

2021

International Education Leadership Summit

What's Ahead: Building a More
Equitable, Sustainable, Peaceful World
through International Exchange in a
Post- Pandemic World

October 25, 2021

THE INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION (IIE) hosted the 2021 International Education Leadership Summit on Monday, October 25, 2021. The hybrid virtual and in-person summit welcomed representatives from international education organizations representing nine countries, including Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The discussion centered on the theme of: *What's Ahead: Building a More Equitable, Sustainable, Peaceful World through International Exchange in a Post-Pandemic World.*

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2021 Common Statement in Support of International Education and Mobility



International academic exchange and mobility are essential to our world's recovery from the economic and geopolitical disruption of the coronavirus pandemic. While this unprecedented global challenge has again laid bare the disparities of wealth and well-being among nations, it has at the same time demonstrated the fundamental interdependence and shared vulnerabilities of all people. As our planet begins to reopen and reengage, assuring that academic bridges remain in place to facilitate collaboration among scholars, researchers and students is central to not just rebuilding, but realizing a better world.

Determining what our post-pandemic world will be is a common project in which all nations and cultures can take part. The collective challenges we face cross borders and transcend politics, as do the most effective responses and remedies. Addressing our planet's climate crisis, constructing a sustainable world, achieving societies built on access, equity and inclusion, and strengthening democracies that value all voices require international collaboration and cooperation. Throughout history, the world's progress in technology, commerce and peace have depended on the exchange of individuals and ideas and expanding the global networks through which knowledge can be further shared for the benefit of all.

We all must also work hard to assure that pandemic-driven fears regarding travel and nationalistic rhetoric around immigration do not inhibit the free exchange of students and scholars or put at risk the necessary public and private investments in higher education and research around the globe.

One thing the nations of the world are learning from our battle with COVID-19 is that we thrive or fail as one people. This is an opportunity to come together, and as national organizations dedicated to promoting international academic exchange, we are united in our commitment to enhance the mobility of students and scholars, which should occur in an academically safe environment.

We call on leaders at every level to support measures to allow more students around the world to spend part of their education in other countries and to keep our own academic doors open to incoming students from abroad. We urge a wide and rapid response to the needs of refugees displaced by the pandemic, oppression, violence and wars, and urge higher education institutions to participate in programs to host student and scholar refugees. Such actions will not only speed our planet's recovery, protect lives and preserve knowledge, but also enrich each host country's classrooms and build a safer, healthier future for us all.

Our organizations pledge to follow-up on this commitment in our daily work, as well as our international and national networks, cooperation and partnerships.



Canadian Perspectives on the Future of International Education

Our collective experience over the last 19+ months has demonstrated that internationalization has been a very important part of how governments, institutions and students across the globe have responded to COVID-19. We witnessed campuses close, teaching and learning move online, and the inbound and outbound mobility of our students, faculty and researchers largely grind to a halt across a global landscape. In spite of the challenges that surfaced through the pandemic, this crisis also brought with it much opportunity for change and innovation in the work of internationalization for our local and global communities. Out of necessity, we were forced into implementing online education in a global context – a context where faculty and students are engaging online in learning from around the world and across time zones and cultures. We also learned that there is much that can be done in international education in the absence of physical mobility. So, what lies ahead?

The Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) and our Canadian higher education institutions look ahead with optimism as we seek to do our part towards creating an inclusive future for all through international education. Here are a few of the things that we are thinking about, and planning to act upon in the near future:

- Leveraging the role of internationalization/IE and knowledge diplomacy in advancing Canada's global engagement and in promoting democratic values across multiple international domains (foreign policy, sustainable development, trade, culture and diplomacy), all the while seeking to support the leaders of higher education institutions as they navigate the complex and ever-changing geo-political landscape;
- Applying an equity, diversity and inclusion lens to existing scholarship program designs and modalities and working to recalibrate them such that they are maximally inclusive and accessible;
- Acting with intention to support Canadian institutions as they design and implement activities and programming intended to advance inclusive global learning both at home and abroad, with a particular focus on moving away from traditional, more siloed approaches to that of promoting intersectoral and multi-dimensional approaches (across diverse cultures, perspectives, knowledge systems, nations, diverse ways of knowing and being, and lived experiences);
- Seeking to elevate and amplify the voices of the alumni of Canadian learning and learning abroad (we recently launched a new podcast series entitled "Audio Alumni" beginning with

scholars of the CBIE-led African Leaders of Tomorrow scholarship program in public policy and public administration), as well as promoting continued connection with our alumni post-learning/learning abroad through new modalities;

- Working to build a more robust national dataset on international education in Canada, with a focus on international students and international student experience in Canada (next week, we launch the latest edition of CBIE's International Student Survey), as well as education abroad (with particular emphasis on the future state of learning/education abroad) and the role of internationalization in advancing the SDG agenda (we recently established a cross-sectoral working group to advance the work of higher education institutions on key SDG priorities across Canada);
- Supporting Canadian institutions as we seek to provide viable and durable pathways for scholars and students at risk emerging from challenging home contexts, most recently Afghanistan, to come to Canada, learn and to stay as part of both humanitarian and higher education pathways;
- Creating spaces for Canada's international education sector to tangibly move forward with humility in reconciling inherent tensions and in Indigenizing and decolonizing international education (on September 29, 2021 Canada celebrated its first National Day of Truth and Reconciliation intended to recognize the tragic and painful history and ongoing impacts of colonization and the residential school system in Canada on our Indigenous nations), as well as for promoting learning about local Indigenous histories and narratives through internationalization efforts now and into the future; and
- Promoting greater inter-institutional collaboration across Canada in the area of international partnership development, with particular emphasis upon collaboration between Anglophone and Francophone institutions and between Canadian colleges and universities (next month, we are launching a design thinking process for Canadian institutions to co-design and co-create new modalities for international partnership development).

On these and other IE matters, CBIE and Canada remain open to engaging with our friends and colleagues in sharing and learning from one another, and in seeking to collectively advance progress for people and the planet through internationalization on the basis of our long-held shared commitments and values.

WHAT'S AHEAD?

The Finnish National Agency for Education EDUFI is a government agency under the Ministry for Education and Culture responsible for **developing education** and training, early childhood education and care and lifelong learning; **anticipating society's competence** and education **needs**; drafting the national core curricula for pre-primary, primary and secondary education and training; facilitating programs and contracts that **promote internationalization** and providing consulting services for internationalization; providing services for **student admissions**; producing information to **support development and decision-making** in our field, and making decisions on the **recognition of studies completed abroad**.

EDUFI consists of six main functions (Leadership, Support for Operations, Customer Experience & Data and Knowledge, Learning and Support for Internationalization, and Impact and Coordination of International Affairs) and 23 separate units with personnel size of 480.

In June 21 the Government appointed Dr Minna Kelhä as the new DG of EDUFI for a duration of five years. Before her appointment to EDUFI Dr Kelhä served as Vice Minister of Education. In this position Dr Kelhä led the legislative projects and content preparation of key education policy reforms under the Government Programme. Her previous positions include Secretary-General of the Left Alliance Parliamentary Group from 2016 to 2019 and several other roles in national politics.

EDUFI's work is guided by the following four multiannual impact objectives: inequality is ceased and **equity** in education and internationalisation grows; learners' **wellbeing** improves; continuous learning raises the level of **competences**; and, **broad-mindedness** increases. These objectives represent our plans for long-term societal effects of our work, and they are defined and agreed in cooperation with the Ministry for Education and Culture.

These institution-level objectives are operationalised through more focussed "impact actions". In the area of internationalisation and Higher Education for 2021 there are following priorities:

- implementing efficiently Erasmus+ programme as well as other cooperation instruments in order to reach increased mobility and more cooperation;
- promoting education export and contributing to country branding so that Finland is seen as an interesting and attractive destination for global talent (incl. retention and integration) – this all in line with the new Government road map for work and education-based migration

with the aim of tripling the number of international students in Finland and making 75% of international graduates to stay in Finland after graduation;

- promoting global-mindedness, Agenda 2030 objectives and internationalisation at home;
- promoting cooperation in international networks and in the field of knowledge production.

EDUFI also aims at promoting development cooperation in the education sector and creating stronger partnerships with Africa in the field of education, training and youth in line with the Government's new strategy for Africa. This year we have strengthened our partnership with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and with funding from the ODA budget EDUFI launched in October a new Centre of Expertise in Education and Development, in cooperation with the Ministry. This Centre of Expertise will pool Finnish capacity and expertise in education and development; facilitate deployment of education-sector expertise, with a focus on systemic and policy-level development, for the use of developing countries and development donors; and support partner countries' efforts in offering equitable and inclusive quality education.

While preparing for 2022 priorities EDUFI has for the first time carried out a broad interactive consultation process with our customers, beneficiaries and stakeholders to take stock and understand better what the whole field of education in Finland has experienced and learned during the pandemic, and what are the specific challenges in our field we should focus on in coming years.

An open delfoi-process gathered 650 participants who gave 3800 comments and provided us with 1300 suggestions for activities in 2022. As part of the process six webinars were organized with 500 persons participating (a separate event was even organized for youth). With this eDelphi process we were able to identify the following four central challenges: equity and regional divergence, well-being, digitalization, and sustainable development. These challenges will, in coming weeks, be translated into more focussed working priorities in our respective fields of action - like promoting internationalization in HE, for example.

What's Ahead?

The unprecedented global COVID-19 pandemic has affected countries and communities worldwide. Whilst many deplore the loss of loved ones or have endured intense suffering, and even though the sanitary crisis is not yet over, the overall outlook is looking more optimistic.

In the field of international higher education and academic mobility, institutional stakeholders have had to adapt swiftly to manage the crisis but can now start to look more positively to the future.

Campus France, a French public institution that acts under the supervision of the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, has a long-standing commitment to **cooperating closely with its international and European partners** with whom it shares a **common world vision based on democratic values**. In 2019, Béatrice Khaiat, Director General of Campus France, was awarded the IIE's prestigious Centennial Medal for her organisation's contribution to international education.

Key strategic priorities for Campus France include participating in the global effort to **protect the environment**, providing **assistance to students and academics at risk or in exile** and supporting the **One Health** approach. The Agency implements a number of programmes to uphold these strategies, such as the *Make Our Planet Great Again* initiative for researchers or the EU-funded *HOPES-LEB* project to support Syrian refugees.

Campus France enjoys close collaboration with the French higher education institutions and their conferences, notably within the scope of the Campus France Forum and its 371 member organisations. Over the past 18 months, HEIs have had to move courses and testing online and take additional measures to assist students and staff. Campus France continues to support the promotion and development of **online and blended programmes** within an inclusive, student-centred and connected higher education system. With the planned return to on-campus teaching in the Fall, Campus France also focuses on ensuring the **wellbeing of international students through specific hosting services**.

During the crisis, France has **kept its borders open and has continued to welcome international students**. With 370 000 international students in France, the government has made the delivery of visas to this key target group a priority. Following a 25% fall in non-EU students in 2020-2021, applications for the forthcoming academic year are following a positive trend, with a 26% increase compared to one year ago.

Campus France is responsible for implementing the **government's *Bienvenue en France* strategy** launched in 2018 with the objective of attracting 500 000 international students to France by 2027.

In the short-term, we aim to further our position as one of the **leading destinations for international students** and be the top non-English-speaking host country.

The worldwide *Bienvenue en France* communication campaign, Campus France's vast online presence and the network of 259 Campus France offices in 127 countries within the French diplomatic network contribute to increasing France's international visibility and ensure students stay informed about the latest developments in French higher education. Graduates of French HEIs and the 350 000 members of the *France Alumni* network also contribute to increasing France's attractiveness.

Campus France is pursuing the implementation of the *Bienvenue en France* quality seal ('Label') building on the 120 higher education institutions that have already been recognized as providing top-quality services in the hosting of international students.

In terms of **geographical priorities**, the Indo-Pacific region is a key focus for forthcoming actions, and Europe and Africa, in particular, remain important target regions. Campus France is responsible for promoting French off-shore and joint campuses as well as the *Partnerships with African Higher Education* initiative which funds cooperation between French and African institutions. The Agency also supports several European Universities, helping to make them more visible on the international stage.

Campus France continues to manage student and researcher mobility programmes for the French and foreign governments and public and private organisations, and is active in developing new international academic programmes. The reinforcement of the **empowerment of women** in international exchanges is a key element of this action.

Whilst it is important not to abandon the benefits of online events that have been prevalent during the COVID-19 crisis and have enabled us to maintain that all important contact with our partners, a gradual return to physical fairs, workshops, networking seminars and conferences can be expected from late 2021 onwards. We look forward to **renewing our face-to-face dialogue** and to enjoying those special moments together.

DAAD - What's ahead in international higher education?

The Covid19 pandemic has had a dramatic impact on international academic exchange. Massive restrictions on international travel and the disruption of on-campus study as well as the transition to new digital formats of distance learning will shape the reality of international academic exchange for a long time to come. At the same time, there has also been resilience, creativity, and strength among university faculty and administrators, scholars, and students to overcome the crisis and to find solutions to the challenges created by the pandemic. Scientific research has been able to develop vaccines against the virus in record time, such as the start-up BioNtech from the campus of the University of Mainz in Germany, which was then able to offer one of the most widely used vaccines with Pfizer-BioNtech. University faculty and students have often teamed up to develop new virtual teaching models and conduct international research together in new virtual spaces. Two examples are the DAAD programs IP Digital, which expands the international digital campus, and IVAC (International Virtual Academic Collaboration), where German and international students study and work on projects together in joined or linked classrooms through their university partnerships.

There is no shortage of the most pressing challenges of our time. Climate change is forcing us to massively reduce our consumption of fossil fuels, and this will also affect international academic mobility. In creating new rules and limitations for international travel and mobility, we will have to be careful not to build up new mobility hurdles for those minorities or underprivileged student groups that participate less in international exchange. This would, in turn, continue to hinder academic and social advancement in the context of free global competition. Scientific societies cannot afford to ignore the potential of minorities and underprivileged groups to thrive. Unequal distribution of opportunities and unfairly distributed access to resources for education and science can be found on a national and international scale. Today, through global networking, social media, and the massive expansion of access to information via the Internet, these inequalities are becoming more rapidly and dramatically evident and demand urgent attention and change for the better.

Along with the massive worldwide expansion of access to information, we also see worldwide tendencies - depending on the form of government and society - to regulate, limit, filter, influence or even manipulate information by state or private actors. The relentless flood of information in the modern attention economy causes stress and uncertainty for many people. On the one hand, science and society are benefiting from the free flow and access

to information and scientific knowledge, but at the same time we see heated debates, emotionalization and even incitement to violence, manipulation and hate speech. In fact, the societies of the world are having trouble agreeing on rules of communication and conduct.

The international higher education community is deeply concerned to see that hostility to science has been gaining momentum worldwide in recent years. The question of freedom of science and the limits of this freedom remains, however, difficult to balance. Much like the field of politics, these questions possibly elude easy ethical definitions, because science has always been characterized by controversy, often passionate controversy. The claim to represent a morally good position is usually made by all actors, and a judgment on this is in many cases very complex.

On a global scale the Afghanistan crisis reminds us that there are countries and regions where students and scientists are particularly vulnerable and need the solidarity and as much as possible protection and support from other countries and the international higher education community. It is an imperative of humanity to help people in need and suffering from persecution. In addition to this, for scientists accustomed to analyzing complex systems, it is obvious that in the interdependent global world there is no prospect of shielding and isolating oneself from the conflicts and forces in other regions. Such attempts have always failed in short or long term, and they are even more unrealistic given today's technology. What's more is they ignore the fact that it is the crises of the world that shackle the potential of the people in Afghanistan and other conflict regions and keep them from advancing for the benefit of development and prosperity on this planet.

What do the challenges of our time mean for shaping the future of international academic exchange?

One consequence of the pandemic will be that public and private health care will become more important. As the Pfizer-BionTech example shows, research needs international exchange to provide successful, applicable solutions. Science and international academic exchange will help to organize health care in an efficient and evidence-based way for the protection and benefit of people.

In view of climate change and technological progress, distance learning and virtual mobility will play an increasingly important role in international exchange. We will need to develop a new balance of physical and virtual mobility. Virtual formats can also provide an accessible way for intercultural understanding and affordable study abroad experiences for increasingly diverse groups. Deep immersion in other cultures, the learning of foreign languages, and the acquisition of intercultural skills will always require longer stays abroad for studying, research and work. We need to find ways that make this physical and longer mobility increasingly accessible to more diverse student groups.

International academic exchange allows one to experience a variety of points of view, mentalities, histories, and often ideologically different positions. Given this, the international exchange community should in particular be able to contribute to the question of how we deal with cutbacks on academic freedom, hostility to science, division and confrontation. In this regard, international education opens up spaces for dialogue through which we can advocate for the values which underly our understanding of science and research. At the same time, international encounters allow us to train critical thinking including questioning oneself and coming to new perspectives on our own views. "To agree to disagree" is often the starting point of intercultural exchange, from which a complex path of dialogue can begin.

The violent conflict regions of this world show us what happens when division and confrontation escalate to the point where dialogue, understanding and civilized coexistence are no longer possible. If we take the values of humanity and freedom of knowledge seriously, the international higher education community will increase its efforts to provide protection to scholars and students from conflict regions and to build academic structures and capacity in the greater region of conflict. We should see this not only as a charitable activity, but as an investment in the future of a knowledge- and science-based global world, where people's potentials are unleashed and benefit society as well as science.

What's Ahead?

Italy is the first country in the West to have been hit by the pandemic. It was also hit very hard because the event was completely unexpected and the country was not prepared to face it. In March 2020, the Italian Government imposed a general lockdown with the stop as well of all the teaching activities in presence and forcing to distance learning mode any educational institutions.

Within a single week, it was necessary to switch to online modes, to deliver lectures both synchronously and asynchronously and to transform in online exams and graduation sessions. The attendance of workshops was much more problematic, and activities based on computer simulations and studies had been favored.

However, the Italian university system was not completely unprepared. Since 1991, on the initiative of the Ministry of Education, University and Research, a Consortium of public universities, developed the first international distance learning model. Through exploiting satellite television, thousands of video lectures have been made available to everyone, free of charge. The distance learning model leant on traditional universities that agreed to reorganize themselves to answer the new demands for flexibility in teaching and learning processes and their teachers were able to experiment with new languages and new teaching technologies, including the “blended” form. In 2003 the Ministry established also “telematic Universities”, 11 up today, and the course delivery platforms became digital. Many young assistants of the time were able to take advantage of that past experience to tackle remote teaching during the lockdown.

The situation of the Institutions of higher artistic and musical education (fine arts academies and music conservatories) was different. In fact, in these Institutions teaching is much more linked to the direct relationship between teachers and learners. In general, the impact was worse, also because these Institutions were less technological equipped to provide distance learning models. The traditional training was substituted by forms of students self-training, periodically followed at a distance by the teachers.

The stop of international travels, with cancellations and delays of numerous students' mobility programs, forced universities to offer alternative arrangements in the form of 'virtual mobility' and remote teaching.

The use of ICT tools changed the traditional methods of teaching, founding the use of alternative tools for virtual learning models and the possibility of providing recorded lectures.

The response of the students to the new distance learning methods was generally very positive¹, also due to the possibility of following the lectures in a much better way, with less distractions and greater visibility, as well as the possibility of having direct contact with the teacher. Other positive element has been the cancellation of the use of public transportation (possible vectors of infection).²

On the other hand, the personal relationships and the socialization activities almost disappeared, however, as demonstrated by the answers highlighted in several university's surveys, without deep students suffering, thanks to the social campaigns developed by most of the universities to psychologically support students.

Ultimately, in general, universities have overcome the period of face-to-face teaching without too many traumas, but the nationwide closures affected the local and national economy, with evident economical and learning losses. In the pre-university education institutions, there have been sometimes the problem of insufficient distribution of IT infrastructures and tools to attend the lectures. This problem has not been felt in higher education institutions.

The Italian higher education system as a whole from the academic year 2019/20 to the year 2020/21 lost about 20,000 students (about -16%), but the traditional universities recorded an increase of about 37,000 students (+23%), while telematic universities suffered a dramatic decline (about -43%). The universities with the greatest international activity experience had a significant increase in foreign students.

Fortunately, the highly advanced vaccination campaign now gives us a more optimistic glimpse on the future. The end of the lockdown and the free zone have started since 1st of June 2021. Universities are now developing blended forms of teaching for the near future.

Cristina Messa, the Italian Ministry of University and Research quotes that blended teaching, not only will remain in the future, but it could also become a method to increase the attraction the number of international students in Italy. Starting from September 2021, lectures are to be hold mainly in presence, with booking via app and consequent blended teaching model.

The ability of organizing lectures also aimed at virtual learning will be invaluable in order to develop projects of internationalization at home. Probably the goal of exposing 50% of the students at European universities to international experiences during their academic career, a goal suggested by the European Commission, will be realistically feasible by combining face-to-face mobility, supported by Erasmus+ funds for 2021-27, and various forms of virtual mobility.

¹ In many universities, 99% of students said they were enthusiastic about dual teaching.

² A university made a study according to which 50% of emissions are caused by travel, especially by students.

We will certainly take care of these changes forced by the pandemic for the world of universities in our near future. It will perhaps be useful to enhance the virtual learning tools, also in the perspective of lifelong learning.

As a final remarque, the pandemic has radically changed the universities approach to the attraction of students, as well as the way to promote their services and programs. Fairs and events around the world have been replaced by the digital arena. Universities have learnt that their key selling points and recruitment actions need to be adapted to the shifting needs and circumstance.

The University student offices strategy focused on compensating the forced lack of the invaluable face-to-face interaction by expanding the digital outreach (more initiatives in a wider geographical span) and increasing the marketing automation processes, further enhanced activities dedicated to nurturing and retention.

In the academic year 2020/2021 the Italian Universities participated in thousand activities worldwide, reaching millions of students: as a result, as I already said, the Italian Universities have registered, for the second year in a row, an increase of domestic and international applications, both for our Bachelor and for our Master Programs.

What's Ahead for Nuffic and internationalization in the Netherlands?

Nuffic is the Dutch organization for internationalization in education. On behalf of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the European Commission, we work with our partners at home and abroad to help build a peaceful and prosperous society for everyone. We focus on all sectors of the Dutch education system; from primary education to research and adult education. In order to be more successful – we are open to forging new (international partnerships).

Our ambition is for all pupils and students to have the opportunity to acquire international competencies, whether at home or abroad. This will prepare them for the society and labor market of the future and ensure that they are ready to tackle the global challenges of our time. After all, international problems require international solutions. Economic, political or social tensions do not stop at national borders. The changes that the world is experiencing as a result not only of globalization, but also of digitalization, require significant changes to education.

Building the future of 2025

In the context of rapidly changing national and international circumstances like climate change or COVID-19, we help schools and education institutions shape internationalization and international cooperation. Our focus for the next 5 years will be on:

- **Being a linking pin:** We support schools and education institutions in their internationalization activities, forming connections between them and across national borders.
- **Implementation and policy:** We are an organization that implements large-scale grant programmes such as the Orange Knowledge Programme and Erasmus+. As a knowledge organization, we are able to contribute to internationalization policies thanks to our practical experience.
- **Wide reach:** We are a flexible, customer-oriented organization with a wide reach, covering everything from primary to higher education in the Netherlands, Europe and worldwide. We are ready to take on new assignments and seize opportunities to expand our portfolio.
- **Partnerships:** We will strengthen our existing partnerships with schools, institutions, civil-society organizations and public-sector bodies and forge new ones.
- **Agility:** To achieve our ambitions, we must continue to develop. We will make our organization more agile to ensure our continuing ability to meet the needs of our partners and clients.

In the coming years, our focus in the various sectors will be on:

- **Primary and secondary education:** We will support networks and platforms such as bilingual education and eTwinning. By 2025, we will have developed a specific product offering for secondary education, practical training and special education.
- **Vocational education and training (VET):** We will introduce a tool kit for teacher mobility, sharing knowledge and encouraging schools to learn from each other. In 2025, at least 10% of vocational students will enjoy an experience abroad thanks to our support. We will also support more VET colleges in their ambition to forge international partnerships.
- **Higher education:** We will promote the full scope of the Dutch higher education system abroad. In addition, we will issue advice on the recognition of diplomas from abroad and provide insight into facts and figures. We will also contribute to the formulation of a strategy to attract talent from abroad to the Dutch labor market, focusing on academic talent in particular. In 2025, a greater and more diverse group of students will move abroad for a study or internship.
- **Sector-wide:** For people who are already active in the labor market, the development of international competences will become increasingly important.

Changing perspectives

As the internationalisation agency of the Netherlands, Nuffic is not left unaffected by the ongoing debates on internationalization. Between education institutions there are big differences in how they experience and view internationalization, too. These differentiated needs present an additional challenge for Nuffic in its role of facilitator for all the Dutch education institutions and as an intermediary organisation between the government and the education institutions.

Nuffic's role has evolved in response. On the one hand it follows the direction of the government and reflected on and adjusted its own activities. On the other hand, it stays critical towards the changing perspectives and delivers research data to counter the concerns and opinions and tried to reframe the way internationalisation was viewed. The organization shifted its focus from attracting international students and talent retention towards balance in mobility as well as research and knowledge generation, with a particular focus on the possible downsides of internationalisation. At the same time Nuffic needs to close its Neso offices and the funding for its alumni activities is expected to be stopped.

Making more impact

In 2022, Nuffic's position will be solidified with a statutory mandate from the Ministry of Education for its main activities such as credential evaluation and scholarship administration. Nuffic's role now demands a continuous re-evaluation of its desired impact and contribution to internationalisation of education, but with the specific challenges of internationalisation in the Netherlands and the specific role and assignment that has been granted, the organization is well in place to take the next step in this ever-changing landscape.

Our steps forward in 2022

Next to Nuffic's position, the organization has plenty of ambitions for the new year. Some of these are:

- We will have special focus on SDG-related themes as sustainability and inclusion. We will take measures to reduce our footprint, reach out to target groups that are underrepresented in internationalization activities, and aim to be more inclusive in recruitment and talent development internally.
- We focus on working outside-in more and more. In 2022 we will intensify our stakeholder management to get a clearer image of our client needs.
- Learning and improvement will be boosted by improving our planning and control cycle and using the takeaways to do our work better every day.
- It is important to diversify our service portfolio, to enlarge our impact on society. We aim to be a pillar assessed organization and forge strategic partnerships to have a shot at tenders and calls for proposal that fit our organizational goals and capabilities.
- Digitalization and automatization of our processes and services will make things easier for our partners and customers. Security of our systems needs to be boosted continuously to hold off cybercrime as much as possible.
- Focus on excellent programme management will be key, by being effective, efficient and having a big reach. This is what makes our organization successful.

Internationalization is a means, not an end. We believe it is important to embed internationalization and international cooperation in the broader objectives of the education sector, civil society organizations and the public sector. That is how we can ensure that internationalization will have an impact and help tackle the main challenges of our time. We are open to having discussions and conversations with organizations with which we could work together on these goals.

Boosting internationalization through flexibility and innovation

One of the things the pandemic has taught us is that we need international cooperation, now more than ever. The future of internationalization does indeed look bright, as we expect a surge in person-to-person contacts across borders after more than a year of only digital meetings. So, what we will see in the future is more flexible and innovative modes of collaboration which are expanding the opportunities for global interaction. It is worth noting that the authorities in Norway actually raised their ambitions for international cooperation in education in the midst of the pandemic. To further internationalization in education post-Covid, however, we need a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the new modes of cooperation.

Students, teachers, and education institutions across the world have met closed borders and campuses with flexibility and creativity. Digital modes of communication and cooperation have replaced face-to-face teaching and physical meetings. In what ways can the new technological platforms work together with more traditional approaches – and how can they be utilized to create more sustainable ways of internationalization? Our government agency, the Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills, has a special responsibility overseeing these developments. A recent report entitled “Crisis and creativity: Consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic for international educational cooperation” (2021) summarizes Norwegian-funded projects’ experiences during the pandemic and provides important insights into how international cooperation may be strengthened post-Covid.

A major advantage of the shift from physical to digital cooperation is that reduced air travel saves time and money and decreases the carbon footprint. Digital cooperation is financially more sustainable over time and makes projects less vulnerable to changes in funding opportunities. For our agency’s clients and users, the transition to more digital modes of cooperation has made it possible to expand the number of partners, increase access to internationally acclaimed teachers and make education more inclusive and available to wider audiences.

So, if digital international cooperation works so well, do we really need to continue to meet face-to-face? The short answer is yes. Not all forms of physical mobility and cooperation can be replaced by virtual or digital alternatives. According to our clients, face-to-face interaction is

necessary, particularly for projects that include practical education activities such as fieldwork, internship, laboratory work, or physical and artistic performance.

Besides, embarking on a new international partnership without having met face-to-face can be demanding. Spatial separation increases the barriers to cross-cultural communication and relation-building between the project partners themselves and vis-à-vis the project's participants. During the pandemic, fledgling partnerships have thus faced more challenges than well-established ones. The latter have already met physically – perhaps several times – and this has made the transition to digital cooperation much easier. Our agency takes this as a reminder of the importance of including opportunities for physical mobility in our future seed funding allocations.

Another lesson from the pandemic is that staff mobility is more easily and successfully replaced with digital alternatives than student mobility is. The cultural and social benefits of virtual student mobility are much poorer compared to physical mobility. In some cases, even academic output is reduced. This may be because some teachers lack digital pedagogical skills and have struggled to find adequate solutions for interacting with students across digital platforms. In addition, different time zones may make digital international group work demanding. Undoubtedly, teaching in real time encourages interaction, motivation, and more active student involvement in the learning process.

The global digital divide affects many of the international projects, particularly those based on North-South partnerships. A pertinent question is therefore whether increased digitalization may entrench an already unequal distribution of and access to knowledge between affluent and less affluent countries. Or perhaps it is the other way around; does digitalization function as a global equalizer and lower the threshold for participation in international projects as the number of costly intercontinental travels and long-term stays abroad decrease? We do not have the answers to these questions yet, but one fact remains: The number of applications to our agency's partnership program for global academic cooperation reached an all-time high this year.

Based on the experiences of our current projects, downscaling physical student mobility in favor of digital mobility is not recommended. Digital mobility is both underdeveloped and insufficient. Norwegian government policy underscores this observation; during the pandemic, an ambitious White Paper on student mobility was presented. Titled *A world of opportunities – international student mobility in higher education*, the White Paper's long-term goal is that 50 per cent of those who complete a degree in Norwegian higher education should have had a study or training period abroad during their studies. This is a powerful signal that Norway recognizes the great need for international cooperation that has been made all the clearer during the pandemic.

At the height of the pandemic, the Norwegian government also renewed and expanded its so-called "Panorama Strategy", which is guiding the country's bi- and multilateral cooperation

on higher education and research with key partner countries outside the EU. The original six strategic partner countries, Brazil, China, India, Japan, Russia, and South Africa were joined by Canada, South Korea, and the US. The strategy's objective is to ensure constructive interaction in higher education, research, and innovation, with strong ties to working life and the business sector, aiming to contribute knowledge towards solving the global challenges of our times.

With ambitious goals for student mobility, and an expanded research and education strategy for cooperation with key partners, the Norwegian government is setting the agenda for internationalization in higher education post-Covid. The future does indeed look bright, and digitalization will feature as an important addition to the traditional modes of cooperation. At its best, digitalization promotes sustainable, inclusive, and more affordable internationalization with a lower carbon footprint. At the same time, it cannot replace face-to-face interaction when new partnerships are forged or give students the cultural and social immersion that they get through physical mobility. Instead of being inclusive, digital cooperation can leave out those who need it most, a clear breach of the 2030 Agenda's promise to leave no one behind.

It may be that it is not a question of choosing one or the other. A more flexible approach is needed with a combination of digital and physical modes that can mutually reinforce each other. Virtual meetings before or after a physical exchange period can strengthen the learning outcome of that stay. Exposing students to virtual exchange can even entice those who hesitate to leave their country to travel abroad anyway. Our aim should be to prepare for a surge in student mobility once we get out of the pandemic. Flexibility in our approach will make us reach our ambitious goals of building bridges across borders.

Reimagining International Education for a Post-Pandemic World

Even before the pandemic it was clear that international higher education was changing. The global pandemic has accelerated the pace of change and brought the future ahead of schedule.

The old dynamic of wealthy English-speaking countries with long-established higher education systems dominating international student recruitment is being challenged. For example, China has invested heavily in its higher education system and can now increasingly both educate its own young people and recruit students from across East Asia. Regional hubs are also growing in strength in the Middle East and Africa. German, Dutch and French universities are offering courses taught in English and increasing their share of international students.

At the same time, tolerance for inequity in partnerships between developed and developing countries is wearing thin. Low- and middle-income countries are demanding to be at the table when international research projects are discussed, fully involved in their design and equal recipients of the rewards - such as enhanced institutional reputations. Organisations like the African Research Universities Alliance seek to pool the research resources of their region to build capacity, influence and impact.

International student demand is also shaping how higher education is delivered. Many students want to begin their international student experience in their home country before travelling overseas.¹ Digital innovations are making it easier for universities in different countries to make this an integrated experience. Domestically, digital advances are also making it possible for universities to offer more flexible, student-centred courses that blend digital and face-to-face learning.

Students are not just demanding innovations in teaching but also scrutinising whether their institutions are tackling global problems more critically. They are concerned about the climate emergency and systemic racism and they want their universities and colleges to be part of the solution.² Higher Education Institutions must find a way to manage the tension between

¹ A British Council study, developed with UUKi found that 1 in 6 new international “first degree” students in the UK have gained prior credit towards their UK qualification whilst in their home country.
<https://www.britishcouncil.org/education/he-science/knowledge-centre/transnational-education/tne-routes-uk-he>

² The latest [Deloitte Global 2021 survey](#) finds that 30% of Generation Z and 26% of Millennials have participated in a public demonstration or protest during the last year. Millennials and Gen Z continue to make choices aligned with their values. Furthermore, 60% of Gen Z and 56% of millennials say systemic racism is widespread in general society.

operating globally, reducing their carbon footprint and tackling issues around racism and inclusion.

A British Council and Association of Commonwealth Universities study (to be published in October 2021) has found that international higher education and research partnerships can make a significant contribution to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. We believe that higher education partnerships should be a force for equity. We are developing a new programme, Going Global Partnerships, to support international higher and TVET partnerships – making sure that they are co-designed and co-delivered with equal sharing of reward.

We are also taking steps to understand future trends in international tertiary education through a series of conversations with leaders and students. By gaining a greater sense of the demands on international tertiary education and attempted responses, the community will be better prepared for the future and better equipped to influence the direction of travel.

We recognise that students are also increasingly concerned about the social impact of universities. In his book, "The New Power University", Professor Jonathan Grant argues that universities should put social responsibility at the core of the academic mission. The British Council is supporting this agenda. In East Asia, we have established the Social Innovation Linkages for Knowledge Exchange Network (SILKEN). This network aims to develop long term, sustainable social innovation networks between universities and their stakeholders and produce and disseminate a roadmap for future engagement. The digital knowledge exchange platform brings together universities from over 40 countries to collaborate on complex social issues, placing social innovation at the heart of academia for post Covid renewal and recovery.

The pandemic has taught us that we can and should do things differently and has forced us to experiment and innovate. The British Council recognises that we must continue to do this even if it becomes possible to go back to the old way of doing things. We are exploring how we can take advantage of digital means of delivery to reach bigger audiences and to offer more flexible ways for people to engage with us. For example, during the pandemic we successfully moved many of our English for Education Services resources online and are now exploring whether we can do the same with learning from other programmes such as Connecting Classrooms for Global Learning. We are also seeking to create a new digital community for international alumni of UK higher education with a core offer of information, and networking services as well as additional opportunities targeted at particular alumni groups.

Access to digital could also help young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to overcome barriers to mobility. For example, virtual engagement could build their confidence before travel. The shift to digital could also increase the impact of shorter periods of mobility so that students who cannot spend long periods abroad because of caring responsibilities or lack of access to funds can still obtain many of the benefits. We are exploring how we can integrate this into our mobility programmes while still retaining longer, immersive periods of work, study

or volunteering overseas for those who seek mastery of a language or a deep understanding of a culture.

We also note that one of the collateral benefits of digital is that it allows virtual engagement which can reduce the need to travel. This will help us to operate more sustainably – which is crucially important for the credibility of our [Climate Connection Programme](#) which supports the UK's hosting of COP26. This includes a series of global policy dialogues exploring the multiple roles that universities play in combatting the climate crisis. The dialogues will be located across 4 different regions and bring in policy makers and innovators to discuss global challenges.

We recognise that digital delivery brings its own challenges. Even in developed countries not everyone has access to appropriate places to study, good internet and appropriate devices and this can be even more challenging in developing environments. There are also some aspects of relationship building that are more successful when done face to face. We are building this into our strategy.

While the pandemic has hit some parts of the world harder than others and will have set development back, the countries that have been able to recover most quickly should seek to use what they have learned from the pandemic and ensure their international activity acts as a force for equity. This is important not only because it is the right thing to do but because if the pandemic has taught us anything at all it has shown that we share one world. The political boundaries dividing countries are artificial and challenges are shared and global. They can only be addressed if we work together.



— Joint Statement of Principles in Support of International Education —

Reengaging the World to Make the United States Stronger at Home

A Renewed U.S. Commitment to International Education

SUMMARY

The United States cannot afford to be absent from the world stage: U.S. leadership and engagement makes an essential difference abroad, as well as at home. Indeed, in today's interconnected world, our foreign and domestic policies are inextricably intertwined in pursuit of a preeminent goal – improving the lives of the American people.

Many of our most pressing challenges are inherently global in scope and impact and can only be addressed by nations and individuals working together. From tackling pandemics and the climate crisis, to reducing economic disparities and building prosperity, to countering threats to democracy and maintaining peace – resolving these global challenges requires partnership and collaboration across borders. It is imperative that we continue to cooperate with our allies, invest in our relationships, and broaden our engagement worldwide.

The robust exchange of students, researchers, scholars, and educators, along with broader international education efforts between the United States and other countries, strengthens relationships between current and future leaders. These relationships are necessary to address shared challenges, enhance American prosperity, and contribute to global peace and security.

U.S. students, researchers, scholars, and educators benefit when they engage with peers from around the world, whether overseas or through international education at home. All Americans need to be equipped with global and cultural competencies to navigate the ever-changing landscapes of education, international business, scientific discovery and innovation, and the global economy. International education enhances cultural and linguistic diversity, and helps to develop cross-cultural communication skills, foreign language competencies, and enhanced self-awareness and understanding of diverse perspectives.

ACTION

We propose the following principles to guide our approach to international education. We recognize that the U.S. government has a unique role in international education because of its responsibility to the American people; its purview over foreign affairs, national security, and economic and border policy; its capacity to provide national and global leadership; and its role in affecting how the United States is perceived globally.

As U.S. federal agencies involved in different aspects of international education, we commit to undertaking actions to support a renewed focus on international education. We will seek to:

- Participate in a coordinated national approach to international education, including study in the United States by international students, researchers, and scholars; study abroad for Americans; international research collaboration; and the internationalization of U.S. campuses and classrooms.
- Emphasize the U.S. government's commitment to support key facets of international education, in partnership with U.S. higher education institutions, schools, state and local governments, non-governmental entities, the business community, and other stakeholders.
- Incorporate a strong focus on international education as part of the nation's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in order to build back better at home, maintain U.S. global leadership, and promote equitable access to the benefits of international education.
- Welcome international students, researchers, scholars, and educators to the United States in a safe and secure manner and encourage a diversity of participants, disciplines, and types of authorized schools and higher education institutions where they can choose to study, teach, or contribute to research.
- Encourage U.S. students, researchers, scholars, and educators who reflect the diversity of the U.S. population to pursue overseas study, internships, research, and other international experiences.
- Recognize the significant benefits that international students, researchers, scholars, and exchange alumni contribute to research, innovation, economic development, and job opportunities in many fields and sectors throughout the United States.
- Promote expanded access to international education, including through the use of technology where in-person experiences are not feasible, to connect U.S. students, researchers, scholars, and educators with their peers abroad.
- Implement policies, procedures, and protocols so as to facilitate international education and authorized practical experiences while promoting program integrity and protecting national security. Clearly communicate policy guidance and implement fair, efficient and transparent support processes while maintaining national security and upholding the law.
- Leverage existing international education programs and resources to create new opportunities to broaden access and underpin U.S. excellence and leadership.
- Foster increased cooperation among the federal government, the private sector, and educational institutions so as to maintain the integrity of federally-funded and protected intellectual property and research endeavors from undue foreign influence and unlawful acquisition.

CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

At several key points in U.S. history, prompted by urgent domestic and global developments, the nation has benefitted from strong U.S. government leadership in actively promoting international education and exchange. In the wake of World War II, Congress created the Fulbright Programs for international education and exchange. The launch of the Sputnik satellite by the then-Soviet Union in 1957 resulted in U.S. legislation that created model international programs in U.S. higher education. Just a few years later, President John F. Kennedy established the Peace Corps for U.S. volunteers to serve in developing nations. Over the past two decades, the 9/11 terrorist attacks, economic challenges, cybersecurity threats, migration crises, climate change, and the COVID-19 pandemic have brought into stark relief that we are at another critical juncture. It is vital to reinforce our people-to-people relationships around the globe and to strengthen the infrastructure and pathways that help prepare Americans in all sectors to engage with the world.

Enhancing National Security and the Economy

International education benefits the national security of the United States. It supports U.S. diplomacy by promoting people-to-people ties that create goodwill and mutual understanding, while also advancing the security of the American people. Our national security is bolstered when we lead with our strengths, where in a globally competitive environment the United States remains the partner of choice and the pacesetter in research and innovation, even as we mitigate risks from malign actors. Whether these people-to-people ties are formed by international students in the United States, U.S. students studying abroad, faculty efforts, university partnerships, virtual exchanges, or other forms of engagement, these activities strengthen our ability to build alliances and lasting relationships in government, business and trade, science, and innovation, as well as the arts and culture.

International education also contributes significantly to the U.S. economy, job creation, and innovation. The most immediate economic impact of international education derives from the presence of international students on U.S. campuses and in the surrounding communities. In 2020, international students contributed over \$39 billion to the U.S. economy, making U.S. education the nation's 6th largest services export, supporting an estimated 415,000 American jobs.

Benefitting American Students and Communities

International education and internationalization in academic offerings help American students understand the interdependence and interconnections within global systems. In addition, the presence of international students, researchers, and scholars on U.S. campuses enhances diversity, contributes to academic vibrancy, and fosters creativity and innovation in the sciences and the arts.

International education also provides insights about the global ramifications of local and national events. As a result, students develop their critical thinking skills and learn to draw conclusions that take a range of viewpoints into consideration. Exposing students to a diversity of thought and experiences is a hallmark of the U.S. education system. Students engaged in international experiences, like study abroad, develop additional socioemotional skills, including greater resiliency, an increased capacity to innovate, and the ability to deal with unfamiliar environments. This benefits students and enriches their communities and their campuses when they return.

Strengthening U.S. Higher Education

The U.S. higher education sector is among our most precious assets as a nation. Its scope, diversity and creativity are unmatched by any other higher education system worldwide. Additionally, U.S. campuses support faculty-student dialogue and the free expression of ideas, cultivating democratic values and active citizenship among U.S. and international students, creating a stronger nation, and building alliances with citizens of other countries.

The U.S. higher education system has had to demonstrate remarkable flexibility and resourcefulness in addressing the unique challenges of the pandemic, especially for international students in the United States and American students who were abroad during the outbreak. As the health crisis recedes, we need to restore and further strengthen the capacity of our higher education institutions, including their critical, ongoing role in the provision of international education and care of international students.

Supporting Research and Innovation – Our Competitive Edge

International students, researchers, scholars, and exchange alumni contribute to the long-term economic health and competitiveness of the U.S. economy. They make significant contributions to U.S. innovation through their research and academic work and their subsequent professional collaboration, in fields that range from cutting-edge digital technologies to the development of the COVID-19 vaccines. In addition, international students, researchers, and scholars who gain practical experience in the United States after graduation benefit U.S. businesses through their multicultural perspectives, linguistic skills, and academic training, particularly in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

While the United States remains the top host nation of international students in the world due to its quality of education and diverse offerings, other countries, including our closest partners and allies, are now aggressively competing with the United States to host those students. This competition — especially from nations that are not our allies and do not share our values — represents a direct challenge to U.S. leadership in research and innovation, our ability to tackle common global concerns, and our capacity to effectively champion universal values, such as human rights, the rule of law, and equity and tolerance, on the global stage.

It is imperative that the United States continue to lead the world and remain the destination of choice for talented international students, researchers, scholars, and educators. International students make a critical contribution to a foreign policy that serves the interests of the American people.





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