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INTERNATIONALISATION STRATEGY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF LIBERAL ARTS BANGLADESH (ULAB)
FOR THE PERIOD OF 2023 - 2027



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I. Introduction

Established in 2004, ULAB is an institution devoted to developing young minds to their fullest potential through the free and creative pursuit of knowledge. It is firmly committed to helping young men and women become responsible and caring citizens of their nations and the world. ULAB's core values include love of lifelong learning, practicing integrity and leadership, encouraging innovation, promoting tolerance, and the pursuit of excellence. To achieve these goals, ULAB needs to internationalize. Internationalization is considered an important component for private universities in Bangladesh to fulfill their vision, mission and goals. ULAB students stand to benefit from exposure to exchange students, who add diversity to the campus and help to prepare students for global organizations. Students from abroad are enrolled in Bangladeshi universities and the majority of them are enrolled in the private universities. The following sections indicate the efforts of the university toward internationalization.

ULAB's Philosophy regarding Internationalization. From the onset, the Board of Trustees (BoT) has set international standards for ULABians. It wanted the university to benchmark itself with its global counterparts. These are evident in its vision and mission statements, participation in relationship building as well as in its liberal arts foundation. Generally, liberal arts are taught at the university using two methods. One is through a core general education curriculum and another is through minor courses that they may take in any program of study. The core curriculum ensures that all students have a similar background (taking courses in arts and humanities, social sciences and physical sciences), to share ideas with, and build a foundation for further education. At the same time, minor courses allow students to continue pursuing an area of knowledge (which is not their main study of concentration).

In the ULAB Strategic Development Plan (2017 to 2023), the university aimed for international recognition. These may be achieved through ranking, accreditation, certification and university categorization. Another way the university sought to reach international standards is through accreditation and certification. In terms of ranking, ULAB ranked 75 in WURI's Global Top 100



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Innovative Universities in 2023. It also ranked sixth among Bangladeshi universities in the Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Ranking 2023. In terms of accreditation, the Electrical and Electronic Engineering (EEE) Department has been accredited by Board of Accreditation for Engineering and Technical Education (BAETE) under Institute of Engineers Bangladesh (IEB). The Media Studies and Journalism Undergraduate Program has been accredited by the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management (GA). The accreditation of other programs such as Business Administration and Computer Science and Engineering are in the process.

ULAB obtained ISO 9001: 2015 Quality Management System Certification on 20 September 2019. Its latest surveillance audit was held on 14 September 2023 and certification was presented soon afterwards. The certification covers all educational and administrative support activities of the undergraduate and graduate programs. ULAB is also one of the 30 universities in Bangladesh that have been upgraded to Category 1 by Australia's Department of Education, Skills and Employment under the Country Education Profile.

ULAB's Hiring of Foreign Faculty. One method the university utilized towards internationalization is through hiring international faculty. This started early on at the university with the hiring of the late Prof. Brian Shoesmith (Australia) as ProVost and Dean for Academic Affairs. Other important foreign faculty are Prof. Jude William Genilo (the Philippines) who is the Dean of Social Science and Pro Vice Chancellor and Juditha Ohlmacher (USA) who served as Communication Director. Foreign nationals were commissioned over the years to put up its research centers such as the Center for Sustainable Development (CSD), Center for Enterprise and Society (CES), Center for South Asian Studies (C-SAS) and Student Affairs Office (SAO).

Analyzing ULAB's International Collaborations. The following tables summarises ULAB's Memorandum of Agreements and Understandings with foreign entities from 2015 to present. ULAB's international collaborations showcase a focus on regional engagement, with South Asia (29.79%) and Southeast Asia (25.53%) accounting for over 55% of partnerships. This

prioritization likely reflects geographical proximity, cultural similarities, and shared academic priorities. However, ULAB also maintains a commendable global reach, extending partnerships across Europe (17.02%), USA (6.38%), East Asia (6.38%), and other countries (14.90%). More than half of the MOUs were penned from 2015 to 2018, almost one-fifth during COVID period and the rest from 2022 to present.

Table 1
 MOUs Signed by Region

Regions	Number	Percentage
South Asia	14	29.79%
Southeast Asia	12	25.53%
Europe	8	17.02%
USA	3	6.38%
East Asia	3	6.38%
Multiple Countries	7	14.90%
Total	47	100%

Table 2
 MOUs Signed by Time Period

Regions	Number	Percentage
2015 to 2019	23	54.77%
2020 to 2021 (COVID Period)	8	19.04%
2022 to Present	11	26.19%
Total	42	100%

Knowledge exchange forms the core of ULAB's international collaborations, with research collaboration (53.19%) and faculty exchange (51.06%) standing out as the cornerstones. This

focuses on joint research endeavors and faculty mobility allowing knowledge sharing, intellectual growth, and cross-cultural learning. Additionally, ULAB recognizes the importance of nurturing future generations, as evidenced by its commitment to student exchange programs, including internships (42.55%). Beyond these core activities, ULAB actively engages in joint activities and events (36.17%), conference partnerships (14.89%), program enhancement initiatives (6.38%), and various other activities (14.89%), showcasing a well-rounded approach to international collaboration that extends beyond traditional academic pursuits.

Table 3
 MOUs Signed by Activity/Purpose

Regions (Multiple Response)	Number	Percentage
Student Exchange, including Internships	20	42.55%
Faculty Exchange	24	51.06%
Research Collaboration	25	53.19%
Program Enhancement/ Benchmarking	3	6.38%
Joint Activities/Events	17	36.17%
Conference Partnerships	7	14.89%
Twining Programs	1	2.12%
PhD Programs for ULAB Faculty	1	2.12%
Others (mentorship, training, cultural activities)	3	6.38%

ULAB primarily collaborates with universities (70.21%), reflecting its academic mission and focus on knowledge exchange. However, recognizing the value of diverse stakeholder

engagement, ULAB also partners with non-governmental organizations (14.90%), research centers (8.51%), and corporations (6.38%). This multifaceted approach allows ULAB to broaden its societal impact and explore practical applications of research.

Table 4
MOUs Signed by Organization Type

Regions	Number	Percentage
University	33	70.21%
Research Center	4	8.51%
Corporation	3	6.38%
Non-Government Organization	7	14.90%
Total	47	100%

Recently, ULAB has signed MoU with the Macquarie University, Australia, Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania, China Three Gorges University, China, Dayananda Sagar University (DSU), India, Universitas Pembangunan Nasional "Veteran" Jakarta, Indonesia, Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP), Philippines, Central Luzon State University, Philippines, Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT), India, The University of Zaragoza, Spain, SVKM's Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies (NMIMS), India etc.

Analyzing Student Demand for Exchanges. In the "Survey on International Student Exchanges," it was found that among the 194 respondents preferred two-term academic exchanges (33 percent), foreign internships (25.3 percent), one-term academic exchanges (22.7 percent), summer school (8.8 percent), student conferences (6.7 percent) and cultural immersions (3.6 percent). In terms of placement, 35.6 percent prefer to have an exchange in Europe, 30.9 percent in Asia, 19.1 percent in North America and 13.4 percent in Australia. If the placement is fully funded, 36.6 percent prefer to have an exchange in Europe, 32.5 percent in North America, 18.6 percent in Australia, 10.8 percent in Asia and 1.5 percent in South America. So far, ULAB



has worked towards student exchanges in the areas of media studies, sustainable development, digital finance, information ecosystem, health communication, machine learning and robotics, literature and cultural studies. It has sent students to India, Thailand, Indonesia, China and Nepal.

Analyzing Faculty Collaboration with Foreign Researchers. In Summer 2023, the total number of ULAB full-time faculty members is 127. The number of ULAB faculty members listed in the AD Scientific Index 2023 is 72 or 56.7 percent of the total. Among half of those listed have undertaken research collaborations with foreign counterparts. The tag cloud below shows the subjects/research focus of ULAB faculty as listed in the AD Scientific Index 2023.



It indicates that the most popular research focus or subject of ULAB faculty members are in machine learning, management, sustainability, media studies, cultural studies, economics, health communication, higher education, internet of things, information and communication technology and artificial intelligence. Some activities that may be undertaken to improve research collaborations with foreign academics is through strategic matching and through interdisciplinary approach in research. It should be noted that, as shown on Table 3, 53.19 percent of MOUs signed by the university are for research collaborations. This is the highest among the other MOU purposes or activities of ULAB.

SWOT Analysis

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ULAB's philosophy and values. ● Dedicated team members. ● Recognition and reputation in the international community. ● OBE Curriculum. ● Focus on internationalization in research. ● High interest of students for exchanges. ● International collaborations. 	<p>Weakness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Limited funding opportunities. ● Limited time for academic exchanges due to the trimester system. ● International office has just started, a steep learning curve ahead. ● Limited partners in North America and Australia.
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Technological advancements - online courses, virtual conferences, webinars, etc. ● Growing demand for international education. ● Universities are more willing to enter into collaborations. 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Competition for international students ● High Economic Cost of Student and Faculty Exchanges, as well as educational fairs participation. ● Geo-political landscape.

II. General and Specific Objectives

The general objective of internationalization is to improve academic quality in terms of teaching, learning and research through the creation of an internationally-oriented university. The specific objectives of internationalization at ULAB are as follows:

1. To have partnerships with more universities around the world with special emphasis in placements of interests of ULAB stakeholders.
2. To attract international students to the university whether through cultural immersions, internships, student conferences, summer schools and academic exchanges.
3. To facilitate academic exchanges and research collaborations among faculty members through offering more global opportunities.
4. To retain a positive international image of ULAB in the global education sector through rankings, accreditations, certifications and other global recognitions.
5. To promote the UN Sustainable Development Goals through international partnerships and projects.
6. To participate in global conferences and events that help build the university's brand image.

III. Measures and Activities Necessary to Achieve Expected Objectives and Results

To achieve the expected objectives and results of internationalization at ULAB, the following measures and activities are necessary:

- Articulation and development of international strategies at ULAB. The university needs to write up its internationalization strategy and incorporate it in its next strategic development plan.
- Development of faculty and staff at ULAB. The university needs to build the capacity and orient the mindset of faculty members and staff towards internationalization.
- Improvement of curriculum at ULAB. The university should explore compatibility with the curriculum of foreign universities, including compliance with international accreditation bodies.

- Intensify student mobility at ULAB. The university needs to facilitate various types of international student exchange programs by being mindful of the interests expressed by students in a survey and the costs involved in such programs (searching for scholarships, waivers and funding in the process).
- Having faculty and staff exchanges of ULAB. The university should facilitate faculty and staff exchanges with foreign universities, devising mechanisms for these to take place under current human resource policies.
- Establishing physical facilities for international visitors - students, faculty and researchers. The university should develop spaces that would bring about a holistic and quality lifestyle to foreign visitors in terms of accommodation, recreation, lifestyle and other activities.
- Strengthening the ULAB International Affairs Office. The Office is still quite new and it needs to be provided with guidance and resources in order to grow. The Office, once enhanced, would lead to increased collaboration between ULAB and other international partner universities.
- Hosting international events at ULAB. International events, including conferences and seminars, are important mechanisms to improve the reputation and image of the university.

IV. Estimating the Impact and Financial and Non-Financial Costs of Implementation

Estimating the impact and financial and non-financial costs of implementation of internationalization at ULAB can help this esteemed university to assess the attainability of its internationalization strategy for further improvement. ULAB expects the following impact and cost of internationalization.

Impact:

- ULAB can ensure that internationalization will improve the quality of education by helping academic staff and students of ULAB to have a global knowledge exchange, get experience of cross-cultural communication and be exposed to new cultures.
- Building international reputation and creating a positive image in global education by enhancing the effective collaboration with international partner universities.

- Increase of diversity in student and faculty population at the university.

Cost:

- ULAB needs to invest in infrastructure for international students and visitors.
- ULAB needs to invest in faculty exchange programs.
- ULAB needs to invest in building teams for internationalization.
- ULAB needs to invest in organizing conferences and international events.

Non-financial Costs:

- Time and Effort of International Affairs Office, Faculty, Staff and Students.
- Cultural Adaptation, Intercultural Mindset and Acceptance of Diversity.
- Administrative Complexity given issues in terms of physical mobility, logistics, communication barriers and health risks.

V. Expected Results and Progress Indicators

For the internationalization of higher education expected results and progress indicators, we will follow a CIPO model taking context (C), input (I), process (P), and outcome (O) dimensions under consideration. These indicators can be evaluated by different participants for specific purposes in various higher education settings.

Context	C1: Increase in the number of international students
	C2: Distribution of international students' countries and the increase in their number
	C3: Increase in the number of overseas students
	C4: Distribution of overseas students and their increase among various countries
Input	I1: Setting up international affairs offices

	I2: Investing in required staff in the international affairs offices
	I3: Strategic plan for internationalization
	I4: Monitoring the process of internationalization through SOP
	I5: Funding for promoting internationalization
Process	P1: Establishing distance-learning programs
	P2: Promoting international research cooperation
	P3: Endorsing internationalization-related courses
	P4: Promoting international learning activities
	P5: Promoting international student recruitment
	P6: Promoting international internship accreditation
Outcome	O1: Ratio of outbound students
	O2: Ratio of international students on campus
	O3: Ratio of foreign staff on campus
	O4: Number of international-cooperation programs
	O5: Number of articles published in international journals
	O6: Number of papers in international conference proceedings

VI. Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation of the Strategy

The overall success of internationalization at ULAB depends on implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the strategy. ULAB may follow a specific method to ensure implementation, monitoring and evaluation of strategies.

For implementation:

ULAB needs to recruit human resources for its international affairs office. ULAB may follow a basic structure for an International Affairs Office at ULAB:

1. Director of International Affairs:

- Overall strategic planning and execution of international initiatives.
- Liaison with global partners and organizations.

2. International Programs Coordinator:

- Development and management of international academic programs.
- Coordination of student exchange programs.

3. Global Partnerships Manager:

- Identification and cultivation of international partnerships.
- Collaboration on joint projects and initiatives.

4. Student Exchange Coordinator:

- Facilitation of student exchange programs.
- Assistance to incoming and outgoing exchange students.

5. International Recruitment Officer:

- Development and execution of strategies to attract international students.
- Coordination of recruitment events and initiatives.

6. Cultural Exchange and Events Coordinator:

- Planning and execution of international events and cultural exchange programs.
- Promotion of global awareness on campus.

7. International Affairs Specialist:

- Research and analysis of global trends in education.
- Support in policy development and compliance.

8. Language and Cultural Advisors:

- Language support for international students.
- Cultural orientation and integration assistance.

9. Administrative Support Staff:

- Administrative tasks to facilitate the smooth functioning of the office.
- Data management and record-keeping.

10. Public Relations and Communications Officer:

- Communication with stakeholders regarding international activities.
- Publicizing achievements and initiatives of the International Affairs Office.

This above-structure provides a foundation for ULAB's International Affairs Office, ensuring a comprehensive approach to internationalization with dedicated personnel for various crucial functions.

- Create international focal points from all academic departments of ULAB.

For monitoring:

- ULAB needs to track key performance indicators (KPIs) to monitor the improvement of action plans and assess the outcomes continuously.
- ULAB needs to collect data regularly on the KPIs and analyse the data to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy.
- ULAB needs to find out the challenges so that it can take necessary steps to overcome the hurdles.
- For improvement, ULAB's international affairs team needs to provide feedback to the stakeholders.

For evaluation:

- **Cultural Integration:** Evaluate the success of cultural integration initiatives, measuring the effectiveness of programs in fostering a globalized and inclusive campus environment.
- **Student and Faculty Feedback:** Gather feedback from students and faculty involved in international programs to understand their experiences, challenges, and suggestions for improvement.
- **Partnership Performance:** Evaluate the outcomes and sustainability of international partnerships, considering academic collaborations, research opportunities, and joint initiatives.
- **Global Reputation:** Monitor changes in ULAB's global reputation and ranking, assessing the impact of the international strategy on the university's standing within the international academic community.
- **Compliance and Risk Management:** Ensure compliance with international regulations and assess the effectiveness of risk management strategies in dealing with challenges arising from global operations.
- **Adaptability and Flexibility:** Evaluate the strategy's adaptability to changing global conditions, demonstrating the university's ability to respond to evolving trends and challenges.
- **Long-Term Impact:** Assess the long-term impact of the international strategy on ULAB's overall mission, vision, and goals, ensuring alignment with the institution's strategic plan. Regularly review and update the evaluation process to ensure its relevance and effectiveness in gauging the success of ULAB's international strategy.

VII. Risks in the Strategy Implementation Process

Implementing an international strategy at ULAB can involve various risks. The predictable risks that ULAB may face during the implementation are as follows:

- **Health risks:** Incorporating health risk management into ULAB's international strategy is crucial. Develop orientation programs for international inbound students, emphasising health precautions and providing information on prevalent diseases in Bangladesh. ULAB may face troubles collaborating with local health authorities to establish preventive measures and create a support system for international students in case of health emergencies. ULAB will need to regularly update and communicate health guidelines to foster a safe and informed international community. Moreover, ULAB will need to provide warnings to the incoming students regarding diseases and viruses in Bangladesh.
- **Legal risks:** In order to implement internationalisation strategies, ULAB may face complications in adopting the laws of the University Grants Commission and facilitating the immigration of partner countries to promote global opportunities.
- **Cultural risks:** As internationalisation is not very common in Bangladesh, ULAB may need to struggle to promote the culture of diversity. The stakeholders of this university may not be aligned with the system and process of practicing internationalisation at this institution. ULAB may not create awareness about global experiences among students. It will be a new culture at ULAB for students to go for exchanges, credit transfers, and internship programs.
- **Financial risk:** Promoting international strategies at ULAB will require a good budget. ULAB may not remain prepared to spend so much on international strategy implementation. Faculty exchanges will need to be funded by ULAB. Not all students at ULAB are financially solvent to grab the international opportunities offered by ULAB. Sometimes, ULAB may need to provide financial support to the students so that they can experience exchanges to gain cultural exposure and become global citizens.
- **Operational risk:** ULAB does not have sufficient human resources who can actively work for international strategies. As this trend is new in Bangladesh, not all employees are trained to deal with international affairs. ULAB may face challenges in recruiting the right person who can actively accelerate the tasks of achieving the international goals.



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Annex 1: IaH Action Plan

Planned Activities for next 5 years (2023 - 2027):

1. Core areas for global partnership

ULAB has plans to work towards its vision on internationalization of education and research in the fields of Arts and Humanities, Business, Science & Engineering and Social Sciences. To be specific, it emphasizes collaboration in areas, but not limited to, sustainable development, digital finance, information ecosystem, health communication, machine learning and robotics, literature and cultural studies.

2. International Affairs Focal Persons (IAFP) Forum

The International Affairs Focal Persons forum can be established with faculty members from School of Arts and Humanities, School of Business, School of Science & Engineering and School of Social Sciences. It will consist of Heads of Departments & Alumni of Leading Universities, Representatives of International Accreditation Bodies and ULAB Alumni. The International Affairs Focal Persons will have the task of making concrete suggestions on advancing the international recognition of the four schools of ULAB and help develop the quality of its educational output on international standards. The IAFP Forum will play a pivotal role in providing practical guidance, critical analysis and assistance in relation to the organization's industrial approach & help ensure ULAB's graduates are prepared for the real-world of business. The forum will convene bi-annually to assess the progress of four schools. Besides its active involvement in building a stronger international dimension in curriculum, research and teaching methodology, the board will promote student success, learning and development on a global level.

3. International Faculty at ULAB

ULAB will prefer to create a diversified culture by having a mix of faculty from abroad both from the fields of academia and industry. They may consist of the following:


- **Adjunct Professors: Fellowships/ Chair Professorships:** Chair Professorship is one of the highest honors that can be awarded in the academic domain at ULAB, reserved for the faculty who have demonstrated a sustained high level of scholarly accomplishment in their respective field of study. The title is a recognition of their contributions towards research, teaching and advancement of the University. These will serve as tribute to the international personalities they are named after, and will demonstrably enrich the quality of educational opportunities of students and faculty associated with the chair, on a global level.

4. Events at ULAB

- ULAB plans to start a few wide-ranging global flagship events where international faculty members, researchers, writers may participate. For example, to organise sessions on poetry, short story anthologies, Partition, publishing, freedom of expression, division and conflict resolution, women's empowerment, minorities etc ULAB has established a series named "Lit Salon". One of the objectives of ULAB is to continue the series of Lit Salon to exchange views globally.
- ULAB plans to organize other yearly flagship events like International Students' Day on 17 November every year. ULAB can organize yearly one or two international conferences/seminars.
- ULAB will organise the International Admission Fair for international students which will be hosted virtually and promoted online.
- Other series of activities will be conducted on a regular basis to ensure internationalization of the University such as, ULAB International Lecture Series, The Business Talk, ULAB Global Forum, International Month among others.
- ULAB will host the International Lecture Series where it will offer its students an opportunity to learn and grow with new perspectives on global issues through its International Lecture Series.
- ULAB will host the International Business Talk. This talk will be a dedicated 2-hour lecture for four schools of ULAB's students, Renowned Global Industry Leaders, Heads & CEOs of major international corporations in the world deliver a lecture on the topic of their specialization.

- Yearly ULAB will host an international month where a series of conferences and seminars can take place from February – March where the Representatives from Global Partner Universities & International Guests come together. This will be aligned more towards meeting international education standards and understanding industry requirements and practices from fresh graduates.
- The Diplomats at ULAB will be a talk show series. This will be introduced to create awareness about country representation, bringing the communities together, understanding the geo-political and economic implications, pressing issues as well as focusing on the applications of UN SDGs in Academia and Industry.

On behalf of University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB) this document is approved by



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