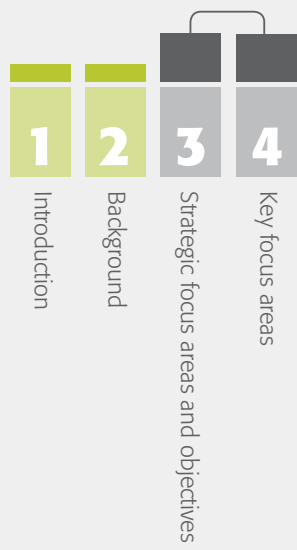


# Internationalization Strategy



2011 - 2015



*The strategy is illustrated with pictures from VIA's Facebook photo contest that ended in March 2011. In the contest you had to play with VIA's logo. The winner is Natu Dan from Romania who is studying at VIA.*

# 1

## Introduction

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Below follows a presentation of VIA's internationalization strategy. The strategy focuses on how VIA will work to fulfil the goal of being among the world's leading providers of professional bachelor programmes and knowledge, which both acknowledges and challenges the regional, national and global needs of society. The strategy has come into existence as a result of the efforts made by a transverse working group in VIA which has collected input from a broad range of directors and employees at various levels engaged in VIA's international work.

The process of developing the strategy has shown that on the basis of the previous efforts in the schools, VIA has a good starting point for successful internationalization. Thus VIA has many international partners at its disposal and offers several educational programmes and courses/modules in English. Furthermore VIA is among the first Danish institutions with bachelor programmes to establish itself in China with educa-

tional offers. In addition to this VIA co-operates with a number of countries both inside and outside Europe on the development of programmes, exchange, research and development activities with the authorities, educational institutions and companies etc. The purpose of the strategy is to take this development a step further and contribute to an extended integration of VIA's efforts to internationalise its core processes and strengthen VIA's position on the global market for education.

An annual follow-up of the strategy will be conducted on the basis of specific strategic objectives. The follow-up will be carried out by VIA's International Committee assisted by International Relations.

## 2

# Background

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The strategy should be seen as VIA's wish to contribute to the development of the competitive power of Danish companies and to the coherence of the welfare state and its general development in an ever globalizing world. From a political perspective, e.g. in the strategies formulated by the Danish government on globalization and mobility, it is strongly emphasized that educational institutions ensure the internationalization of programmes, students and employees. To rise to this challenge, it is decisive that VIA is considered an attractive partner, university college and workplace and in this way is able to attract and maintain the most talented partners, students and employees from Denmark and abroad.

In an increasingly globalized labour market, where companies on the one hand assign high priority to international competencies and on the other hand recruit across national borders, it is essential that VIA supports Danish companies in this development through its international strategy. Besides the opportunity for VIA's students to develop strong interna-

tional competencies throughout their education, VIA must additionally contribute to meeting the customers' needs for hiring graduates with a higher Danish education by attracting foreign students and organising educational courses.

Accordingly, it is VIA's firm belief that internationalization is an important part of the continuous quality improvement of not just VIA's educations but also the research and development efforts in VIA. The internationalization is an essential element in a process of formation and development that aims to make students, graduates and employees in VIA prepared to meet the challenges and opportunities of globalization in Denmark as well as abroad within a professional international environment. In addition to this, a mutual international cooperation will contribute to the development of VIA as an organization.

The globalization also entails a deepened competition between educational programmes and institutions worldwide. As a consequence of the extended

portfolio of professionally acknowledged educational degrees based on Scandinavian educational thinking and didactics as well as the close contact to the competitive market, VIA has something exceptional to offer international partners. Despite this point of departure and besides a continuous development of the educations, it is crucial that VIA has the opportunity to offer professional master programmes, if VIA is to strengthen its position as a strong actor on the global market for education. The strategy is to expand VIA's possible actions internationally.

## Strategic focus areas and objectives

On the basis of the above, VIA has put forward three strategic objectives for the period 2011 – 2015:

### **Students with strong international competencies**

VIA educates highly qualified students to take a professional responsibility and be co-creators and co-developers of their profession and trade. Therefore students at VIA must have the opportunity during their education to develop strong international competencies, which qualify them to a continually globalizing labour market and a multicultural and globalized Denmark in the way of global outlook, cultural understanding, intercultural communication etc. Like-wise through the programmes, VIA must professionally address the challenges and opportunities that are attached to an increasing globalization with regard to climate, energy, technology, food, health, education, poverty eradication etc.

### **Attractive and internationally popular educational programmes**

Internationalization is a significant part of the continuous development of VIA's educations and professional environment and furthermore it will help to attract more students to higher education. Previously, higher educational institutions primarily attracted students from neighbouring areas but with today's growing market for education, students seek institutions that offer the best education and the most stimulating study environment. Therefore, VIA should develop attractive and internationally popular educational courses conducted in international study and learning environments in VIA or at partner institutions, such as companies or educational institutions abroad that address the challenges and opportunities attached to an increasing globalization.

### **Participation in international research and development projects**

As part of VIA's long-range ambition to become a highly acknowledged research-based university, it is crucial that VIA strengthens its position together with international partners and other interested parties in relation to international professional research. This is in view of the fact that an increasing part of the research generally takes place in international networks. Hence VIA must step up its participation in externally financed international research and development co-operations including a strengthening of the network for international research institutions and interested parties.

### 3.1. Critical success factors

Critical success factors are understood as internal and/or external circumstances of crucial importance to the realization of the strategy. The mobility strategy of the Ministry of Education emphasizes that internationalization of vocational and professionally oriented higher education traditionally has been carried through by fiery souls and the degree of internationalization therefore often varies depending on subject area, education etc, a situation which in many ways explains the state of affairs in VIA. Among the decisive success factors for this strategy is consequently that VIA succeeds in diffusing the interest for internationalization among more employees and succeeds in supporting those employees that have already gained interest through offers of relevant competence development, job offers, stays abroad etc.

A highly prioritized success factor for VIA University College is to offer Master degree programmes and be a leading and creative partner in research and development projects with other international universities. VIA is already a very attractive partner for many international universities and the further development

of our organization as a strong international educational institution will serve to ensure strong strategic partnerships.

VIA thus invites international Universities and Universities of Applied Sciences to future collaboration in the field of research and development projects. VIA also invites partner institutions abroad to collaborate in the development of double- and joint degree programmes, Master programmes as well as Bachelor programmes.

### 3.2. Strategic principles

A strategy cannot take into account all the phenomena and changes that may occur within a given strategy period. Consequently, VIA has decided to draw up a set of strategic principles that may guide decisions, choices and actions in the spirit of the corporate strategy.

#### PROXIMITY AS A PRINCIPLE

Decisions are made in close proximity to those concerned. The implementation of the strategy is largely

founded in professional environments in the five schools and administrative offices and divisions. The directors and employees at the individual schools and administrative offices and divisions have the greatest insight into how specific efforts may convey great professional value in the entities with respect to the strategic objectives referred to above.

#### FOCUS AND PRIORITY

If the ambition to be among the world's leading providers of professional bachelor programmes is to be realised, it will require commitment and courage continually to make choices both for and against.

#### IMPLEMENTATION THROUGH DIALOGUE

As document alone, the strategy does not create value for VIA's partners. A continuous dialogue between directors, employees, partners, interested parties and students is decisive to the transformation of the strategy into action and for its value for all partners.



# 4 Key focus areas

VIA has prioritised the following eight key focus areas that are to contribute to the fulfilment of the above-mentioned strategic objectives:

- 1. Internationalization of educational programmes**
- 2. Incoming and outgoing student mobility**
- 3. Incoming and outgoing staff mobility**
- 4. International networks**
- 5. Internationalization of research and development performance**
- 6. Partner collaboration, visibility and branding**
- 7. Internationalization of administrative offices and divisions**
- 8. Physical settings for international activities**

The focus areas should be regarded as the overall guidelines which VIA will follow to enhance internationalization during the strategy period. The first five focus areas centre primarily on the internationalization of VIA's core services, that is education and research, while the three remaining key focus areas aim at internationalization of the supporting processes. As previously mentioned, the implementation of the strategy is largely founded in the five schools: the School of Health Sciences, the School of Education and Social Studies, the School of Technology and Business, the School of Design, Animation, Media and Business and the School of Continuing Education. The focus for the administrative offices and divisions will be on the development of professional and effective support to the schools, i.e. counseling in regards to legislation, entering into strategic partnerships, shared activities in relation to visibility and marketing, administrative tasks etc.

## **4.1 Internationalization of educational programmes**

Increasingly, VIA will internationalize the curricula of all educational programmes and thus guarantee that the students have the opportunity to obtain and develop international competencies during their years

of study at VIA. This will be conducted by drawing up study programmes that provide students with the opportunity to go abroad without extending their studies beyond the nominated study period. To ensure that all students have the opportunity to obtain international competencies, our various educational programmes are working with 'internationalization at home'. In addition to this, VIA wants to ensure that students receive the necessary assistance with the organization of studies and practical placements abroad and also to provide the students with the possibility of choosing courses in high-level English.

Similarly, VIA will want to increase the number of degree programmes offered in English as well as develop a strategy for the offering of Danish degree programmes abroad as part of our participation in the international market for education. VIA will work to establish double degree programmes and to a certain extent joint degree programmes in collaboration with our international partners. Finally, VIA will ensure that international students are offered the option of participating in Danish language courses and courses in Danish culture and society in order to increase the possibility of keeping international students in the Danish work force upon graduation.

## 4.2 Incoming and outgoing student mobility

### INCOMING STUDENTS

VIA will attempt to ensure that the number of incoming students – full degree as well as exchange students – is in constant growth in consideration of the given political and physical setting. In this regard, the establishment of international study environments at VIA's various campuses is crucial. Furthermore, an effort must also be made to encourage Danish and international student to interact both professionally and socially. The efforts to implement Code of Conduct<sup>1</sup>, among other things to professionalize recruitment and marketing management and the enrollment and counseling of students, will of course continue.

### OUTGOING STUDENTS

VIA will work to ensure that the number of outgoing students is in constant growth in order to meet the requirements set forth by the Danish Ministry of Education in its strategy for mobility as well as the objectives inherent in the Bologna Process. Thus, VIA continually works to increase the number of outgoing students, both Danish and international, who place their internships abroad or who seek to take part or all of their

studies abroad. All students in VIA must therefore be informed about the various possibilities for study and internships abroad and about the various scholarships available to them. Furthermore, VIA will collaborate with partners and other interested parties to inform the students about the advantages of studying and interning abroad during their studies. The international skills acquired by students during their stay abroad must be credited and likewise it should be attempted to include the students' professional and personal experiences upon their return in the marketing of studying abroad and during classes. VIA is working to ensure the issuing of an international qualifications diploma as is recommended in the mobility strategy set forth by the Danish Ministry of Education. VIA is working to ensure a balance between the total number of outgoing and incoming students for both study and internship at the level of the individual educational programmes.

## 4.3 Incoming and outgoing staff mobility

### INCOMING STAFF

VIA attaches great importance to inviting and receiving international lecturers to teach both Danish and English-language classes and seminars and thereby to

<sup>1</sup>Code of Conduct - CoC is a set of clear, ethical guidelines for recruitment, enrollment and studies for international students. CoC makes clear the educational and economical rights of the international students during the recruitment, enrollment and study period. CoC has been authored by the University Colleges Denmark in collaboration with the Danish Ministry of Education, the Danish Vocational Colleges and the Rectors' Conference of University Colleges Denmark.

offer students at VIA the opportunity to participate in classes and seminars conducted by international lecturers from international partners, and thus compare the quality of those lectures to that delivered by VIA's own staff. The individual schools and educational departments at VIA encourage their staff members to invite and receive international lecturers from partner institutions abroad to teach at VIA.

#### OUTGOING STAFF

VIA encourages international mobility among lecturers through their participation in teacher exchange programmes at partner institutions abroad for more than two weeks for the purpose, among others, of increasing the quality of the lectures VIA's students receive as well as increasing the English language skills of VIA's lecturers, and to ensure that all staff members at VIA, lecturers as well as administrative officers, develop intercultural qualifications and skills. To support that measure, VIA offers a test of English language skills and an A-level English language course to all staff members. The hiring of new lecturers at VIA will emphasize the applicant's English language skills and multi-cultural qualifications as well as the applicant's international profile, especially skills and experience in teaching in English.

VIA wishes to ensure that technical as well as administrative staff will participate in and complete exchange training abroad.

#### 4.4 International networks

VIA highly prioritizes collaboration and networking with the labour market both nationally and internationally. VIA encourages teaching staff as well as administrative staff to get involved in international networks – bilateral as well as multilateral – in collaboration with educational institutions and the international labour market. International networks are among other things used in establishing agreements about the development and offering of a wide range of joint professional master degree programmes. VIA will focus on quality in the collaborations with the strategically preferred partners and in this way ensure activity with the collaborators with whom agreements are signed. VIA will aim in time to become a bilingual educational organization.

#### 4.5 Internationalization of research and development performance

VIA wishes to strengthen the collaboration with international partners in the field of research and development projects because we acknowledge that a

greater part of the research actually takes place within and among international networks. VIA will develop procedures and incentive structures which support and encourage staff participation in international networks for research and development projects with research institutions as well as the international labour market, both national and international corporations. VIA wishes to influence the development within the field of professional educational research and in collaboration with Universities of Applied Science create knowledge for the benefit of the vocations and professions which VIA's educational programmes cater to. Staff involved in research and development projects will ensure the publication of the relevant research in internationally recognized media. Lastly, VIA will increase efforts to successfully acquire international research and development funds.

#### 4.6 Partner collaboration, visibility and branding

VIA will brand and market our own international activities and educational programmes globally. The purpose of marketing is to make VIA visible on the international scene, so international students may choose to enroll in one of VIA's programmes, either

as full degree students or as exchange students. VIA's visibility on the international market, which is a joint effort between the five schools, International Relations and VIA Communication, also serves to attract international partners as participants in joint international research and development projects. VIA will brand our own programmes as degrees with Danish didactics and theories of education as well as Danish values, mindset and social culture, e.g. the practice of project and media based teaching methods as well as collaboration with national and international partners within the professions. VIA will influence the political process in order to ensure the acknowledgement of research and development of and within the professions, and make VIA visible in international networks for university colleges and bring VIA's influence to bear through the hosting of international conferences for and with partners and other interested parties. VIA will collaborate with private and public enterprises in the national and international labour markets to ensure that the needs of the professions are reflected both in the learning processes and the educational curricula of the programmes as well as in the professional and personal qualifications of the graduates.

#### **4.7 Internationalization of the administrative offices and divisions**

The administrative offices in VIA must ensure that international students are offered the best possible service equal to the services offered to Danish students. VIA will thus implement signposting in both English and Danish as well as ensure easy access to literature in English and Danish at the various schools where international students are enrolled. The Quality and Assessment Division will likewise work to ensure that the staff in the various schools possess the qualifications and skills required to support the internationalization of the educational programmes, e.g. in matters of offer and accreditation of educational programmes abroad. The administrative offices will establish an emergency service (a service which provides students will help in emergency situation both during and outside of normal offices hours) for all students and will offer the necessary help to establish social activities between international students and Danish students. VIA's maintenance and service staff, who service the international students, will be offered the necessary help in assessing and upgrading their English language skills to ease and ensure communication with international students. The ad-

ministrative offices at VIA support all schools/educational programmes/research centres etc. in matters of carrying out and reporting on projects. The purpose of these activities is to contribute to the development of an international mindset among directors and administrative staff in VIA's administrative offices.

#### **4.8 Physical settings for international activities**

VIA will purposefully work to ensure that international students will be offered good living conditions and VIA will attempt to consider the varying needs of our international students. VIA will continuously stay updated in the matter of changes to the law of ownership and the rental possibilities with regard to campus accommodation/apartments for both national and international students.

