

## **The National Union of Icelandic Students Policy on Internationalisation of the Icelandic higher education sector**

With this policy The National Union of Icelandic Students (hereafter NUIS) aims to contribute to the policy process of both the government and individual higher education institutions in regards to the internationalisation of the Icelandic higher education sector. The foundation of NUIS' policy rests on the idea that equal access to education (both domestically and abroad) is a human right and one of the foundations of a prosperous society. It is the hope of NUIS that the government and higher education institutions put that idea at the core of their policy too.

Internationalisation is the driving force of the free flowing of knowledge across the world. Internationalisation can already be found in all parts of the Icelandic higher education sector; whether it's within the academic curriculum, in teaching methods, methodologies, ideas, or in discourse. Internationalisation is also clearly visible in the variety of individuals and groups which make up the Icelandic university community. One of the main aims of internationalisation of higher education institutions is to expand the horizons of students and staff by introducing them to new ideas, viewpoints, and concepts that would otherwise pass them by. University education and internationalisation thus go together hand in hand. Iceland is part of the global community and thus it is vital to ensure that education in Icelandic higher education institutions is characterised by this in both a societal and educational regard.

Internationalisation further aims to bring knowledge, critical thinking, and subject understanding of students up to a higher level, both in terms of their academic skills, but also their personal standing in the global community. An isolated higher education system, impacts on students' standing in languages, their cultural understanding, critical thinking, and ideas of people from different cultural backgrounds. With increased travel and communication, the world is continuously getting smaller and the need for such competences and skills and much greater.

Internationalisation can also contribute towards creating a more tolerant society. The Icelandic higher education sector should be leading in this area as well as in the struggle against prejudice more generally.

By setting out this policy on internationalisation of the Icelandic higher education sector NUIS wants to:

Encourage Icelandic education authorities to:

- Create a policy on internationalisation of the Icelandic higher education sector with clear goals and targets and ways to reach them, in addition to increased data collection and statistics in this field. The policy must be worked on in close co-operation with students.
- Set a target that by 2020 40% of Icelandic higher education graduates will have studied abroad, either during an exchange or for a full.
- Broaden laws on residency and work permits so that foreign students have equal and easy access to university education in Iceland, irrespective of where they come from and can have the possibility of working here after graduation.
- Remove barriers to secure equal opportunities for all Icelandic students who want to go on academic exchange, work placements, or complete full studies abroad. Specific attention should be given to support and funding opportunities for low income and marginalised student groups.
- Secure financing for higher education institutions to work towards developing internationalisation, building a strong support network, as well as securing access to Icelandic language tuition for foreign students, staff, and their families.

Encourage Icelandic Higher education institutions to:

- Create a clear policy on internationalisation within their school and publish a yearly overview of its progression towards set targets.
- Secure access for all students to academic exchange or work placements abroad, with increased access to information and funding opportunities. Particular attention should be given to support and funding opportunities for low income and marginalised groups.
- Increase significantly opportunities for work placements or exchanges abroad within subjects where this is currently uncommon. Work towards expanding the number of working agreements with foreign higher education institutions and ensuring that both study periods and placements are always counted towards academic credits.
- Support teachers and other staff, such as guidance counsellors, in fostering internationalisation at home and in undertaking training or gaining teaching experience abroad.
- Show societal responsibility by fostering co-operation with higher education institutions across the world and ensuring equal access of all people to education, not least those with special needs. Support student unions in bridging the gap between domestic and foreign students.