

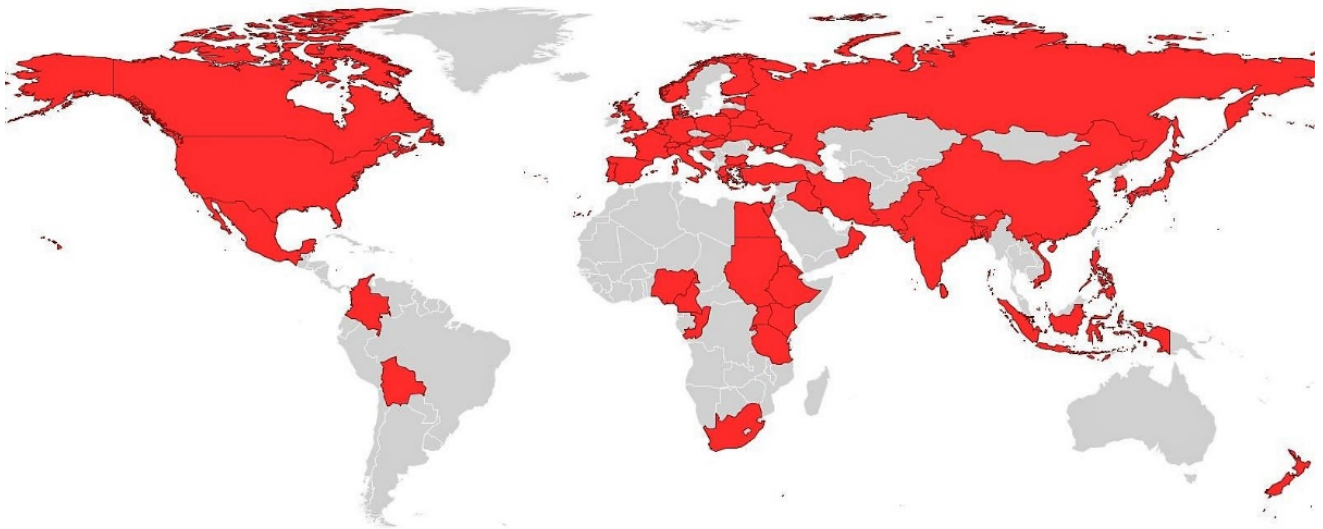


UMEÅ UNIVERSITY

# Internationalisation at the Faculty of Medicine

Employees and PhD students  
with an educational background in a foreign country

*160 employees from 39 countries*



*and 139 PhD students from 52 countries*

A report from  
THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE  
Faculty of Medicine  
Umeå University

# Preface

How international are we, at the Medical Faculty of Umeå University? And what can we do to develop an even more internationalised academic environment, for staff and students at all levels?

These questions are of key interest to the Faculty's International Committee. Internationalisation of academia usually focuses on an international exchange of staff and students, which is important. However, in the globalised world of today, that is not enough. To provide a high-quality education and increase our students' competitiveness globally, internationalisation needs to take place at home, every day. This is reflected in the Faculty's internationalisation strategy, summarised on page 2, where you also find a link to the full document.

One important prerequisite, for internationalisation at home, is the extent to which our Faculty has staff and students with an international educational background. Until now, we have known very little about this, a gap that is partly closed by this report.

We hope that the Faculty's international strategy, together with this report, will contribute to inspiring and constructive discussions about how we can move on to become a strongly internationalised Faculty. *Please, discuss this with each other and with your Programme Council's representative in the International Committee.*

May 15, 2017

ANNELI IVARSSON  
Chair of the International Committee

CURT LÖFGREN  
Member of the International  
Committee

## **INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND THE PROGRAM COUNCIL THEY REPRESENT**

CHATRIN PERSSON,  
Nursing

MIKAEL WIKSTRÖM,  
Biomedicine

ANNIKA VIKSTRÖM,  
Speech-Language Pathology

SVEN-ARNE SILFVERDAL,  
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CATHARINA ÖSTERLUND,  
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Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy &  
Physical Training

CURT LÖFGREN,  
Public Health

HANNA JERNDAL &  
MARTIN THURESSON,  
Student Representatives

# 160 employees and 139 PhD students from 61 countries at the Faculty of Medicine

Internationalisation of a university is best done at home. Other parts of the process, e.g. exchange agreements with foreign universities – offering possibilities for Swedish students and staff to go abroad – are, of course, also important. However, for the overwhelming number of students, internationalisation only happens if the education at home and the university environment, at large, are characterized by an all-encompassing global perspective.

This is strongly emphasized in the strategy for internationalisation that the Faculty of Medicine has adopted, and that is summarized on the next page. The Faculty International Committee's interests lie in these aspects of internationalisation that are not often discussed and for which there is no easily accessible data.

One such aspect is the proportion of staff and PhD students with an educational background in countries other than Sweden. Therefore, the Committee has conducted a survey, among Faculty departments and units, to map the number of staff and PhD students with such valuable educational experience.

The survey shows that there are (at least) 299 persons, among the staff and PhD students, that have an educational background in a country other than Sweden. Below, is a diagram illustrating the distribution of these persons based on the different WHO regions (Figure 1).

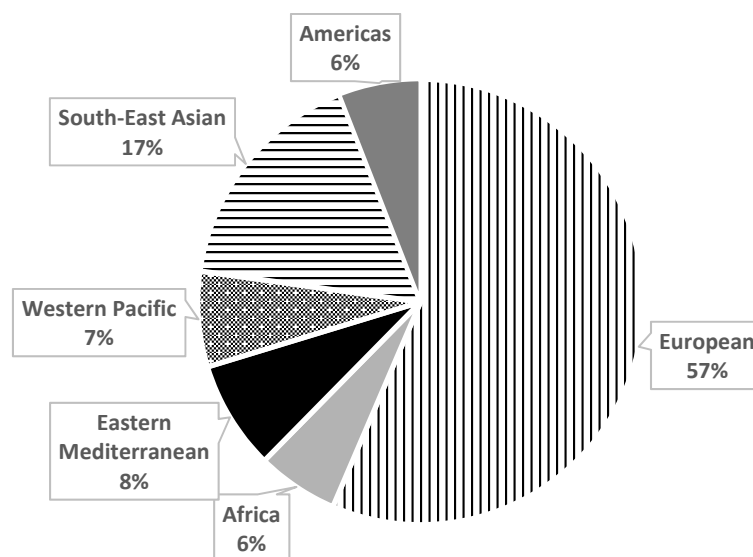


Figure 1 The proportions, from the different WHO regions, of staff and PhD students with an educational background in countries other than Sweden

The results of the survey are reported below. However, prior to the results, a brief background, first, of the Faculty strategy for internationalisation and second, how the survey was conducted are presented.

## **The Faculty's strategy for internationalisation**

In August 2016, the Board of the Faculty of Medicine adopted a new strategy for internationalisation<sup>1</sup>. This strategy is based on a corresponding central strategy, established by the University Board, which was adopted for the Medical Faculty conditions. A large difference is that the Medical Faculty's strategy not only covers education in the first- (bachelor) and second- (master) cycle, but also doctoral studies and research.

The strategy is divided into six sub-strategies (following the structure of the central strategy). These are briefly presented, below, with no ambition to cover all of the aspects included in the strategy. The purpose of this short presentation is, rather, to motivate why the International Committee has prioritized a survey on staff and PhD students with an educational background outside of Sweden.

1. *Develop and expand the range of programmes offered.* One objective, here, is to increase the number of courses given in English. This will, among other things, widen the potential for finding new and good exchange agreements, as well as increase the possibility for Swedish students to meet the Faculty's international staff.
2. *Develop the Faculty into a clearly international environment.* Here, activities leading to the coordination of internationalisation, over the whole Faculty, is emphasized (first- and second-cycle education, PhD training and research). Much of the international experience embedded in staff and students at all levels is not yet fully utilized.
3. *The bilingual Faculty.* The internationalisation process necessitates that information and communication to and among the Faculty also be given in English, to ensure the participation of non-Swedish speaking staff and students, at all levels.
4. *Develop the organization, based on an international approach.* Here, it is emphasized that at different levels – programme councils, units, departments, and centrally at the Faculty – when planning and strategic decisions are made, the international perspective and the internationalisation process should always be considered.
- 5 *Strengthen the Faculty's brand in an international perspective.* The international visibility of the Faculty is emphasized here. This, of course, calls for extensive information in English about education and research,

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<sup>1</sup> Available at <https://www.aurora.umu.se/enheter/medfak/organisation/rad-namnder-kommitteer/internationella-kommitteer/>

as well as for more targeted information, such as contact information, about, e.g. representatives of different nationalities on the Faculty.

6 *Prioritized geographical areas.* Universities where English is the working language are prioritized; but, it is also emphasized that networks with low and middle-income countries are necessary for a global perspective.

The strategy, as mentioned above, focuses on more than just the students in the first- and second cycles. In much of the strategy, the contribution from teachers, researchers and PhD students is discussed. This is also emphasized in the background of the strategy, in the following way:

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.

However, little is known about the extent of internationalisation of our staff and PhD students. That is why the International Committee decided to survey this matter.

## **The Survey**

In 2016, the International Committee designed a web-based survey, which was sent to the heads of all of the units and the heads of the departments that are not partitioned into units. In the mail, there was a link to the questionnaire.<sup>2</sup>

The questions concerned *staff and students, with an educational background in a country other than Sweden, during the spring of 2016.* This key variable was chosen for two reasons: 1) The University does not record from which country an employee originates and neither did we wish to do so and 2) An extensive international educational background is interesting, even if the person in question originates from Sweden.

An international educational background was defined as having one, or several, of the following degrees from a country other than Sweden: A basic college/university degree corresponding to a bachelor's level and/or a master degree and/or a PhD degree. The questions for the staff concerned the country of their college/university degree, gender, position at UmU and employment status (permanent or temporary). For the PhD students, the questions concerned the country of their college/university degree, gender and employment status as a PhD student.

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<sup>2</sup> A short version of the questionnaire is available (in Swedish) at <https://www.aurora.umu.se/enheter/medfak/organisation/rad-namnder-kommitteer/internationella-kommitten/>

## A large contribution from other countries?

High response rate

The response rate from the departments and units was high. Of the 43 units and departments not partitioned into units, data exists for 36. The missing data all belong to multiunit departments. For three of them, data was incomplete and for four, data was missing altogether. This means that the numbers of staff and PhD students, with an educational background in other countries, may be somewhat underestimated. *A detailed presentation of the results, for all departments and units, is given in the appendix<sup>3</sup>.*

Table 1. The number of staff and PhD students with an educational background in another country, spring of 2016

WHO region	Staff	Fraction	PhD students	Fraction	Total	Fraction	No. of countries
European	113	71%	57	41%	170	57%	28
South-East Asian	20	13%	30	22%	50	17%	5
Eastern Mediterranean	4	3%	20	14%	24	8%	7
Western Pacific	10	6%	11	8%	21	7%	6
Africa	3	2%	14	10%	17	6%	10
Americas	10	6%	7	5%	17	6%	5
Total with educational background abroad	160	101%	139	100%	299	100%	61
Total no. on the Faculty	1075		502		1577		
Proportion with educational background abroad	15%		28%		19%		

Note. Data for the total number of staff were found in the UmU FOKUS database and apply to 2015. The fractions may not total 100% due to rounding off errors.

If the two groups, staff and PhD students, are combined, Europe dominates (Table 1). But, there is a marked difference between the groups. While almost three out of four of the staff, with an international educational background, received it in Europe, almost two out of three PhD students, being educated abroad, did so outside of Europe. More than one out of five PhD students come from South-East Asia and one of ten from Africa, which is a considerably higher proportion than that of within the staff.

Staff from Europe  
PhD students from the rest of the world

<sup>3</sup> The appendix is not attached to this report, instead it is available (in Swedish) at <https://www.aurora.umu.se/enheter/medfak/organisation/rad-namnder-kommitteer/internationella-kommitten/>

One out of five, of the total, staff and PhD students, when combined (19%), have an international educational background. Among the PhD students, this proportion is almost one out of three. It raises an interesting question of whether or not this should be considered a large contribution to the internationalisation of the Faculty. Certainly, for the PhD students, the share is large. But, is it large enough?

*Large contribution?*

In total, 61 countries are represented among staff and PhD students, when combined (Table 1). Which countries are these?

Table 2. The number of staff and PhD students, with an international educational background, from the countries that are most represented, and which together, represent approximately half of the totals, during the spring of 2016

Staff		PhD students		Total	
Country	Count	Country	Count	Country	Count
Germany	20	India	22	India	39
Russia	17	Germany	12	Germany	32
India	17	Iran	11	Finland	21
Finland	13	Finland	8	Russia	17
Spain	12	China	6	Spain	15
		Italy	5	Iran	13
		Great Britain	5	Great Britain	13
Total		Total		Total	
	79		69		150
Total on the Faculty*		Total on the Faculty*		Total on the Faculty*	
	160		139		299

\*Total of the groups having an educational background in a country other than Sweden.

Note. A detailed account, of all of the countries, can be found in appendix Tables A7, A8, A11, A12 and A13.

India and Germany stand out, as does Finland (Table 2). More than half of the staff and PhD students, with an international educational background, come from these three countries. Among PhD students, coming from Iran is also relatively common, while for staff, this applies to Russia (a detailed presentation of all countries is provided in the appendix).

*Most from India, Germany and Finland*

## The Staff

In total, 15% of the staff has an educational background from countries other than Sweden (Table 1); hereafter, called the international staff. There is a large variation, in this share, between departments and units. Some have zero or very few international staff, while others, have a large share. In Molecular Biology, two out of three staff members belong to this category (Figure 2).

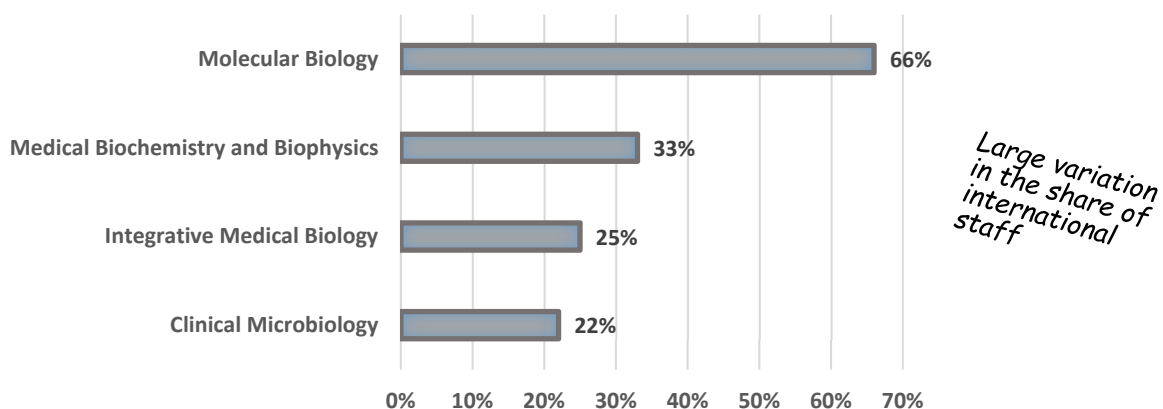


Figure 2. The four departments having the largest share of staff with an educational background in other countries

Notes: See Table A1 and A4, in the appendix, for greater detail regarding the departments and units.

The data for Molecular Biology only refer to the part of the department that belongs to the Medical Faculty.

Most of the international staff are not professors or senior lecturers, but rather, have “other positions” (e.g. post doc or other research positions). A higher share of the international staff consists of technical/administrative staff, than of professors and lecturers (Figure 3).

*And, relatively few of them are professors or lecturers*

*The majority hold temporary positions*

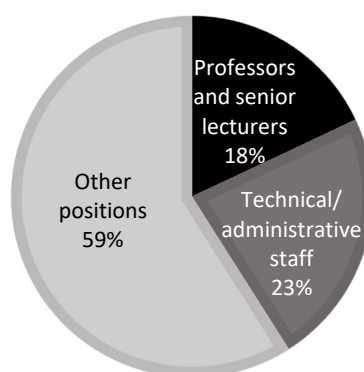


Figure 3. The share of different positions among the staff, with an educational background in other countries

Note: In the appendix, Table A4 provides a detailed presentation of this, for departments and units.



Most of the international staff (58%) holds a temporary position, as compared to only 20%, among all staff (see the appendix, Tables A2 and A6).

The majority of the international staff are men, while the opposite holds for all Umeå University staff (Figure 4). But, the difference between the two groups is not strikingly large.



Figure 4. The percentage of women and men among the different staff groups  
 Note: See Tables A3 and A5, in the appendix, for greater detail regarding the departments and units.

## The PhD students

While the gender difference for staff is relatively small, when comparing employees with and without an international educational background, this is not so for PhD students. More of those previously educated abroad are men (Figure 5).

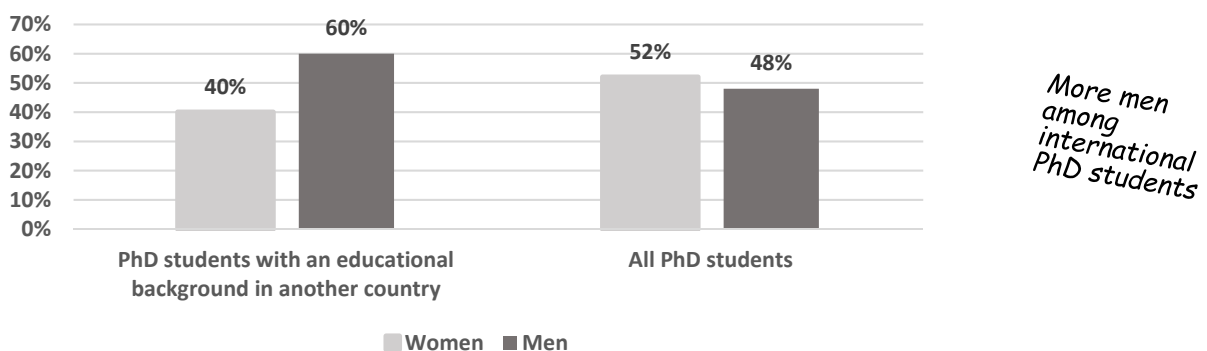


Figure 5. The percentage of women and men among PhD students  
 Note: In appendix Table A10, there is a detailed presentation of this, for departments and units.

There is an interesting gender difference, depending on where in the world the Faculty's PhD students come from (Table 3).

Table 3 The number of women and men, among the PhD students, with an educational background in a country other than Sweden

WHO region	Women	Fraction	Men	Fraction	Total
European	27	47%	30	53%	57
South-East Asian	8	27%	22	73%	30
Eastern Mediterranean	5	25%	15	75%	20
Africa	4	29%	10	71%	14
Western Pacific	7	64%	4	36%	11
Americas	3	43%	4	57%	7
Total	54	39%	85	61%	139

Note: See Table A10, in the appendix, for greater detail regarding the departments and units.

The proportion of women and men is approximately the same among the European PhD students. But, for those from Africa, the Eastern Mediterranean and South-East Asia, the men outweigh the women, by three to one.

Table 4. The six departments having the highest proportion of international PhD students

Department	International PhD students	Fraction of total no. of PhD students	Total no. of PhD students
Molecular Biology	21	60%	35
Clinical Microbiology	13	43%	30
Medical Biochemistry and Biophysics	8	40%	20
Public Health and Clinical Medicine	54	39%	139
Integrative Medical Biology	8	35%	23
Medical Biosciences	8	29%	28
Total	139	28%	502

Note: See Table A10, in the appendix, for greater detail regarding the departments and units.

As for internationalisation among staff, the share of international PhD students varies greatly, between the departments. Some have few or none. Some have a large share (Table 4). Again, Molecular Biology stands out, with almost two out of three PhD students having an educational background in a country other than Sweden.

How are the international PhD students financed? A large share of them – almost half – hold a PhD position (“doktorandtjänst”), but many of them (22%) are, so-called, “sandwich” PhD students. These persons are employed in their home country (usually at a university) and have received approval to use a considerable part of their time for PhD studies, guided by a main supervisor at Umeå University and a co-supervisor from their home university. They spend a minimum of 30 weeks at Umeå University, during their four years of PhD studies, and the hosting department covers travel and per diem costs.

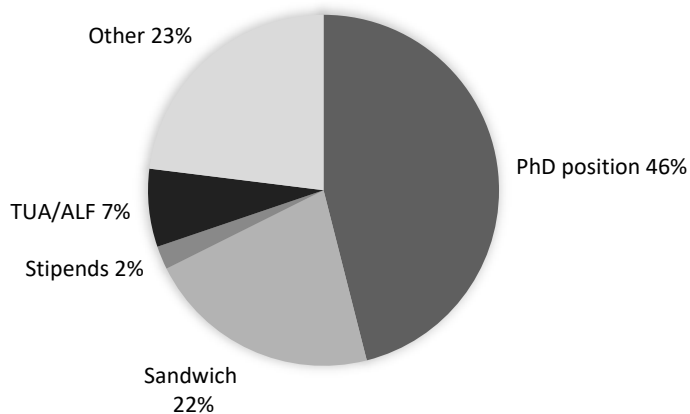


Figure 6. The different ways international PhD students are financed  
 Note: See Table A11, in the appendix, for greater detail regarding the departments and units.

## Why interest ourselves in international staff and PhD students?

This is a brief presentation of a survey of the internationalisation of staff and PhD students, in the Faculty, with detailed information for each department and unit being given in the appendix. Why is this important?

The Medical Faculty has a strategy for internationalisation that emphasizes that what happens at home is crucial. The reason for this, is that even if we are successful with staff and student exchanges, only a minor portion will benefit.

So, how do we reach the rest? Again, the strategy states that each educational programme must have at least one course in English. It should not be possible for a student to graduate, without having experienced being lectured by and holding discussions with English speaking teachers. In addition, the strategy also calls for the announcing of new positions, internationally. So, the Faculty wishes for a larger proportion of international staff.

Most important:  
Internationalisation at  
home

Over the past decades, this type of internationalisation has happened, although it has not been strategically guided through formal Faculty strategies. A likely explanation is that any department, wanting to be successful in research, has had to compete for the highest qualified staff and PhD students, to be competitive internationally.

Large international influence  
But is it enough?

The survey, reported here, shows at least partial success. Having one out of five staff and PhD students with an educational background that comes from countries other than Sweden, indicates there is a considerable international influence among the Faculty. But, is it enough?

How do we compare to others?

How does the Faculty of Medicine compare to other universities in Sweden, in this respect? What strategy do our competitors use? Are we behind or ahead? And, what about the quality institutions in Europe, those that are in the group that we would like to belong to?

Where is the faculty going?

This report is a descriptive presentation of the basic data on the internationalisation of staff and PhD students. It can certainly be criticised, because it raises more questions than it gives answers. But it is a beginning. Where is the Faculty going? Are we satisfied with the data the survey provides? Is it good or bad?

Finally, but also importantly, discussion has been raised by the International Committee of the Faculty as to how to best use the potential of the international experience, at hand. The international staff comes from 39 different countries and the PhD students, from 52 countries. How does the Faculty utilize this resource?

We have, at least potentially, communities of people from a large number of countries. This provides a basis for marketing educational programmes and positions, and for bringing in new international perspectives into education. So far, though, the Medical Faculty is underutilising these resources.

*Therefore, it is the hope of the International Committee that this report will lead to a discussion about what we have done, and what we should do, now and in the future.*



The report and other relevant documents can be found at:

<https://www.aurora.umu.se/enheter/medfak/organisation/rad-namnder-kommitteer/internationella-kommitten/>



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