



INTERNATIONALIZATION PLAN OF FIRAT UNIVERSITY

Firat University was established in April 1975. This is considered as a very important step for Eastern and Southeastern Anatolian Region. Being at its basis an university with technical profile, Firat University is currently one of the best institution in Turkey in the field of technology and engineering. In the same time Firat University, can be considered as a bridge between modern and traditional values of education and culture. This is very easy to understand as long as we think about the fact that Elazığ is a perfect meeting point for different cultures and civilizations.

Internationalization is a very important process for the university, as a large part of the activities held within its frame, are oriented according towards this aim. In order to support the internationalization our academicians and staff are encouraged to participate to conferences, workshops, training or other events organized abroad. For reaching its targets, Firat University's and International Office's representatives realized a plan helping the team to better understand the good parts that should be kept and the shortcomings that should be improved.

To be able to realize all the objectives from our list, Firat University's team should firstly be aware of the missing parts and build strategies which would support the improvement and increase of the quality level of its services. A very detailed analysis it is needed in terms of organization, academic activity, academicians/ staff/ students quality and public relations. To accomplish all of these facts we analyze models of internationalization plans from universities all around the world, ensuring the objectiveness, but, in the same time adapting their good actions to the conditions and possibilities of Firat University.

Our internationalization plan is based on the following objectives:

1. *Develop the knowledge of academicians, staff and students to word's global topics*

In order to be active at the international level, university's environment should have always up-to-date information about the events, problems and challenges going on around the world.

Positive features:

- + Access to journals, media and conferences;
- + Financial means for conferences and workshops organizations;

Negative features:

- lack of interest without any type of motivation.

Our strategy is to improve the media means by ensuring a high rate of access to information about all the stringent actions that should be taken at international level. Beyond this, our university should increase the support offered up to now, to motivate all the possible participants in activities that may realize projects in correspondence to our internationalization plan.

2. *Expand and promote the study and use of world languages*

In a world where the globalization process is developing in a very quick manner, requesting everybody to keep up, one should pay great attention to the language learning process as the communication is the key for everything.

Positive features:

- + high interest and effort in the English leaning process;

Negative features:

- lack of practice;
- lack of proficiency in teaching when it comes at cultural issues and specialized area;
- unfortunately, all the attention is oriented towards English language. Firat University should develop a certain interest on other languages as well;

Lately, an increased interest towards English language was observed, which is good as in an academic environment the knowledge of a foreign language is primordial. The worst part about the learning process is the lack of possibilities when it comes about practice. There are very few cases in which Turkish students have the opportunity to interact with foreigners in order to be able to practice their English knowledge. To improve this aspect we encourage our students to interact with our incoming foreign students, organizing meeting between them from time to time.

Another weak aspect of university's activity in the field of foreign languages would be the related to the fact that there are very few persons able to communicate in other foreign languages excepting English. Being able to communicate in different languages is a key action in establish easier collaboration, being one of the strongest proofs of respect and interest towards the target country.

3. *Promoting the idea of academic adviser*

An academic adviser is the person in charge with the analysis of course catalog and with the research on the field of education innovation.

Negative features:

- in majority, the academicians are involved also in management activities, which causes a lack of time and fully-oriented interest;

It is considered that there should be a person named in the function that would

take full responsibility of the innovation process and updates. To be able to claim Firat University as being an international one, the quality level of its services should be compared with others and increased in the weak parts. Different educational systems should be analyzed, as well as the way in which the university organizes its academical events and activities. Firat University would like to create a system to which everybody could adapt easy and which would be accessible to people from different cultures and various academic backgrounds.

4. Assist departments in developing programs of international exchange and cooperation that utilize technology to connect students and academicians across the globe

Online systems are shown as being the solution in a world with a large time gap. Firat University plans to improve its actions in this field and start using even more the technical means which could ease the communication and the academic development, both for academicians and students.

Positive features:

- + strong will of students/staff/academicians to be part of international activities;
- + financial and technical means;
- + possibilities for distance learning;

Negative features:

- lack of information;

Firat University should get more up-to-date information about possibilities of organizing distance events, about partners who would accept and enjoy a similar working opportunity and initiate such activities. For instance, common conferences can be organized, giving to the participants to physically participate or to attend it via Skype. Such action would save time and money and support in the same time the idea of modernity towards our university's image.

5. Enlarge competitiveness for exchange programmes

Starting 2015, the process of students selection in programs as Erasmus+ was done in more strict parameters. An objective English exam was organized and between the result and the Transcript of Record the average result was calculated. The students with the highest scores were selected.

Positive features:

- + long experience in exchange programmes;
- +experience in different types of selection processes, with important improvements concerning the objectivity and the criteria quality;

The competitiveness is supported as a higher grade or language score will be an important factor in the selection process. In the same time, the students with higher

points have priority in selecting the future host university, which can be considered as an important advantage.

6. Recruit students from less developed countries

Firat University has a huge interest in welcoming foreign citizens as being its student, at any level: Bachelor, Master, PhD or Post-PhD.

Positive features:

+ Firat University receives annually hundreds of applications from student coming from Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Kazakhstan or Azerbaijan. In the base of an admission exam they are encouraged to apply and became our students. For many of them our university is a gate to European education systems, to modernity and innovation.

+ There are many Master degree and PhD foreign students willing to accomplish their education process in our university. Moderate tuition fees are established for them as a proof of our support and interest towards their education and professional future.

Negative features:

- Unfortunately, at the time Firat University is not able to provide courses in English language, the students having the possibility to follow 1 year of Turkish language courses, many of them being certified.

Being recognized as full-time students, they have also the possibility to receive grants for exchange programmes and to gain the chance of a continuous self-improvement, in personal and professionally level.

7. Increase the number and the geographical representation of institutional partnerships, with a focus on those that involve student exchange

Among Firat University's main aims, it is stated that institutional partnerships are to be established all around the world. Getting to know closely different cultures, sharing ideas and improve communication skills is a great proof of knowledge enrichment.

Positive features:

+experience in programmes as Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci, Mevlana, Erasmus+;

+ on-going collaboration with most of the European Countries;

+ desire and interest to develop collaborations with countries from as many geographical regions as possible;

Negative features:

- few collaborations going on outside European Union;

Firat University's International Office's representatives consider that it would be a great chance if the institution could start exchange collaboration outside Europe on the frame of Erasmus+ programmes, due to the experience and the good management

in organizing mobilities.

8. Increase participation in internships

The practical approach has been always considered as essential, when it comes about proving the knowledge acquired during the study period. Our University drives itself upon the idea that by practicing, the learning process comes to accomplish the initial outcomes.

Positive features:

+ high interest from the students towards internships abroad;

Negative features:

- language barrier;

- lack of objective choice of the host institution;

It is consider that our students need to improve their foreign languages knowledge, fact which will make them more confident and help them to choose their future host organization in terms of quality, innovation and acknowledgment instead of choosing it because of a relative feeling of comfort if the destination organization is not among the best on the field and thus, the requirements are more flexible.

9. Create a more favorable campus climate for internationalization for all students

Firat University has the 3rd largest campus in Turkey, offering a good space and environment for the leisure and academic activities going on.

Positive features:

+ large campus, with possibilities for space disposal.

Negative features:

- not adapted for all groups of age and slightly conservative;

The campus should fulfill the needs for academic, leisure and “having-fun” activities in a frame that could be proper for different cultures and several target age-groups.

10. Increase the number of bilateral agreements

Firat University is very active in the process of establishing new partners and agreements. As institution, we aim to become partners with the best institutions among the world and try to improve ourselves by taking good examples from many other correspondent institutions.

Positive features:

+ more than 250 departmental agreements

+ continuous research for new partners.

11. Work overload

In the following period of time, Firat University aims to develop a new strategy

when it comes about the share of work load.

Positive features:

- + initiate key roles-system;

Negative features:

- part of the academicians have also responsibility for management and organizational activities;

It is considered that an equal amount of work disposal, oriented by taking into account the interest and good level of knowledge of each staff in different fields, would ease and increase the level of performance in the internationalization activities.

12. Agreements with companies for placements with hiring possibilities

At the moment Firat University supports mainly placement in organization with whom a bilateral agreement was already signed. Most of them are universities, because of the fact we have a clear idea about their quality and student-oriented interest.

Negative features:

- No specific agreement for placements;

There is a high need in trying to establish such agreements that will increase student's interest and will provide a higher motivation towards their future career;

13. Inviting professors to conferences and teaching activities

Positive features:

- + many visitors for teaching activities;
- + collaborations between academicians in the field of research;

Negative features:

- not too many conferences;
- lack of information;
- not too many common events;
- need to improve the number of common publications;

As Firat University aims to develop the international cooperation, at the moment discussion are conducted with our partners with the aim of organizing common conferences. A good step is the fact that our academicians and partner academicians started to develop research together and even publish common scientific articles.

14. Motivation for the academicians to get involved extra curriculum

- + financial motivation;

For the moment financial motivation can be found in research grants and other projects supported by the government. A further analysis is needed, in order to define

different typology of academicians and establish different manners to motivate them.