Strategy for internationalisation at the Faculty of Medicine, Umeå University

Translation from Swedish*

Established by the Board of the Faculty of Medicine 2016-08-24

* This document has been translated into English. In case of divergence of meaning between the English and Swedish wording of this document, the Swedish wording shall prevail.
Background

Internationalisation of the Faculty of Medicine should mean that our living in a global age is clearly noticeable in our daily activities. This should include education, research and interactions with the rest of society, as well as the interactions between these activities.

In a global era, the Faculty’s attractiveness will increase if our activities are at the cutting edge internationally. A large number of international teachers, researchers and students at all levels increases opportunities for creating a stimulating and creative working environment within the Faculty and at each department/unit. Students and doctoral students who are educated in such an environment are better equipped for a working life that is characterised and underpinned by a global outlook.

The number of teachers/researchers, doctoral students and students with an educational background from a country other than Sweden varies between departments/units within the Faculty. Within preclinical and public health science activities, the numbers are high, but within clinical activities involving patient-related work, the numbers are often low due to the need to speak and understand Swedish. The number of outgoing teachers and students varies within the Faculty and between its various programmes, due to a combination of factors, including the ability to negotiate functioning agreements as well as the need to achieve course objectives.

The Faculty of Medicine’s Strategy for internationalisation is based on “Umeå University 2020 – Vision and objectives”, and “Umeå University’s internationalisation strategy for education”. However, the Faculty has chosen a more comprehensive approach, so that the strategy includes doctoral studies and research in addition to education at the first- and second-cycle levels.

Vision

All staff will work to promote international aspects as part of daily activities. All students and doctoral students will have a global perspective when they graduate. Guest teachers/researchers, doctoral students and students will have such a positive experience of Umeå University that they subsequently act as ambassadors for our activities.

Strategy 1: Develop and expand the range of programmes offered

The University Board has decided that all degree programmes must contain a course in English by 2020. The Faculty should therefore perform an inventory of all its degree programmes at first- and second-cycle level and take measures to ensure that all programmes contain elements/courses in English.

All students and doctoral students must be offered the opportunity to apply for exchange studies or be offered international research visits. Both longer and shorter exchanges, as well as research visits, are valuable and should be facilitated at both Faculty and department level. The Faculty should also continuously review existing agreements and only extend high-quality agreements that are functioning effectively. It is vital that the Faculty plays an active role in the search for new foreign partners.

Development of e-learning will facilitate internationalisation here in Umeå and is important. Examples include internet-based lectures from foreign higher education institutions and joint seminars involving student groups on the Faculty’s various degree programmes and at equivalent partner universities.

Good knowledge of both written and spoken English is vital to ensure that teaching in English is of a high quality. Therefore, the Faculty’s teaching and supervising staff should be offered the opportunity to develop these skills. It is also important for teachers to be offered the opportunity for skills development by teaching students with different cultural backgrounds.
Strategy 2: Develop the Faculty into a clear international environment

The concept of internationalisation should be expanded. A truly international environment involves all staff (teachers/researchers and technical/administrative staff), doctoral students and students participating in the global academic dialogue. In terms of internationalisation, there should be a transparent structure and allocation of responsibilities within the Faculty and in relation to the higher level of the University.

The Faculty should work towards the introduction of a university-wide organisation for coordination of internationalisation in all areas (first- and second cycle education, doctoral education and research). This is to ensure overall competence and so that certain groups are not excluded (e.g. doctoral students with an educational background from outside Sweden and without employment at Umeå University).

The Faculty should strive for international cooperation that includes all degree programmes and research environments. This cooperation can best be started and built up in partnership with selected partner universities, other higher education institutions and research centres. The Faculty and departments/units should make greater use of the international elements available in the form of students, doctoral students and researchers/teachers in first and second-cycle and doctoral studies, as well as in research. Measures should be taken to strengthen the construction of global networks. Existing international research environments should be highlighted as good examples. When teaching positions become vacant, the Faculty should direct inventory-taking and job advertisements both nationally and internationally.

Each programme will strive to make it easier for students with an educational background from a country other than Sweden to participate in the programme and for teachers to make use of these students as a resource in teaching. Everyone will do what they can to facilitate the participation of the faculty’s students and doctoral students in international exchanges. Incoming and outgoing students/doctoral students, teachers/researchers and other staff will assist in this, and both short- and long-term exchanges will be valued.

Strategy 3: The bilingual faculty

Nowadays, English is an unofficial global language, and a good ability to speak and write the language is important for all staff, doctoral students and students. The competitiveness of our students and doctoral students on the labour market will increase if they are proficient in English.

Improved English skills can be obtained in various ways, including participation in courses in English, participation in an international environment, and participation in international exchanges.

Incoming students and doctoral students should have good prior knowledge of English and, in some cases, Swedish, in order to be able to benefit from their studies. This should be communicated to partners in connection with discussion of future cooperation. It is important that the University and Faculty provide good support and service for incoming students/doctoral students and teachers/researchers in order for their everyday life and studies/work to be effective.

Procedures will need to be created within the Faculty to ensure that the majority of the internal and external information, including websites, is available in both Swedish and English. It is also important for the University to be able to supply high-quality translation functions, which is an issue that the Faculty should pursue.
Strategy 4: Develop the organisation based on an international approach

The Faculty, including the programme councils, and departments/units should consider international perspectives prior to all strategic decisions.

The Faculty should strive to create interactive focus environments for education and research that make use of all the opportunities for internationalisation. The Faculty should also make use of the experiences and skills of international employees in its overall work.

The Faculty should ensure that the administrative processes facilitate and stimulate internationalisation. A broad survey of internationalisation that our departments/units contribute to should be carried out. Report templates should be produced for feedback from both incoming and outgoing students, doctoral students, teachers/researchers and technical/administrative staff. The results should be considered in budget and prioritisation contexts.

It is important that the documentation of the various aspects of internationalisation is made as effective as possible. The reporting of exchange studies should be improved in order to reveal all forms of exchange. Further indicators should be followed, e.g. students with an educational background from a country other than Sweden, the number of programmes and elements/courses in English, the number of doctoral students who go on international research visits, the number of teachers/researchers with an educational background from a country other than Sweden, and permanent employees and guest lecturers.

Strategy 5: Strengthen the Faculty’s brand in an international perspective

A key factor for ensuring good international visibility is to make all relevant information regarding education, doctoral studies and research available in high-quality English.

In order to increase accessibility for potential visitors (students, doctoral students, teachers/researchers and technical/administrative staff), part of the faculty’s website should gather all the information for this group, including a description of the Faculty, links to courses in English, links to major research projects, information on contact persons of different nationalities and practical information in the form of a guide for incoming students, doctoral students and staff.

All press releases, as far as possible, should be distributed in English in addition to Swedish, and should be distributed at the same time as the Swedish press release. The responsibility for this primarily lies with the person responsible for the press release. The distribution channels should be examined and developed.

Strategy 6: Prioritised geographical areas

Countries where the language of education is English have an advantage. It is also important for the faculty to build networks with low- and middle-income countries in order to create a global perspective.

The Faculty will strive to take an active part in the internationalisation work that is taking place at the university level and, where possible, will create substitute agreements to central agreements. The Faculty should take part in University-wide information campaigns where these are focused on countries of interest to the Faculty.

In order for all students and doctoral students to be offered the opportunity for international experience, the Faculty and departments/units should take a more active role in the search for new agreement and cooperation partners. The Faculty should strive to create more faculty- and department-wide bilateral agreements. The agreements must be characterised by a mutually beneficial exchange, and they should correspond to the wishes of the students as far as possible. In order to guarantee the quality of the agreements, they should be regularly followed up and evaluated.