THB is sustainably strengthening its course offerings in English and creating space for international learning and teaching content. THB strives to further develop the quality, scope, and diversity of its course offerings in English, taking into account criteria such as relevance and availability of resources within existing degree programmes. The aim is to firmly establish English as a language of teaching and thus contribute to strengthen the attractiveness and competitiveness of the degree programmes in the long term. Teaching in English promotes students' language skills and complements subject-specific qualifications. At the same time, the expansion of teaching in English forms an important basis for cooperation and communication with international partners.

² Brandenburg University of Applied Sciences: Guiding principles of Brandenburg University of Applied Sciences, [online] <https://www.th-brandenburg.de/hochschule/vorstellung-ueber-uns/leitbild/>.

In the future, the intention is to expand competences and potential for the development of international degree programmes and double degrees.

Goal 2

THB is expanding its international research collaborations and networks and is thus rendering research achievements more visible internationally. Participation in international research stays and research projects enables access to new networks and collaboration with leading international experts. International academic exchange is essential and ensures the quality and impact of research achievements. The publication of research results in international journals and participation in international conferences also contribute to visibility and THB's reputation. These factors make the university more attractive and dynamic as a research location. As a result, it can play a greater role in solving global challenges such as climate change, digital transformation, and sustainable development. The university encourages application to and participation in European and international funding programmes and research pools.

Field of action: Partnerships and mobility

Goal 3

THB is expanding its international university network across all degree programmes and departments. Cooperation with international universities helps to ensure the quality and relevance of the course offerings in an increasingly globalised world of research and labour. The university considers strategic criteria such as the potential to implement joint, interdisciplinary, and didactically innovative courses when selecting international university partners. The ideal of a sustainable partnership is the broadest and most robust collaboration possible at many levels and across disciplines, providing mutual benefit. Such cooperation may then be expanded into a strategic partnership.

Goal 4

THB is sustainably expanding its mobility programme. International teaching, study and work experiences make global diversity of perspectives and intercultural cooperation come to life. For students, offers of semesters abroad or internships abroad are promoted; particularly, within the framework of Erasmus+. In order to increase equal opportunities for students for whom longer stays abroad are not an option, the range of alternative mobility programmes such as short term stays or digital/virtual formats are going to be expanded. In addition to students, academic as well as administrative staff should also be able to take part in mobility programmes; for example, by participating in international conferences, workshops, and research visits. Ecological standards are taken into account during physical travel and sustainable behaviour is encouraged.

Field of action: Guidance and support for students

Goal 5

THB supports international students with target group-specific measures to promote their academic success. To this end, appropriate information and further education programmes are offered at a low threshold. Through close guidance and supervision, challenges faced by international students are recognised in good time. The aim here is to recognise and take into account possible different learning cultures and expectations and to enable international students to learn independently and make good use of existing support services.

Goal 6

THB is strengthening the links between international and German students and is promoting intercultural exchange. In doing so, the university promotes a welcoming environment and ensures that international students integrate well and feel comfortable. Networking between international and German students not only strengthens the intercultural competence of all, but has also been proven to promote the academic success of all students. Plus, it may help motivate German students to study abroad during their university years. In close cooperation with student representatives, more programmes and offers are to be created to inspire both sides to approach each other and learn from one another.

Field of action: Organisational structure and university staff

Goal 7

THB is strengthening structures and processes for university-wide internationalisation in a sustainable and digital way. Internationalisation can only succeed through cooperation between academic and administrative staff in the departments, centres, and administrative areas. This requires clear structures and efficient processes. The use of digital tools and information resources simplifies the coordinated and resource-efficient design, planning, and implementation of international course offerings. The aim is to motivate the continued development of internationalisation in the future and enable the implementation of new development steps.

Goal 8

THB creates the conditions for a diverse, international, and cosmopolitan workforce. Mutual understanding and an open-minded dialogue are essential for internationalisation and form the basis both for the academic success of international students and for the cooperation with international partner universities. For this reason, the university exemplifies cosmopolitanism at all levels and actively communicates this internally and externally. THB expressly welcomes international job applicants, applications from people with a migration background, or extensive experience abroad; especially in international academia. In addition, THB supports its employees in acquiring intercultural competences and strengthens the role and the visibility of the anti-discrimination officer.

Field of action: Best practice and regional outreach

Goal 9

THB prepares students for international labour contexts and promotes the professional qualification of international students for the regional labour market. A central strategic goal is to open up good career prospects for all students, especially as qualified employees for the region. At the same time, it is particularly important to prepare international and domestic graduates for increasingly international labour contexts. In order to develop courses that are practice- and demand-oriented, the university aims to strengthen the connection between internationalisation and professional practice. In dialogue with employers from business and industry in the region, the requirements for the qualification of graduates from courses in English are to be discussed and incorporated into the further development and design of these programmes.

Target 10

THB is strengthening its exchange and cooperation in the context of internationalisation with relevant stakeholders from the local community. Internationalisation does not solely take place within the university, but also needs to be considered beyond the campus boundaries. In addition to an attractive range of courses, social and organisational aspects are also very important for international university members. At the same time, there are other institutional players for whom internationalisation is also an important field of action. The exchange and cooperation with the city of Brandenburg an der Havel and its authorities, with the Student Services Potsdam (Studentenwerk Potsdam, soon to be renamed Studierendenwerk Westbrandenburg), as well as with the state of Brandenburg, and the other universities in the region are all opportunities to address the internationalisation approach holistically and to develop joint solutions.

Framework setting

In order to achieve the goals of this internationalisation strategy, constructive university-wide cooperation takes place and the perspectives and interest of all its stakeholder groups are considered. Internationalisation is understood as a long-term process that requires structures as well as human and financial resources.

Internationalisation at THB is a cross-sectional task that is supported by the departments and in which support services and administration are closely involved. Internationalisation as a strategic and university-wide task is primarily the responsibility of the Vice President for Teaching and International Relations (VPL). The Centre for International Relations and Languages acts as a central anchor point for internationalisation at THB.

To ensure that internationalisation is successful in the long term and the objectives of the strategy are met, a selection of specific measures to be implemented is coordinated across departments, their impact is regularly evaluated and changed requirements are reviewed. The legal and structural framework conditions, in particular the university agreement³ and the structure and development plan⁴, as well as the available resources are all taken into account.

³ Ministry of Science, Research and Culture (MWFK) of the state of Brandenburg: Hochschulvertrag MWFK - Technische Hochschule Brandenburg, 21 March 2019, [online] https://mwfk.brandenburg.de/sixcms/media.php/9/HSV_THB_2019.pdf

⁴ President of Brandenburg University of Applied Sciences: Brandenburg University of Applied Sciences - Regional, Practice-oriented, Modern. Structure and development plan 2021-2025, 03/02/2021.