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Centre for International
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[Internationalisation Webinar 2025](#)

Exploring Internationalisation in African Higher Education: Policy, Practice and the Road Ahead

Date: 6 May 2025 | **Time:** 12:00–14:00 GMT

Summary of Session 2 – Internationalisation Webinar Series 2025

Overview

The second session of the *Internationalisation Webinar Series 2025* brought together colleagues to explore the evolving landscape of internationalisation in African higher education. This session focused on the policy dimensions of internationalisation; what is working, and what still needs to be addressed.

Building on insights from the first episode, participants revisited five core priorities: securing sustainable funding, strengthening doctoral training, expanding global research collaborations, enhancing academic linkages, and establishing strong leadership through dedicated internationalisation structures. It was agreed that these priorities are deeply interconnected and should be addressed in a coordinated manner. Strong institutional leadership, coherent policy frameworks, and strategic collaboration across the continent were seen as essential foundations. Synergy creation, efficiency, and reputation building are key pillars of a successful internationalisation strategy in higher education; for instance, doctoral training programs can be collaboratively developed with international partners, leveraging external grant funding and oversight from the internationalisation chair to ensure strategic alignment. Such coordinated planning not only enhances efficiency by minimizing duplication and optimizing the use of institutional resources but also strengthens the universities' global reputation by presenting a unified and impactful international presence.

Leveraging Strengths in African HE

The discussion highlighted Africa's unique strengths, including

- a large and youthful population,
- rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and
- a growing foundation of regional frameworks and leadership capacity.
- a growing African HE data platforms (e.g., AHEEN: African Higher Education in Emergencies Network, African Education Observatory).
- a youth and civil society engagement: a vibrant youth base can help push bottom-up reforms and bring global awareness to African HE priorities.

However, participants noted that these strengths are not yet fully recognised, promoted, or effectively leveraged. There is a need for more research and reflective discussions to better understand these strengths and channel them into internationalisation policies and practice. This requires better communication between institutions, and policies that reflect local realities while embracing indigenous knowledge and perspectives.

Acknowledging Challenges and Gaps

At the same time, critical challenges were acknowledged, and a few areas were cited as needing attention. These include

- limited financial and infrastructural resources - potentially leading to
- inconsistent engagement with global academic networks
- brain drain,
- a continued reliance on 'Western' models of internationalisation,
- language barriers, while also acknowledging multilingualism as a strength.

- Insufficient research capacity due to a lack of advanced laboratory infrastructure, limited access to experienced research mentors, and inadequate doctoral supervision. This results in a low researcher-to-student ratio, limited output of academic publications, and underdeveloped research management systems within institutions – all factors that hinder innovation and long-term academic growth.
- limited mobility and recognition mechanisms as students and staff often face visa restrictions, inconsistent credit recognition.

Importantly, participants noted that there is a need for harmonisation across systems, and that African institutions must lead in developing context-sensitive strategies, to overcome these barriers. Suggestions for African-led initiatives to enable further development and global collaborations include joint online courses, and co-authored publications to ground African perspectives firmly within the global academic narrative, and co-design programs that prioritise African leadership and capacity, not dependency.

Policy Directions and Future Action

A number of urgent priorities were proposed:

- Creation of national internationalisation policy briefs tailored to local realities, to be shared across the continent.
- Establishment of dedicated internationalisation units in institutions.
- Development of an Africa-wide framework for quality assurance.
- Mapping of existing strengths and gaps to address and integrate into policies.
- Harmonising Mobility & Credits
- Funding via Public-Private Partnerships
- Strengthening Doctoral Training

A three-tiered policy structure was also proposed:

- Continental (Supra-policy) – overarching policy guidelines across the African continent
- Regional – policies adapted to regional contexts
- Local/National – policies tailored to country-specific needs

Conclusion

The discussion in the second session of Internationalisation Webinar Series 2025 highlighted the need for interconnectivity across the African continent, as far as internationalisation policy is concerned. The session laid important groundwork for the next discussion in the series, which will explore how internationalisation policies can intersect with sustainability and global citizenship in African higher education.