



3.5 National Recommendations for International Cooperation in Teaching, Learning and Research (T/L/R)

Country: Malaysia

1. Higher Education system context in Malaysia

- The aim of Higher Education in Malaysia is to strive excellence in research, to seek new knowledge, nurture better learning environment for students, to train students with critical thinking skills in order prepare them prior to joining the work force or professional settings. The system also aims to develop and produce leaders of calibre who will be able to address challenges for the betterment of human living environment.
- In Malaysia, higher education system started with the establishment of Universiti Malaya in 1962. The development of higher education in Malaysia has been connected to societal development and domestic need. Thus, international factors such as globalization, internationalization and trade in higher education significantly influence the development of higher education in Malaysia.
- The Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (MOHE) was first established on 27 March 2004. In May 2013, the Ministry of Education (MOE) and MOHE were merged. The main objective of this exercise was to speed up the education transformation and to harmonise the education strategic plans between both ministries. Two years later in 2015, MOHE was re-established to fulfil the demand of human resource development. Then, after May 2018 and in line with the new Malaysia agenda, the two ministries were merged again for the second time.
- As of April 2018, there are 20 public universities, 36 polytechnics and 94 community colleges, with 467 private higher education institutions and 10 international branch campuses in Malaysia. Malaysia also hosts a number of branch campuses from Australia and the United Kingdom.
- Malaysia higher education system is well structured and is guided by the National Higher Education Strategic Plan 2007-2020 which was launched in 2007. Then, in 2013, Malaysia Education Blueprint - Higher Education



2015-2025 was launched. The new higher education system aspires among others to: produce graduates who are job creators and balanced citizens with entrepreneurial mindset; to construct academic and TVET pathways that are equally valued and cultivated; to focus on outcomes over inputs; to harmonise HLIs (private and public), and to ensure the financial sustainability of the higher education system.

2. National policies and programs for the internationalisation of HEIs.

- The National Higher Education Strategic Plan 2007-2020 (NHESP) – focuses strongly on the internationalisation agenda where Malaysia’s aspiration is to create a higher education system that would enable Malaysia to compete in the global economy.
- In one of the agendas in the Malaysian Education Blueprint - Higher Education 2015-2025 (MEBHE 2015-2025), Malaysia has set out to become an international higher education hub and become among the top-six destinations for international students and aims to attract 250,000 international students by 2025.

3. Internationalization of universities in Malaysia

- The Malaysian higher education system has undergone various changes structurally and strategically. In order to capture the global market, the higher education system was transformed towards enhancing the quality of higher education, ranking, international collaboration and increasing the total number of international students. Internationalization is one of the enablers or critical components for Malaysia’s higher education ecosystem.
- Malaysia targets to become an international higher education hub in the region and beyond. Various strategies have been developed and implemented which can be experienced through the students, faculty members, education and mobility programmes and higher education providers. Improvement of International collaborations, student mobility, and academic programs are among activities conducted by higher education institutions in Malaysia.



- Malaysia is also involved in Transnational Higher Education – with the main idea to brand the country as a regional higher education hub and to internationalise higher education. Malaysia aspires to become an international education hub that provides values-driven and globally relevant education, and is recognised by students for its balance of quality and affordability, good quality of life, and rich cultural experiences.

4. Problems and Challenges.

- Lack of funding to support outbound and inbound mobility, poor language proficiencies and intercultural competencies of students/staffs/researchers, and scheduling of student exchange program as well as academic programs that were developed without focus on international market are among the problems that hindered internationalization of higher education in Malaysia.
- Challenges in the internationalization of Higher Education in Malaysia are the international coverage in the academic curriculum, higher education institutions' staff involvement in the internationalization process, resources for projects and new initiatives, research and academic collaboration, exchange programmes, and networks to recruit international students and staff.
- Lengthy and constantly changing immigration rules and procedures that hindered the enrolment of international students and the appointment of international academic staff

5. Conclusions and National Recommendations.

The Malaysian higher education system has continued to focus on internationalization to capture global market and attract best talents. It is guided by a strong policy with the target to make Malaysia the education hub for international students. Among several recommendations towards achieving this national agenda are:

- To make it compulsory for Malaysia higher learning institutions (HLIs) to draw up their own internationalization agenda.



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- The establishment of a trust fund to support activities in relation to students/staff mobility (locally, regionally and internationally)
- The need to focus on international strategic agenda where international cooperation becomes an integral part of internationalization in order to enhance the visibility of the country in the international sphere.
- Nurture leaders and talents in all Malaysian HLLs to deal with internationalization and internationalization at home.
- The dissemination of information regarding best practices in Internationalization. The enhancement of the documentation about the activities for future reference and official publication of certain areas covered for the international program should be strongly encouraged.
- Strategic planning for future research that focuses on different agenda for Internationalization should be in the national agenda.
- The need to improve and streamline immigration procedures and processes to match international best practices as well as to inform HLLs of any changes made in a prompt manner.
- To put more focus on academic programmes in niche areas such as Malay as a foreign language, Malaysian indigenous studies or Islamic banking and finance that could attract international students.
- The need to draw up a national policy on employability for international students (during and upon completion of their studies).