Internationalization strategy of Heilbronn University of Applied Sciences

Heilbronn University pursues a holistic approach to internationalization. Three areas - the Office of the Vice-President for International Affairs, the International Office and the faculties - act as the lead committee that is in charge of the internationalization process in terms of expansion and continuity. The bodies involved work closely together and participate actively and responsibly.

Full openness to other cultures of the world forms the basis of our work at Heilbronn University of Applied Sciences. We thus explicitly promote international and intercultural exchange opportunities for all university members. Students, instructors and employees, whose aim is to participate in international exchange and cooperation programs, are fully supported by Heilbronn University of Applied Sciences.

This strategy addresses all members of the university, institutions of international higher education, industry partners and the general public.

We have created the following organizational structure for the development of internationalization at Heilbronn University: Each faculty has appointed a professor as International Relations Officer who is responsible for coordinating the faculty’s activities in this field and who serves as direct point of contact for the International Office and the Office of the Vice-President for International Affairs. Internationalization departments were established in the faculties to support the International Relations Officer. Moreover, there is at least one contact person for each partner university who takes care of all activities related to this partner university.

With the support of the central units, in particular the International Office, the faculties drive forward the operational implementation of the internationalization strategy. The faculties regularly present their internationalization strategy to the University management as part of their strategy meetings and report on measures carried out.

Information on the current status of the internationalization process is provided by the International Office and the faculties’ internationalization departments. Current information on our partner universities is available at https://www.hs-heilbronn.de/partnerhoch-schulen.

Internationalization of Heilbronn University of Applied Sciences affects the following six areas:

- Internationalization of academic education
- Internationalization of higher education sites
- Internationalization of higher education staff
Internationalization of research

International network of partner universities

Partnerships with international acting companies

Due to the differences between the fields of study, Heilbronn University decided to define no core regions for its international contacts. This way it is possible to optimally adapt the interests of the faculties to the ever-changing political, economic and social conditions in the different countries and regions.

Internationalization of academic education

In the context of knowledge transfer, Heilbronn University of Applied Sciences strongly encourages the international experience of students in the form of study periods and internships abroad and acquisition of double degrees. Additionally, excursions, summer schools and international study projects offered by Heilbronn University of Applied Sciences or its partner universities contribute to the broadening of the students’ international competence.

Internationalization of teaching is continuously stepped up through events held in English and events dealing with international and intercultural topics. Foreign guest lecturers contribute significantly to the diversity in teaching.

The range of international courses is complemented by multimedia learning such as ‘virtual classrooms’ and e-learning modules.

The aim of the university is to establish an open and versatile culture of study that contributes to the students’ personal development and improves their intercultural competences and language skills and, consequently, increases the international employability of the graduates.

When organizing group activities, lecturers are actively encouraged to mix students of different cultural and national origins.

Learning foreign languages is highly promoted and shall be part of all study and examination regulations. Each faculty provides a range of English language courses, allowing exchange students to study at the University for a period of at least one semester. Master's degree programs in English allow in particular foreign full-time students to study at the Heilbronn University.

The Centre for Study and Teaching offers students the opportunity to acquire additional language skills across faculties. And foreign students can attend ‘German as a Foreign Language’ courses at different levels.

Internationalization of higher education sites

Heilbronn University of Applied Sciences welcomes its global partners at its sites in Heilbronn, Schwäbisch Hall and Künzelsau. The international guests contribute to the
cosmopolitan profile of our sites and promote internationalization at home. Heilbronn University of Applied Sciences regularly organizes events, such as conferences, international weeks and summer schools that are enriched by the participation of these guests.

Intercultural exchange and mutual respect reflect our core values. They are closely linked to our welcoming culture that we live up to at all university sites.

International students receive a high level of support and care. The International Office organizes orientation and welcome sessions for its exchange students over a period of one to two weeks prior to the beginning of the semester. During this time, guest students have the opportunity to find out more about the campus and their guest faculty. They can meet fellow students and explore the Heilbronn-Franken region as part of joint activity programs.

Foreign full-time students who complete their entire degree program at Heilbronn University of Applied Sciences are accompanied and supported by senior students. This is part of our intercultural mentoring program designed to help students during their studies, in particular at the beginning.

Appropriate conditions for refugees are created proving study competence so that they can start or complete a degree program.

**Internationalization of higher education staff**

Internationalization of our university staff is expressly encouraged.

International experience of each staff member - both as part of their professional and personal qualification process - is promoted through stays abroad, including guest lectures, research semesters, attendance of international conferences and staff mobility. Recruitment of foreign professors and staff members is supported.

The visits of staff members to partner universities strengthen existing partnerships and intensify cooperation. The intercultural dialog broadens one's horizon - both professionally and personally - a fact that is highly appreciated by all participants.

All staff members have the opportunity to expand their skill set by attending international and intercultural seminars, workshops and language courses. It is competence building that allows to show that internationality is an integral part of the university’s mission and communicate it in a convincing way to the public.

**Internationalization of research**

Heilbronn University is involved in international research through contributions to international official publication media and conferences as well as through the mobility of its researchers. We also participate in international research projects and networks and invite international scientists to visit Heilbronn University. This includes improved access opportunities to doctoral studies.
Heilbronn University encourages its researchers through the allocation of travel costs to participate in international conferences where they have the opportunity to share their knowledge and expertise with peers from around the world. As part of regular evaluation in the field of research, higher priority is given to internationality. Taking on reporting functions with respect to dissertations at foreign universities is encouraged and supported whenever necessary and feasible. This also includes agreements on dissertations with international partner universities.

International network of partner universities

Heilbronn University is continuously expanding its partner network and intensifying its relations with existing partners. Cooperation, especially in the form of exchange between students, staff and lecturers, is strongly supported. A consultation shall be launched to find out how to integrate faculties into existing partnerships with foreign universities. The aim is to intensify partner networks and generate synergy effects. Sharing knowledge and expertise in the development of curricula and the implementation of joint curricula with selected partner institutions will promote the students’ international mobility. Double degrees are further developed and allow students to complete a degree program characterized by a high level of internationalism.

When the students return from their stay abroad, the full recognition of their academic achievements abroad is ensured by a prior study agreement between students and Heilbronn University of Applied Sciences.

The shared vision of internationalization is reflected by joint research projects with staff members of our partner universities. The international network of partnerships shall be linked even more closely through strategic partnerships and knowledge alliances. They increase awareness of Heilbronn University - both in Germany and abroad - and increase the university’s attractiveness as a place of science.

Partnerships with international acting companies

Heilbronn University of Applied Sciences is a reliable partner for the business sector. There are numerous internationally operating companies in the so-called 'region of global leaders'. Students thus have access to internships at company sites abroad due to the high degree of internationalization of the organizations. In addition, they get the opportunity to write their theses there.

Together with local and industrial partners, Heilbronn University promotes the integration of foreign students in the region. The international corporate culture supports the possibility that foreign students can complete an internship at a local company. This is part of the socio-political responsibility of Heilbronn University - an approach that also takes demographic change and the lack of skilled labor into consideration.