

Agreement on Good Practice in the Internationalisation of Estonia's Higher Education Institutions

GUIDED BY good practices, international treaties and the legislation in force in the Republic of Estonia,

ACTING ON THE BASIS OF the Internationalisation Strategy of Estonian Higher Education for 2006–2015,

HAVING REGARD TO the importance attached to the internationalisation of higher education in the context of the European Higher Education Area and the significance of internationalisation for the sustainable development of Estonia,

CONSIDERING that going abroad to study is an important decision in anyone's life,

ACKNOWLEDGING the need to develop a study and work environment that facilitates internationalisation in higher education institutions,

DESIRING TO provide solely quality education, a modern work environment and the support services necessary for foreign nationals residing in Estonia,

AIMING TO attract to Estonia only those students who are motivated and who hold the required qualifications, and only those researchers and teaching staff members who hold high academic qualifications,

have concluded the following Agreement on Good practice in the Internationalisation of Estonia's Higher Education Institutions (hereinafter, the 'Agreement on Good Practices' or 'Agreement').

I. General provisions

1. The purpose of the Agreement on Good Practice is to specify the duties and tasks that participating higher education institutions shall undertake and that these institutions pledge to observe by executing the Agreement.
2. Good practice forms the foundation for any internationalisation-related actions of participating higher education institutions, including actions not funded from the national budget and services provided outside Estonia.
3. The participating higher education institutions shall strive to build a reputation for Estonia as a country that provides internationally recognised and acclaimed, high quality higher education.
4. The participating higher education institutions shall endeavour to do everything in their power to provide their students with a positive experience of Estonia and the Estonian education system.
5. The participating higher education institutions affirm that any marketing actions targeted by them to international students shall conform to ethical standards.

II. Information on study opportunities

6. The participating higher education institutions recognise the right of international students to timely and relevant information regarding studies in Estonia, and to equal treatment. The information must be easily accessible to the students and must describe at least:
 - 6.1. the accreditation results in respect of the curricula offered, or the measures implemented for ensuring the high quality of training programmes;
 - 6.2. the content of a curriculum or a programme offered, as well as the learning outcomes, quality requirements and the degree or diploma awarded in the curriculum or programme;
 - 6.3. admission requirements and procedures, and the cost of studies;
 - 6.4. the linguistic competence required;
 - 6.5. the procedures for evaluating and recognising prior qualifications;
 - 6.6. the services provided by the higher education institution.
 7. The participating higher education institutions shall make an English-language translation of the Agreement available to all international students. In the case of a study programme that is taught in a language other than English, a translation of the Agreement shall be provided in the language of the programme.
 8. The foreign-language name of a participating higher education institution must correspond to the original. Descriptions of the content of the studies offered, as well as any other studies-related information provided in a foreign language must correspond to the relevant and adequately detailed information available in Estonian.
 9. In the event that a participating higher education institution uses commercial agents in recruiting international students, the agents must also be bound by the requirements stipulated in the Agreement. The terms of the Agreement on Good Practice shall be observed in any agreements concluded with such agents. If a commercial agent fails to honour the Agreement on Good Practices, the agreement concluded with the agent must be terminated.
- s
10. International students shall pay their tuition fees and other eventual admissions-related costs directly to the receiving higher education institution participating in the Agreement. Any fees due to a commercial agent shall be paid by the higher education institution. In the case that the agent's services entail a charge to the student, the agent must inform the higher education institution of the rates chargeable to students.
 11. A participating higher education institution shall conclude an agreement regarding arrangements for overseeing the observance of the Agreement on Good Practice with any commercial agent whose services it employs. The higher education institution shall regularly request feedback from students with regard to whether or not such agents honour the Agreement on Good Practice. In the event that a higher education institution terminates an agreement with a commercial agent due to a violation of the Agreement on Good Practice, or of any other contractual obligations, the higher education institution shall notify all other participating higher education institutions of the termination.

III. Academic and linguistic requirements for admission

12. The participating higher education institutions shall ensure that
 - 12.1. their admission requirements are the same for all student candidates regardless of their country of origin;
 - 12.2. international students are only admitted to curricula that are certified and fully accredited by the Ministry of Education and Research of the Republic of Estonia. Other recognised quality assurance measures shall be used in the case of freshly instituted curricula or shorter study courses;
 - 12.3. English-language information is available regarding admission requirements and procedures, selection criteria, the organisation of studies and research, and in the case of paid tuition, regarding the rates charged for tuition;
 - 12.4. any international students admitted to a participating higher education institution have the required educational qualifications;
 - 12.5. in cooperation with the Estonian ENIC/NARIC centre, a proper evaluation of the prior educational level of international students and of the documents proving completion of a period of studies outside Estonia;
 - 12.6. depending on the nature of the speciality, a basic requirement of linguistic competence is established in the admission requirements so as to permit international students to participate in their studies to the full extent;
 - 12.7. full use is made of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) in calculating the students' participation in studies.

IV. Duties of participating higher education institutions in respect of international students

13. A participating higher education institution shall perform the duties assumed by virtue of the Agreement on Good Practice in respect of each and every one of its international students regardless of the length of the student's studies at the higher education institution.
14. A participating higher education institution shall treat its international students the same as it treats domestic students. The same rights and duties that are provided by legislation in regard to domestic students shall apply to international students.
15. A participating higher education institution shall send an admission letter to its international students so that the students can present it when crossing the border, should this be necessary.
16. The package of admission information sent to an international student shall include information regarding travel, the documents that the student is expected to bring with him/her, visa and residence permit procedures, the academic calendar and the organisation of studies.

17. A participating higher education institution shall endeavour to train, in addition to support staff dealing with international students, peer tutors to advise international students on practical matters already before the arrival of those students in Estonia and later during their stay in Estonia.
18. The participating higher education institutions shall offer their newly admitted international students a general information course on Estonia, the university city, the organisation of studies, the health insurance system, security-related issues and recreation possibilities. The higher education institutions shall also offer their international students an opportunity to learn the Estonian language.
19. A participating higher education institution shall conclude a tuition agreement with each of its international students or with the parties who fund those students' studies. The agreement shall stipulate the rights and obligations of the parties involved.
20. The participating higher education institutions shall ensure that academic staff involved in the curricula and programmes taught in foreign languages have the necessary linguistic competence in those languages.
21. During the time of studies, a participating higher education institution shall ensure the provision of information in both its academic and support structure units to its international students on English-language studies at the higher education institution and on the study regulations applicable to those studies.
22. A participating higher education institution shall request feedback from its students so as to be provided an evaluation regarding the quality of its teaching services.
23. The participating higher education institutions shall in particular develop their career counselling and psychological counselling services, and shall extend the range of opportunities that are available to their students in terms of practical professional training.
24. In the case that an international student from outside the EU is removed from the matriculation register of a participating higher education institution before his/her period of studies has expired, the higher education institution shall notify the Estonian Citizenship and Migration Board thereof.

V. Duties of participating higher education institutions in respect of teaching staff and researchers

25. The participating higher education institutions shall announce all their academic vacancies in domestic and international media, including the European Researchers' Mobility Portal.
26. The participating higher education institutions shall provide information and assistance to international researchers and teaching staff in relation to work

arrangements and other practical matters (visas, residence permits, employment contracts, accommodation, etc.).

27. The participating higher education institutions shall provide an opportunity to the international teaching and research staff to learn the Estonian language.
28. The participating higher education institutions shall do everything in their power to attract highly qualified researchers and teaching staff to work in Estonia.
29. The participating higher education institutions shall pay special attention to ensuring the return to Estonia of Estonian residents studying or working in research and education institutions abroad.
30. A participating higher education institution shall support the adaptation of its international researchers and teaching staff to life in Estonia by facilitating their close interaction with its academic and support staff.
31. A participating higher education institution shall provide additional English language training and instruction on cultural differences to all members of its teaching staff whose courses are taught in English, and to members of support staff who advise international students, researchers and teaching staff.
32. A participating higher education institution shall ensure adequate knowledge and tolerance among its members in order to create understanding for the particularities of those members of the higher education institution who have a different cultural background.
33. The participating higher education institutions shall ensure fair and reliable evaluation and recognition arrangements in respect of the qualifications that an international researcher or teaching staff member has acquired outside Estonia.

VI. Parties to the Agreement on Good Practice

34. The Rectors of all public universities in Estonia shall sign the Agreement on Good Practices.
35. Any of Estonia's higher education institutions that express their desire and readiness to observe good practice as defined in this Agreement are welcome to join the Agreement.
36. In order to join the Agreement, the Rector of the higher education institution desiring to join must present a request stating that desire and undertaking to abide by the terms of the Agreement. The request shall be decided by the Board of the Council of Rectors.