

ISMA
ANNO 1994

ISMA UNIVERSITY
OF APPLIED SCIENCES

**ISMA UNIVERSITY
OF APPLIED SCIENCES
INTERNATIONALISATION
STRATEGY
FOR 2022 – 2027**

Strategic planning document

Approved
By ISMA Senate meeting
January 18, 2022,
Protocol No. 1-22

Riga, 2022

CONTENTS

Table of contents

Introduction	3
Abbreviations	
1. ISMA in the Latvian and international higher education area	5
2. SWOT analysis	7
3. ISMA internationalisation vision and mission	8
4. ISMA internationalisation strategic priorities	9
5. Strategy implementation and management	15

INTRODUCTION

ISMA University of Applied Sciences (ISMA) Internationalisation Strategy for 2022-2027 (Strategy) is the medium term planning document which is worked out based on the ISMA University of Applied Sciences Development Strategy for 2018-2023, Fergana Branch (Uzbekistan) ISMA (Latvia) – (ISMA Fergana Branch) - Development Strategy for 2019-2029, as well as in compliance with ISMA vision and mission reflecting ISMA values, which are closely related to ISMA strategic priorities and horizontal directions of action.

The Strategy is developed following the new initiatives of the European Union (EU), which are included in the joint documents published by the European Commission in January 2022:

- European strategy for universities;
- Commission Proposal for Council Recommendation on building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation.

The Strategy is based on the conditions of a European way of life, based on the values identified by ISMA: excellence, diversity, intellectual freedom, cooperation, creativity, respect and sustainability. They form the basis for an open, democratic and modern society, the future goals of which are closely linked to sustainable growth and international synergies, in order to create a genuine European dimension in higher education.

The ideas contained in the Strategy reflect ISMA's future desire to play an increasingly active role in the European dimension of higher education and research, to develop itself as a European community member, to continuously support the academic staff in the development of their academic and research careers and the formation of the skills required in the future, to create and maintain diversity and inclusive environment that provides opportunities for everyone to participate in various processes, to develop the offer of international study programmes, to attract only the highest quality foreign students and lecturers, as well as to develop and strengthen international mobility and international cooperation.

The Strategy convincingly indicates that ISMA is committed to providing a quality study experience for all foreign students, as well as to strengthening the reputation of the Latvian state and Latvian higher education in the international area.

The Strategy is developed by ISMA working group in cooperation with ISMA Convention of Advisors, academic staff, students, social partners – industry associations and entrepreneurs.

ABBREVIATIONS

EU	European Union
ISMA	ISMA University of Applied Sciences
IZM	Ministry of Education and Science (Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija)
MOODLE	Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment
Strategy	ISMA University of Applied Sciences Internationalisation Strategy for 2022-2027
SWOT	Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats analysis

1. ISMA IN THE LATVIAN AND INTERNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

ISMA University of Applied Sciences is a higher education and research institution of university type founded by the legal person AS "Izglītības nams". ISMA offers students higher education study programmes and professional qualifications at all levels which are developed, accredited and internationally recognized in accordance with higher education standards: first level professional higher education programmes, Bachelor's level higher education programmes, Master's level higher education programmes and doctoral study programmes.

ISMA is the only higher education and research institution of university of applied sciences type in Latvia, which currently has an officially registered foreign branch - ISMA Fergana Branch (Uzbekistan), which implements internationally recognized higher education study programmes which are licensed and accredited both in the Republic of Uzbekistan and in the Republic of Latvia.

In order to provide all interested parties and ISMA prospective students with the opportunity to obtain information about ISMA, as well as to ensure the representation of ISMA interests and other organizational activities provided for in the ISMA Statutes and internal regulatory documents, ISMA has opened two foreign representative offices - in Uzbekistan and in Ukraine. On December 2, the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Trade of the Republic of Uzbekistan received the Accreditation Certificate.

Currently, the areas of strategic specialization established by ISMA are natural sciences (computer science and informatics) and social sciences (economics and business), which serve as a basis for planning the strategic development of ISMA, the primary fields of science to develop, and the following study directions:

- Information Technology, Computer Hardware, Electronics, Telecommunications, Computer Management, and Computer Science;
- Management, Administration and Management of Real Property;
- Hotel and Restaurant Service, Tourism and Recreation Organisation.

The development of an international cooperation programme is set as one of our priorities. Within the framework of this programme continuous, purposeful and active work is being done to establish and strengthen international relations and contacts. Thanks to this activity, ISMA has been able to create a large network of foreign partners, including partner universities, international companies, companies and industry associations both inside and outside the EU.

ISMA is active in the framework of the ERASMUS Charter, which ensures the mobility of our students and academic staff, as well as ensures the cooperation of higher education institutions in the context of promoting innovation and exchanging good practice.

Today, ISMA is an internationally recognized, modern university-type higher education and research institution with a rich tradition and a clear vision for the future of a common European higher education area.

2. SWOT ANALYSIS

As part of the strategy development process, the ISMA working group conducted a situation analysis (SWOT) to systematize the impact of internal and external environmental factors on the improvement and development of ISMA's internationalisation processes.

STRENGTHS

- ✓ International recognition;
- ✓ Fergana Branch a(Uzbekistan) and representative offices in the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Ukraine;
- ✓ Motivation of students to obtain EU and internationally recognized higher education and professional qualifications;
- ✓ Active mobility of students and staff within the framework of the ERASMUS Charter;
- ✓ Rapidly growing number of international students;
- ✓ Extensive networking of international cooperation and partnerships with partner universities, foreign companies, companies and associations of the industries;
- ✓ Management of study courses using the electronic learning management system MOODLE;
- ✓ Competitive tuition fees (compared to other foreign universities).

WEAKNESSES

- ✓ High costs for the study process;
- ✓ Uneven level of initial preparation of students;
- ✓ Different levels of students foreign language proficiency;
- ✓ Difficulties in controlling the activities of foreign agents.

OPPORTUNITIES

- ✓ The growing need for higher education to achieve future goals;
- ✓ Development of joint study and research programmes with Latvian and foreign partner universities;
- ✓ Internationalization of studies;
- ✓ Interest and support of the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan;
- ✓ Increase in the number of foreign students.

THREATS

- ✓ IZM's lack of interest in developing a regulatory framework that would regulate the operation of foreign branches of Latvian higher education institutions;
- ✓ Differences in the cultural environment, including education systems;
- ✓ Low solvency of the population;
- ✓ Threats of monetary devaluation and potentially rapid inflation.

3. ISMA INTERNATHIONALISATION VISION AND MISSION

VISION

ISMA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES -
INTERNATIONAL, RECOGNIZED, MULTICULTURAL
AND DYNAMIC
PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION IN THE
LATVIAN AND EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION
AREA, CHARACTERIZED BY:

- ✓ research-based study programmes that provide our competitive advantage in the Latvian and international higher education market;
- ✓ a culture of relationship between students, staff and university administration based on the European way of life, with a particular understanding of our multicultural environment;
- ✓ Extensive networking of international cooperation and partnerships with partner universities, foreign companies, and industry companies and associations;
- ✓ integration into international networks of scientific excellence and integration into the European Research Area through joint mobility projects.

MISSION

THE MISSION OF THE INTERNATIONALISATION OF ISMA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES IS TO OPEN TO THE WORLD IN ORDER TO IMPROVE OUR COMPETITIVENESS AT THE INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL LEVELS.

4. ISMA INTERNATIONALISATION STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Priority PR.1. STUDENTS AND PERSONNEL MOBILITY

Priority aim PR.1.A.

To ensure the intensity of ISMA students and staff mobility, as a result of which the participants will gain valuable academic, linguistic and cultural experience in various European countries, thus contributing to the strengthening of European life, as well as the development of highly qualified, open and internationally experienced professionals.

Priority objective PR.1.M.O.1.

To promote active participation of students in international mobility (incl. ERASMUS +) projects.

Responsible for the implementation of PR.1.A.O.1.: ISMA International Relations Department.

Priority objective PR.1.M.O.2.

To promote active participation of staff in international mobility (incl. ERASMUS +) projects.

Responsible for the implementation of PR.1.A.O.2.: ISMA International Relations Department.

Priority achievement indicator PR.1.I.1.

To increase in the number of outgoing students and staff participating in international mobility projects.

Priority achievement indicator PR.1.I.2.

To increase in the number of incoming students and staff participating in international mobility projects.

Priority achievement indicator PR.1.I.3.

The increasing and more comprehensive number of information events on opportunities to participate in the activities of various international mobility projects.

Priority PR.2. FOREIGN STUDENTS ATTRACTING AND SELECTING

Priority aim PR.2.A.

To ensure the international reputation of Latvian higher education, including ISMA, by attracting only those potential students who are motivated to obtain a higher education diploma through systematic studies, as well as to acquire intercultural skills, and enrich their European life experience both in the study process and in public life.

Priority objective PR.2.A.O.1.

Reviewing the educational documents obtained by potential students in previous education, the documents of persons who have received the lowest successful assessment in one of the profiling study courses of the respective study programme in their country of origin shall not be forwarded for further recognition.

Responsible for the implementation of PR.2.A.O.1.: ISMA Admission Board.

Priority objective PR.2.A.O.2.

To comprehensively evaluate the compliance of potential students' English language proficiency with their studies, as well as with the legal regulation of the Republic of Latvia in the respective field.

Responsible for the implementation PR.2.M.U.2.: ISMA Admission Board.

Priority objective PR.2.A.O.1.3.

Conduct an interview with a potential student to ascertain their motivation for systematic study in the chosen study programme, as well as the desire to acquire intercultural skills and enrich their experience of European life in both the study process and public life.

Responsible for the implementation of PR.2. A.O.3.: ISMA Admission Board.

Priority achievement indicator PR.2.I.1.

Procedures have been developed that regulate the examination of potential students' educational documents obtained in previous education and further progress for recognition at the Academic Information Centre.

Priority achievement indicator PR.2.I.2.

The prospective student's English language proficiency is fully compliant with level B2, as defined in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages for the level B2 communication activities and strategies, which is evidenced by a document issued by an international testing body in the last five years confirming at least B2 level.

Priority achievement indicator PR.2.I.3.

The prospective student has successfully passed all parts of the English language test in accordance with the "Methodology for Testing the English Language Skills of Foreigners" (Annex to the wording of Cabinet Regulation No. 414 of 30.06.2020, as amended by Cabinet Regulation No. 170 of 18.03.2021), obtaining at least 50 % of the maximum possible number of points for each part.

Priority achievement indicator PR.2.I.4.

Procedure is developed for interviewing a prospective student and recording the interview on video with the student's consent, as well as for storing and making the interview available to the competent authorities if the need arises.

Priority PR.3. FOREIGN ACADEMIC STAFF ATTRACTING

Priority aim PR.3.A.

To ensure the attraction of foreign academic staff, thus promoting the increase of the quality of ISMA studies and the compliance of the study environment with the generally accepted

operating principles, as well as increasing the capacity of ISMA human resources and promoting the internationalisation processes of higher education.

Priority objective PR.3.A.O.1.

To develop a set of measures to ensure the involvement of foreign academic staff - visiting professors, associate professors, doctors and guest lecturers who have been employed in academic positions in one of the accredited universities of EU countries, except Latvia, - in the implementation and improvement of ISMA study process.

Responsible for the implementation PR.3.A.I.1.: ISMA Vice-rector for Academic Work and ISMA Vice-rector for Studies.

Priority achievement indicator PR.3.I.1.

At least 5% of the total number of academic staff involved in the implementation and improvement of the ISMA study process are foreign visiting professors, associate professors, docents and guest lecturers who have been employed in an academic position in one of the accredited universities of the EU, except Latvia.

Priority PR.4. PROVISION OF STUDY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUPPORT

Priority aim PR.4.A.

To promote the availability of higher education implemented by ISMA by fostering the understanding of the higher education acquisition processes represented in the student-centred study approach, as well as to inspire and show the values of Latvian culture, the values enshrined in the Satversme of the Republic of Latvia and our European way of life.

Priority objectives PR.4.A.O.1.

To ensure that every student before arrival in Latvia can receive answers to their questions not only about studies, but also about living and customs in Latvia, as well as to provide all the necessary support for a foreign student to settle in Latvia in the first weeks on arrival.

Responsible for the implementation PR.4.A.O.1.: ISMA International Relations Department and ISMA Students' self-government Body.

Priority objectives PR.4.A.O.2.

Starting the study process, an informative day shall be organised for all ISMA foreign students to participate in person in order to provide them general information about Latvia and Riga, about ISMA, the study process and student life, the access to necessary health care, safety issues, information about emergency services, leisure facilities and public transport.

Responsible for the implementation PR.4.A.O.2.: ISMA Study Department, ISMA International Relations Department and ISMA Students' self-government Body.

Priority objectives PR.4.A.O.3.

To offer foreign students to take a basic course of the Latvian language, to inform students about the opportunities to learn Latvian through self-studies by the means of the Internet and other teaching aids, as well as to provide study courses which form an idea of Latvian culture and identity and promote integration of foreign students into Latvian culture.

Responsible for the implementation PR.4.M.U.3.: ISMA Study Department.

Priority objectives PR.4.A.O.4.

On a random basis, at least once a semester, to conduct a survey of a group of foreign students to obtain information about their satisfaction with the quality and process of studies, as well as the problems they have encountered in their studies or life.

Responsible for the implementation PR.4.A.O.4.: ISMA Study Department and ISMA Students' self-government Body.

Priority achievement indicator PR.4.I.1.

The number of foreign students' answers to the questions about studying, living and customs in Latvia, as well as the support received in the first weeks after arriving in Latvia.

Priority achievement indicator PR.4.I.2.

The number of informative events in which foreign students have the opportunity to receive all the necessary information about the possibilities of ensuring their study, living and security requirements.

Priority achievement indicator PR.4.I.3.

Study courses and their availability, which provide an opportunity to learn the Latvian language, as well as to form an idea of Latvian culture and identity and to promote the integration of foreign students into the Latvian cultural space.

Priority achievement indicator PR.4.I.4.

The application of the analysed results of foreign students' survey in the improvement of the study process and study environment.

Priority PR.5. DEVELOPMENT OF JOINT STUDY PROGRAMMES AND DEGREES, DEVELOPMENT OF STUDY PROGRAMMES IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Priority aim PR.5.A.

To prepare leaders and highly qualified professionals in accordance with the requirements of today's global labour market, whose knowledge, creative and innovative activities enable them to effectively adapt to the transformation and development of the relevant economic sector, industry or region, as well as actively participate in research projects in the interests of the economy and society.

Priority objectives PR.5.A.O.1.

To update cooperation with internationally recognized foreign universities by creating joint or double diploma programmes.

Responsible for the implementation PR.5.M.U.1.: ISMA Vice-rector for Studies and ISMA Vice-rector for Academic Work.

Priority objectives PR.5.A.O.2.

To attract lecturers from foreign universities to conduct study courses in English.

Responsible for the implementation PR.5.M.U.2.: ISMA Vice-rector for Studies, ISMA Vice-rector for Academic Work and ISMA International Relations Department.

Priority objectives PR.5.A.O.3.

To perform regularly self-assessment and improvement of the study process, ensuring full accreditation of study directions.

Responsible for the implementation PR.5.M.U.3.: ISMA Vice-rector for Studies and ISMA Heads of Study Directions.

Priority achievement indicator PR.5.I.1.

All study directions are accredited for 6 years, providing the opportunity to implement programmes in a foreign language.

Priority achievement indicator PR.5.I.2.

Study programmes are regularly updated and improved in accordance with the requirements of the global labour market, based on the recommendations of students, employers and graduates and implementation opportunities.

Priority achievement indicator PR.5.I.3.

New study programmes are developed and implemented.

Priority PR.6. IMPLEMENTATION OF MARKETING ACTIVITIES ATTRACTING FOREIGN STUDENTS

Priority aim PR.6.A.

To create a positive image of ISMA and its higher education offer as internationally recognized, high-quality and competitive, as well as to promote the recognition of Latvian higher education abroad.

Priority objectives PR.6.A.O.1.

To ensure that the information provided by ISMA at any marketing and advertising event to potential foreign students about the study offer, the course of the study process and the life of students is true and does not create a misleading impression.

Responsible for the implementation PR.6.M.U.1.: ISMA International Relations Department, ISMA Marketing Department and ISMA Students' self-government Body.

Priority objectives PR.6.A.O.2.

To ensure the selection of commercial agents and take appropriate measures in cooperation with each commercial agent, so that commercial agents adhere to the principles of fairness as far as the activities carried out by them in attracting students are concerned.

Responsible for the implementation PR.6.M.U.2.: ISMA Vice-rector for International Relations.

Priority achievement indicator PR.6.I.1.

ISMA communication policy and marketing action plan for a specific study year have been developed.

Priority achievement indicator PR.6.I.2.

Procedures which regulate the principles of selection of commercial agents and the procedure for concluding cooperation agreements have been developed.

Priority achievement indicator PR.6.I.3.

Latvian diplomatic and consular missions have been provided with full information on those commercial agents who are entitled to attract ISMA students in their accreditation countries.

5. STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION AND MANAGEMENT

The Strategy is the medium-term (5-year) planning document which sets out the strategic priorities of ISMA Internationalization, the main development aims and objectives to be implemented to achieve each set goal, and is in compliance with the ISMA long-term development strategy.

At the beginning of each academic year, the ISMA Vice-Rector for International Relations, Vice-Rector for Studies and the Vice-Rector for Academic Work jointly evaluate the Strategy and develop an Action Plan for the year, identifying current development priorities, deadlines and responsible persons. After the approval of the Strategy Action Plan by the ISMA Senate, the ISMA officials and structural units responsible for the implementation of the Strategy's objectives control the implementation of the Strategy Action Plan.