

**Sharpening the focus of internationalisation –
Japanese and German universities call for a more strategic approach in
shaping international relations and promoting mutual awareness and
understanding in the process of internationalisation**

Following conferences on higher education reform in Japan and Germany in Tokyo (2006) and Berlin (2010), the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) and the Japanese-German Center Berlin (JDZB), in cooperation with the University of Cologne, aim to further contribute to enhancing cooperation between higher education institutions in Japan and Germany.

During a joint symposium, “The Internationalisation of Universities in Japan and Germany – Institutional Strategies, Operative Structures, and Processes” in Berlin on 17/18 October 2012, participants agreed on the following statement:

Universities – as centres of research and teaching – have a central role to play in the development of knowledge societies. They are transnational actors: in all dimensions of their work and activity, universities must perceive of themselves as creative parts of a global higher education community. Only an internationalised university will be able to meet societal expectations, actively shape the globalisation process, and guarantee its own competitiveness.

Based on this conviction, university leaders in Japan and Germany are striving towards

- shaping universities as places of learning, teaching, and research in the 21st century,
- enhancing the mobility of students and academics, thereby educating responsible global citizens,
- mastering the challenges of modern (and ageing) knowledge societies by providing high-quality education and training that serves the needs of the individual and societies in a globalised world, and
- conducting research for the good of societies.

In this context, symposium participants considered the sustainable development of institutional internationalisation strategies of paramount importance. Universities in Germany and Japan are well on their way and have developed or are currently in the process of formulating institutional internationalisation strategies.

In the framework of the symposium, ways to involve internal and external stakeholders and to ensure the sustainability and quality of internationalisation measures were discussed.

Participants welcomed the fact that the German Federal Foreign Office, the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, and the Japanese Ambassador honoured the participants by their active involvement.

While political support for internationalisation is high in both countries, even more needs to be done to convince young people in both countries to pursue studies and research abroad. The interaction of students, graduates, and researchers across borders is the fundamental requirement for the generation and dissemination of knowledge and technological development and represents the pathway towards academic excellence.

Against this background participants recommended that

- universities make better use of their existing partnership agreements, visiting scholar exchange schemes, and joint research projects by actively promoting them;
- international offices at universities in both countries assume a more active role in enhancing mutual understanding and strengthening future Japanese-German academic cooperation;
- mutual understanding of the prevailing institutional structures and processes of internationalisation be enhanced by introducing mutual or joint learning between international-office staff in Germany and Japan. This goal can be pursued with the means of short-term exchange programmes, joint seminars, summer schools, etc.

Participants asked the organisers to look into means to support these aims, regarding both infrastructure and possible funding.

The German Rectors' Conference and the Japanese-German Center Berlin, in cooperation with the University of Cologne, agree to continue their dialogue to follow up on issues of common interest and to support the mobility of students and researchers between both countries.

Berlin, 18 October 2012