INTERNATIONALIZATION STRATEGY OF THE FACULTY OF PROTESTANT THEOLOGY

OUR PROVENANCE

In accordance with its Jewish and Christian heritage, Protestant Theology does not acknowledge any externally imposed delimitation of its boundaries in academic discourse, including national borders. On the contrary, research and teaching in the field of Protestant Theology has been international in nature ever since the Reformation. Just as the centers of Protestant theological teaching and research in the 16th century were Wittenberg, Zurich and Geneva, today—500 years later—Protestant theology defines itself as an international and ecumenical field of inquiry. Accordingly, the Faculty of Protestant Theology of the University of Bonn has adopted the strategy points outlined in the following aimed at maintaining and enhancing its international orientation.

OUR JOURNEY

A. Academic internationalization

1. The work of the academic staff of the Faculty of Protestant Theology is international in nature. The Faculty of Protestant Theology regularly holds international conferences, performs in advisory roles and co-edits international publications. These efforts heighten the Faculty’s profile around the world as part of its specific commitment to promoting academic interaction and international dialogue.

2. The international orientation of the Faculty of Protestant Theology is apparent in publications by its academic staff, and this distinctly international orientation is to be maintained in publications to ensure that research findings in the various subjects enjoy a high level of visibility going forward.
3. The academic staff members of the Faculty of Protestant Theology are from many different countries in addition to Germany. Most academic staff members have studied, obtained degrees and/ or worked professionally in an international context. The Faculty of Protestant Theology will continue recruiting academic staff from around the world, rather than exclusively from Germany, as part of its commitment to furthering a culture of internationalism, aiming to recruit individuals with a distinctly international background for position openings, irrespective of nationality.

B. Internationalization in study offerings and teaching

1. Students of the Faculty of Protestant Theology have enjoyed an array of study abroad opportunities, and the Faculty remains dedicated to promoting students’ international mobility. Special information events are held to inform all students of the range of available study abroad possibilities and encourage them to take advantage of these opportunities. This is in part because the Faculty of Protestant Theology views students visiting international partner institutions as ambassadors of the University of Bonn.

2. In cooperation with the Center of Religion and Society, the Faculty of Protestant Theology has offered a one-year English-language master’s program in Ecumenical Studies, as well as a two-year Extended Ecumenical Studies program since 2014. Attended by student recruits from all over the world, these programs create international visibility for the Faculty of Protestant Theology in the area of teaching.

3. The Faculty of Protestant Theology has plans in place to establish an English-language master’s program in Biblical Studies. The continental European tradition of exegetical work on biblical texts is respected worldwide, and the master’s program is being created to give international students opportunity to study biblical exegesis in the context of this tradition.

4. The Faculty of Protestant Theology intends to launch a German-English certificate program entitled Formation of Praxis and Meaning in Future-oriented Discourses in an international format, aimed at helping students meet special additional qualification requirements.

5. Furthermore, the Faculty of Protestant Theology is initiating an English-language PhD program in addition to the conventional doctorate in Theology (Dr. theol.)

6. as part of efforts to raise its profile internationally, building upon the Faculty’s experience to expand the offering of international degree programs.

C. Framework for the internationalization of research and teaching

1. The Faculty of Protestant Theology promotes internationalization on the administration level, supporting such efforts through the recruitment of international staff, particularly for the administration of international degree programs. The Faculty also supports staff members in obtaining international continuing education, through language courses and University exchange programs for technical and administrative staff in particular.

2. In early 2019 the Faculty of Protestant Theology increased its online visibility by launching an English-language website, the content of which is to be expanded on an ongoing basis. In particular, student testimonial videos either in English or with English subtitles will be posted on social media to underscore the Faculty’s internationalism. The Faculty employs a webmaster to ensure dedicated website support.
3. The classes offered by the Faculty of Protestant Theology involve academic work on texts in the classical languages of Hebrew, Greek and Latin. In the German-language classes taught by the Faculty, students learn that focusing exclusively on the reception of German-language publications is insufficient today to properly evaluate the state of research in the various different subjects, as contributions to the field of theology in English, French and potentially other foreign languages must be considered as well in academic work. Accordingly, the percentage of courses taught in English as part of German-language degree programs is to be increased, primarily by opening up more courses and modules from the existing Ecumenical Studies/Extended Ecumenical Studies master's programs, the future Biblical Studies master's program and the certificate program Formation of Praxis and Meaning in Future-oriented Discourses, currently in development.

D. Strategic partnerships

The Faculty of Protestant Theology has had several partnerships in place with institutions throughout Europe for many years.

1. Partnerships under the ERASMUS program currently exist with the following institutions: National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Károlyi Gáspár Reformed University Budapest (Faculty of Theology), Durham University (Department of Theology and Religion), Charles University Prague (Protestant Theological Faculty); Facoltà Valdese di Teologia di Roma, University of Strasbourg (Faculté de Théologie Protestante), Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Christian Theological Academy Warsaw, University of Vienna (Faculty of Protestant Theology). The ways in which interaction opportunities with these institutions are taken advantage of differ, and when an ERASMUS partnership is up for renewal the Faculty makes its decisions based on evaluation of past partnerships and consideration of any organizational or practical obstacles, in discussion with the partner institutions. The policy is that partnerships which do not evidence prospects for further development are not to be renewed. Promising new partnerships are sought in parallel with the Faculty's particular focus on the study offerings available through the existing partnerships with Hebrew University and Dormition Abbey in Jerusalem, providing specific information and advice on the corresponding programs.

2. A partnership with the University of Oxford going all the way back to 1977 is punctuated by the biennial Bonn-Oxford Seminar for doctoral and post-doc students and regular study group meetings on lecturer level. The work done by the study group has led to the publication of a series of topical edited volumes of considerable impact, and the Faculty of Protestant Theology intends to continue this format in the years ahead.

3. The long-term partnership with the Protestant Theological Faculty of Charles University in Prague (formerly known as the Comenius Faculty) was integrated into a comprehensive university partnership under a 1995 cooperation agreement between the University of Bonn and Charles University. In recent years, the partnership has developed primarily on the academic level through research and lecture visits and participation in each other’s academic conferences. The Faculty sees potential in expanding the partnership on the student level as well and intends to do so.

4. A partnership with the Christian Theological Academy in Warsaw has been in place since 1978, thus in 2018 an anniversary celebration was held in Bonn as part of a three-day symposium in September. Additionally, members of the two faculties visit the respective partner institution for research and teaching stays every year. Plans are in place to broaden the partnership on the student level by establishing a joint summer school.
5. The mission of the Ecumenical Institute since its founding has been to create and maintain forums for dialogue between East and West, thus relations with partners in Eastern Europe are a chief responsibility. In line with this tradition of international cooperation, the Faculty of Protestant Theology has increasingly pursued partnerships in Africa in recent years, particularly in Ethiopia. Study visits have been organized and a conference has been held in Bonn specifically to deepen these relationships while the Faculty strives in parallel to further expand its ecumenical partnerships.

7. The Faculty of Protestant Theology has been working actively since 2019 to forge a research partnership with the University of St Andrews School of Divinity within the framework of cooperation talks led by the University of Bonn. Such faculty-level partnerships are seen as fulfilling the purpose behind the University’s overarching strategic partnerships.

**E. Bonn as an international location**

The Faculty of Protestant Theology views Bonn as an ideal location for cultivating international relationships and strengthening existing ties throughout Europe. As part of efforts to heighten its international profile, the Faculty of Protestant Theology seeks to exploit opportunities for developing ecumenical contacts as part of meeting the challenges of international cooperation, which are greater outside of Europe, especially in the Global South.
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