Vision and Strategic Principles of Internationalization at the Protestant University of Applied Sciences Ludwigsburg

The Protestant University of Applied Sciences Ludwigsburg (Evangelische Hochschule Ludwigsburg, EHL) promotes the exchange of ideas based on the values of internationality and inclusion. The goal of the EHL is to ensure that students can work, study and live in an open environment in which differing perspectives and opinions are represented and respected. At the EHL, internationality manifests itself in the commitment to respecting the universal dignity of all forms of human life through our actions. The EHL encourages its students and faculty to stand up for a world of peaceful and respectful co-existence and collaboration.

As an integral part of higher education, internationalization takes place within various cross-border frames of reference: Through digitalization and the growing mobility of an increasingly international education market; against the background of the Bologna and Lisbon education reforms, which promote the harmonization and recognition of course contents, academic performances and university degrees; and in view of the globalized professional fields of our graduates. In its efforts to build an international profile, the EHL promotes various programs aimed at developing inclusive learning communities on campus, ensuring any individuals can interact and establish relationships with one another. We promote the development and maintenance of worldwide partnerships with organizations, communities and universities, whether at home or abroad. Through implementation of international course contents and meeting places, the EHL broadens the horizon of its students, facilitates dialogue between them, improves their foreign language skills and encourages knowledge of global connections, thereby providing them with professional qualifications in varied fields of employment.

These are the principles of internationalization at the EHL:

- **Maintaining and developing global partnerships**

The EHL collaborates with partner institutions on every continent, organizing projects and exchange programs for students and staff members alike. It currently has 41 partners in Europe, Australia, Asia, Africa, Latin America and the USA. While the EHL intends to further improve the quality of its partnerships with higher education institutions, it also plans on increasing their number for its newly developed study programs. In addition to the higher education sector, the institutional network includes global partnerships with organizations as well as collaborations with international practice networks such as Bread for the World. A further goal of the EHL is to develop partnerships with civic and church organizations in order to offer international internships to students and create opportunities for research collaborations.
Providing students with high-quality study programs and lasting experiences abroad

The International Office takes an inclusive approach, giving every student the possibility to spend time abroad. By providing specific information, professional and organizational support, transparent recognition of credits and by acquiring third-party funding for grants, the EHL removes some of the potential hurdles students face when planning to study abroad. As a result of this policy, the number of EHL students spending a semester abroad or completing their mandatory internship in a foreign country is significantly higher than at other ‘small’ universities of applied sciences. In 2015, the number of outgoing Erasmus students completing a theoretical semester corresponded to 17.9% of the total number of graduates of the EHL, while 8.8% of all students spent their practical semester abroad as part of the Erasmus program (DAAD, HRK und AvH 2017). If you take into account non-Erasmus students who went abroad, the EHL has already exceeded the mobility target set by the EU: Its goal is to encourage at least 20% of higher education graduates in the European Higher Education Area to spend a temporary or qualification-related period of study or training abroad by the year 2020.

The EHL intends to consolidate its mobility program in scope and quality while also expanding parts of it. This includes increased mobility for study programs in which a smaller number of students typically chooses to go abroad. In addition to semesters of study or training abroad, opportunities for short-term mobility such as excursions and intensive programs are planned, allowing students who are either unable or unwilling to organize long-term mobility due to personal or social factors to gain experiences abroad. Furthermore, the EHL plans to improve the quality and sustainability of semesters spent abroad by ensuring stronger links between course contents, preserving critical reflection in students and staff members and by maintaining alumni networks.

Developing the profiles of International Study Programs

The international study programs of the EHL constitute an essential part of the university’s profile. This is especially true for the study program International Social Work, for which graduates must receive 60 of their overall ECTS credits abroad, resulting in a vocational training specifically tailored to international career fields. In cooperation with Newman University in Birmingham, the EHL has also developed the Bachelor’s double degree program ‘International Work with Children, Young People and Families’, which is sponsored by the DAAD and was successfully launched in the winter semester of 2016.

The international study programs promote collaboration with partner universities as well as an exchange of teachers and specialist knowledge, increasing the quality of academic cooperation beyond the scope of these international programs. The EHL aims to evaluate and develop its international program while also expanding collaboration between teaching and research staff at its partner institutions. As the international study programs are an important part of the profile of the EHL, their presentation to the public should be promoted accordingly. Furthermore, the EHL should fulfill the structural and personal prerequisites ensuring the consolidation of the Dual Award Program beyond the conclusion of the DAAD funding period.
Strengthening a globally connected campus

An open university can only be guaranteed if internationalization also happens at home. Thanks to the internationalization of our course contents and a growing number of courses held in English, the EHL is opening up to international topics, global cooperation and visiting students from all over the world. In the following years, the EHL aims to increase the number of foreign students, including incoming Erasmus students, to strengthen cooperations with partner institutions. In order to guarantee a useful, sustainable and appropriate range of courses as well as support for foreign students, the EHL promotes the development of institutional structures and the consolidation of personal resources.

The objective of the EHL is to make the campus part of a global network which is not only accessible to all members of staff and students, but is also shaped by them. With support from the DAAD program ‘STIBET II’, the International Office has been promoting various measures, such as language courses for faculty members and the expansion of Buddy Programs, since 2018. The goal is to create further awareness of internationalization at the university. With strategic goals of internationalization and digitalization becoming increasingly intertwined, digital forms of teaching and learning open up various possibilities for the integration of an international dimension into teaching and learning processes. The International Office and the university’s various departments will plan further projects in order to encourage the mainstreaming of internationalization.

Promoting documentation, evaluation and collaborative research

The international experiences made by students, combined with the experiences gained by developing international programs at an institutional level, provide us with a wide range of information. This is valuable not only for the EHL itself, but also for other institutions of higher education. By systematically examining and documenting this treasury of information, the findings can be used for the development of teaching, research, politics and internationalization strategies at the EHL. To this purpose, the International Office will be organizing projects aimed at developing the documentation system of periods spent abroad. Furthermore, the faculty, the International Office and the Institute for Applied Sciences are collaborating on accompanying research for the double degree program International Social Work with Newman University.

Vision & strategic principles of internationalization developed by the working group on internationalization of the Protestant University of Applied Sciences Ludwigsburg, state recognized University of Applied Sciences under the auspices of the Protestant Church of Württemberg (12/2018)