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# Internationalisation Policy Guidelines

International Committee of OS (ICOS)

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# Introduction

With the University of Twente becoming increasingly international, it is of the utmost importance that study associations adapt to this growth. Study associations have a key role in creating a welcome and inclusive environment within their studies and around the university. International students are an important part of our community, as they bring new and diverse perspectives which are worth celebrating. It is essential to ensure that they feel included and supported throughout their academic journey, and all other aspects of student life.

In this internationalisation policy guideline document, we offer associations easy access and thought out policy ideas that can be used as an inspiration for their own policy plans. Please note that this document does not have to be adapted as a whole, as long as the sections needed for your association are applied.

Do you think anything is missing in this document? You can always contact ICOS through [icos@os.utwente.nl](mailto:icos@os.utwente.nl)!

# Association

This section will provide you with an insight into what you can do to make English the main language that is heard and seen in your association. Therefore, by adapting these points, you will make big steps in the cultural inclusivity of your association! By appointing one of your board members as a Commissioner Internationalisation, you can safeguard that your association improves on the points in this guidebook. In general, embrace and encourage international students to become a member and become active within the association. The following sections should help you in doing so.

## Written language

Having English as the written language in all facets of your association will make a big difference. Obvious examples are the official documents such as house regulations, statutes, policy plans, and strategic plans. Even though these documents are the foundation of your association, note that the daily messages will have a bigger impact on how culturally inclusive your association will feel to your members on a daily basis. Examples of these messages are messages sent through all your communication channels, such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and your website.

Furthermore, do not forget to check your association room: there will be posters, flyers, notes, your snack system or other random things hanging on the walls. You can easily replace these with an English version, and this will make a huge impact on a daily basis.

It is important to ensure that all promotional material is written in English.

Documenting your work in English makes it so much easier for your successors to improve on your internationalisation work. Think about writing evaluations, continuity documents and committee or board meeting minutes in English. Yes, also when all the people present are Dutch, because the future reader might not!

In all the translation work, have an extra eye out for abbreviations. It is very common to keep using Dutch abbreviations when translating messages to English, but translating these abbreviations as well can make the difference between a message coming off as inclusive or non-inclusive.

## Spoken language

Changing the written language in your association is a passive way to 'easily' make a change in your association. Changing the spoken language can be more difficult,

because you will encounter more people resistant to change. Therefore, when implementing these changes, do not give up! Every small win is a step to a more culturally inclusive association.

When organising activities in English, make sure to start early on informing other board members, committee members, potential speakers, and other parties of your intention. In doing so, do not hesitate, because whenever you give room for a Dutch option, this will decrease the likelihood of you organizing an English activity in the end! When the event is ongoing, do not hesitate to remind people of their responsibility of speaking English, although it can be a difficult task due to how people respond to you. Try to show understanding, but make clear that English is the norm!

Apart from events, the spoken language in your association room is very important as well, and has a big impact on a daily basis. Make sure to remind people to speak English in the association room, especially in situations where speaking another language would exclude people that are present. It can be a threshold to do this when you are not part of a conversation, but remember the goal and do it anyway!

# Facilities

## World map and flags

To represent the international identity of your association in your association room, you could incorporate a cork board or paper map that members can mark their home countries using pins. Other ideas will be to add a picture of the members or a signature so that the specific members who placed the pins can feel proud that they left their mark on the association. DesignLab has an extravagant version of this by their service desk, a large world painted on their wall, with each one of their DreamTeam staff members' photographs on the country from which they come from. Another possibility is to hang flags in the association room / around the room. Perhaps allow members to bring in their own flag, to the extent of creating an event for the members to draw / create their flags.

## Sponsorships

Another way to accommodate your association better to international students is by seeking internationally oriented sponsorships. These sponsorships are characterized by being open to international applicants and preferably having an English speaking environment. If your association has many international students from a specific country, such as Germany, try to find fitting sponsors for them, maybe not even too far over the Dutch-German border! These organizations will be reluctant, especially when you have no history of similar sponsors. Try to bring them in with a good deal for them, and use the first international sponsor as a flagship to reel in more. By doing so, your career activities and job application options represent your international members, as they should!

## Cultural holidays calendar

A great way to make international students feel welcomed and at home, is to make a fuss about specific days that are celebrated in their home countries. It showcases that the association is putting effort into researching cultures and countries that their members are from / partake in. The recommendation then being to note where your members come from, then consider specific dates that are celebrated by including them into your association's website and/or make a special event (e.g. Sinterklaas for the Netherlands)

## Entertainment

Most, if not all, study associations provide their members with games, books and other types of entertainment in their association room. To ensure that your international students can also take part in these activities, make sure that all games

are either in English, or provide an English translation so that they are able to participate.

## Informational ‘How to Student’ booklet

To provide international (especially first year) students with a clear and concise overview of all necessary information so that international students too have the possibility to flourish at our university, create and distribute an information booklet during either the Kick-In or the start of the academic year. Make sure to have this booklet available on your website as well. Some topics to include in your information booklet are:

- Welcome message
  - Start the information booklet with a fun welcoming message, inviting the students not only to your association, but to the university as a whole.
- The Netherlands 101
  - Moving to another country can be a bit of a culture shock, so include an overview of ‘typically Dutch’ traditions or activities that differ from other countries.
- Campus facilities & housing
  - The UT has a lot of different facilities on campus, such as the library at Vrijhof, the sports centre, and of course, the Vestingbar. To make international students aware of these facilities, include an overview and a map of the campus in the booklet.
  - Furthermore, provide a list of housing possibilities, specifically for international students.
- Subsidies & student jobs
  - Similar to housing options, provide a list of subsidies and student job opportunities that are catered specifically to international students.
- Association overview
  - Similar campus facilities, the UT also consists of many different associations. The main types of associations are study, social/student, sports, culture, and world associations. For any student, but especially an international student this can be quite overwhelming, which is why the information booklet should include an overview and explanations of all types of associations.
- Study association
  - To further elaborate on the previous point, elaborate on your own study association in a separate section. Include a fun introduction of the Board and mention some events that your association is known for. Provide concrete information such as but not limited to: the location and main facilities of your association room, how to become a member, where to find an overview of the association’s events, and how to become an active member.

## Staff Assistance for Integration

One of the key aspects of supporting international students lies in ensuring that university staff—particularly study advisors and other personnel who work directly with students—are aware of and sensitive to the unique challenges that international students may face. These challenges can range from homesickness and cultural adjustment to academic stress and misunderstandings stemming from language barriers.

While it is not the association's responsibility to formally *train* university staff, the association does play an important role as a bridge between its international members and the institution. Therefore, associations should take proactive steps to engage with study advisors and relevant university departments. This could involve:

- Initiating regular check-ins or feedback meetings with study advisors to discuss the general experiences of international members.
- Communicating specific, recurring issues that international members have reported (while respecting confidentiality).
- Encouraging staff to adopt more inclusive communication and advising practices when engaging with students from diverse backgrounds.

## Language Support

Language can be both a barrier and a bridge. To help international students feel more integrated and confident, associations should actively promote language learning opportunities. The University of Twente offers a wide range of language courses through the Language Centre at the Vrijhof, including Dutch, English, and other languages relevant for both academic and social contexts.

More information on available courses can be found here: [Language Centre - University of Twente](#)

## Almanac: Celebrating Cultural Diversity

The Almanac is a great opportunity to showcase and celebrate the rich cultural diversity within your association. Highlighting the backgrounds and heritage of international members not only fosters inclusion but also encourages mutual curiosity and respect among all members.

- Include a world map marking the countries of origin of all members, along with short personal anecdotes or cultural facts from those regions.

- Feature short interviews or articles written by international members about traditions, holidays, or experiences in their home countries.
- Create a themed section each year focused on a particular region or cultural topic (e.g., "Festivals Around the World" or "Traditional Foods and Recipes").

By incorporating these elements, the Almanac becomes more than a yearbook—it becomes a celebration of global perspectives and a symbol of unity in diversity.

# Kick-in

The kick-in is the first taste many International Students get of the Netherlands. There are also a lot of new things coming with this new start. New things can be overwhelming especially if they come in an avalanche. Great thing that you can call the first month in the Netherlands an avalanche of new impressions. This part of our guidebook serves to help you inform them and save them some research. You can deliver the information in this section in a presentation, pamphlet or any other suitable way you can think of. Although we do highly recommend a presentation near the start of the kick-in. Luckily we are great people and have detailed some information you can tell the kiddos below!

## Stores

You will probably need to fill your cupboards and flesh out your living space. Luckily there are stores for this, but which ones are the right ones to go to? This section is to help you with that.

- Supermarkets
  - Albert Heijn, Jumbo, Coop and Plus: These are the more costly supermarkets. They offer more variety than the cheaper brands, but that of course comes at a price. Great if you are not tight on budget.
  - Lidl, Aldi, Dirk and Medikamente Die Grenze: These are the cheaper supermarkets. Shopping here can save you a couple of euros per trip. Their products may be cheaper, but that does not necessarily reflect in the quality. They do however offer a little less variety. So if you shop here, you might have to make an extra stop at another supermarket once in a while.
  - Any Toko or Asian supermarket: These are great places to get relatively inexpensive herbs to make your dishes just that bit better. Their Asian offerings are higher quality for less costs, so make sure to go by here if you wish to make nasi, curry or anything from that area of the world. Their herb quantities are also higher than those of the supermarkets, so make sure you have room for them.
- Drugstores
  - Kruidvat and Etos: These are drugstores chains found throughout the Netherlands. The Kruidvat is generally speaking a bit cheaper than the Etos, but if you are looking for a paracetamol after a busy night of studying (or another activity) you can find them here. The same goes for sunscreen, skincare and other non-prescription drugs.
- Warehouses
  - Action: The Action is an amazing store where you can buy nearly everything related to managing a household. Their products range from

pots and pans, to gardening tools to charger cables. They have products for every room in the house. Be that the kitchen, bedroom, bathroom or others. The biggest upside? It is also very cheap. If you want something that holds out a little longer you should, however, go to a different store.

- Mediamarkt: That store is Mediamarkt. The name already implies it, the Mediamarkt has everything to do with media. They are on the more expensive side, so less of a go-to for students than the Action, but if you need something to last you can find it here. Their catalogue includes such items as phones, kitchen appliances and vacuum cleaners.
- Department stores
  - Hema and Xenos: The HEMA and Xenos are a store where you can find a lot of different products. From skincare, to polaroid cameras, to party decorations, the HEMA has it all. You can even find some basic affordable clothing. Generally a good store to go to if you are looking for something but are unsure of what exactly it is. The Xenos on the other hand is more so focused on vanity household items, but also some gifts.
  - SoLow XXL: This store in the city center has a lot of random products. The best way to explain this store is to go there yourself. The only thing we can tell you about it is that it has a lot of random and some very useful stuff laying around.
- Secondhand
  - General kringloop stores; Kringloop literally translates to circle walk. In essence they are second hand stores. Enschede has a lot of them so you can always visit one if you need some inexpensive goods.
  - Marktplaats; The primary secondhand online marketplace in the Netherlands. You can find almost everything here. Be weary though as not everything you see is actually second hand. Some companies pay to have their adverts show on top. So make sure to scroll down at least a bit to see the actual items.
  - Het Goed; One of the bigger second hand chains in the Netherlands. They have a plethora of stuff. If you need something and the exact specifications don't matter all that much. You can search for it here. They don't have everything, but you can always take a quick look if you go by there anyway. They also have a delivery at home option.
- Additional stores
  - Clothing; Primark, THE STING, C&A and ZARA: These stores offer inexpensive clothing of decent quality for every season you'll experience during a year in the Netherlands. There are of course plenty other options, but these are some of the more student budget friendly ones.
  - Hardware stores; Gamma, Praxis, Hornbach: Here you can find hardware for your house. If you need a shelf or paint to refresh the look

of your room, you can find it here. Out of the three all are good options, however Hornbach is a bit cheaper than the rest.

- Furniture; Ikea: Need I say more?

## Housing

Finding housing is important for all students, but especially urgent for international students. This section provides a few options on how to acquire housing as a student:

- Kamernet and Roomspot; These are the primary methods of finding students living in the Netherlands. Houses with a room or landlords with an apartment/house put an advert on these sites. Everyone with a (paid) account can then respond to these adverts. After this the person that placed the advert sifts through the applicants and may or may not invite you to a “hospiteer avond”, this essentially is an activity with the house to get to know you a bit better. Like said, most students find their housing like this.
- Friends; When you are in Enschede a bit longer, you might make some friends. These friends will presumably have found housing already or may have lived here for a couple of years already. They might know people that are looking for new roommates or might be looking for themselves. Don’t be scared to ask around!
- Facebook; Some people also find their houses through Facebook groups. You can just google “Room (or kamer in Dutch) Enschede” and you will already see some options.
- Marktplaats; Yes, Marktplaats even has rooms! We were as surprised as you, maybe. Same as facebook. Just search “Room (or, again, kamer) Enschede” and you will find plenty of options.

# Events

It is important as a study association to focus on and celebrate the different nationalities and cultures of your members. This can be done through organising activities, showcasing cultural customs or simply by enjoying food from different cultures. Think of everything that the Dutch use that is not originally from the Netherlands. Hell, most of what the Dutch eat doesn't originate in the Netherlands. This section will touch on some of these things. First, we'll discuss social, cultural and integration focussed events and some great habits that you can take over from other cultures. Afterwards we will go into activities focused on involving internationals in education.

## Social, cultural and integration

If you want to involve international members more you could set up a committee dedicated to this. This committee can help you set up activities for your members. These can have a broad range. In this section we'll mostly discuss events related to the more social side of the spectrum. For those in a hurry, there are bullet points after the section. The same goes for the section on educational events/support.

First off, a taste of home for those far away from it. Activities that are, almost, always well received are those derived from cultures different from Dutch culture. Especially with people from that culture who might be a little homesick. Think of a food or culture festival. Those are very broad and give a lot of opportunity to show off cool tidbits from other regions of the globe. You can make this as extensive as you want. So don't limit it to only food! Some cultures have amazing traditional clothing, fascinating folklore or very distinct art. Examples of this are shown in the figures below.

Beware of how you label something, some countries are vastly bigger than the Netherlands and there is already a distinct difference between west and east here, at least language wise. Hence our recommendation to always ask people that are from the specific region. Or even better, involve them fully.

Such a festival can be organised by giving people from different cultures each a stand or table. The tables can also be split up to incorporate different regions as well.



Left to right:

An example of traditional Romanian Clothing and [Kuniyoshi Utagawa](#), *The Ghosts*, c. 1850

You can also dedicate an entire activity to a single culture. A possibility for this could be a Delfsblue activity if you want to introduce international students to something Dutch or a sports workshop for a locally distinct sport. The university has a number of world associations, you can find them here <https://su.utwente.nl/en/get-involved/Associations/>. When you are thinking of an activity regarding one of the parts of the world these associations represent, be sure to contact them! Not all of them are equally active, so you might not get a timely response, but it is always worth a shot. You can also just ask them questions if you do not want to or cannot involve them more fully.

## Educational

The Dutch education system can be foreign to international students. From how we communicate with our professors and fellow students to the way lectures are given to the level of English of some people. Here we have a lot of different cultures coming together and even that has its difficulties for some. Make sure to keep this in mind.

One way of doing this is by spending a little time on their perspective of the program during feedback activities and having some activities catering specifically to their needs after having gotten their feedback.

Also try to get the program to enforce speaking English in the project groups as much as possible. Your peers not speaking the same language you do makes studying a lot harder. As it increases the barrier to ask questions. This is of course not what you would want.