European, Global and Intercultural Dimension in Curriculum Development

Higher education institutions are committed in many different ways to strengthening the international dimension and are supported in their efforts by the Federation and the Länder and by intermediary organisations, including the German Academic Exchange Service (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst – DAAD) and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung) as well as the German Rectors’ Conference (Hochschulrektorenkonferenz – HRK). Of note are the intensive efforts to expand English-language study courses, the setting up of international study courses and study courses leading to a double degree or a joint degree, the establishment of international study and training partnerships, the formation of Bachelor’s study courses with integrated periods abroad, the creation of international doctoral programmes and strategic international higher education partnerships, and the employment of foreign guest lecturers. In order to facilitate academic recognition between European partner institutions of higher education and promote the mobility of students, the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) has been introduced in Germany. The ECTS is applied to all consecutive study courses. Within the framework of the key action 1 (mobility of individuals) in the higher education institution sector of the EU Erasmus+ programme, the conclusion of Learning Agreements is obligatory, in which a programme of study is agreed between the home institution of higher education, the foreign guest institution of higher education and students. The Diploma Supplement serves the better acceptance abroad of qualifications and degrees awarded by higher education institutions; this was developed from a joint initiative of the EU, the Council of Europe and UNESCO in Germany in 1999. It is generally written in English. The higher education institutions award a Diploma Supplement to all graduates of Bachelor’s and Master’s study courses, while graduates of diploma and state examination study courses receive the Diploma Supplement on demand.

European and international courses of study are characterised by being based on a study concept that, from the outset, includes an international dimension and involves one or several periods of study at a foreign higher education institution as a compulsory component of the course. Some higher education cooperation schemes and exchange programmes have been developed by the higher education institutions involved to such an extent that foreign degrees are awarded as well as the German degree (double degree or joint degree). The course and examinations are conducted according to a curriculum and examination schedule which has been agreed on between the partner institutions. In the summer semester 2019, 266 first degree and 485 graduate courses of study leading to international double degrees are on offer at German higher education institutions.

A growing number of higher education institutions are offering a range of European-oriented special graduate study courses, especially in law, economics and engineering.
An overview of the international degree courses is included on the website [3] of the German Academic Exchange Service (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst – DAAD), as well as in the DAAD publication series, International Bachelor, Master and Doctoral Programmes in Germany. All in all, according to the Higher Education Compass [4] of the German Rectors’ Conference German higher education institutions in Germany offer just less than 1,800 international first degree and special graduate courses of study. In this way, German institutions of higher education are continuing to play their part in the process of enhancing Germany's international competitiveness in the field of higher education. The DAAD programme “Study Programmes of German Higher Education Institutions Abroad” which has been promoted since 2001, also contributes towards this. The programme provides for the development of curricula modelled on German study programmes in cooperation with local partners. Amongst other things, these offerings contribute to winning highly qualified doctoral candidates for German higher education institutions. Furthermore, the Federation and the Länder in cooperation with the academic organisations (DAAD, HRK) have established an international image campaign which since 2008 has been continued by the DAAD and the Federal Ministry of Education and Research [5] (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung – BMBF) under the roof of the initiative “Germany – Land of Ideas.” Through the consortium GATE-Germany, the DAAD, in cooperation with the German Rectors’ Conference and in consultation with scientific organisations, supports German higher education institutions in their international marketing.

To facilitate improved care and integration of foreign students, doctoral students and academics in Germany, in recent years new service centres (e.g. welcome centres) have been established, as have various general, academic and social offers, and digital channels have been used increasingly. Through the Web seminar series “Higher education markets worldwide” ('Hochschulmärkte weltweit'), the DAAD brings higher education institutions and the DAAD network into direct contact with one another. With a view to a targeted recruitment of skilled employees these offers and structures for the large number of foreign and doctoral students are to be increased and expanded. This involves in particular the stage of orientation and preparation, the observation of the course of study, and also offers facilitating the transition from study to work.

The Graduiertenkollegs, or graduate colleges, of the German Research Foundation [6] (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft – DFG) are becoming increasingly attractive for foreign doctoral students. In 2017, the DFG supported a total of 241 graduate colleges, 43 of which were international graduate colleges. The share of foreign PhD students is much higher in the graduate colleges than in other forms of PhD training. The proportion of such students at the Graduiertenkollegs is considerably higher than in other forms of doctoral study programmes. There is also international demand for the International Doctoral Programmes of the DAAD, the International Max-Planck Research Schools and the Graduate Schools.

**Partnerships and networks**

The Erasmus+ key action 2 promotes the internationalisation of European institutions of higher education within the framework of strategic partnerships and knowledge alliances as well as the creation of networks and joint projects to build up capacities in neighbouring European regions and worldwide international partnerships. In Germany, the action is carried out by the National Agency for EU Higher Education Cooperation of the DAAD.

The Franco-German University [7] (Deutsch-Französische Hochschule - DFH) is an association of German and French members with its own legal personality and secretariat in Saarbrücken. The aim of the DFH is to strengthen the collaboration between Germany and France in higher education and research. It supports the establishment of joint integrated study courses and awards grants to participants. In the 2018/2019 academic year the DFH offered 185 integrated binational and
trinational study courses in different disciplines. Around 6,400 students and 400 PhD students are registered at the Franco-German University.

Apart from the DFH, which is active nationwide, networks for institutions of higher education also exist in the Länder, within the scope of which joint integrated courses of study are offered and an exchange of students and research collaborations are coordinated.

With the DAAD programme “Strategic Partnerships and Thematic Networks” (Strategische Partnerschaften und Thematische Netzwerke) German higher education institutions are given support in developing strategic partnerships and thematic networks with one or more selected higher education institutions abroad, so as to strengthen their international profile. The programme promotes partnerships with different focuses which are funded by Federal Ministry of Education and Research financing over a period of four years.

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