Strategy for the Internationalization of the University of Cyprus

1. Mission

According to the strategic planning of the Rectorate for the years 2010-2020, the University of Cyprus (UCY) has set a number of strategic priorities with regards to internationalisation which provide the architecture for this international strategy, setting forth a series of steps to enable UCY to reinforce and expand its international reputation.

2. Vision

Internationalisation should contribute towards the vision of UCY which is to establish itself as a Pioneer Research and Teaching Institution achieving International Scientific Recognition in European Higher Education, offering Competitive Programmes and to become a Centre of Excellence in the wider Euro-Mediterranean Region.

3. Planning-Realisation

The Higher Education area in Europe and the rest of the world is becoming more and more competitive. Cyprus is an isolated island in the Mediterranean region which means that an innovative and aggressive internationalisation policy is necessary. As the first University to be established in the Republic of Cyprus, the challenge for international recognition and networking is even more.

However, due to Cyprus’ geographical position, UCY has an important role to play. It is called to build upon its portfolio of international activities to create a holistic international strategy impacting on, and driven out of, the full range of University activities. The strategy specifically interfaces with the University Learning and Teaching, Research, Enterprise and Alumni strategies.

A. To achieve impact through international partnerships. This will be delivered through:
1. Consistency with the European education and research area through the creation of the European Union Universities of Small States (EU²S²) Association for the promotion of an active role of small states universities in the knowledge society

2. Participating actively in a number of university Networks/Associations e.g. UNICA, EUA, Santander Group, IAU, ACU, EAEC, etc

3. Engaging in active partnerships with institutions internationally through the signing of Bilateral Agreements of Cooperation which provide for: joint research activities, joint or double degrees, exchange of academic materials and academic publications and information, exchange of faculty members for research/lectures/discussions, exchange of graduate and undergraduate students for study and research, co-organisation of, and participation in lectures, seminars and conferences, co-operation in administrative issues.

4. Active partnerships in EU and other international projects which will assist in strategic engagement in capacity building partnerships with target regions/countries, developing robust procedures for the approval and review of partnership agreements.

5. Organising international conferences/meetings locally and especially within UCY campus.

B. To achieve Impact through a diverse international student and staff body. This will be delivered through:

1. Recruiting International Students through the participation in educational fairs and visits organised by the Ministry of Education and Culture or other national authorities, chambers of commerce or networks: this is closely related to the strategic development plan of UCY for a) the increase of students to 10,000, b) the promotion of the creation of international programmes and c) the improvement of student multicultural environment. It will also enhance the internationalisation of the status of UCY, the indirect development of cooperation with foreign institutions and the development of relations with foreign embassies and state authorities. It will also promote a brain-gain effect, as well as a flow of revenue to UCY and Cyprus.

2. Creating an International Students’ Admissions Office
3. Encouraging students to study abroad within the framework of the ERASMUS Programme as well as other exchange programmes (at least one semester during their studies)
4. Developing and promoting First and Second Cycle Programmes in foreign languages
5. Offering opportunities and facilitating incoming exchange students
6. Developing Joint Degrees with institutions abroad
7. Ensuring that UCY remains attractive for recruiting the highest quality international researchers
8. Promoting opportunities for staff mobility to partner institutions (with which UCY has signed either ERASMUS Agreements or Agreements of Cooperation) to enhancing the research and teaching profile of the University
9. Promoting training opportunities for staff at partner universities using the ERASMUS Programme and other funding programmes
10. Organising summer courses in specific/niche areas relating to current trends
11. Organising tailor-made courses
12. Applying e-learning in teaching

C. To maximize impact through international research activities. This will be delivered through:

1. Ensuring effective communication of international funding opportunities throughout the University, through the Research and Liaising with Industry Sector of the Research and International Relations Service
2. Ensuring key partnerships are used to leverage increased international research funding, i.e. internationalising research activity
3. Increasing the volume of papers/articles published in high impact Journals co-authored with international partners.
4. Strengthening competences and skills of the administrative personnel involved in supporting the researchers in the preparation of proposals
5. Ensuring the establishment and support of a Technology Transfer Office
6. Establishing Institutional Review Boards to facilitate international collaboration
D. To enhance internationalisation in learning and teaching. This will be delivered through:

1. Working with the University’s international students to improve further the international dimensions of teaching and learning
2. Continuous development, external evaluation and modernization of curricula so as to be comparable to and competitive with other programmes internationally
3. Increasing the use of international examples to illustrate learning concepts
4. Expanding the range of joint degree programmes with international partners
5. Engaging with developments in the European Higher Education Area
6. Expanding the opportunities for students to study or work (internships and placements) outside Cyprus as part of their degree programmes and making use of EU and other programmes such as ERASMUS whenever possible.
7. Providing scholarships and/or awards for students to study abroad (outside the ERASMUS Programme)
8. Supporting the engagement of students in international related activities (projects, fora, meetings etc)
9. Developing and enhancing undergraduate and postgraduate majors and minors that are international in character such as regional studies, international studies and foreign languages.

E. To ensure the international impact of UCY is widely recognized. This will be delivered through:

1. Effective communication of international developments in research and teaching to internal and external stakeholders, e.g. though the preparation of an International Newsletter and the development of user friendly UCY website for its international visitors
2. Maintaining a database of ongoing international activities within UCY
3. Effective communication with the IR representatives of Departments so as to facilitate and deliver the international agenda in each
4. Constant communication with Embassies and Consulates in Cyprus and abroad
5. Constant communication and engaging with key international organisations such as the EU, United Nations, UNESCO etc
6. Engaging with international business partners
7. Involving international alumni groups in celebrating and broadening the UCY profile
8. Cooperating closely with organisations of the Greek and Cypriot Diaspora
9. Recruiting skilled staff in IR activities (special attributes)

F. To strengthen the international impact of UCY as reflected in international rankings. This will be delivered through:

1. Promoting and supporting high quality international publications
2. Using a range of communication and marketing vehicles (such as e-newsletters; web-based showcasing; international partner engagement; attendance at embassy events and other international events; engagement with key international organisations; oral and poster presentations at high impact international events) to raise the profile of UCY in the International community
3. Maximizing the added value of staff visits to partner organisations to showcase the research, enterprise and teaching and learning strengths of the UCY
4. Supporting the recruitment of international staff
5. Promoting international dissemination and sharing of knowledge (e.g. open access, open innovation)

4. Improvement Strategy-Quality Assurance

Internationalisation strategy is an integral part in the internal quality assurance system of UCY. UCY utilizes internationalisation approaches (internationalisation benchmarking, peer learning and networking) as part of its improvement strategy.

Assessment of the Internationalisation Strategy of UCY can be carried out using the IMPI Indicators for Mapping and Profiling Internationalization. These indicators are ordered first per goal dimension which involve the following:
1. Enhancing the quality of Education
2. Enhancing the quality of Research
3. Preparing students for life and work in an intercultural and globalising world
4. Enhancing the international reputation and visibility of the unit
5. Providing service to society and community social engagement

Additionally, over-all goal dimensions are set for answering to questions like: Does the unit have a specific organisational structure to support internationalisation? In a given year, what proportion of researchers in the university is involved in at least one research project with an international partner?

Additionally, quality assurance is ensured through the following practices:

- Updating of IR indicators every 2 months
- Carrying out a SWOT analysis once every year which helps shape the correct strategy for internationalisation
- Maintaining regular communication and interaction of all agents involved in IR
- Identifying training needs and participation of personnel in training programmes funded by the institution
- Carrying out personal evaluation of people involved in IR activities every year, which involves self-evaluation and evaluation by two superiors, which is the basis for personal improvement
- The Research and International Relations Service taking part in self-evaluation processes carried out by external auditors (not in a consistent way)

5. Integration and Decision Making

UCY places Internationalisation at the heart of its aims, as UCY decision-making bodies are involved in international relations. In this way, the strategy of internationalisation is effectively integrated into UCY’s decision-making structure. This enables the coherent implementation of all elements related to institutional Internationalisation.

Specifically, the International Relations Committee (IR Committee) undertakes initiatives that contribute to the promotion and enhancement of UCY international
cooperation. These initiatives are then forwarded to the Rectorate Council, which approves the suggestions of the IR Committee. The Senate subsequently ratifies these decisions at a higher level.

The Research and International Relations Service of UCY is also an integral part of carrying out the internationalisation strategy of UCY. The Service acts as a focal/contact point between the world and the University. On one hand it disseminates information from partners in the international arena to the university community; on the other hand, it promotes the UCY strategy internationally, through its cooperation with and participation in international networks/associations and other universities and entities internationally.

UCY Departments are also involved directly to IR activities through their Chairpersons, ERASMUS and IR Coordinators. UCY Departments and Services have a direct communication with the Research and International Relations Service regarding the promotion and involvement in international activities.