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UNIVERSITY OF THE  
WITWATERSRAND,  
JOHANNESBURG

**POLICY DOCUMENT**

# **Internationalisation Policy**

**Version No 1**

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## 1. PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to articulate the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (Wits') views and strategies on internationalisation which is central to the University's understanding of itself and its mission. This Policy is to be read in conjunction with the Wits POPIA Policy.

Wits has over the years built an international reputation as a university of high quality that promotes freedom of enquiry, the generation of knowledge and high quality teaching. At the heart of Wits' mission is an understanding of the pivotal role of higher education in an emerging and transformative South African democracy. Wits' location in Johannesburg, a metropolitan and cosmopolitan city region that is an important economic hub in Africa, presents unique opportunities for the University to respond to global challenges, using the African context as a basis for innovative research and scholarship.

Wits' vision statement articulates its intention to consolidate its status as an intellectual leader in the world, with a particularly strong focus on the needs of the developing world. The University's vision is to enhance its reputation as a world-class university by earning a place in the league of *Top 100 Universities*. [a proxy for world-class(ness)].

While globalisation and associated changes tend to be uncontrollable, borderless and seamless, with little regard to nation states, national laws and country sub-structures, internationalisation recognises and respects the diversity and richness of the world we live in. Its aim is to respond to the challenges and opportunities of an increasingly interconnected world. A key issue for higher education is whether traditional responses to internationalisation, such as collaborative research, joint provision of academic programmes, and student and staff exchanges are sufficient to face new challenges and opportunities on the global stage. It is clearly necessary for higher education, in general and Wits in particular, to develop bold new strategies to position itself in this new world.

## 2. INTERNATIONALISATION – CONTEXT AND PRINCIPLES

Internationalisation in a university context is “*the process of integrating an international, intercultural and/or global dimension into the goals, functions (teaching/learning, research, services) and delivery of higher education*” according to Knight (2005). Thus, internationalisation for a university like Wits, that is ambitious about its place in the world of ideas, should be a proactive, self-reflective, internalised and institutionalised process that is based on the following principles:

- Fostering the diversity of thought and opinion on our campus in a manner that draws from best practices in the world
- Providing international exposure of the University’s ‘core business’ of teaching and learning, research, and engagement with society, in all their manifestations, thereby also deriving the benefit of international scrutiny and quality benchmarks.
- Strengthening our teaching and research programmes through international accreditation processes.

A key goal of internationalisation at Wits is enhancing our contribution to the range, depth and quality of high-level human intellectual capital and knowledge for the benefit of the broad community that it serves. This relates particularly to processes of equipping the next generation of leaders, highly skilled citizens, and top-level critical scholars that are expected to operate effectively in global and cosmopolitan world. Such a process entails adapting curricula, conducting research and encouraging staff and student flow, both into and out of Wits, in a manner that enriches the exchange and development of knowledge and ideas to enable a progressive and highly efficient student and workforce quotient. We think of such an approach as being vital for the achievement of academic excellence. Wits shares the understanding that internationalisation in this context is fundamentally a pursuit of world-class quality higher education, expressed in curriculum design, teaching and research, which can only be achieved if supported by an appropriate strategy that is directed at the recruitment and development of students and staff, their inward and outward exchange with other higher education institutions and scholars, and Wits’ responsiveness to national, regional, and global concerns.

### 3. INTERNATIONALISATION AND THE WITS' STRATEGY

Internationalisation remains a critical aspect of Wits Strategic imperatives. The following outlines what Wits would like to achieve in pursuing an internationalisation policy:

- Engendering the process of intellectual self-renewal that involves both outbound and inbound processes of academic and scholarly engagement;
- Utilizing our African base and its unique opportunities for global competitive advantage,
- Broadening of the perspectives and orientation of our staff and students – intellectual, social and cultural –through teaching and research to engage as competent and versatile citizens in a globalized world;
- Facilitating efficient use of resources and facilities earmarked to internalize the internationalisation strategy;
- Capitalizing on increased business, industrial and government activity on the sub-continent; and
- Projecting Wits as a world-class, leading centre of intellectual engagement through research and academic provisioning, and a preferred destination for top-level international scholars and students.

To achieve the above Wits will endeavour to:

- Capitalize on its current research thrusts and entities, and on model or niche academic programmes;
- Pursue and facilitate strategic partnerships and active engagements in international networks at the highest academic levels, including engagements at postgraduate and post-doctoral level, using an approach which is of mutual benefit to Wits and its international partners.
- Proactively engage with higher education institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa in areas of strength<sup>1</sup>
- Creating time and space for the integration of international perspectives with local perspectives in all our curricula and academic programmes;
- Ensure that accountability for the implementation of this policy will be vested in the appropriate entities and portfolios within the University.
- Develop appropriate performance indicators and measures through the relevant line functions and implement a strategic monitoring process for annual reporting of performance of this policy to the International Policy Committee and to Senate.

Attend to any additional activities or interventions that may be required to ensure that our international students, staff and visitors enjoying a full and rewarding intellectual experience at our university.

## 4. GOALS

### 4.1 Research

Wits students and staff whose research shall be considered ‘international’ shall:

- Produce research and other scholarly work in recognised and/or refereed international journals and/or conference proceedings and/or through international publishers. Such international journals and publishers do not exclude local journals and publishers, provided these have international editorships and publication track records.
- Produce research and other scholarly work that has international acclaim, including those covering local issues and challenges like indigenous, social *and* scientific knowledge and technologies.
- Maintain active networks of international scholars, research centres/institutes and research-active universities, most of these networks having been developed after PhD and post-doctoral studies.
- Lead or participate in international research teams and/or laboratories.
- Produce scholarly work that is highly cited at an international level
- Be recognized internationally by peers through, for example, being regularly invited to deliver keynote papers at international conferences or being editors or members of editorial boards of international journals or other publishing bodies.
- Actively participate in the research of Wits’ leading schools and centres and thereby engender the recognition of Wits as a leading research and knowledge centre in Sub-Saharan Africa and in the world.

<sup>1</sup> Pan-African Universities Partnership. Draft Conceptual Framework, v.6, February 2010

- Attracting distinguished scholars and high-calibre South African and international academics across all knowledge domains, placing exceptional emphasis on strategic niche areas

## 4.2 Curriculum

The internationalisation of curriculum may include a combination of the following dimensions:

- **Curricula should broaden the traditional or original subject using international cross-cultural or intercultural and interdisciplinary approaches:** Course content includes specific reference to contemporary international and African content; does not promote monolithic descriptions of other countries or cultures; addresses issues such as social justice, equity, human rights, and related social, economic, environmental and political issues
- **Curricula should include an international subject or area or language studies:** Courses and programmes include international studies and subjects as a major or sub-major; require students to complete a subject in areas like cross-cultural communication, international studies or a foreign language in order to broaden their undergraduate educational experience.
- **Curricula should aim to have compulsory parts that are offered at or by universities in other regions within Africa or abroad and in which the content is especially designed for inbound and outbound cross-border study:** Courses and programmes would require some partnerships with institutions in Africa and other continents and could include joint curricula, team teaching, and student and staff exchanges.
- **Curricula should, by design, articulate with that of partner universities leading to joint qualifications or having elements of “sandwich” programmes:** Courses and programmes require collaboration at development stage. They might also require team teaching or joint supervision.
- **Curricula should prepare graduates for defined international professions and/or lead to internationally recognized professional qualifications:** Professional practices in the international environment determine course content and delivery. Course description and objectives specify the international professions for which they prepare students and for

which they will be recognized internationally. In this regard, recognition by international accrediting bodies is an integral part of graduateness.

### **4.3 Students and “Graduateness”**

Wits students and graduates that display a mastery of international perspectives intellectually, professionally and in engagement with society shall:

- Display an ability to think globally and consider issues from a variety of perspectives.
- Demonstrate awareness of their culture and its perspectives and other cultures and their perspectives (multi-cultural perspectives) in their intellectual and professional engagements.
- Appreciate the relation between their field of study locally and other intellectual and professional traditions within Africa and elsewhere.
- Appreciate and value cultural, linguistic and intellectual diversity.
- Demonstrate the capacity to benchmark their practices and intellectual engagements against international traditions and practices.
- Demonstrate awareness of the implications of local decisions and actions for international communities and of international decisions for local communities.

### **4.4 Staff Profiles**

The University staff profile shall reflect:

- A significant proportion of international staff and South African academics who received their post-graduate qualifications from universities outside the South African borders.
- Staff members who demonstrate knowledge that draws from other intellectual traditions and cultures and that informs what they teach how they teach it, what they research and how they research it.
- Academic staff that maintain or lead national and international networks of academic endeavour (teaching and/or research and/or engagement with society). These networks could be in terms of individual-to-individual partnerships; being a member or a leader of a university team involved in some institutional partnership; membership or leadership of



a national or international research or teaching centre, and so on. All of these networks should have tangible outputs in terms of collaborative research, team teaching or development of joint academic programmes.

- Academics who spend a reasonable continuous ‘international stay period’ in an institution other than Wits during each three year cycle and on the basis of some tangible and time-framed intellectual project. This stay period should be in addition to a sabbatical for which academics wait for about 6 years before there may be evidence of international engagement.
- Staff members who within each three year cycle host or are hosted by a reasonable number of international scholars with whom s/he collaborates in research, teaching and engagement with society.

Any staff, student or graduate profile that contains ‘personal information’ (as defined in the Protection of Personal Information Act 5 of 2013 (**POPIA**)) of such a Wits staff member, student or graduate, shall comply with the provisions of the POPIA.

## **5. POLICY IMPLEMENTING AND MONITORING**

The implementation of this policy is the primary responsibility of various executive portfolio holders in the Office of the Vice-Chancellor, and through them the various Faculties, Schools, academic departments and centres, and all units that provide services in support of the intellectual endeavours of the University. The Wits International Office shall provide administrative and advisory support to the university-wide enterprise of internationalisation.

The International Policy Committee of Senate (IPC) is responsible for the co-ordination and monitoring of internationalisation across Wits, and reports regularly to Senate in this regard.

## **6. REMIT OF THE INTERNATIONALISATION POLICY COMMITTEE**

The Senate Internationalisation Policy Committee is the custodian of the University’s processes of internationalisation by means of policy and review procedures, and for reporting periodically to Senate in this regard, and to Council where appropriate.

Among other things, the IPC will:

- develop policy with respect to strategic internationalisation, which includes planned initiatives aimed at advancing Wits’ international presence and profile;
- monitor systems of coherence, where needed, between portfolios and functions which contribute to advancing strategic internationalisation (e.g. Research, Academic, Advancement & Partnerships, etc);

- propose and monitor, where appropriate, specific strategies and initiatives intended to give effect to the University's strategic internationalisation goals;

The Wits International Office (WIO) will provide support to the activities of the IPC, especially in terms of informing the activities of the Committee about internationalisation initiatives at the University. The WIO will provide this support as part of the responsibilities noted in its remit, which include the facilitation and support of international relationships.

## VERSION HISTORY

<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Summary</b>	<b>Changed by</b>
1	01/02/2011	Internationalisation Policy (S2010/1837)	
2	31/05/2022	Updated Internationalisation Policy (S2010/1837) – New template including POPIA Compliance note	Nicoleen Potgieter





