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International Strategy 2015–2020

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INTRODUCTION

Örebro University is a relatively young university in the Swedish higher education system. The first decade of its existence has been successful in terms of establishing a sound educational and research base, an excellent campus, a firm reputation in the region and nation, and a robust staff profile. The next phase of the University's development will create an overarching strategic framework to facilitate and guide various initiatives.

Two principal priorities have been identified for 2015–2020; Internationalisation and Research¹ Excellence, which are recognised as mutually reinforcing. The strategy is principally concerned with the former, but draws heavily on the latter. According to Örebro University's definition of internationalisation, both collaboration and exchange with international universities is emphasised, alongside the basic values of diversity, equality, quality, and competence. In collaborating with foreign universities, Örebro University heralds the value of a global sustainable development, including promoting a good, healthy environment, along with economic and social welfare. A focus on global and sustainable development means that the University welcomes international collaborations that could offer solutions to global challenges.

Over the last couple of years, much work has gone into transforming the entire social and physical environment and the university culture, and building a truly international atmosphere and opportunity for academic interaction and experience. The building-up of a fully functional support structure for internationalisation at Örebro University is in progress. The broader strategic framework that guides the internationalisation is presented below.

The University sees well-functioning international partnerships for education and research with eminent foreign universities as being quite critical to the growth and quality of Örebro, and it is our hope that Örebro will be viewed as a city with a great deal to offer to such partners.

¹ Throughout this document, the terms research and education encompasses all the University's disciplinary domains, including arts as well as science.

CORE PRINCIPLES AND GOALS FOR INTERNATIONALISATION

Internationalisation at all levels of the University is considered as **central to maximizing opportunities** for doctoral students, post-docs, researchers, teaching staff and other staff and students to create and maintain important contacts with the international front line. This is the core of Örebro University's internationalisation policy.

In order to secure a respected position in international higher education, Örebro University is clear about what constitutes its **academic brand and public identity**, since this determines the willingness of students, faculty, staff, partners and sponsors internationally to engage in this endeavour.

The University has defined areas where exchange agreements and partnerships with foreign universities both at the undergraduate, graduate, and research levels already exist, but can be further developed. Örebro University **focuses on its strong disciplines and research areas** in its discussions concerning **partnerships** in order to achieve mutual synergies and expand the University's academic capacity. The agreements are strategically selected and include a limited number of universities where collaborations over time can become firmly established. Internationalisation initiatives primarily focus on European universities, without excluding activities, exchanges and partnerships with universities outside Europe.

Given that the principal stimulus for internationalisation is the research excellence agenda of the University, and that research excellence is to be promoted through international collaboration, the selection of partners is crucial. This is a strategic decision, which includes a clear statement on what is Örebro University's "proposal" to partners, backed by evidence, as well as robust, long term agreements committing both partners for sustained collaboration and support.

The international strategy is to be **fully integrated** across the University with regard to all academic units and professional support services.

Consequently, the primary goals for internationalisation at Örebro University are:

- ❖ Increased research quality, through international collaboration and visibility;
- ❖ Increased quality in education, through global perspectives and international experiences;
- ❖ Integration of an internationalisation mind-set and sense of global citizenship, among faculty, staff and students.

The actions proposed in this document are to be seen as a means to reach these goals, enabled by an adequate and efficient support structure and facilitators at different levels of the university organisation.

INTERNATIONALISATION IS KEY FOR HIGH QUALITY IN RESEARCH

The quality of research at Örebro University is a key factor for successful international collaboration. Thus, research competence at the university is of central importance. Through international partnerships, competitiveness in research is increased, which will lead to greater capacity to obtain external funding as well as quality in education. International contacts provide a mechanism through which the quality of research and education is raised. Through systematic internationalisation, our researchers and teaching staff gain new perspectives. All internationalisation activities offered to faculty and staff at Örebro University should be viewed in the context of the explicitly stated purpose of maximizing opportunities for making and maintaining key contacts with the international front line. Active internationalisation creates a competitive advantage.

It should be natural for doctoral students, post-docs and researchers at Örebro University to engage in the international scientific community through international research collaborations, international research dissemination, and active participation in the international scientific arena.

At Örebro University it is expected that research environments have a clear international dimension, including the use of English language as an integral part of the working environments that have a marked international presence, and the use of international literature in research, as well as in research level courses and seminars.

Priority actions for internationalisation of research include:

- ❖ A continuing process of research assessment to establish and monitor strengths and cultivate new areas, especially multi-disciplinary
- ❖ The identification of stable research partners, and university partnerships
- ❖ The establishment of joint research groups/graduate schools in terms of common global significance for joint doctoral arrangements, joint funding applications, joint postgraduate courses and joint training.

INTERNATIONALISATION INCREASES QUALITY IN EDUCATION

Internationalisation of education should strengthen global perspectives and engagement in comparative studies, and contribute to greater mobility for teachers and students. Teaching staff should be recruited from Sweden as well as from abroad, and it should be the norm at Örebro University that teaching at advanced levels is conducted in English, and that English teaching materials are used. Students at Örebro University should perceive internationalisation as an opportunity to benefit from high-quality courses at other international sites of learning, and gain related work experience. Incoming students should experience that Örebro University offers advanced, high quality training that they could not obtain at their home universities. Students from abroad should experience Örebro University as a global institution, where courses maintain a high international quality. They should expect to meet an innovative, well-functioning and friendly educational milieu, which is research oriented and open to their needs. They should expect that their training is attractive on the labour market and leads to good occupational advancement. Possibilities for professions practice placements and internships should be developed, for outgoing as well as incoming students. Sustainability in internationalisation efforts for faculty and students is achieved through collaboration among the Schools.

Agreements about student exchange with other universities are strategically selected and decided upon, and primarily focused on partner universities. Agreements on the undergraduate level will be signed with universities of high international standard, which provide teaching in English. Agreements on the graduate level are primarily signed with European universities having high research expertise in the areas where Örebro University has a respected research profile. Ideally, agreements cover both the undergraduate and graduate levels, and involve the University's professional programs.

Priority actions for internationalisation of education include:

- ❖ Securing policy clarity on the desired modes of study and possibilities for mobility e.g. 'free mover', exchange, dual and joint degrees;
- ❖ Progressive internationalisation of the curriculum (including language of instruction and teaching materials) in ways appropriate to particular disciplines, to increase market attractiveness internationally;
- ❖ Creating incentives for Swedish students to travel overseas;
- ❖ Ensuring clear and legitimate credit recognition for study and work internships abroad;

- ❖ International accreditation of university programs to facilitate both employment mobility and subsequent license to practice;
- ❖ A robust quality assurance regime which includes especial provision for international education.

INCREASED QUALITY THROUGH INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES

The student experience

Incoming students

Örebro University will be a welcoming place for foreign students, and offer incoming undergraduate students a stable and attractive range of courses in English. It must be seen as an added academic and professional value for students to study here. In addition, housing and other social functions should be guaranteed, and there should be a transparent organisation for the reception of incoming students. To fully enjoy their stay, students will be given the opportunity to learn Swedish as credit-bearing courses.

At the graduate level, incoming students should be able to choose courses in the disciplines and professional programs that Örebro University has identified to have well-documented research competence.

The international Master's programs are offered on the European market. Faculty teaching skills in English is a key factor to ensure a high-quality education in English-language courses. All courses taught at Master's level are given in English when international students are attending.

Outgoing students

Organising international education offers to Swedish students is in progress and measures are being developed. Undergraduate students at Örebro University are encouraged to take part in education at foreign universities, to undertake field studies, professional practice placements and internships abroad as part of their education. Student placements will facilitate the international employability of students and global citizenship as part of their studies. On the graduate level, the university will offer advanced training at foreign universities in specific disciplines. For students on the professional programs there will be opportunities to take courses at foreign universities that Örebro University has defined as partner universities. Joint 'graduate schools' with partner universities, defined as joint courses at the Master's and PhD levels, will be developed in areas where the University is strong in research.

High quality in PhD programs is of key importance to scientific quality. At Örebro University, all PhD students are expected to establish their own visibility in the international scientific community, and present their research at international conferences in order to acquire the international state-of-the-art expertise in their particular field of study. PhD students may also have parts of their research training at a foreign university, to establish international collaborations and partnerships, thereby advancing their academic careers. It follows that PhD students at Örebro University should be able to have international co-supervisors, as well as being registered at both a foreign university and Örebro University, in order to conduct a joint PhD arrangement, all of which presuppose well-established institutional partnerships.

Priority actions for the student experience include:

- ❖ Ensuring that the University quality assurance processes are robust for incoming and outgoing students;
- ❖ Developing a service culture in relevant support units to cater for the various needs of the international experience, incoming and outgoing;
- ❖ Ensuring partner universities are similarly equipped to offer opportunities and support;
- ❖ Academic reforms as indicated in the section on education;
- ❖ Assessing the adequacy of language policy, and introducing necessary additional courses.

The Faculty and staff dimensions in internationalisation

Internationalisation implies a broader international perspective for researchers, teaching faculty, and staff. They should have genuine possibilities to develop their profession through international contacts, collaboration, professional networks, study trips as well as regular conferences and seminars abroad.

Researchers at Örebro University are expected to be active in international networks within their fields. They should have funding opportunities for travel abroad and invitation of foreign researchers. In many disciplines at our University, international recruitment of researchers, teaching faculty, post-doctoral and PhD students is increasingly intensified using international networks and academic job platforms. For incoming researchers, housing is guaranteed, and a well-functioning organisation for their reception is being developed. Incoming researchers and teaching faculty employed by the University for longer periods, and especially those employed on a permanent

basis, are offered intensive courses in the Swedish language at an advanced level, enabling them to fulfil all relevant research, teaching and administrative duties.

Priority actions for the staff dimension include:

- ❖ The enhancement of budget for international staff travel;
- ❖ The design of a staff development programme for faculty, and professional support staff to enable them to function effectively in international contexts;
- ❖ The provision of flexible contract arrangements for international visiting staff and university staff.

SUPPORT MECHANISMS AND FACILITATORS

An integrated support system for the internationalisation strategy has been successively built up and will be fully functional in the next years. There are several components of this system, among which the key functions is the Pro-Vice Chancellor for International Development and the International Board. The Faculty Boards promote internationalisation as a means of achieving high quality in education and research, while much of the strategic and operational work to establish international research environments is in the hands of the Schools, which appoint Deputy Heads International. Örebro University's internationalisation strategy presupposes targeted support in international business matters as well as integrated services for international students and for faculty, provided by the administrative departments of the University.

SUMMARY

Internationalisation is about cooperation across national borders. Through cooperation, exchange and networking can knowledge, experience and ideas easily be traded across borders. Internationalisation is a means for Örebro University to increase the quality in all its' actions and activities. In a broader perspective, internationalisation has to do with inclusion, a developing society, a global sustainable environment, and democratisation processes.

Örebro University recognises the immense creativity and proactivity of individuals, research environments, and Schools in initiating exciting possibilities for internationalisation. This also requires a broader strategic framework to guide directions, canalise energies, and to create the necessary resources, support and facilitators to sustain a credible international presence. This international strategy document is offered in this spirit.

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