

# **RECTORATE**

## **THE UNIVERSITY OF BONN**

### **2025 INTERNATIONALIZATION STRATEGY**



## OUR PROVENANCE

### The University of Bonn: A Profile

Formed in 1818, the University of Bonn is one of Germany's leading universities and regularly ranks among the top 100 in the world. Located in the heart of Europe, the University is centrally positioned within Europe as well in terms of its mission and relationships. While beyond Europe, the University enjoys global recognition of its top-level research capabilities, research-oriented degree programs and distinctly international orientation.

The University recruits top doctoral students, postdocs and professors, who enjoy an atmosphere of free academic discussion and independent research and teaching, driven solely by their own professional interests.

Our mission is to empower academics to engage in fundamental research inquiry as a pathway to solutions to the great challenges facing our society. We believe this is best achieved within a collaborative and innovative research culture that—crucially—is internationally networked.

We promote mutual understanding between cultures and religions, seeking not only to explore questions of diversity and inclusion but also to make these a real part of life at the University. Ensuring equal educational opportunity is thus of central importance to us. At the same time, we are focused on how best to make our own contribution toward a sustainable future. Our academics thus receive support with sustainability-related research projects, and University staff and students are universally required to observe principles of conservation and sustainable resource usage.

The University, in our view, plays an essential role as a pillar upholding the basic principles of a free and democratic society. As an institution of the city that became emblematic of German democracy following the Second World War, and furthermore the seat of numerous United Nations organizations, the University sees itself as having a particular obligation to promote education and democracy as the prerequisites for freedom of research and a prosperous society within a globalized world.

## OUR JOURNEY

### Internationalization objectives and action areas through the year 2025

We firmly believe that internationalization contributes substantially to realizing further quality and competitiveness gains across all areas of activity at the University of Bonn. Accordingly, we are committed to more firmly enshrining internationalization broadly at the University, setting objective in the areas of research, degree programs, teaching and administration to be attained by the year 2025. These plans pick up where the 2020 Internationalization Strategy left off, the chief elements of which have been recalibrated to reflect current conditions and further developed.

Recruiting is at the heart of the 2025 Internationalization Strategy, as we seek to attract outstanding international academics and students by offering an optimal environment for research, study and teaching at the University in preparation for entering highly competitive global job markets in academia and the private sector.

To facilitate execution of the Strategy, these five internationalization action areas have been defined, each with its own set of objectives (discussed in further detail below):

#### ACTION AREAS

- Internationalization of academic research
- Internationalization of study offerings and teaching
- Framework for internationalization
- Strategic partnerships
- Collaborations based in the international city of Bonn

We believe internationalization requires organizational implementation across many different areas, thus to achieve all of the objectives, broad measures are defined which in part are implemented by the central units (Vice Rectorate for International Affairs and International Office) and in part by the faculties and cross-departmental organizational units.

**Action area****INTERNATIONALIZATION OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH**

Researchers at the University of Bonn are plugged in to a large global network, collaborating across all six continents and quite frequently publishing jointly with international colleagues (ranked 2nd in Germany for international co-publications in the Nature Index 2018). Many academics in Bonn are involved in international collaborative projects that receive matching-funds grants from German and international organizations. Graduate study is highly internationalized at the University, as reflected in the twelve Bonn International Graduate Schools (BIGS), other internationally oriented Research Training Groups and an array of bi-national “cotutelle” doctorate programs, some of which are offered together with our strategic partner universities (see Strategic Partnerships).

The international character of our research is one of the University of Bonn’s primary strengths. This was confirmed in the university internationalization audit conducted in 2018 by the German Rector’s Conference (HRK) and in the walk-through inspection of the University of Bonn in 2019 in connection with obtaining University of Excellence status. There is still room for improvement, particularly regarding the hiring of professors who are not German nationals. Increasing the percentage of this demographic to 15% of professorial staff represents a primary internationalization objective to be attained over the next five years. This represents part of our efforts to attract outstanding researchers from all over the world and enhance internationalism across academic departments, rendering the University of Bonn even more connected and competitive.

Further objectives in the area of academic internationalization include increasing the number of international research collaborations, strategic expansion of research partnerships within the European Union and career path internationalization for graduate students and post-docs.

**Milestones since 2015**

1. Six international transdisciplinary research areas and six clusters of excellence formed with Principal Investigators from all faculties
2. High-profile international research awards earned by Bonn academics: Fields Medal, 13 ERC grants, four Alexander von Humboldt Professorships ... and more
3. A leader in international co-publications: Ranked 2nd in Germany for international co-publications in the Nature Index 2018
4. The Bonn International Graduate Schools (BIGS) system expanded to twelve graduate schools. Implementation and continuation of the BIGS-supporting DAAD program “International Doctorate in Bonn”
5. Implementation of a research alumni strategy, creation of a network of 15 Bonn University Ambassadors

**OBJECTIVES FOR 2025**

- Increase percentage of non-German national professors to 15% of total
- Implement incentives as part of the Excellence Strategy to increase the number of joint international research projects being conducted
- Increase application filing and approval rates in European Union research funding programs to build up and expand European research and innovation networks
- Provide support to postdocs in realizing an element of internationalization in their career paths
- Enhance the international profile of the Bonn International Graduate Schools (BIGS)



## SPECIFIC MEASURES TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES

- Introduce high-profile professorships, a substantial percentage of which should be filled by foreign candidates
- Enter into joint project funding agreements with strategic partner universities and other high-profile cooperation partners
- Develop, adopt and implement a university-wide EU strategy, setting up an EU office
- Funding of extended stays abroad as part of the Argelander Scholarships program for postdocs
- Improve the measures in place for recruiting international doctoral students to the Bonn International Graduate Schools (BIGS)

### Action area

## INTERNATIONALIZATION OF STUDY OFFERINGS AND TEACHING

Plans are in place to systematically internationalize study offerings and teaching at the University of Bonn in order to optimally prepare students for the challenges they will face in competitive global job markets in both academia and the private sector. We view foreign language ability, international and intercultural competence and exposure to different scientific approaches and methods as important parts of a broad academic education of excellence.

The University of Bonn has become significantly more attractive for foreign students in recent years, as indicated by these developments: In the winter semester of 2019/20, students of foreign nationality comprised 14.2% of total enrollment, a figure which steadily increased over a seven-year period (from 12.5% in the winter semester of 2013/14). Foreign students comprise around 6% of undergraduate degree program enrollment, but in graduate degree programs this figure is nearly 25%.

We have increased the number of master's courses taught exclusively in English to 26. This puts us in the top four of German universities with the highest percentage of English-language master's programs. Another ten degree programs confer dual degrees with universities in France, Great Britain, Japan, the Netherlands and elsewhere (see Strategic Partnerships).

There is room for improvement in our efforts to systematically internationalize teaching. One particular aim is to exploit the many and varied opportunities digitalization holds for making our study offerings more international. Our students come from a highly diverse range of backgrounds, thus other objectives include promoting intercultural competency and experimenting with intercultural classroom concepts. Both of these will be pursued as we work to expand the number of international degree programs offered—and international partnerships within degree programs—by the 2025 milestone mark.

Courses in our bachelor's degree programs are generally taught in German, with English-language modules only being required in exceptional cases. This means however that we are missing an opportunity to prepare students early for the global job markets and for our master's programs taught in English. Thus our goal of increasing the percentage of English-language courses taught as part of bachelor's degree programs. At the same time we are focused on helping international students better acquire German language competency both before and during their studies, aiming to more precisely tailor our offerings. Students in master's degree programs taught in English are to be given opportunity to take German language classes as necessary for better integration into German society, affording better prospects in the German job market as well.

To further increase student mobility internationally we aim to structurally anchor mobility opportunities within the curricula, implement clear regulations on recognition of foreign study, qualitatively improve and expand our exchange programs and enhance student advising on study abroad. In parallel we will be promoting mobility, aiming affirmatively to provide opportunities to individuals who are currently access-challenged due to socio-economic disadvantage, such as students with disabilities, caregiving responsibilities or an immigrant background. The 2025 Internationalization Strategy dovetails precisely with the University of Bonn strategy for diversity enhancement.

### Milestones since 2015

1. Increase the offering of English-language master's degree programs to 30% of total
2. Increase Erasmus+ budget by 150% between 2015 and 2019
3. Adopt policies for internationalizing teaching
4. Form a German as a Foreign Language section within the International Office to insource the conducting of German language courses for our international students
5. Continuous improvement of the advisory services provided to all students by the International Office

### OBJECTIVES FOR 2025

- Digital internationalization of study offerings and teaching
- Increase the number of English-language degree modules in undergraduate programs
- Increase the number of incoming international exchange students especially in bachelor's programs
- Increase outgoing student mobility, e.g. in the Global Exchange Program and affirmatively improving access by underrepresented groups of students
- Sharpen recruiting measures, improve structuring of the study commencement phase for international students, add more German language learning opportunities tailored for international students

### SPECIFIC MEASURES TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES

- Develop advisory and continuing education structures promoting the digital internationalization of study offerings and teaching in cooperation with the Digital Science Center and the Bonn Center for Digital Humanities
- Outline policies conforming with the legal framework governing the teaching of courses in English
- Introduce Germany in a Global Context as a basic course for international bachelor's exchange students, conducted in English
- Enhance administrative structures for Erasmus+ coordination (KA 107 in particular); adopt policies anchoring mobility windows and general recognition rules within curricula
- Quality-focused recruiting of international students for English-language master's degree programs and through the Studienbrücke program (in cooperation with the Goethe Institute and DAAD); expand offering of German language acquisition courses conducted both before and during the semester

### Action area

## FRAMEWORK FOR INTERNATIONALIZATION

The framework for internationalization at the University of Bonn has undergone systematic improvement since 2015. Participation in the University Internationalization audit (2017–2018) and ongoing re-audit (2019–2022) have been effective, as intended, in making internationalization a front-and-center issue in the faculties. This has been flanked by the appointment of Internationalization Officers (Vice Dean, etc.) within the dean's offices, the adoption of internationalization sub-strategies by five of the seven faculties and the continuation of a cross-faculty project group on university internationalization. Cooperation between central and peripheral players on internationalization initiatives has improved through regular reporting from the Vice Rector for International Affairs in Deans Council meetings and continuous dialog between the Vice Rector, the Director of the International Office and the deans.

The issue has also become increasingly important within the central administration in recent years, internationalization initiatives receiving additional funding as part of the Excellence Strategy since 2019. Language policies have been adopted as a framework for internationalization throughout the University, underscoring the importance of multilingualism as part of internationalization efforts.

We intend to further develop the processes implemented within this framework over the next few years. So far, dedicated structures supporting internationalization activities on an operational level have not existed in all faculties. Similarly, services offered by the central administration have not all been available multilingually or at least bilingually. Realizing this will be a primary goal in the period up to 2025, in part to ensure that administrative structures are in place supporting the recruitment of international professors (see Internationalization of academic research). Expanding the offering of classes taught in foreign languages is important to University students, lecturers and staff as a key element of internationalization.

### **Milestones since 2015**

1. Successful completion of the “University Internationalization” audit overseen by the German Rector’s Conference (HRK)
2. Successful completion of the Diversity Audit conducted by the Stifterverband, a donors’ association for the promotion of science and humanities in Germany. Formation of the Equal Opportunity and Diversity office
3. Design and launch of the “Internationalized Administration” project as part of the Excellence Strategy
4. Creation of a Central Translation Service, release of University language policies, introduction of Corporate English (with glossary and style guide)
5. Expansion of English-language website content, involving the creation of two positions (one permanent) for English web editing and international marketing

### **OBJECTIVES FOR 2025**

- Expansion of German-English services in central administration, all significant regulations and statutes to be available bilingually
- Enhancement of foreign language and intercultural competency acquisition opportunities as part of personnel staff skill development
- Further development of existing internationalization structures within the faculties, departments and institutes
- Digitalization of service structures for international students and academics at the University of Bonn
- Professionalization of the University of Bonn's international marketing/public relations

### **SPECIFIC MEASURES TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES**

- Central administrative forms, information documents and university regulations to be translated into English
- Increase mobility for non-academic staff, expand the offering of English-language courses available abroad
- Appointment of Vice Deans for International Affairs and/or International Officers in all faculties
- Implementation of digital information and advising instruments, expansion of virtual international exchange activities
- Production of analog and digital PR media for intensified international marketing

**Action area****STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS**

The University of Bonn has partnerships on the institute, faculty or overall university levels with over 200 universities around the world in the areas of research, teaching and/or administration. A process conducted over the last five years has been completed of identifying universities with which we want to turn the existing relationship into a strategic partnership that heightens the University's international profile while systematically enhancing international cooperation. These are: the University of St Andrews (GB), the University of Melbourne (AUS) and Waseda University Tokyo (JP). These three partners complement the University of Bonn extremely well with regard to their high-profile research areas and the long-term, interdisciplinary collaborative projects they have underway. As part of our partnership strategy we have additionally defined these focus countries for international cooperation: Australia, France, the UK, Israel, Japan, the Netherlands and the US. The selection criteria included substantial pre-existing academic ties, geographic proximity (NL, FR) and shared values—such as freedom of research and teaching, freedom of academic speech and commitment to standards of academic integrity.

We will be forming a global network with select partner universities over the next five years with the aim of heightening the international profile of the University of Bonn. This will involve building upon existing bilateral collaborations while seeking additional suitable partners. We believe multi-dimensional dialog within the global network will enable us to achieve greater impact through international cooperation, better exploit synergies and increase university visibility. As a further objective, plans are in place to systematically expand and enhance strategic collaborations with partners in Africa, Asia and Latin America as well as the European Union.

**Milestones since 2015**

1. Bilateral strategic partnership agreements concluded with the Universities of St Andrews, Melbourne and Waseda
2. Adoption of a strategic partnerships strategy, publication of a position paper on cooperation with countries in the so-called "Global South"
3. Visits to partner universities in the seven focus countries as well as select African, Asian and Latin American countries by members of university management
4. Securing of Excellence funding to support strategic partnerships and collaborations in Africa, Asia and Latin America
5. Allocation of a joint budget for funding joint projects with Emory University (Atlanta, USA) and Hebrew University (Jerusalem, Israel)

**OBJECTIVES FOR 2025**

- Formation of a global network with the existing strategic partner universities, and potentially including new partners
- Expansion and broad-based development of bilateral strategic partnerships in the areas of research, teaching and administration
- Continuation of efforts to build up the European University of Brain and Technology (NeurotechEU) within the EUN (European University Network) funding framework
- At least two countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America respectively to be chosen as focus countries for international cooperation where strategic partner universities are to be identified
- Establishment of joint doctoral programs, expansion of bi-national "cotutelle" doctorate programs with focus-country universities



## SPECIFIC MEASURES TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES

- Develop a collaborative network fund for strengthening multilateral relations over the long term
- Promote bilateral strategic partnerships by providing incentives and advising
- Coordinate a work package as part of the European University of Brain and Technology (NeurotechEU) initiative by 2023. Drafting of a renewal proposal
- Cultivate relationships with select partner universities in Africa, Asia and Latin America at the university management level
- Streamline the framework regulations for joint doctorates with select partner universities

### Action area

## COLLABORATIONS BASED IN THE INTERNATIONAL CITY OF BONN

The University of Bonn has been driving forward internationalization in recent years by exploiting its locational advantages to greater effect, leveraging the identity of the City of Bonn as a high-profile global center of environmental and humanitarian policy. The year 2017 saw the formation of the Bonn Alliance for Sustainability Research, embodying expanded cooperation between sustainability research institutions based in the local area (BICC, DIE, Bonn-Rhein-Sieg University of Applied Sciences and United Nations institutions). Through its mission of promoting joint projects the Alliance further enhances the image of Bonn as a sustainability hub. In 2018 the Alliance successfully launched “Sustainability and Global Change” as an ICB (Innovation Campus Bonn) project with state and federal grant funding, commencing project execution. Enhancing our interaction with the Institute for Environment and Human Security at United Nations University, we created the successful joint degree program “Geography of Environmental Risks and Human Security” and the Master’s in “Global Health Risk Management & Hygiene Politics” (tuition degree program with career experience requirement). Coming after substantial efforts, simultaneous public-private professorial/research appointments were conducted jointly with the DIE and BICC,

so that the respective directors of the BICC and DIE are now both University of Bonn professors.

The network structures we have created are to be further expanded to achieve greater international visibility—particularly for the ICB, which is to be developed into an academic model organization for advancing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Another aim in further growing bilateral cooperation between the University, the BICC, the DIE and the City of Bonn is to move forward in concert on internationalization issues of mutual import.

### Milestones since 2015

1. Formation of the Bonn Alliance for Sustainability Research (comprised of the University of Bonn, UNU, Bonn-Rhein-Sieg University of Applied Sciences, the German Institute for Development Policy and the Bonn International Center for Conversion) and of Innovation Campus Bonn (ICB), focused on “Sustainability and Global Change”
2. Joint public-private professorial/research appointments of the directors of the BICC and the DIE
3. Creation and successful conducting of a joint degree program with United Nations University: Master of Science in Geography of Environmental Risks and Human Security
4. Conclusion of a broad partnership agreement with the City of Bonn encompassing collaboration modalities regarding internationalization
5. Participation in the 2017 UN Climate Conference in Bonn (COP23) and the Villa Hammerschmidt Open House (attendance more than 10,000), where the University of Bonn had sustainability-relevant information stands

## OBJECTIVES FOR 2025

- Increased bilateral cooperation between the University of Bonn and United Nations University (UNU)
- Increased cooperation with international academic and science organizations active in Bonn, including the DAAD and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation.
- Increased cooperation with private-sector firms based in the region to promote the employment of our graduates from abroad.
- Increased cooperation with the City of Bonn on internationalization-relevant initiatives
- Development of long-term internationalization plans aligned with the identity of the City of Bonn as a center for sustainability policy

## SPECIFIC MEASURES TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES

- Formation of a network with universities at other UNU locations, development of joint digital course offerings
- Creation of a visiting professorship for the "Internationalization of Higher Education" in cooperation with the DAAD, holding joint events together with DAAD and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation
- Creation of a network of international mentors at private-sector firms based in the Bonn area for international students
- Designing of a joint internship placement project with the City of Bonn for international students at businesses located in the greater metropolitan area
- Development and implementation of a strategy for sustainability in international partnerships







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