



ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME

Furthering International Relations Capacities and Intercultural Engagement to Nurture Campus Diversity and to Support Internationalization at Home (FRIENDS)

PSU Roundtable for IaH Action Plan

30 September 2019

MINUTES

Venue: Prince of Songkla University

Attendees: see list attached

1. Opening address by Vice President for International Affairs and IAO team

Asst. Prof. Dr. Thakerng Wongsirichot, Vice President for International Affairs; Asst. Dr. Wongkot Phuphumirat, Assistant President for International Affairs; and Miss Suphitcha Ek-Uru, Assistant President for Promotion of Foreign Affairs, welcomed participants from PSU's five campuses (attending in person at Hat Yai Campus, and via video conference at the four other campuses) for a roundtable event of the FRIENDS project, regarding Prince of Songkla University's policy to promote the international and intercultural competency of students on campus through the Internationalization at Home (IaH) initiative. The objectives of this roundtable event were to gather feedback and opinions on the proposed action plan to carry out various IaH activities, and to discuss the matter of accepting international students to the international and English programs offered at PSU.

2. Describing internationalization at HEIs

The event started with Dr. Wongkot Phuphumirat, Assistant President for International Affairs, describing the "Five Myths of Internationalization". As internationalization matures, it is becoming a more important and complex process, resulting in confused and misunderstood concepts in areas of policy, practice, and research in higher education. The five myths are: (1.) foreign students as agents of internationalization of institutions; (2.) international reputation as a proxy for quality; (3.) international institutional agreements as a measure of success; (4.) international accreditation as a measure of quality; and (5.) global branding as a measure of institutional success. The purpose of identifying and reflecting on the myths and truths is to ensure that internationalization is on the right track, with awareness of intended and unintended consequences.



Dr. Wongkot then described the perspective of internationalization in the context of higher education institutions, in terms of four processes of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions, or delivery of postsecondary education, as follows: activity which is used to describe internationalization such as curriculum, student/faculty exchanges, technical assistance, and international students. Competency is defined as the development of new skills, knowledge, attitudes and values in students, faculty and staff. Ethos is about creating a culture or climate on campus that promotes and supports international/intercultural initiatives. Process is an integration or infusion of an international or intercultural dimension into teaching, research and service through a combination of a wide range of activities, policies and procedures.

Dr. Wongkot also discussed the current status of internationalization at PSU. The university has implemented several types of internationalization across borders with regards student mobility, such as exchange programs (Erasmus & exchange partners), summer schools / laboratory visit for research, international internships and volunteering, international certificate and language courses, international marketing and recruitment of full-time (semester) international students (PSU extension/semester exchange / PSU: feel like home). In addition, academic staff mobility has also been implemented in terms of staff exchange programs/co-lab, international research funding, national sponsors and scholarships at doctoral and post-doc levels, international associations/conferences in specific academic disciplines, employing full-time international academic staff. Mobility of academic programs: joint or dual-degree programs, articulation/progression agreements.

3. Discussion on how to implement the campus life for PSU Internationalization at Home

Dr. Wongkot described the PSU Internationalization at Home initiative in terms of academic activities. PSU has implemented the provision of programs and courses with a global/international, intercultural, or comparative focus; teaching foreign languages/regional studies/area studies; teaching in foreign languages. He also mentioned that campus life and international environment could be further enhanced, thus this round table meeting serves good starting point for creating the action plan in order to develop an internationalization at home program at PSU.

Miss Suphitcha Ek-Uru, Assistant President for Promotion of Foreign Affairs described and discussed how to implement Virtual Mobility at PSU, and presented examples of campus life activities that could help support the international competency of students. The examples focused on creating a culture or climate that values and supports intercultural/international perspectives and initiatives, with providing campus life and international engagement for students through “inspiring talks” events that encourage and support local students to go abroad and interact with international students at the University. Moreover, events celebrating Chinese New Year and Easter allow for provision of cultural events supporting and nurturing intercultural/international competencies and nurturing PSU student intercultural competencies through

cultural activities. Finally, international events such as “Love songs across the globe” and “International Sports Day”, help bring international and local students together on campus.

4. PSU action plan for Internationalization at Home activities

Dr. Wongkot Phuphumirat presented the university's proposed action plan for groups of the University Administration, Academic Affairs, International Affairs, and Student Affairs to acknowledge the importance of focusing on internationalization at home, to drive effective results for the university and foster the global competency of students.

The International Affairs administration then pointed out that Prince of Songkla University's current Internationalization at Home (IaH) policy attempts to cover all aspects of international nature, including research, teaching, and the daily life of students. However, PSU's new IaH initiative for 2020–2021 will be carried out through the four approaches with the aim of providing the vast majority of students who have never spent time abroad opportunities to get exposed to different cultures and environments in order to strengthen their international and intercultural competency. The four goals of the PSU IaH action plan are following:

Goal 1: creating a culture or climate that values and supports intercultural/international perspectives and initiatives;

Goal 2: provision of cultural events supporting and nurturing intercultural/international competencies;

Goal 3: bringing international and local students together on campus (international events);

Goal 4: to enable PSU staff to gain insight into the Internationalization at Home concept.

In addition, the expected outcomes include students understanding each other's cultural and historical background through campus life activities, students becoming inspired to get exposed to different cultures, and willing to seek out international or intercultural opportunities. With their new understanding and appreciation of other cultures and worldviews, students will also be expected to be able to interact appropriately and effectively with other students from different cultural backgrounds.

5. Other discussions

Asst. Prof. Dr. Thakerng Wongsirichot, Vice President for International Affairs highlighted the importance of focusing more on Virtual Mobility at PSU. As a related matter, Virtual Mobility should be specified in detail in MOU implementations as well.

The Vice President then pointed out that the international accreditation curriculum should meet not only the requirements of the Office of the Higher Education Commission, but also the needs of international students interested in studying at PSU.



Dr. Urai Hatthakit, Associate Dean for Student Affairs and International Relations, agreed that Thai students and international students should be better enabled to interact with each other, and as an example mentioned the planned activities for an upcoming Loi Krathong event.

Dr. Prathana Kannaovakun, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Phuket Campus, pointed out the importance of appropriate facilities for international students, particularly those of the international dormitories. The Chairman of the meeting accepted this matter for consideration.

6. Conclusion

The International Affairs Administrators agreed with PSU's laH action plan. The proposed plan received constructive feedback from participants, who also offered promising ideas regarding international student admission, thus fulfilling the event's objectives. With the feedback and understanding gained through this roundtable, the PSU's new laH action plan has gotten one step closer to implementation in 2020-2021.