



RAC International Strategy 2011-2016

Introduction

1. The Royal Agricultural College (RAC) has been international in its mission, intent and outlook since it was granted its Royal Charter in 1845. Historically, the RAC helped establish various colleges in other countries and has always had a significant number of students from other countries (41 countries in 2011-2012) and on-going involvements around the world. This has been demonstrated and reinforced through the teaching programmes (including overseas teaching), research, consultancy, staff and students of the College. This document sets out the RAC's international strategy, which has been formulated following discussions with colleagues and external stakeholders in the light of the College's overall Academic Strategy 2011-2016 and Corporate Plan 2010-2015.

Background

2. An important aspect of the RAC's academic delivery is working in collaborative partnership both in the UK and overseas. All of the RAC's awards are delivered in English. International programmes are currently delivered with partners in China, Hong Kong, USA and South Africa.

3. The RAC also operates student exchange opportunities with a number of institutions in New Zealand, Canada, the USA and Australia.

4. Students take up work placements and internships with employers and organisations in many organisations worldwide, and have done so for a considerable time as part of their degree studies.

5. The RAC has a small international team comprising an International Marketing Officer, international Link Tutors, an International Teaching Support Officer and an English for Academic Purposes tutor. The RAC has a dedicated annual budget for strategic international initiatives including activities that directly benefit international collaboration and development.

Global context

6. The RAC's Corporate Plan for 2010-2015 acknowledges that HE is viewed worldwide as being central to a competitive modern economy and critical for an open and inclusive society. The College mission is 'To provide leadership regionally, nationally and internationally through education, research and consultancy, to the agriculture, equine, food, drink, property and land-based industries'.

7. The RAC also recognises that:
 - HE is operating in a global market where there is increased student mobility, and intensifying competition amongst HEIs to attract international students.
 - New technology, including e-learning materials and the Internet, will enable students who are not geographically mobile to access the provision that best meets their needs, regardless of where it is delivered.
 - European activities are assuming a higher profile and the impact on HE looks set to continue and increase following the Bologna Declaration, follow-up agreements and EU HE and research initiatives.
 - New developing countries in the global economy are becoming increasingly prominent with education and collaboration aspirations, such as China.

8. The RAC has responded to these challenges by seeking to exploit its comparative strengths and through international collaboration. The RAC takes an interest in key national and international initiatives that impact on HE, and works with partners wherever it can to support these.

9. The RAC will continue to identify opportunities to collaborate with other countries where this brings mutual benefits. The RAC recognises the significant educational, social, cultural and economic value gained from international collaboration.

Principal values

10. The principal values that underpin the RAC's strategic international activities are:
 - Recognising the increasing significance and success of the RAC's current wide-ranging international activities and achievements, identifying the strengths on which they build and reinforcing them.
 - Adding value to the work of the College globally, where this is possible.
 - Adapting the dynamic culture of the RAC to develop a genuinely international culture, outlook and orientation.
 - Identifying international regions and countries to target for recruitment, research, collaborative programmes or other links based on an informed appreciation of the relevant contexts and effective assessment of future trends.
 - Working widely with others, regardless of ethnicity, belief and disability, to enrich the RAC community.
 - Ensuring a proactive and strategic approach to the identification of potential partners in all areas of activity and the development of effective, sustainable, mutually beneficial and appropriate partnerships.
 - Utilising significant unique selling points of the RAC to help achieve international aims.
 - Utilising the benefits of knowledge-sharing and partnership.
 - Producing high-quality outcomes.
 - Ensuring RAC continues to provide highly relevant and vocational programmes.

- To continue to provide applied education of relevance to the needs and opportunities for employment in the industries and professions the College serves.

11. These values support key national and international initiatives and are central to this strategy and to the RAC's mission, as set out in the Corporate Plan.

Strategic areas of interest

12. The RAC has identified the following complementary types of international engagement:

- Supporting students.
- Supporting staff.
- Learning from others.
- Facilitating opportunities for international collaboration and development.

Supporting students:

13. The RAC strives to ensure effective and appropriate support for international students studying at the RAC and international students the College teaches overseas on RAC programmes. The core goals of the internationalisation strategy in supporting students are to:

- Provide international curricula supported by learning, teaching, research and assessment methodologies that embrace and build on the differing prior experience of an international student body.
- Support scholarships and other awards for talented students from all nationalities and backgrounds.
- Offer exchanges and study abroad schemes.
- Provide opportunities and support, wherever possible, for students to work and/or study overseas, e.g. on placement and through international study tours / field trips.
- Provide English for Academic Purposes tutoring and an English language pre-sessional induction programme for candidates who do not have the required level of English to join a degree programme directly, or wish to improve their English language and academic skills before the start of their programme.
- Provide a comprehensive Student Handbook which addresses all students.
- Provide opportunity for membership of the RAC's student-led International Society, Global Café and other international group initiatives.
- Provide appropriate support for international disabled students.

Supporting staff:

14. The core goals of the internationalisation strategy in supporting staff are to:
- Recruit, retain and support appropriate staff from across the world.
 - Provide practical, social and immigration support for new international staff to enhance the RAC's reputation as a truly multinational and multicultural employer and institution.

- Encourage and support staff in undertaking international activities, work overseas and the gaining of international experience, in various capacities from conference participation to consultancy and on shared academic teaching and research programmes, through the provision of funding, information, advice and recognition of their efforts whenever the opportunities and resources allow.
- Support academic staff in undertaking research and producing academic publications with an international remit and focus, and assist staff in international knowledge transfer and organisational learning.
- Provide advice, guidance and staff development with regard to international issues, e.g. cultural awareness, internationalising curriculum and learning, teaching and assessment methodologies.
- Keep staff informed of news and RAC developments with respect to international activities.
- Expand the RAC's network of international visiting fellows, visiting professors and research scholars.
- Encourage RAC networks of expertise that are internationally-related and collaborative within the wider international community.

Learning from others:

15. The study of international HE policies and practices enables comparison with those of the RAC, which can lead to a clearer understanding of the RAC's competitiveness and worldwide trends and developments. The RAC is committed to strengthening communication and knowledge-sharing internally and externally to support this process.

16. Expected outcomes of these processes are:
- a. A contribution to the development of RAC policies and practice over the medium to long term, using the RAC's international knowledge and experience.
 - b. An understanding of the comparative performance and international competitiveness of the RAC, which will inform developments.
 - c. Sharing of internationally good practice and innovation, development of networking opportunities and continuous learning and development for the RAC and both its current and potential partners.
 - d. Contribution to national and international discussions shaping the HE internationalisation policy and practice agenda.
 - e. Increasing international recognition.

17. The RAC will identify priorities and activities within its strategic themes through consultation and discussion with colleagues and external partners. New initiatives include:

- Delivery of collaborative partnerships for development in Africa (with the Africa Fellowship Trust).
- Responding to European policies and initiatives.
- Supporting international (virtual) knowledge-sharing of HE policies and practices with both current and potential partners.

- Development of the College internet to ensure the availability of accurate and complete information to international stakeholders.

Facilitating opportunities for international collaboration and development:

18. The RAC's medium to long-term aim is to develop the capacity, capabilities and opportunities for the RAC and its current and potential partners through international collaborative activities that share good practice and promote and strengthen the internationalisation of HE.

19. Expected outcomes are to:

- a. Work with premier international partners to develop quality joint and collaborative programmes.
- b. Improve ways of providing international work experience for students during their studies through placements and internships.
- c. Improve the administration and management of international activity.
- d. Target recruitment on specific countries, so as to continue the managed growth in international student numbers and to recruit the most able students at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.
- e. Enhance the global competitiveness and international standing of the RAC.
- f. Enhance and maintain ongoing relationships with international alumni and use these links to promote the opportunities for study at the RAC.
- g. Enhance the RAC's strategic developments through international sharing of knowledge and good practice.
- h. Enhance the international and intercultural skills of students in preparation for life and work in the global community. This will be achieved by increasing the international exposure and mobility of students through pedagogic developments, curriculum innovation and improved facilitation of placements and exchanges.

Implementation

20. To deliver this strategy, the RAC will work with international partners across the strategic areas of interest to develop and manage:

- international collaborative projects (which may involve one or more international partners).
- research, benchmarking and knowledge-sharing.
- briefings and events on international topics for RAC staff and partner organisations.
- visits to the RAC from individuals and groups from overseas.
- a large database of international contacts.

21. The implementation of this strategy will be monitored by Academic Board.

22. It is recognised that the success of the RAC's international activities depends upon working in an open and transparent way within available resources, managing risks and expectations, keeping within the College's remit, seeking synergy with the

RAC's national and international partners and the UK HE sector's interests, avoiding duplication and providing value for money.

International Strategy Action Plan

Timescale	Objectives
Short term: 2011-2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review use of the student transcript to ensure that it continues to meet the requirements of the European Diploma Supplement and better enable students to compete in the European employment market, giving due consideration to the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) as recommended by the Burgess Report (2007). • Review the current induction programme with a view to better supporting non-UK students. • In reviewing current student study skills workshop provision, consider in particular the needs of non-UK students. • Review the level and appropriateness of language support available to students for whom English is not their first language. • Develop MA and MBA European Food and Agribusiness programmes in collaboration with ESCP Europe in Turin, Italy. • Widen international recruitment through the development of distance learning initiatives. • Encourage greater staff engagement with international research and consultancy, and producing academic publications with an international remit and focus, in preparation for the College's REF submission. • Develop international internship grant support from College for students from October 2012.
Medium term: 2013-2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to review curricula, pedagogic methodologies and the provision of information to ensure that College practices are fully inclusive within the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise the profile of international exchange opportunities for undergraduate student programmes. • Continue to provide staff with advice, guidance and training with regard to international issues, e.g. cultural awareness, internationalising curriculum and learning, teaching and assessment methodologies. • Continue to expand the RAC's network of international visiting fellows, visiting professors and research scholars. • Enhance and maintain on-going relationships with international alumni and use these links to promote opportunities for study at the RAC.
Long term: 2016 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to strengthen the RAC's international reputation and academic standing through the expansion of successful international partnerships. • Enhance the RAC's strategic developments through international sharing of knowledge and good practice.