



**KOÇ
ÜNİVERSİTESİ**



KOÇ UNIVERSITY

Internationalization Strategy

2021-2026

CONTENTS



- 1** Introduction
- 2** Current Internationalization Strengths
- 8** Aspirations
- 9** Strategic Priorities for Internationalization
- 16** Measurement
- 17** Conclusion
- 18** Contacts

INTRODUCTION

This document presents the renewed approach to Koç University's international strategic activity from 2021-2026. The strategic direction of Koç University's internationalization, as described in the 2017-2020 strategy document, has been updated based on the University's refreshed institution's strategy and changes in the international higher education landscape.

Since its foundation, Koç University has given strong emphasis to the internationalization of the University. As a leading research university that regularly ranks among the top institutions in Turkey, in the region and in the World, Koç University recognizes that it needs to connect globally across all its missions in order to serve its students, partners and society. At Koç University, we firmly believe that internationalization contributes substantially to realizing further quality and competitiveness gains across all areas of activity and that international higher education, research and innovation can strengthen relations between and among nations.

Koç University works towards adopting a "Comprehensive Internationalization Strategy which is a commitment, confirmed through action, to infuse international and comparative perspectives throughout the teaching, research, and service missions of higher education. It shapes institutional ethos and values and touches the entire higher education enterprise" (Hudzik, 2011) . As with the previous internationalization strategy at Koç, it is the work and best practice of our colleges, graduate schools, research forums/centers and administrative offices which will realize the strategic activity described in this document. Therefore, internationalization is not an end in itself; our aim is to embed it in everything we do. It is also acknowledged that this strategy will need to continue to develop together with the challenges and opportunities which the University encounters between 2021 and 2026.

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CURRENT INTERNATIONALIZATION STRENGTHS

WE ARE CURRENTLY PERFORMING WELL INTERNATIONALLY ACROSS A WIDE RANGE OF AREAS, AS EVIDENCED BY THE OUTPUT OF OUR ACTIVITIES AS WELL AS INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY RANKINGS.

EDUCATION

While some of our programs are globally accredited (i.e. EQUIS, AACSB, etc.) and global context is embedded in a growing number of our courses, internationalization of the curriculum is still an ongoing process and in an effort to do so, instructors and administrative units use worldwide statistics and benchmarks to align course contents and teaching methods with international standards, and skills and qualities sought by multi-national employers. All programs, courses, practices and support structures are regularly reviewed with respect to their suitability for students from diverse backgrounds. All academic staff are equipped with the training and skills necessary to teach diverse international students with different learning styles and traditions. With the advantage of offering almost all courses in English, some faculties administer internationally accepted exams.

Availability and development of joint/double degree programs, especially at master's and PhD levels, has enabled cooperation between faculty members and offers competitive education programs to a diverse student body, while strengthening our partnerships with strategic institutions. Even though we have had several unsuccessful joint/double degree programs, it has provided institutional learning on what kind of partnerships to enter in the future, based on the mistakes from previous experiences. Accelerated by the global pandemic, delivery of online courses and development of online programs (i.e. co-designed, co-taught, short-term, etc.) have brought a competitive advantage to Koç University in terms of future prospects and cooperation globally.

[Return to content](#)

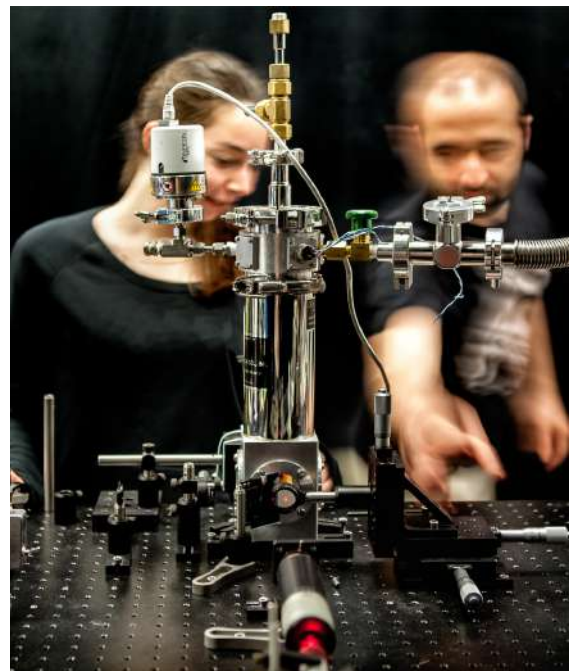
RESEARCH

Koç University faculty are recognized nationally and internationally for their research. Our faculty lead the field in Turkey for research grants competitively acquired from the European Research Council (18 out of 30 ERC projects in Turkey are at KU) and other international bodies and we are honored to have been entrusted with the establishment of several large-scale pioneering research centers, funded by state agencies and industry.

The extraordinary growth of research productivity at our university has been driven by an aggressive increase in the number of our PhD students and Post-doctoral scholars.

The preparation of statistics and benchmarking reports on the quality of research at KU with respect to globally competitive standards has helped us understand the areas in need of improvement. Continuous monitoring and continuous improvement help us stay globally competitive as a research university, which is a natural driver of most internationalization goals. International grant applications are encouraged and comprehensive support services for externally funded research projects are provided for faculty following international practices and mandates.

While international seed funding programs are designed and offered, Koç University faculty members coordinate and participate in international research projects and research groups. Koç University is a member of various international research associations and networks, and very active in organizing international research conferences/workshops/symposiums. The university hosts overseas researchers and faculty via visiting scholar program, exchange programs and one-to-one arrangements, which contribute to the development of cooperation among faculty members. The proportion of published materials (books, journal issues, articles, etc.) produced through international collaborative activity and the proportion of articles authored (or co-authored) published in internationally refereed journals are very high. Since research is encouraged at all study levels at Koç University, students are also encouraged to engage in research via structured programs and funding schemes.



PARTNERSHIP

Koç University is a member of, and often takes on a leadership role in many international networks and associations (PIM, LSGL, CEMS, SSUN, etc.), which leads to the formation of strategic partnerships with leading global institutions. The university also has partnership agreements with more than 300 institutions in 60 countries for mobility of individuals, research collaboration, joint-programs, etc. Strategic global partners have been identified for all colleges, institutes and research centers. In an effort to build new partnerships and also deepen the collaboration with these strategic partners, specific initiatives such as joint/double program development, teaching and research collaborations, capacity development projects, etc. have started and/or taken place.



Koç University is part of a European Universities Initiative, The European University of Post-Industrial Cities (UNIC), which is a unique alliance of eight universities in post-industrial cities that all face similar challenges and opportunities in terms of mobility, inclusion, and diversity. UNIC's Mission is to revolutionize education and respond to the needs of diverse populations as partners co-create a unique study experience by structurally involving their students, research, staff, cities, civil society and urban companies in their university. KU strongly values its involvement in this consortium in order to continue to embrace, embed and enhance European and international cultural awareness and diversity in the 21st century setting to have a strategic approach to the internationalization of its activities.

Representation of the university at international conferences, symposiums and workshops also helps to increase its visibility in the international higher education and research arena. Having partnerships with international corporations that support research projects and sponsor the establishment of research centers as well as the education of students in need and their employees at Koç University has been an important strategic initiative for Koç University. Additionally, managing scholarship programs with international organizations that include foundations (Victor and William Fung Foundation, Al Ghurair Foundation, Institute of International Education), government organizations (HEC Pakistan, Turkish Scholarships, Bolashak Scholarships), and educational agencies has contributed to strengthening Koç University's network and thus diversifying its student body.

[Return to content](#)

STUDENTS

In partnership with more than 300 institutions worldwide, KU participates in exchange and mobility schemes (internships, short-term programs, etc.) that offer students a challenging and exciting international experience, providing them with new perspectives and an understanding of different cultures. Every academic year, around 300 KU students attend various exchange programs offered by the university. The university makes sure that the curriculum and additional services offered to students prepare them for an international career. Students at all levels are encouraged and supported financially in order for them to participate in mobility programs, international conferences, symposiums, workshops and competitions. KU designed and offers a flagship track program that focuses on global leadership, 21st century skills and sustainability (GLLS), and aims to equip KU students with skills and understanding of the ever-changing global landscape. At KU, students also have a plethora of options for participation in student associations and events with international context.



Increasing diversity through recruitment of quality undergraduate and graduate international students from different countries has been a key strategic goal for KU since 2013. In order to achieve this goal, the following planned steps have been taken:

- Targeting applicants from countries that have under-representation in the overall number of students at Turkish universities;
- Recruiting international students to our undergraduate programs from the best high schools in our target countries in Central Asia and MENA region;
- Developing tailored communication and engagement channels to reach prospective international applicants in several languages (English, Arabic, Russian, Chinese);
- Developing partnerships with high school counsellors and educational agencies in our target countries to continually improve the academic quality of applicants to our undergraduate programs.

As of 2021, 49% of international students at KU are pursuing undergraduate degrees, 34% PhD degrees and 17% Master degrees.

Hosting full-time international students, international exchange students, PhD researchers, Post-Doctoral fellows at KU through various programs and scholarship schemes increases the diversity at KU campus, facilitating KU's internationalization at home efforts.

[Return to content](#)



STAFF

KU considers its faculty and administrative staff as the backbone of all operations, and thus the university. KU faculty members are trained in multicultural skills to teach diverse international students with different learning styles and traditions. While Turkish and international staff members are offered language acquisition programs (Turkish, English) to further develop their skills and have a smoother adaptation process, they also have enhanced opportunities for global experience and collaboration such as participation in exchange and visiting scholar programs, global networks and associations, and international education and research projects. Faculty members are exposed to international experience and collaboration through strategic partnerships with international organizations (research projects, joint/double degree programs, joint-supervision of Ph.D. students, etc.) and strong support mechanisms are in place for faculty members and administrative staff to apply and manage internationally funded projects.

KU values internationalization at home for staff as well and in order to achieve that the university invites international staff from global institutions to KU via exchange, visiting scholar, teaching and seed-funding programs. KU is one of the leading universities in Turkey in terms of attracting global talent and currently, 8.12 % of KU staff is international.

[Return to content](#)



SERVICES

In order to help the integration of the international community and also maximize their wellbeing, bilingual communication and support services are offered by all academic and administrative departments of the university. While various departments have developed and offers pre-departure and orientation programs and resources that are tailored to the needs of the international community (students, faculty, administrative staff, researchers, etc.), social activities, events, and specific programs (mentorship, language acquisition, etc.) are designed in order to provide better support services and help the integration of the international community with the local community. KU strongly values its relationship with its international alumni and alumni who work abroad and has been working on expanding alumni activities in international locations. Overall, continuous improvement of existing services and the introduction of new services based on the needs of the international community is crucial for KU, and this is done through feedback received by the community.

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[Return to content](#)

ASPIRATIONS

“Koç University strives to be a center of excellence, one that succeeds in providing a world-class education to its students, creating new knowledge via the research of its faculty, applying the acquired knowledge for the benefit of society, and equipping its students with the highest sense of ethics, social responsibility and good citizenship.”



This aspiration places enhancing our international reputation for quality in learning, research and knowledge transfer at the center of our future activities. We aim to further develop our relationships with the best international universities across this range of activities. Increasing our international reputation should contribute to building further opportunities for international research partnerships with other top-ranked universities and institutions worldwide; enhancing our ability to secure increased levels of international research funding; attracting the best minds to work with us; increasing our ability to secure sustainable income flows through offering increased opportunities to international students to study here; and offering all of our students increased international experience and understanding that will support them in building a future in an increasingly interdependent world.

Becoming a center of excellence is a process and requires continuous improvement in what we do across a range of areas, and we will ask ourselves how we can best demonstrate and deliver continued and improved quality in what we do to meet actual and future expectations. We will continue to appreciate that everyone at Koç University has a role to play in developing and extending the impact of our European and international activity.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR INTERNATIONALIZATION

In an effort to identify KU's 2021-26 strategic priorities for internationalization, an assessment phase was completed with the input of 45 academic & administrative units and research centers of the university. This study provided a snapshot of the university regarding the current state of internationalization at KU, goals for internationalization and challenges ahead.

Based on assessment phase findings, to facilitate execution of the Strategy, the following five strategic internationalization priorities have been defined, each with its own set of goals (discussed in further detail in the following sections):

- **Excellence in Global Education for All Students**
- **Attracting and Supporting International Students**
- **Increasing Our International Research Power**
- **Supporting Staff Internationalization**
- **Raising Our International Profile and Reputation**

We aimed to describe goals that were specific, motivating, achievable, realistic and measurable, and were linked to Koç University' Strategic Plan.

EXCELLENCE IN GLOBAL EDUCATION FOR ALL STUDENTS



We will systematically internationalize study offerings and teaching at KU to best prepare our students to thrive in and contribute to an increasingly interdependent World.

In order to do so, we will:

- continue to offer internationally accredited academic programs;
- embed global context in courses and review all programs, courses, practices and support structures with respect to their suitability for students with diverse backgrounds;
- develop new training programs for faculty members on internationalization of course design and delivery, and enhancement of skills necessary to teach diverse student groups with different learning styles and traditions;
- exploit the many and varied opportunities digitalization holds for making our study offerings more international;
- increase the number of international partnerships within degree programs (joint/double degree programs);
- develop skill building courses/workshops for students based on the needs of the international job market.

We will grow our portfolio of mobility opportunities for students and increase the number of students who undertake an international opportunity abroad.

In order to do so, we will:

- increase the diversity of study/work/volunteer abroad opportunities for students at all levels (virtual/blended mobility, blended intensive programs, short-term study abroad, internship abroad, volunteer abroad, etc.);
- work towards identifying international experiences and learning opportunities abroad that will be suitable for individual academic departments;
- sustain and, when suitable, increase funds to support students, especially the ones from disadvantaged backgrounds, to take part in international opportunities;
- offer more support on careers, including attracting internationally recruiting employers and identifying more international work placements;
- increase the percentage of students having an international experience (mobility, internship abroad, virtual exchange, projects, language programs, etc.) during their studies to 25 % of the total student body by 2026.



We will provide meaningful global experiences and global learning opportunities for KU students without leaving Turkey.

In order to do so, we will:

- develop non-geographic mobility through digital collaboration with our international partners (UNIC Virtual Exchange, MOOC, COIL, etc.);
- enrich our course catalog by offering virtual course catalogs of partner institutions.

ATTRACTING AND SUPPORTING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

We will develop a comprehensive recruitment plan for international undergraduate and graduate students, tailored to the priorities and objectives of KU colleges and graduate schools.

In order to do so, we will:

- increase the number of international students and diversity of students in education, service-learning and internship programs and research-positions offered by colleges, institutes and research centers;
- target applicants from countries that have under-representation in the overall number of students at Turkish universities;
- recruit international students to our undergraduate programs from the best high schools in our target countries in Central Asia and MENA region by developing partnerships with high school counsellors and educational agencies in these regions;
- implement tailored marketing and recruitment practices to respond to the rapidly changing environment;
- continue to offer MOOCs and share examples of our world-class research and education through electronic media and in other ways which are meaningful and accessible to a large scale global audience;
- increase our external income for research and innovation to support more international MA/MSc and Ph.D. students;
- develop degree articulation arrangements and agreements with overseas universities in order to provide innovative ways for students in different countries to benefit from KU education and research;
- reach the goal of 10% international students in our undergraduate student body by 2026, and %10 international students in our Master and Ph.D. programs by 2023 from our target countries/regions.

[Return to content](#)

We will offer a learning and living experience that explicitly meets the needs and expectations of international KU Students.

In order to do so, we will:

- ensure compliance of services with relevant international bodies and benchmark with international institutions to provide better services to KU international students;
- develop a programme of (live/online) events to celebrate our internationally diverse campus and provide opportunities for increased intercultural awareness and understanding;
- increase coordination and cooperation among KU colleges and administrative departments in order to better serve the needs of the international community;
- implement new support channels and improve systems for international students to:
 - improve international students' enrolment process;
 - implement a CRM system focused on international students;
 - support the development of survival level Turkish for all international community;
 - create mechanisms, communication channels and programs that facilitate integration among Turkish and international communities;
 - increase international community's awareness on certain issues such as organizational health and safety and wellbeing.
- increase participation of international students in student club/cultural/social/sports activities.



INCREASING OUR INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH POWER

We will increase our research outputs with international collaborators and secure a greater volume of resources from international research partnerships.

In order to do so, we will:

- facilitate and incentivize faculty to apply for international research grants across all disciplines via European research grant schemes;
- raise the visibility of previous and current research projects and impact of Faculty and Ph.D. students through international collaborations;
- develop a better research reporting and monitoring support as part of digitization efforts;
- increase the number of international Ph.D. students for graduate schools and research centers to reach 10% of our Ph.D. student body by 2023, and provide post-doctoral fellowships and sustain the number via national or international funding;
- increase the number of top international publications and collaborations;
- increase faculty members' participation in international research networks and consortia, and increase the number of international conferences/symposia/workshops, etc.;
- ensure the continuation of existing research facilitation programs for students and faculty members.

SUPPORTING STAFF INTERNATIONALIZATION

We will continue to develop a strong international focus and awareness in all our staff.

In order to do so, we will:

- increase international exposure and opportunities for staff, across all job families, to support professional development and strengthen our international partnerships:
 - increase participation in mobility programs;
 - increase participation of faculty members and administrative staff in international (funded) projects/programs and provide related support services;
 - increase the number of faculty and staff leading international events/programs (i.e. conferences, fairs, workshops, exchange programs, etc.);
 - increase inbound staff mobility via exchange programs, visiting scholar programs, etc. to support internationalization at home.
- support international work and collaboration by faculty in line with institutional goals;
- identify and develop systems to track admin staff-led/faculty-led international programs, research, relationships, and education initiatives.



We will continue to prioritize attracting an internationally diverse staff.

In order to do so, we will:

- sustain and when possible increase the number of international faculty/administrative staff/interns at KU;
- improve international staff members' onboarding and offboarding processes.

RAISING OUR INTERNATIONAL PROFILE AND REPUTATION



We will focus on building new strategic partnerships and strengthening our partnerships and networks.

In order to do so, we will:

- focus our activity on deepening our existing key education and research partnerships, ensuring they are mutually beneficial, reciprocal and well-communicated, and which lead to the establishment of multi-lateral strategic partnerships for cross-institutional engagement;
- develop new institutional partnerships with universities, corporate organizations, research centers, non-academic and non-profit making activities and international funding bodies, which are aligned with our strategic and/or academic priorities;
- continue to cooperate with international networks/associations/accreditation bodies, and receive and maintain international certifications/accreditations;
- focus on strengthening our alumni engagement by increasing our activities in international locations;
- reach out to partners to gauge their interest, and promote and communicate our international activity vigorously;
- facilitate and support both internal and external events that showcase our international activities, thus raising our profile and reputation.

MEASUREMENT

Working closely with all academic and administrative units, the Office of International Programs will oversee the implementation of the Strategy. We will report annually on our progress, drawing from measures including:

- Global ranking tables;
- Overseers Report;
- Curriculum review reports;
- Reports prepared for accreditation bodies;
- Business Plans of all academic/administrative units;
- Annual faculty reports;
- Statistics and benchmark reports on the quality of education;
- Statistics on research output and share of international research grants;
- Statistics on funding available for international mobility/projects, etc.;
- Student surveys and evaluations;
- Reports taken from software in use (KUSIS, Kuapp, Dreamapply, Simplicity, etc.)
- Analysis reports on international students' success, quality of teaching and effectiveness of scholarships;
- Statistics on the international community (students, post-doctoral fellows, staff, interns, etc.);
- CRM system to track student life-cycle in terms of experiences and international exposure.

CONCLUSION

Since internationalization touches on a wide variety of activities at the University, the goal and scope of this internationalization strategy must be comprehensive. It will need to be refined in light of what we learn as we move forward with our agenda, as well as the external circumstances, which will certainly change quickly. Because of these considerations, the University's success will be based on the enthusiasm and outward-looking attitude of its community. We will be well on our way to achieving our goal of becoming a center of excellence with this support and involvement, which will be built on our current worldwide capabilities and relationships.

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