

Internationalization_at_LBU

LBUS's international strategy was not, however, highlighted to the team during its various meetings. Indeed, in many of the meetings there was far more commentary on the local/regional dimension of the university. The impression gained was of a proliferation of international links but with little sense of how these fitted into a wider strategic objective. In addition there was no information on how the benefits of these links were being evaluated. While in the short term there was clear value in raising the profile of LBUS in the wider international arena there was a danger that such an expansive approach would, in due course, dissipate resources in the university and hinder the delivery of real, measurable benefits. The university should, therefore, formulate a clear international strategy and, in the medium- to long-term, consider providing more focused international links both in terms of countries and subject disciplines.

Staff directly involved in international activity were found to be knowledgeable and enthusiastic and provided a range of support for international students, particularly in relation to financial support. It was established that there were 458 international students of which 60% joined Masters' programmes, 20% Bachelors' programmes and 20% started PhDs. There was a very strong trend in recruitment to the engineering faculty. There was evidence of coordination of activities with faculties through the Vice-Deans for student affairs. However, the central staff support for this activity was, in common with other central activities, relatively limited and the IT and information infrastructure needed development.

Staff and students were generally enthusiastic about the value of international links and opportunities but there was limited mobility through the ERASMUS programme and students that had studied elsewhere in the EU through ERASMUS felt that the organisation of these activities at the partner university was rather better than at LBUS. On return not all ECTS credits were incorporated into their home programme, a problem acknowledged by the International Department. The team recommends, therefore, that the university should ensure there are rigorous systems in place for recording ECTS when students return from their Erasmus programmes.

The team felt that there was greater scope for the recruitment of international students outside the area of engineering and therefore, as suggested, by one professor, the team recommends that the university take advantage of the opportunities for developing more programmes in English, perhaps initially with an offer of 60 ECTS to facilitate student exchange.

Equally the ability of students from across Europe and the wider world to understand the potential for studying at LBUS could be increased if the English language version of the university's website was kept up-to-date and offered more specific guidance on the content of academic programmes.

The team was impressed with the breadth of activity in the international arena. It felt, however, that international students studying at the university could benefit from a greater involvement with the affairs of the city. There could be reciprocal benefits to this integration. The team recommends that the university should work jointly with the Mayor's office to consider ways in which international students might be more involved with cultural and other events in the city.