

International Strategy

Internationalisation as comprehensive process

International networking is a basic prerequisite for a better understanding of social contexts and the development of cultural diversity. The internationalisation strategy of the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna is based on a comprehensive approach to the internationalisation of studies, teaching and research.

The Academy's strengths include the international reputation of its teaching staff and the internationality of its students, coming to Vienna from over 50 countries and enriching the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna with their artistic biographies. The central position of the Austrian capital as a mediator between East and West plays an important role in its international orientation.

Internationalization permeates all levels and areas of the Academy and is supported by a continuous program on site. These activities focus on the integration of international students and teaching staff through the Student Welcome Center, the International Office and Academy staff, as well as the creation of mobility opportunities and additional internationalization initiatives for students and staff on site (through events, workshops, courses).

Internationalization takes place at the Academy with a specific profile that follows current cultural policy debates and reacts to current political developments. Perspectives on decolonization, diversity and responses to global crises, play an important role here. A key goal is to increase the mobility of staff in departments and institutes, as well as students, to enhance diversity skills and international networking opportunities. Aspects of an internal decolonization of the Academy are reflected in the development of initiatives that improve the social inclusion of students from non-EU countries and students with a migration background, as well as increasing the diversity of Academy members. In line with the guiding principle of universalism from the margins, the Academy orients itself towards the international art scene and sets its own geographical accents.

Focusing on Central and Eastern Europe, countries of the Global South and the North Atlantic region, the Academy will continue to expand international cooperation and challenge the transatlantic orientation of the art scene with alternative perspectives. In addition to existing collaborations in Central and East Africa, which will be further developed, the aim in the coming years will be to intensify cooperation with individuals and institutions in Southeast Asia and Latin America - not least in order to address questions of aesthetic-political subjectivation more explicitly in the light of contemporary trends towards recolonization. In addition to intensifying research and exchange collaborations, the further development of exchange and residency programmes as well as the *Art School Alliance* for student exchanges with internationally renowned art academies are crucial for the area of internationalization.

Student mobility

The Academy of Fine Arts Vienna is highly international - 54% of students do not come from Austria, a total of 33% come from EU countries and 21% from non-EU countries.¹ The degree of internationalization already achieved makes it possible to speak of multidimensional heterogeneity due to the cultural diversity, the heterogeneous study experiences of the students and the different prior knowledge. Nevertheless, heterogeneity

¹ as of 2023

has its limits: for example, first generation students, descendants of migrants and students from the Global South are still underrepresented.

The internationality of the student body anchors an international, context-sensitive understanding of art in the student body and thus contributes to the quality of teaching and the institution as a whole. Nevertheless, there are also challenges to overcome in the area of internationalization. Differences in students' language skills must be must be addressed through language acquisition courses to ensure high-quality teaching. A high level of student mobility is naturally one of the Academy's goals. Students who spend time abroad improve their language skills, communication skills, resilience and their ability to move and prove themselves in different cultures sustainably. Incoming students from abroad also contribute to on-site internationalization. The Academy's mobility opportunities are widely utilized. Almost a third of graduates complete one or more study-related stays abroad, such as semesters abroad, internships, blended intensive programs (*BIP*) or short-term mobility. Overall, the aim of expanding the internationalization portfolio is to develop partnerships and offers in the target and desired regions, i.e. to serve both the Academy's strategic goals and students' specific internationalization interests. A regular evaluation of the partnerships, which also includes the experiences and feedback of the students, as well as better networking between incoming and outgoing students in order to make the partner universities better known to Academy students and to intensify networking on site, is part of a targeted and attractive offer. The mobility coordinators at the institutes make an important contribution to this. They advise students on questions about studying abroad and are an important advisory body for the International Office and the institutes.

The further development of a culture of internationalization includes regular information events in the individual fields of study, diverse blended intensive offers and short-term mobility opportunities for all subject areas, comprehensive information and advice on semesters abroad and internship offers as well as the anchoring of mobility windows in the curricula. Well-formulated learning outcomes as the basis for fair and simpler recognition, simplified and digitalized recognition processes and clear responsibilities as well as good documentation of mobilities help to make all mobilities visible.

Staff mobility

In addition to student mobility, the Academy also promotes and develops the mobility of its staff (artistic, academic and administrative staff). Stays abroad by artistic and academic staff are a key indicator of international networking and thus also of the international relevance of a university. International job shadowing enhances administrative and teaching practices at all university levels. All mobilities involuntarily contribute to the development of intercultural skills, the relevance of which is essential in a world increasingly characterized by international cooperation (as well as movements of capital, data and migration) and by a lively exchange of international research and knowledge production.

Against this background, all academy members are encouraged to teach or train abroad. Care is taken to prioritize people who have never been sponsored for stays abroad. Staff can pass on their knowledge of partner universities to students, broadening their horizons and encouraging them to consider studying abroad. This not only increases the diversity of exchange opportunities, but also increases students' willingness to seek out new and different cultural and academic experiences.

Learning other ways of working, technologies and teaching methods can lead to new ideas and innovations and improve understanding of global developments. One of the Academy's declared aims is to increase the mobility of artistic and academic staff in order to open up career prospects and improve teaching through international impulses.

Higher attention is also being paid to the mobility of general university staff. Exposure to administrative structures abroad fosters new perspectives and ideas through comparisons with other universities. The annual target feedback meetings, centrally organized group mobilities at selected partner institutions (such as job shadowing) serve to strengthen the implementation of a culture of staff mobility.

Diversity and inclusion

Employees at the Academy - in teaching and administration - often have an international background. 28% of employees have a nationality other than Austrian. Even more diversity, particularly among teaching staff, is expressly desired and is specifically addressed through recruitment measures.

Promoting equal opportunities and diversity is integral to the Academy's identity. In the coming years, the Academy will continue to work hard to ensure that members of the Academy - regardless of age, ethnic origin, disability or impairment, gender, sexual identity, religion or ideology and nationality - have the same development opportunities and are protected from discrimination.

In this respect, one of the Academy's declared goals is to improve its internationalization services with a view to inclusion and compatibility. Short-term programs (blended intensive programs, excursions, summer schools, internships, project weeks, etc.) are being expanded to provide even better support for working students, students and colleagues with care responsibilities or chronic illnesses. Students who are unable to complete longer stays abroad for various reasons will be given priority when applying. Support in choosing a program and in the application process will be further improved and comprehensive information for outgoing students will be made available.

Hospitality policy - culture of internationality

Cultural diversity, along with the knowledge and experience of international students and staff, represent enormous potential. The Academy is constantly working to improve the inclusion of its international guests, students and employees. A good welcoming culture requires a self-image of hospitality that gives those who are new to the Academy the chance to find their bearings quickly and as free from fear and uncertainty as possible. Small but important instruments are onboarding processes that are organized for all new employees, as well as generally accessible basic information.

The Student Welcome Center is the first point of contact for students and prospective students with study-specific questions. The focus here is on the needs of students in their first semester and/or of international origin. In addition, the Student Welcome Center is responsible for organizing the orientation program and information materials such as the welcome guide for first-year students. The International Office offers students advice and support in planning and carrying out a stay abroad and accompanies them before, during and after their mobility. Each semester, a one-week orientation program is offered for international exchange students, who are also supervised by two students from the Academy, so-called Exchange Companions. A varied leisure program facilitates the arrival in Vienna.

As far as guest lecturers, researchers and colleagues who complete an Erasmus stay at the Academy are concerned, the International Office works equally on a culture of hospitality. For externally funded projects, guest researchers receive support from the Art | Research | Support department and the project managers.

By further internationalizing its curriculum, the Academy, the Academy aims to equip all students for a future in a globally networked world, fostering nuanced, critical, and constructive awareness.

Internationality is not limited to stays abroad and should also be experienced locally in a diverse environment, regardless of the chosen subject. The prerequisite for this is to further increase the proportion of courses taught in English (especially in theory) and the proportion of international guest lecturers, to emphasize specific international topics and content in the courses on offer, to expand the language skills of all students and staff and to further increase the diversity of teaching staff.

Intensification of international cooperation

The Academy is an important centre in a network of international art and theory production. It cooperates worldwide with other universities as well as with numerous art and cultural institutions. Among other things, the Academy's participation in the *Art School Alliance (ASA)* network makes it possible to establish an attractive international study exchange program for students of fine arts. In addition, networks are established and expanded through residencies, research and exhibition projects as part of strategic partnerships in all fields of study. International cooperation with complementary partner universities in research and teaching generates synergies in the fields of study. The targeted expansion of partnerships focuses on the Academy's strategic priorities and on regions in which students and staff are particularly interested. Particularly important partner institutions are other academies, universities, museums and art and cultural institutions, as well as the Austrian cultural forums in numerous countries.

Digitalization, sustainability and internationalization

Advancing digitalization is opening up new opportunities for (lower-emission) international cooperation. With this in mind, the aim is to further expand blended learning offerings and digital teaching formats to create an "international classroom". Short but intensive programs such as the *Blended Intensive Programs (BIPs)* and blocked thematic seminars in cooperation with strategic partners are suitable for this purpose. Virtual mobility measures help to break down barriers and thus indirectly promote physical mobility. The Academy is working hard to further digitalize the enrolment of international students, recognition, diploma supplement, administrative processes, etc. and to enable smooth internationalization processes in line with the European Commission's requirements.

In its development, the Academy gives high priority to sustainability goals. The systemic contradictions between mobility and sustainability are not easy to resolve. The Academy has already implemented a number of measures to minimize its carbon footprint as far as possible. First and foremost, following the principle of Scientists for Future, the Academy has committed to no longer promoting air travel of less than 1,000 km. For air travel that is nevertheless undertaken, compensation measures are obligatory. *Blended Intensive Programs* are offered specifically at partner institutions that can be reached by train. Currently, around 80% of GDPs (in countries such as Germany, Spain, Poland, Slovenia) are travelled environmentally friendly.

The Erasmus+ program (2021-27) offers a range of financial support for students who travel green. The Green Mobility offer is already used by over 90% of mobile people for mobilities of less than 1,000 km. Overall, around 60% of students travel in an environmentally friendly way. The aim here is to further sensitize students and staff to environmentally friendly travel.

The Academy, its members and project managers are committed to improving the handprint through their global and political involvement in projects in the Academy's target regions, including as part of the *Sustainability in the Arts* research and knowledge cluster.²

Overall, the Academy thrives on a vibrant art discourse that knows no national or continental borders. The credibility of the internationalization strategy depends on how effectively the Academy absorbs, reflects, and shapes these international dynamics in the field of art.

Wien, 12.2.2025

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Jan H.', written in a cursive style.

² The “handprint” concept was developed by the Centre for Environment Education (CEE) in India and rewards social and political commitment.