

Pathways to **PRACTICE**

— A PRACTITIONER'S TOOLKIT —

IMPLEMENTING
INTERNATIONALISATION AT HOME
FOR INTERNATIONAL OFFICERS

*By Elisabeth Brunner-Sobanski,
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We achieve this mission through a combination of training, conferences, and knowledge acquisition and sharing. We partner with key stakeholder organisations and institutions to promote our membership's interests and advance international higher education in Europe and the rest of the world.

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TOPIC IN CONTEXT

Universities worldwide have invested considerable effort in providing opportunities for mobility and international activities abroad. While the percentage of mobile staff and (especially) students has remained very low, travel restrictions due to COVID-19 have forced us to view internationalisation through a different lens. While continuing to provide opportunities to the small proportion of students who are able to study abroad, institutions must strive to offer all students the chance to develop the skills and competencies they need to succeed in today's global labour market. This involves intentionally incorporating internationalisation across the formal and informal curriculum in learning outcomes, content, pedagogies and the overall student experience. This is what Internationalisation at Home (IaH) is about, and it is gaining traction in institutions across Europe.

Despite the fact that IaH primarily concerns teaching and learning (and hence should be owned by academic staff), international officers are often involved in, and sometimes even held responsible for, its implementation. Although international offices in higher education institutions across Europe are very diverse in their structures and role assignments, the topic of IaH



frequently ends up on the desk of the international officer for a variety of reasons, ranging from a lack of understanding of IaH among colleagues to the perception that such initiatives are the responsibility of the international office. Senior international officers in particular have an influential position. As they work closely with university leadership and are involved in the development of strategies, they usually have a helicopter perspective, good internal networks, and often inhabit a ‘third space’ between administrative and academic realms of the university. As such, they can play an instrumental role in the implementation of IaH.

This publication provides international officers with five essential steps in the implementation process of IaH across the institution. This should help you as an international officer in defining and navigating your new responsibilities, while at the same time finding ways to work with new stakeholders in internationalisation, such as professional development colleagues, for example educational developers and lecturers.

WHAT PROBLEM DOES IT SOLVE?

If IaH matters end up on your desk as an international officer, how can you not only respond but take action in a field that primarily concerns teaching and learning?

International officers may feel challenged or uncomfortable with IaH, as teaching and learning are typically not their responsibilities or field of expertise, yet others expect them to play a role in it. This publication addresses a number of challenges international officers face, including:

1. **How do I start the process of IaH implementation and what is needed to have an impact in the institution-wide implementation of IaH?**
2. **What is my role and what are my responsibilities in this process?**
3. **Who are the key stakeholders in IaH and how do I engage them?**





WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED?

The solution is a multi-stakeholder approach, involving the university's highest leadership, middle management, support services (eg educational developers and teaching and learning centres), academics and students. The international office can connect these different stakeholders, acting as the advocate of institution-wide internationalisation (explaining the concept and addressing misconceptions) and integrating an IaH action plan.

Jos Beelen's adapted stakeholder model, with the international office at the centre, can help you map your institutional context and identify key stakeholders as well as define your role and responsibilities in the IaH implementation process. In doing so you can engage **multiple stakeholders** in dialogue, decision-making and implementation. The diagram also shows which stakeholders have a more direct role to play in IaH implementation (inner circle) and which have a more indirect involvement (outer circle). However, stakeholders and their involvement in IaH can differ in different contexts.

WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

While successful IaH efforts depend on institutional contexts, success involves the following factors:

- Engaging relevant staff to trigger institution-wide internationalisation
- Getting the leadership on board and securing commitment from decision-makers
- Offering staff more opportunities for professional development to increase awareness about the importance of internationalisation for all
- Creating a framework to make IaH sustainable by embedding it into the processes and systems of the institution



TERMINOLOGY

Internationalisation at Home

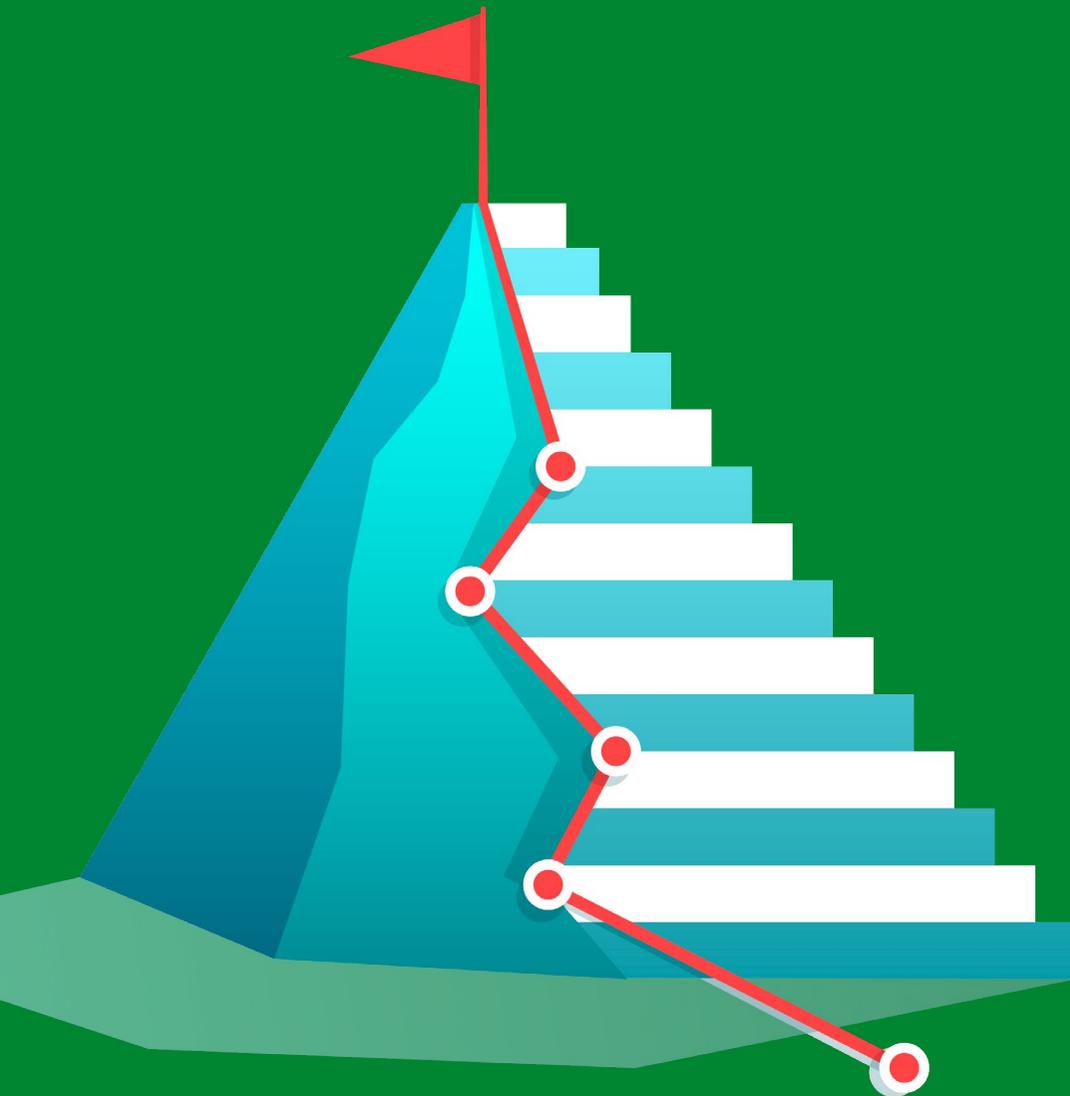
“The purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments” (Beelen & Jones, 2015)

(Imagine)-Plan-Do-Check-Act framework

A quality management tool used in the process of Internationalisation of the Curriculum as outlined by Betty Leask (2015)

Internationalisation of the curriculum

“The incorporation of international, intercultural and/or global dimensions into the content of the curriculum as well as the learning outcomes, assessment tasks, teaching methods and support services of a program of study” (Leask, 2015)



KEY STEPS IN THE PROCESS

1. Introduce and explain the concept of IaH
2. Identify, understand and connect stakeholders
3. Shape the process by creating a structure and bringing in different perspectives
4. Offer support
5. Find your role in the process

1. INTRODUCE AND EXPLAIN THE CONCEPT

a. Highlight why IaH is important

In a context where stakeholders are unfamiliar, it helps to introduce the concept by highlighting why IaH is important and what is in it for the university as a whole, and in particular academics and students. To increase awareness and overcome misconceptions, you can present current trends in internationalisation, mobility numbers (and their limitations) and research insights, as well as highlighting good practices as a source of inspiration.

b. Make sure the university leadership is on board

IaH requires broad institutional commitment and shared responsibility beyond the walls of the international office. It is therefore necessary that university leadership and relevant decision-makers are on board, know the concept and provide a framework for IaH. Helping them to understand the relevance and complexity of IaH is a good starting point. Successful implementation will hinge on top-down support measures such as a clear vision of IaH, strategic anchoring, adequate resources, recognition of achievements for IaH and the development of expertise within the institution.

2. INVOLVE STAKEHOLDERS

a. Identify and connect stakeholders

Implementing and facilitating IaH across the institution relies on meaningful connections and collaborations with different

stakeholders in and outside your institution. Knowing whom to involve within your institution and how to secure their commitment and support is therefore a key skill.

Your helicopter perspective should help you to identify and connect stakeholders and foster a dialogue about IaH. Advocates and supporters can help to build alliances; create synergies between schools, departments and programmes; and encourage more interdisciplinarity as a catalyst for IaH. It is also helpful to know where the sceptics and opponents are and which strategies to apply to them.

b. Make sure your message is heard

Speak about IaH to different stakeholders and adjust the communication and message to your audience and your context. As an international officer, 100% of your work is dedicated to internationalisation. Other stakeholders might have other priorities. Try to switch perspectives and imagine the day-to-day work of your colleagues: this should help you to understand different viewpoints and find arguments your colleagues will be inclined to listen to.

c. Build a bridge to internal support services and external partners

Build bridges to units and stakeholders who should be involved. Professional development, for example, is not the primary task of an international office, but you could help your colleagues to understand IaH, recommend experts from the field and make your networks accessible to colleagues in other service units.

Your international partner network can open doors for sharing and learning platforms across countries and institutions.

As an international officer, you can be a driver and agent for IaH, but a multi-stakeholder approach is needed for successful implementation. Jos Beelen's adapted stakeholder model (see page 06) helps you to identify stakeholders and navigate your institutional context.

3. SHAPE THE PROCESS

a. Understand the complexity of IaH and provide a structure

Since IaH is a complex concept and the implementation a multi-layered process, a structure is needed. It is important to embed IaH into existing processes and units. Your management expertise might help you when strategies of implementation and action plans are developed. A plan-do-check-act framework could be a sustainable way of embedding IaH in the institution's mission and helping you with its implementation. In case your institution is sceptical, you can initiate a small pilot project and make sure it turns into a success, which could open the door to more IaH initiatives.

b. Bring in different perspectives

Although IaH explicitly addresses students, they are often not involved as contributors to or co-creators of an internationalised curriculum. By actively engaging students (and alumni) in IaH and asking them about their perspectives, you create a sense of urgency, which university leadership and academics might listen to. Furthermore, employers and experts from the

field can offer valuable input for curriculum development and create an awareness that these perspectives are necessary when implementing IaH. Additionally, inviting perspectives from different academic disciplines can serve as a catalyst in internationalising the curriculum and create synergy between academic programmes within your institution.

4. OFFER SUPPORT

a. Develop platforms to foster inspiration and exchange

Inspiration and structured support are key enablers for IaH. Shape the IaH message together with leaders, managers and staff through organising special events and seminars at your institution. You can invite external experts through your national and international networks to discuss the concept, create platforms for sharing good practices and a space to learn from each other. Focus on strategies to stimulate bottom-up activities within individual programmes of study where the contextualisation of internationalisation should take place. Learning communities or networks organised close to the teaching and learning practice can foster peer learning and support champions in the faculties.

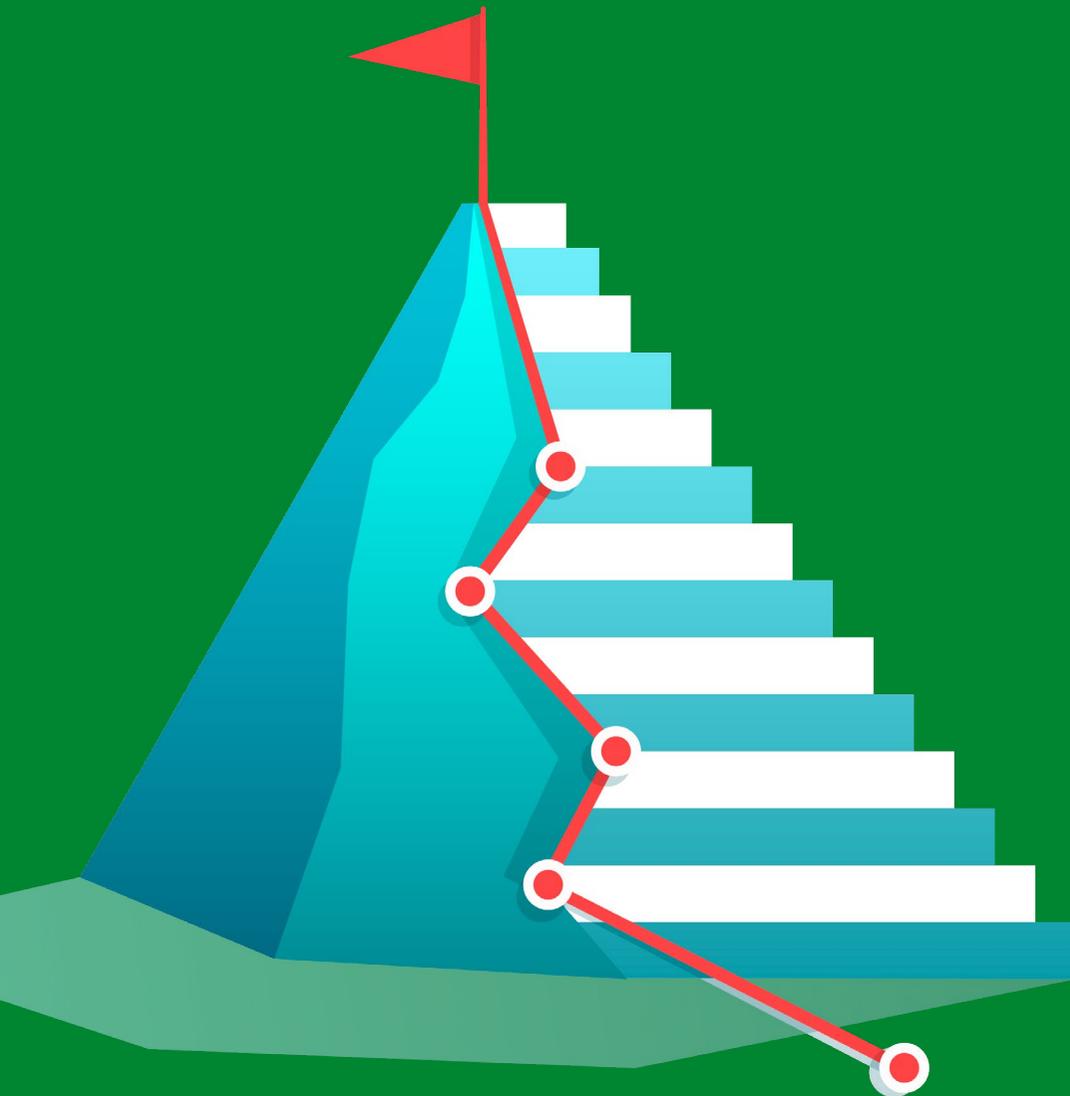
b. Make sure that academic staff is involved from the beginning and support is in place

Given its emphasis on the home curriculum, academic staff constitute a key stakeholder group in IaH. Support needs to be in place to assist academic staff to further develop their internationalisation skills and stay engaged in the process. Professional development and educational specialists might

rely on your expertise when developing suitable formats. As an international officer, you need to find ways of involving relevant stakeholders and inspire them to take action.

5. FIND YOUR ROLE IN THE PROCESS

When IaH ends up on your desk as an international officer, there are plenty of roles and responsibilities you can embrace. Obviously, there is no 'one size fits all' approach, because roles and responsibilities ascribed to international offices differ in different contexts. Your impact is highly dependent on your ability to analyse your context and the roles different stakeholders have in the complex universe of your university. Mapping the landscape of your university and scrutinising your role in it is an important first step to take action. You can build trust by listening to others, switching perspectives and adjusting your messages to your target audience and offer as much support as your role allows for. As an international officer, you can connect stakeholders and share responsibility in your field of expertise. After all, IaH is a joint effort which requires that you identify the priorities of your stakeholders and explain how IaH connects to them.



DON'T FORGET

-  **Step back and reflect when things seem to be stalling.**
Which factors can you actually influence?
What is needed in this particular phase of IaH implementation? Sometimes a change in perspective can help you to see clearer. Also, make sure to begin the process by involving advocates and supporters, not by trying to convince opponents.
-  **Make sure it is clear where your responsibility starts and where it ends.**
As an international officer, you can be a driver and agent for IaH, but a multi-stakeholder approach is needed to successfully implement it.

TAKE-AWAYS

Both before the pandemic and in the future that awaits after it, the limitations of student and staff mobility are unequivocal. Enthusiasm for IaH, it seems, is on the rise. The dynamic of the current discourse can well be harnessed to communicate urgency to stakeholders across your institution, to take inventory of current good practices, to share experiences and to inspire academics. It is also a good moment to address common misconceptions – such as that IaH does not require the presence of international students or teaching staff, or that it is a mere preparation for a mobility period or an alternative to study abroad – and to weave IaH into strategic plans.

However, IaH is not a quick win, but rather a long and winding road. A plan-do-check-act framework can help you as you structure the process of implementation and keep sight of your aims as you also define your role in it.

Finally, it's best not to walk alone: be open to the company of new allies and embrace the powerful networks that emerge.



FURTHER READING

Books and articles

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