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INTERNATIONALISING THE CURRICULUM: BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES IN A SWEDISH CASE

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Abstract English

Global experience and internationally enriched learning environments are increasingly valued in today's higher education. To meet these demands, a curricular reform was initiated to internationalise the Master's Programme at the Department of Criminology at Malmö University. International research collaborations were already well established and bilateral exchange agreements existed but were used to a limited extent due to language obstacles. Swedish students went abroad, but this was not reciprocated. English was therefore introduced as the medium of instruction. This paper describes the plan to implement this internationalisation process and its subsequent effectuation. The process included an external market analysis, support seminars and workshops for both students and teaching staff, and a brief process evaluation. Finally, the paper presents post-process reflections and concluding remarks from a group of domestic and international students in the programme, as well as from an external review panel that assessed the educational quality of the programme.

Keywords: curriculum, evaluation, global exchange, internationalization, pedagogy

Introduction

English is today becoming increasingly common as the medium of instruction in courses and programmes in higher education. Students seeking global training, and institutions that are able to provide this, are a natural part of the way towards meeting the needs of the world's globalisation trend. The Department of Criminology at Malmö University was at a crossroads with regard to curricular reform, with the goal of internationalising and increasing competitiveness by offering students a learning environment that promotes global awareness and competence. Implementing courses taught in English at the master's level was one way of moving towards the achievement of this goal. The objective was to open up the programme to foreign students in order to enrich the classroom environment with multiple cultural perspectives for the Swedish students, while at the same time making the programme content available to foreign students; thus, both Swedish and international students would benefit from each other. Students who study at an advanced level already have the study habits required for higher education and may therefore more easily assimilate into higher education. For this reason, the master's programme was chosen for internationalisation over the bachelor's programme. The present paper describes the initial reasoning, strategic planning, implementation and current benefits and challenges associated with the internationalisation process and its execution. In the following, six key aspects are outlined:

1. The purpose of internationalising the curriculum
2. The initial steps of the process
3. Evaluation of the initial steps, and subsequent preparatory steps
4. Implementation and experiences of the internationalised programme
5. Student engagement and feedback
6. Quality assessment and continuing challenges

Background to the internationalisation of the curriculum

Well-functioning and continuous international research collaborations already existed at the department; for example, international guest lectures were often held as part of the curricula during both cycles one and two. However, one of the goals in the department's operational plan was to increase internationalisation in education beyond this level. This was partly because existing exchange study agreements with other universities were only being used unidirectionally, despite the reciprocal nature of the agreements, because any foreign student wanting to visit the department had to be able to understand Swedish in order to participate in the courses. Creating an international academic environment also stimulates the motivation of students to mobilise themselves to study abroad, especially when international and domestic students gain experience of interacting together (di Pietro, 2020). More importantly however, the reason for implementing courses in English was to create an educational environment with an international dimension that would strengthen the communication skills of students in an international language as well as foster communication between students who do not have Swedish as their native language. This would make it possible for students from all over the world to enter the programme and would thus open up for a rich variety of cultural perspectives in the classroom as well as providing the students with the ability to contribute to solving contemporary global challenges in society. Leask (2001) has described the effects that international studies and an international curriculum can produce and the characteristics that it can promote in students. Positive characteristics that students may develop include an ability to think globally and consider issues from a

variety of perspectives; they demonstrate awareness of their own culture and its perspectives and of other cultures and their perspectives; they recognise intercultural issues relevant to their profession and appreciate the complex and interacting factors that contribute to notions of culture and cultural relationships. They also value diversity of language and culture and appreciate and demonstrate the capacity to apply international standards and practices within their discipline. As a cultural melting pot of residents from all over the world, the city of Malmö benefits by having access to higher education as English becomes the medium of instruction.

Internationalising Swedish higher education has been prioritised since the late 70s, as national businesses started to extend into global markets since this change promoted international positioning. Therefore, the education system back then also needed to be able to compete to fill those international positions (Kälvemark, 1997; Pinnetti and Väfors Fritz, 2018). In 2011, when the discussion about internationalising the curriculum at the Department of Criminology became more intensified, not as many cycle-two programmes were taught in English as is the case today.

Initial steps in the internationalisation process

As a first step, literature on the internationalisation of higher education was reviewed. Secondly, a colleague from an international programme joined one of the department's work placement meetings. Thirdly, an internationalisation expert was invited to hold a seminar on the topic. The first semester of the programme implemented English as the *lingua franca* and this was evaluated by both staff and students. The evaluation led to a STINT application (Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education) in order to further prepare staff and students for a full-programme curriculum transition into English. The following section describes this further and identifies challenges that arose as a result of the curricular transition.

First, an external market analysis was conducted which provided information from departments, institutions or businesses that had participated in internationalisation transitions and which shared their experiences. Foremost, they emphasised both positive and negative reactions from staff, and the challenges they had faced in the implementation of their internationalisation transitions (Sawir, 2011; Schuerholz-Lehr, Caws, Van Gyn, and Preece, 2007). Knight (1994) noted the importance of having a clear plan, ensuring staff commitment and including other relevant stakeholders as part of the internationalisation process. Schuerholz-Lehr and colleagues also emphasised the importance of integrating staff from the very beginning of the process in order for them to feel included (2007). In their curricular development, *process course design workshops* were conducted in which the staff were given opportunities to critically explore, review and reflect over internationalisation and its consequences via transformative learning. Discussions and strategic problem solving created collegial collaboration and a positive approach among those who were involved in the transition. It is hoped that the current paper will also add to the body of literature on experiences of internationalising curricula in the Swedish context.

One of the problems identified by Schuerholz-Lehr and colleagues was disagreement among the participants/staff regarding how the term *internationalisation* should be viewed. Creating room to explore the concept and refine the definition of internationalisation made the participants feel included in understanding and supporting the aims and execution of the transition. They also worked with *Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)* as discussed by Ryan, Kang, Mitchell, and Erickson in 2009

in conjunction with a method labelled *Framtidsverkstäder* - originally developed by Jungk and Muller (1984). This is a pedagogical approach that emphasises a democratic participant methodology when working with operational development. These three models were used as inspiration in order to stimulate active participation in the internationalisation process among all the involved staff members within the Department of Criminology. These models were chosen because they emphasise the facilitation of discussions and provide activities for staff members in order to enable them to assert influence and create feelings of security in relation to the prospective changes.

As has been mentioned, a colleague teaching in an international programme within the Faculty of Culture and Society was invited to a staff meeting early in 2012 to share experiences in a brainstorming meeting on internationalising the curriculum. One challenge that was raised was the dissatisfaction of international students with their studies at the university (as seen in the student barometer) due to a lack of informal bonds with Swedish peers, teachers and the local community. Swedish higher education does differ somewhat from higher education in countries such as the United States, Germany and Great Britain, where it is more common for students to live on campus, and where social activities are regularly held. Back then, in Sweden generally, and in Malmö in particular, these social student environments were not well developed. Furthermore, lecturers in other countries often have more concentrated “teaching times”, whereas lecturers in Sweden must often simultaneously conduct research and teach courses, while also carrying out administrative duties and missions. This perhaps contributes to a teaching environment that is perceived as being more fragmented. Some staff members at the Department of Criminology reported that they found teaching in English demanding and challenging. Spontaneous discussions were seen as being particularly challenging in a second language. However, none of them received any complaints from the students regarding insufficient English language skills. Nevertheless, a few colleagues who currently teach on our programme still feel insecure when teaching in English.

In an attempt to make the staff feel included in the process, a researcher who specialises in internationalisation was invited to a seminar that discussed the concept of internationalisation, *internationalisation in higher education and the curriculum* and also *teaching in English*. The pedagogical literature addresses issues of high-level adult English language learners (ELLs) and English as a second language in higher education (Kuteeva, 2011; Gustafsson, 2011; Kanno and Cromley, 2013; Wang and Machado, 2015). At the seminar, the invited guest seminar leader and internationalisation expert Hedda Söderlund spoke about initiatives in public service agreements, Bologna process documents, the Swedish Higher Education Authority, the Higher Education Act and the Higher Education Ordinance, university and faculty missions, visions and strategic plans, et cetera. The seminar also discussed how mobility and the influx of students from multiple countries places demands on the language or mode of instruction, and also how teachers can handle new language situations and what happens to students’ learning in the context of this process. Approaches to meeting these demands were suggested, and finally, the issue of how internationalisation can be implemented in in-class conversations, dialogues and discussions was addressed in order to practice internationalisation at home (IaH). Internationalisation needs to be an intrinsic development in which students extend themselves through their experiences and understanding of their own and other nations’ cultures, perspectives, and global relationships (Söderlund, 2013).

Evaluation and continuing toward full implementation

Evaluating the first semester

At this stage, all courses in the first semester were changed to English as the language of instruction. Swedish literature was replaced with similar literature in English. Programme syllabi, course plans and study guides were translated. First and foremost, the evaluation of the transition during the first semester provided the department with insights into how much the English semester had been appreciated. At the same time, the evaluations showed that both staff and students expressed the need for further support.

Lecturers articulated concerns about weakened quality in their courses. They were worried that standards might not be achieved by comparison with when they had been teaching in their mother tongue, in particular with regard to pedagogical conditions in class and spontaneous discussions. Although these concerns had been raised and discussed by staff in preparation seminars prior to the internationalisation transition, these thoughts were still expressed in the evaluation.

Students, on the other hand, raised concerns that they were not able to demonstrate their knowledge, competence and skills in English, either orally or in writing. However, despite these concerns, the students stated that they perceived the actions taken by the department to internationalise the curriculum to be beneficial to their own competitiveness and employability in both the Swedish and the international labour market

Addressing the need for support

In order to continue the internationalisation plan to transform the entire master's programme into an English-based language mode, the Director of Studies for the master's programme (and author of the present paper) and a colleague applied for a STINT grant. The application sought financial support in the effort to provide further backing for the teaching staff and students.

The Vice Chancellor contacted the Director of Studies with the information that the University intended to submit and support another application to STINT that year, but due to the importance of the application, they would nonetheless finance the application internally within the University. Thus, even though the application was not ranked highest in the annual application round, Malmö University decided to finance all the proposed activities.

The support efforts were conducted on two separate tracks – one for teaching staff and one for students.

In order for *staff* to work on their preparedness to teach in English, a consultant was invited to spend a day with teachers who felt the need to develop their spontaneous (dynamic and non-planned) language skills to enhance pedagogical and educational conditions. A workshop to practice English by rehearsing a couple of fictional monologues and exploring how to bring life to these monologues by means of different exercises was held to make it easier for the teachers to teach in everyday language. In a large room, the teachers were able to practise and test their vocal capacity by warming-up and enhancing their voices and body language and by moving around as they practised the monologue in different pitches and modes.

For the *students*, support seminars were offered in parallel throughout the first semester, focusing on normalising academic communication in English and building a socially stable foundation for students to continue to develop social relationships with classmates. A few of these parallel seminars were integrated within the first course of the programme, while others were offered as additional seminars to the scheduled classes within the normal curriculum. The Student Council, comprised of student representatives, was invited to greet the new programme students. A bus tour of Malmö was planned which visited relevant criminological locations such as the Öresund Bridge and Customs, the Court of Appeal, the Prison and Remand Centre, and crime victim support centres. The bus tour was concluded with a ‘fika’ (coffee and cake break), which included a quiz about Malmö. The purpose was for new students to become further acquainted with their classmates as well as with Malmö and relevant criminological sites in the region. This event emerged from student initiatives during the first welcome meeting at which speed-dating was employed as a quick means of getting to know each other, along with other ice-breaking exercises. Two subsequent seminars were held by the grant applicants (the Director of Studies and a teaching staff member), which focused on addressing student expectations and informing them about among, other things, the Swedish academic system and problem-based learning. The parallel seminars consisted of 20 meetings throughout the 20 weeks of the first semester. The remainder of the seminars focused on developing student skills in relation to two themes: *supporting students’ language skills* (e.g. language labs, a hit parade of language errors, basic sentence structure, vocabulary development, punctuation and subject-verb agreement, guided peer review) and *how to approach academic texts* (e.g. learning how to select, predict and read selectively, how to analyse research article structure in order to know what to expect, and reading a great deal in order to learn how to write). For both themes, consultants were brought in who were experienced in advancing students’ skills in these areas. The language labs were led by a colleague from within the University’s *Language and Writing Centre* and the other consultant was a recommended and highly qualified external consultant.

Evaluating the addressed support

At the end of the semester, the parallel seminars were evaluated, and students completed a survey regarding what they liked most about the seminars and what they had not appreciated. They were able to provide suggestions for improvement and additional comments. Of 32 students, 19 responded, giving a response rate of 59 per cent, of which 18 were non-native English speakers.

Only five students chose to attend all the seminars that were offered, while most only attended a handful, and six students chose to not attend at all. The positive aspects that students raised in the evaluations were the willingness of the department to help and support the students by offering the seminars (thus providing an insight into the staff’s motivation and enthusiasm); the provision of the seminars as a means to further their academic skills (i.e. improving reading and writing skills and peer review, discussing common writing mistakes and sentence-building, starting the two-year programme in a positive way, positive feedback on principles that were already being applied, et cetera); and the opportunities the seminars provided for the students to get to know each other on a deeper level. Further, the students felt very included and they appreciated the help in enhancing their English vocabulary. The teachers and consultants involved in the seminars were also highly appreciated.

Some aspects that the students thought could be improved were that the parallel seminars that were not integrated in the courses were scheduled on days when no regular curricular courses were being held.

This probably affected their independent study time and conflicted with their work schedules or their free time. The university offers all international students a basic Swedish language course during their first semester. One student said that the additional assignments (besides the regular course assignments) made it unnecessarily demanding. One student experienced that expectations were too high regarding the students' level of academic writing and vocabulary. The fact that the students' proficiency level in English differs widely was, and still is, a major challenge, even though the university has fair entry requirements regarding English language skills. The evaluation also showed that some of the students wanted to go to the seminars but did not in the end prioritise attending these despite knowing that they would benefit by going. They expressed that perhaps the benefits of attending the supportive seminars should have been emphasised more by the teachers and management at the beginning of the semester.

Thus, the challenges associated with the support seminars are similar to the challenges that we still face today. Although the university centrally offers writing support, few students make use of this service despite having been informed about it during the introduction to the programme, on the website, and by teachers who identify students with writing difficulties and thus encourage them to use it. As a consequence, the Language and Writing Centre has changed form from previously being accessible on a drop-in basis to now being available only by appointment.

Reading and writing are not the only challenges faced by students in higher education. To meet the need among novice academics for an introductory guidance text, the Departments of Criminology at Malmö University and Stockholm University collaboratively published a student Handbook in Criminology in 2014. This book describes criminology in higher education in Sweden today for academic beginners. Further, it addresses, among other things, learning in academia; being a student in higher education; research and ethics, cheating and plagiarism; searching, selecting and appraising reading material; and internationalisation in higher education (Mellgren and Tiby, 2014). In 2018, a second edition was published that also included a collaboration with Örebro University. This updated version contained additional chapters addressing writing further, group work, and theory in practice (Mellgren, Tiby, and Väfors Fritz). Due to the nature of the handbook and the fact that the target group is first and foremost comprised of first-year university students in Sweden, the book chapters are mainly written in Swedish. However, the chapter about internationalisation was intentionally written in English, and in the second edition of the book, an additional chapter on theory was also written in English.

Using literature written in languages other than English constitutes another challenge faced by students in non-native English countries, since English-language literature associated with the local context is scarce. This was addressed by some of the students in subsequent cohorts of the Master's Programme in Criminology at Malmö University.

Student engagement and feedback

Early in 2016, the Directors of Studies for both the bachelor's and the master's programmes shared some observations about the international student-teaching environment with the Head of Department. As the programme had gained international recognition among prospective students and had enrolled an increasingly culturally diverse student population, the student dissimilarities also resulted in certain unexpected teaching and learning challenges. One example of this related to students who share similar (heterogenous) cultures but who experience them differently. Thus, conflicts within countries sometimes follow the students into class discussions regarding their native systems, and these systems are not

always fully understood by the teachers. For teachers to understand student behaviour, they need to understand both the international context within which international students are acting and their original culture (Mott-Smith, 2013), and this places high demands on teachers' knowledge.

All students who were enrolled at the time were thus invited to a meeting (as an extracurricular activity) to discuss how they experienced the international programme and its intercultural nature. The turnout was impressive, and the discussions were so fruitful that it gave rise to a small pedagogical project in which five students were recruited to initiate and carry out a substantial two-month review of how the students enrolled in the programme (the cohort admitted in 2014 and 2015) experienced the programme in general and its international diversity in particular. The students named the project the MAH Criminology *Team on Research and Pedagogical Advancement* (TRPA). They planned the start-up of the project, its structure and form, and meetings with their peers. They also documented the process of student involvement, created and analysed an online student questionnaire, and completed a final project report (Bassett, Hennen, Lavrushyna, Theuri, and Wepsäläinen, 2016).

Prior to distributing the online survey, the students gathered ideas about developing the international and pedagogical aspects of the programme and the learning environment by compiling information from the student discussions. These views were then further addressed in the online survey. From the compilation of ideas and views, the survey covered issues regarding language, student–teacher relationships, writing formalities, research, extracurricular activities and cultural diversity. A total of 54 students were given the opportunity to participate in the survey, and 25 responded (46 per cent response rate). The results illustrated, among other things, that the most frequently experienced challenge (43 per cent of the students) was language-related (including language barriers and writing formalities), and more than 30 per cent reported that they did not feel comfortable speaking in front of the class.

Not surprisingly, it was evident from the survey that non-native English speakers encountered the most problems when reading course literature and expressing their opinions in English. The researcher who had helped our staff approach the concept of internationalisation in the workshop during the initial stages of the internationalisation process presented research results showing that students in classes taught in mediums other than their first language tend to speak less than students whose classes are in their first language (Söderlundh, 2010), and more recent research also shows that using English as the teaching language places constraints on the efficient learning of non-English-speaking student populations (Harrison, 2015). Interestingly, given the language admission requirements, only 72 per cent of the students who responded regarded themselves as being fluent in English.

However, language barriers extend to more than non-native English speakers. Non-native Swedish speakers also experienced difficulties in terms of having poor access to Swedish research and literature, and they expressed an inability to collect their own data in Sweden (Bassett et al., 2016). Thus, many students raised the challenge of accessing research material and participating in research projects when they were not fluent in Swedish (the language in which most of the research at the department is conducted).

In the report (Bassett et al., 2016), the authors concluded by making suggestions to improve the programme. Of relevance to this paper were the students' ideas about advancing different aspects of internationalisation in the classroom: pairing Swedish students with international students for research purposes, initiating comparative studies among countries, implementing introduction lectures and

providing descriptions of written formalities and requirements, creating opportunities for international interactions outside the classroom, and further taking advantage of student diversity in a more formal way in class meetings. These represent more guided approaches to integrating students' backgrounds inside and outside the classroom (for a more detailed description of the project and its results, or to read the report, contact the author). Measures were taken to realise a number of these suggestions.

Nonetheless, even after the conclusion of the TRPA project, criminology students still reported that gaining access to Swedish research and texts, and also approaching the local Swedish community, was difficult when one was not fluent in Swedish. Thus, in 2018 the Director of Studies together with a co-editor started a project in which researchers and students at the department, as well as professionals from Malmö, were invited to write chapters in an anthology. The target readers of the book were the students, practitioners and researchers and also the public. Consequently, in early 2019, a book on crime and victimisation in Malmö was published in order to, among other things, address the need for students to participate in research conducted at the department and to get an idea of how students can apply theory to research conducted at the department in the course of their education (Väfors Fritz and Khooshnood). Given that students had expressed experiencing weak ties to the local community, two of the chapters focused on professionals in the surrounding community who are affected by crime, such as professionals working within the police and the healthcare system. It was again noticeable that non-Swedish students experienced difficulties accessing Swedish texts, as the publisher would at first only agree to publishing the book in Swedish. However, the Department of Criminology, together with the Faculty, thought it important enough to finance the translation of the book in order to give the international students access to the text, with the result that the anthology was published in English in mid-2019.

Although the programme and course documents have been translated, some additional mission documents and student-related documents for higher education are still not available in English; nonetheless, progress has successively been made in this area over the last couple of years.

Many students expressed a wish to further include the international students' educational and cultural backgrounds in class discussions, presentations and assignments. Harrison (2015) has investigated research evidence regarding 'internationalisation at home' which taps into how students who are not internationally mobile, and thus study in their home country, experience academia when interacting in an international programme that includes both international and national students. One conclusion, also supported by others (Halualani, Chitgopekar, Morrison, and Dodge, 2004; Halualani, 2008), was that this is problematic due to an unwillingness among native students to interact with international students in general, in group work as well as in social relationships (Mckenzie and Baldassar, 2017). Harrison (2015) asserted that there is "...accumulating evidence that ... IAH is unequally distributed, with strong differences in willingness (or ability) to benefit. Those with pre-existing 'cultural interests' are most likely to seize the opportunities available to them, leaving a larger group of students effectively self-excluding – a case of those most in need of an educational input being the least likely to get it." We have not encountered this in the dialogue with our students over the years. However, it has perhaps been noted indirectly by some of our students, since in the TRPA investigation students did raise ideas about, and a desire to, increase intercultural experience with their classmates. Just because students witness and encounter positive intercultural experiences in an international classroom, this does not necessarily mean that they are developing intercultural competence (Lantz-Deaton, 2017). This is thus something that we need to keep working on. Students differ in personality as well as in their level of engagement, and it is up to the department to develop a climate that fosters advancement for all.

Continued challenges and quality assessment

Over the last couple of years, the number of applications to the Master's Programme in Criminology at Malmö University has increased, resulting in a growing waiting list of students who want to enrol in the programme. Thus, over the years the international experience of staff at the department has increased. However, many of the challenges identified early on in the process, both in the literature and by the consultants, still exist and are detectable in the student entrance questionnaire, which is now distributed at the beginning of the programme. In the most recent cohort entering the programme (Autumn, 2019), 42 of 46 enrolled students completed this questionnaire. Thirty-four were between the ages of 21 and 35, nine were between the ages of 36 and 40, and three were over 41, creating a varied mix of life experience (nine students were parents). Differences among the student group continue, as one of students had started post-doctoral studies, six had a previous master's degree, and the remainder met the minimum requirements by having a bachelor's degree in social sciences or medicine. Further, social sciences in Sweden may not be defined in precisely the same way as in other countries.

Although all of the students have a cycle-one degree, not all have written a dissertation in the course of their previous studies. Some of the students from the fields of law or medicine, for instance, do not have this experience, which presents certain challenges in relation to writing formalities and reference management, a problem that had already been identified by the students in the TRPA report. In the most recent cohort, eight students had not completed a dissertation project prior to entering the programme. Despite this challenge, the department has chosen to continue with the same admission requirements, not specifying that students must have written a dissertation due to what these students still add to the programme. Students of medicine and law contribute with specialist knowledge from their academic disciplines that enriches the discussions, and writing difficulties tend to be more individually based than dependent on academic discipline.

Seventy-nine percent of the students had chosen to study this particular programme because of its content, and 60 percent reported that they had also chosen the programme due to its international nature. The students represented 19 different countries (18 students from Scandinavia, 11 from Northern or Central Europe, three from the Middle East, two from Eastern Europe, two from South Asia, three from Southeast or East Asia, two from Africa and one from South America). This indicates that we need to continue to develop aspects of internationalisation in class and in assignments in order to achieve transnational competence. The quality of the programme was the third most common reason for entering the programme.

An additional dilemma with such a diverse group of students which is no doubt common in other cross-disciplinary academic subjects and cycle-two programmes and that is not linked to the international diversity and the heterogeneity of the students' previous academic subjects is the students' methodological skills. For example, 13 students had basic quantitative methodological experience, while 23 had basic qualitative methodological experience. Although many students lacked basic methodological skills, six students in the same class did have advanced methodological skills. Moreover, the level of methodological skills with which the students enter the programme changes with every cohort. Two of the previous cohorts of students had raised such concerns and an anxiety with regard to methodology courses, and the Applied Statistics Course in particular. As a result, the department arranged for students in the same or the previous cohort to become temporary teaching assistants on the cycle-one Statistical Course in an attempt to meet these concerns.

In our case, the process of internationalising the curriculum was implemented successively. We began with one semester and then subsequently the whole first year, and then finally, the full two-year programme. This resulted in three concurrent programme syllabi with different course codes and somewhat different reading material, which at times gave rise to administrative challenges. Thus, programmes that intend to internationalise their curricula may need to thoroughly think through the advantages and the disadvantages of applying such an approach.

Some of the trials of today's programme can also be viewed from an even broader perspective. University studies are more important than ever, and more students are applying to higher education than ever before. At the same time, Malmö University prides itself on being an open and inclusive university with a student population in which more students are the first in their family to attend college and where many students juggle their studies with work. Perhaps this is one reason why many students do not attend the support services that are offered by the university, such as the language centre. However, upon reflection, the support seminars held exclusively for the programme students were not highly attended either. At the same time, students have high expectations of their education programme but are not always as well prepared as they could be. During the second week of the last semester, three students admitted to not yet having read the syllabus for the education programme they were enrolled in. This is a complex phenomenon in itself, and the addition of the international dimension further heightens this complexity. Leask (2015) has suggested that in order for students to engage successfully, they need to be empowered to take ownership. It is suggested this can be promoted by appropriate training and by facilitating motivation.

To bridge the gap between academia and the local community, the university has started a mentor programme, and this warmly welcomes both international and national students. This is one way to support students by familiarising them with the labour market. The Faculty of Health and Society was the first faculty on campus to implement the Certificate of International Merits (CIM) in an effort to give recognition to students who engage in international activities associated with their study subject. It constitutes a verification of their academic, personal and professional progress, their international and intercultural competence and their ability to make international comparisons related to their profession.

Mentorship and the pairing of international students with Swedish students could aid in connecting academia to the local community context, as well as facilitating access to research material offered by researchers at the department. Many students ask about internships, something that is not offered at our department. However, students with experience from countries other than Sweden are more accustomed to "volunteering" in order to obtain similar life and work experience, and international students have shared these possibilities with Swedish students. Despite the pre-existing challenges faced by our international programme, and the work the department needs to continue to do in order to address these, both students and experts are satisfied with what the programme offers.

In Sweden, the Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ) reviews the quality systems of universities, and in order to ensure that the university and its study programmes meet educational quality demands, both internal and external systematic reviews are regularly conducted. In order to prepare for such an external review, a self-evaluation was written by the Department of Criminology. This self-evaluation, together with educational documents (programme and course plans, several key performance indicators such as number of applicants, admissions, course completion, course and alumni surveys), as well as a random selection of master's theses and a dialogue served as the material on which the expert panel

based their assessment of the educational content (design and scope of the programme). More specifically, the panel reviewed the quality of the educational constructive alignment, links to current pedagogical research and the use of digital development, the student-active learning environment and student influence, collaboration with the surrounding community, alumni and work places, the labour market within and outside academia, global engagement, international viability and exchanges, widened recruitment/participation and gender equality, sustainable development, teacher competence and teaching capacity, and the learning environment and infrastructure. The panel also reviewed and assessed whether the students achieved the programme's learning outcomes (with regard to knowledge and understanding, competence and skills, and also judgement and approach) in the random selection of master's theses.

During the 2020 spring semester, the external expert and assessment panel reviewed the Master's Programme in Criminology at Malmö University. Following a dialogue between the panel and representatives from the educational programme and student representatives, the panel authored a review report that consisted of an overall assessment of the programme including the programme's strengths and areas that had been identified for further development in order to continue enhancement of programme quality.

The points identified by the panel for further improvement related to the unique profile of the programme with the recommendation that this ought to be more visible in the official documents. They also recommended that the selection process should be reviewed in order to broaden recruitment, which is today based solely on credits. In addition, diversity, gender issues and non-Western perspectives, as reflected by course content and literature lists, could be strengthened. The panel also identified a mismatch between the methods learned by the students during the programme and those they subsequently employed in their master's theses. It was suggested that the department analyse the theoretical progression of those students who choose to begin with a one-year master's programme and then return for the second year. Finally, the students' ability to discuss ethical and methodological concerns in their master's theses could be strengthened. Translating the chapter addressing "research and ethics" in the student Handbook of Criminology may provide a means to support this effort.

The panel's overall assessment, however, was that the two-year Criminology Master's Programme was of high quality. In particular, the assessment panel found that the programme was well-thought through and had an excellent structure and content. Specifically, the major strengths identified were the department's high level of commitment to the students' learning, which was reflected in the students' high level of overall satisfaction. One example of this was the book *Crime, Victimization and Vulnerability in Malmö*, which was written by departmental researchers in collaboration with bachelor, master's, and doctoral students. Further, the panel noted the clear links in the programme to criminological research and that much of the programme content took current developments in the field of criminology as its point of departure. Finally, another identified strength was the programme's strong focus on quantitative methods, which provides the students with valuable tools for analysing complex data. This, the panel argued, could be seen in the clear empirical focus in the master's theses.

Some of the challenges involved in internationalising the curriculum have yet to be overcome, as is evident from communications with students as well as the expert panel's recommendations. However, while working to overcome these, the advantages of an international programme outweigh the challenges. Studying abroad has a substantial effect on future employment (di Pietro, 2013) and

students' intercultural qualifications (Leask, 2001). By tapping into students' strengths, co-teaching with language teachers and community actors and continuing to collaborate with other departments, we will expand our efforts to enhance our programme and to be flexible and adaptable to the diverse needs of our students. At the very least, students who complete programmes characterised by this kind of cultural diversity will subsequently be equipped with an important network of alumni from all over the world.

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