

# SELF EVALUATION REPORT

# 2023



University of Antwerp  
IOB | Institute of  
Development Policy

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# 1. Introduction: Setting the scene

This self-evaluation takes place in year 6 of the quality assurance cycle, in preparation of the visit of a peer review team. The last intermediate **internal review** took place 3 years ago (2019). More recently (2022) the University of Antwerp also undertook a **general evaluation** of all Bachelor and Master Programmes. The results of this evaluation<sup>1</sup> are – where relevant - discussed throughout this report.

Turning back at the 2019 intermediate [internal review](#)<sup>2</sup> a lot of strong elements were mentioned about IOB's master programmes: the student centered education, internationalisation, the internal quality assurance, the assessment policy, working with alumni. The review did make 3 recommendations for IOB:

1. make the internal quality assurance feasible (so do less, not more), which has become the guiding idea for the CIKO<sup>3</sup> and the education commission to plan evaluations;
2. involve more than 1 external expert for the next benchmark exercise about the master dissertations, which has been successfully executed with 8 external experts in September 2022 (see [report](#)<sup>4</sup> of this exercise);
3. measure whether and how IOB students learn to develop intercultural competences, which has been done as part of [the alumni barometer research](#) and in the UAntwerp programme evaluations (see footnote 1).

The efforts to address these recommendations are taken up in this report, but - in parallel - important, more global events and tendencies have taken place which forced IOB **to move beyond these teaching-related recommendations**. A more fundamental soul-searching process was initiated relating to our core-business of research, teaching and outreach as a northern based development studies institute. We refer to this as **our DNA process**. Detailed information on this process can be found in Box 1.

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<sup>1</sup> See education portfolio > [https://pintra.uantwerpen.be/bbcswebdav/institution/Faculteiten en instituten/IOB/03 Education/01 Educational commission \(OWC\)/02 Meeting documents/2022-2023/2022-12-05/UAntwerp programme evaluations](https://pintra.uantwerpen.be/bbcswebdav/institution/Faculteiten%20en%20instituten/IOB/03%20Education/01%20Educational%20commission%20(OWC)/02%20Meeting%20documents/2022-2023/2022-12-05/UAntwerp%20programme%20evaluations)

<sup>2</sup> See education portfolio > [https://pintra.uantwerpen.be/bbcswebdav/institution/Faculteiten en instituten/IOB/03 Education/04 CIKO - UFOO/02 External quality assurance/2019 IPS](https://pintra.uantwerpen.be/bbcswebdav/institution/Faculteiten%20en%20instituten/IOB/03%20Education/04%20CIKO%20-%20UFOO/02%20External%20quality%20assurance/2019%20IPS)

<sup>3</sup> Cell for innovation and quality assurance in education. At IOB this Cell consists of one half time staff member and a CIKO-coordinator, who is a professor doing this on top of his/her other responsibilities.

<sup>4</sup> See education portfolio > [https://pintra.uantwerpen.be/bbcswebdav/institution/Faculteiten en instituten/IOB/03 Education/04 CIKO - UFOO/02 External quality assurance/2022 Benchmark dissertations/2022 Benchmark](https://pintra.uantwerpen.be/bbcswebdav/institution/Faculteiten%20en%20instituten/IOB/03%20Education/04%20CIKO%20-%20UFOO/02%20External%20quality%20assurance/2022%20Benchmark%20dissertations/2022%20Benchmark)

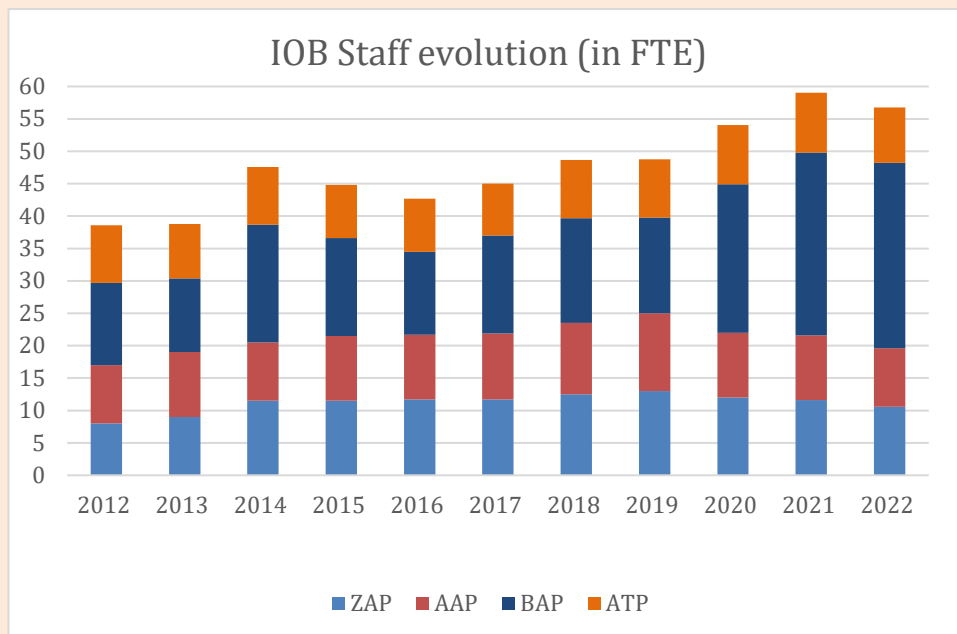
### Box 1: Snapshot of the DNA process.

The idea to organize a reflection-process on our DNA was born in 2020, during the second half of the covid-19 lock-down period. IOB realized that online meetings don't necessarily allow to "meet", or that an exchange of mails doesn't necessarily facilitate "exchange". Tensions and misunderstandings were building up and we needed to address these.

- First, we needed to reconfigure **"the how"** we interact with each other, in other words, the importance of non-violent communication, also online and in mails.
- Second, we needed to re-think on a deeper level **"the what"** of IOB, what we are, what we aspire to as a collectivity.

This need to rethink/rephrase the DNA of IOB also related to the pressing need to involve/integrate new colleagues in IOB. Half of IOB's staff is renewing every six years (AAP and BAP<sup>1</sup>). Added to this we have had an explosion of BAPs in recent years: from 15,10 full time equivalent staff members in 2017 (34% of all IOB staff), to 28,60 FTE in 2022 (50% of all IOB staff). With Covid-19, without face-to-face contact, many new colleagues were left in a vacuum without any feel regarding what IOB is or aspires to be.

**Figure 1: Evolution of IOB staff composition**





In parallel, the field of development and development studies has been challenged by and confronted with a myriad of normative arguments (linked to the woke-movement, Critical Race Theory, decolonisation and decoloniality, etc...). Within IOB all these ideas are also very much present and vocal, and thus it was felt important to take stock and develop a vision of what IOB wants/needs to be in the future taking into account these tendencies.

At the same time, there were also some very concrete elements on our to-do list, for which we received funding from the Flemish Interuniversity Council for the period 2017-2022. This funding allowed us to experiment with new, innovative ways of thinking about co-creation of education, research and outreach with our partners in the Global South.

Therefore, in 2021 we started with this DNA process. We revisited our history and embeddedness in a Western-European university context (with a colonial past) and acknowledge that this has had implications for the way in which we function and what we have/can aspire. In questioning our DNA, we are revising our mission and vision, our structure, our functioning and our practices in order to identify “sticky institutions” and address them. With this mindset we set up a DNA Taskforce in charge of organizing a series of events:

- **November 2021:** 2 day meeting among all ZAP<sup>1</sup> staff members to reflect on the “How” (moderated by Peter Musschoot, Mind the Solution)
- **December 2021:** Meeting open to all IOB staff members to reflect on the “How” and work towards a Team Charter.
- **December 2021 – February 2022:** preparatory meetings to discuss three papers:
  - Gleiberman, M. (2021). Decolonisation: where and how does it fit at IOB?
  - Murray Li, T. (2017). After Development: surplus population and the politics of entitlement.
  - Demeter, A. (2021). Development studies in the world system of global knowledge production: a critical empirical analysis.
- **March 2022:** 3-day residential seminar in Alden Biesen to reflect on the “What” (moderated by Thea Hilhorst, from the Institute for Social Studies The Hague (NL)) The seminar allowed us to focus on the mission/ vision, on education/ research/ PhD/ outreach experimenting with various forms of interaction, formal and informal, plenary meetings, sub-group meetings, small group interactions but also individual moments of reflection.
- **24 June 2022:** IOB staff day on the code of conduct, and how to take the insights so far to education, research, outreach and IOB structures/procedures/functioning
- **18 November 2022:** IOB education policy day on multi-perspectivity in Education
- **20 March 2023:** ZAP day to map the areas of tension

After the peer review, we furthermore plan on May 12 2023: ZAP day to finalize the discussion regarding areas of agreement, disagreement and boundaries. Finally November 9-11<sup>th</sup> 2023: a second IOB retreat to Alden Biesen to land the DNA-process with a timeline for future activities/landmarks.

The choice for the three topics on which this self-evaluation is focused, largely originates from the concerns and ambitions that emerged from this DNA process. The three topics below were identified as important drivers for the future of our education, research and outreach, and because of the interesting debates around these issues, external inputs are warmly welcomed to further sharpen our own reflection, and shed light on our future roadmap. The three topics are:

- **Multi-perspectivity in education**
- **Deepening and broadening internationalisation in education**
- **Nexus Education-Research**

The critical reader will notice that quite some activities at IOB actually relate to all three topics, hence, there is some overlap. We have, to the best of our abilities, focused on those aspects that are relevant for the topics concerned, and/or classified some activities under a specific topic due to the essential goal the activity aims at realizing.

Before delving into these three topics however, let us briefly introduce our master programmes in the next section, and get acquainted with the long term vision we hope to realise (section 3).

## 2. IOB Master Programmes at a glance

IOB has 3 [advanced<sup>5</sup> Master programmes](#):

1. [Governance and Development](#),
2. [Globalisation and Development](#),
3. [Development Evaluation and Management](#)<sup>6</sup>.

These three programmes attract similar, yet different audiences. All three programmes attract junior to mid-level professionals and recent graduates from all over the world. They all aspire to contribute to inclusive and sustainable development, through improving interventions, policies, (social) businesses, and/or advocacy, research, education... The audiences of the three Master programmes however differ in terms of focus:

### Globalisation and Development



### Governance and Development



### Development Evaluation and Management



**Master globalisation and Development:** challenges for poverty reduction and sustainability related to economic and financial globalisation, trade, mobility and migration, value chains and/or climate change and environmental crises.

**Master Governance and Development:** how governance at local, national, regional and international levels contributes to sustainable development, processes of state formation & reconstruction, peace-building, and conflict resolution.

**Master Development Evaluation and Management:** development policies, paradigms and interventions- the role of international actors- Monitoring and Evaluation- enabling and constraining factors of development success or failure.

Each of the three MA-programmes takes 12 months to complete, starting and ending mid-September. Though different in content, the three Master programmes have **a similar structure**,

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<sup>5</sup> Advanced refers to a professional master, meaning that most students already have a Master degree. Prior Learning and/or extensive professional experience can however allow students with a Bachelor degree into the Advanced Master.

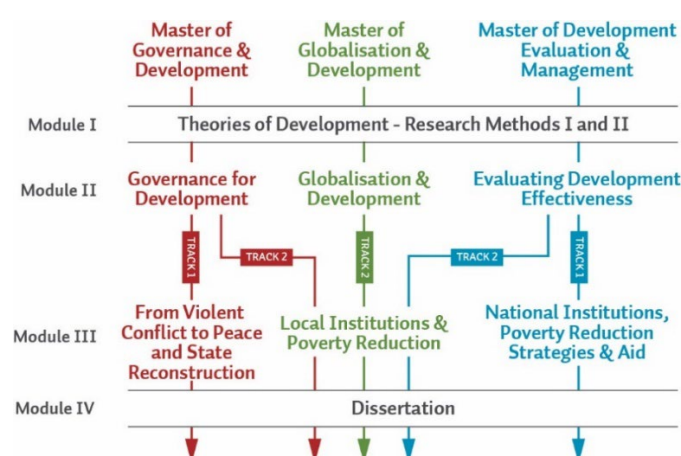
<sup>6</sup> For more information please see our [flyer globalisation](#), [flyer governance](#), [flyer development evaluation](#) or our [website](#)



consisting of four modules in which teams of lecturers teach different subunits. Each module concludes with an examination or another assessment-format.

- The first Module (12 weeks) is followed by all students. It provides an **overview of Theories of Development** on the one hand and **Research Methods** (Quali/Quanti/Mixed) on the other. Both courses aim at bringing all students up to date regarding the state of the art in theories and methods in development studies.
- In Modules II and III (around 8 to 9 weeks), students split up into their respective Masters where **research-driven interactive education** is offered.
- In Module IV, students write their **dissertation**: they conduct an individual research project under the guidance of a supervisor. The topics covered in the dissertation relate to the thematic focus of Modules II and III. A limited number of students receive IOB travel grants in order to conduct fieldwork for their research projects. The dissertation is the subject of a public presentation and defense.

*Figure 2: Structure of Master programmes*



The figure above shows that in Module III students of Governance and Development Evaluation and Management can pick a second track - Local Institutions and Poverty Reduction – where a specific emphasis is given on local institutions.

Important to mention is that this structure also has very specific **management components**:

- Each Module is composed of a team of teachers (team teaching) and is coordinated by a **Module Coordinator**. The module coordinator monitors the learning objectives and ensures that there is sufficient coordination in terms of content, teaching formats, assessment methods and deadlines. The coordination is of particular importance when new staff comes in, when staff decides to make some adaptations to their units, etc...
- Coordination between modules (or courses) is taken up by the **Programme Director**. He/she oversees the 3 masters and is responsible for the day-to-day management of the programmes.
- Finally, the **Chair of the Education Commission** is in charge of the policy aspects of education, including participating at central level education bodies of the university.

### 3. Long term vision on our master programmes

**IOB has decided to glocalise our master programmes. The idea is to:**

- **go global:** certain modules of the MA programmes will be delivered in regional hubs in Africa, Latin America and Asia
- **go local:** content-wise the modules delivered will be co-created, co-organised and co-taught with our partners in the Global South.

In order to guarantee high quality education, the nexus with research is important. Therefore, IOB has committed to actively invest in the **co-creation of knowledge** together with and for our partners in the Global South. We aim to consolidate a broad, global networked partnership that includes the possibility for the creation of stand-alone teaching modules as micro-credentials, summer schools, but also more research oriented networks for PhD students and/or a PhD programme for development studies.

The long term general purpose of both projects is to create a **global alliance of academic partners** that would jointly offer a number of academic programmes in Antwerp and in the different locations of our partners. The aim is **to make these programmes truly global** (connecting 4 continents) and open them up to students and academics from different places in the world. In this way, they can contribute to more differentiation in terms of the content of our programmes, more internationalisation, a stronger education and research nexus, and to the decolonisation of our study programmes.

The development of this vision has been accelerated by the Flemish Interuniversity Council for Interuniversity Development Cooperation (VLIR-UOS)<sup>7</sup> because they provided generous funding in the period 2017-2022 and for 2022-2027 to realise our 'Going Global' and 'Connect' projects. More information can be found in box 2.

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<sup>7</sup> Link to VLIR-UOS website: [www.vliruos.be](http://www.vliruos.be)

## Box 2: VLIR-UOS funding for IOB

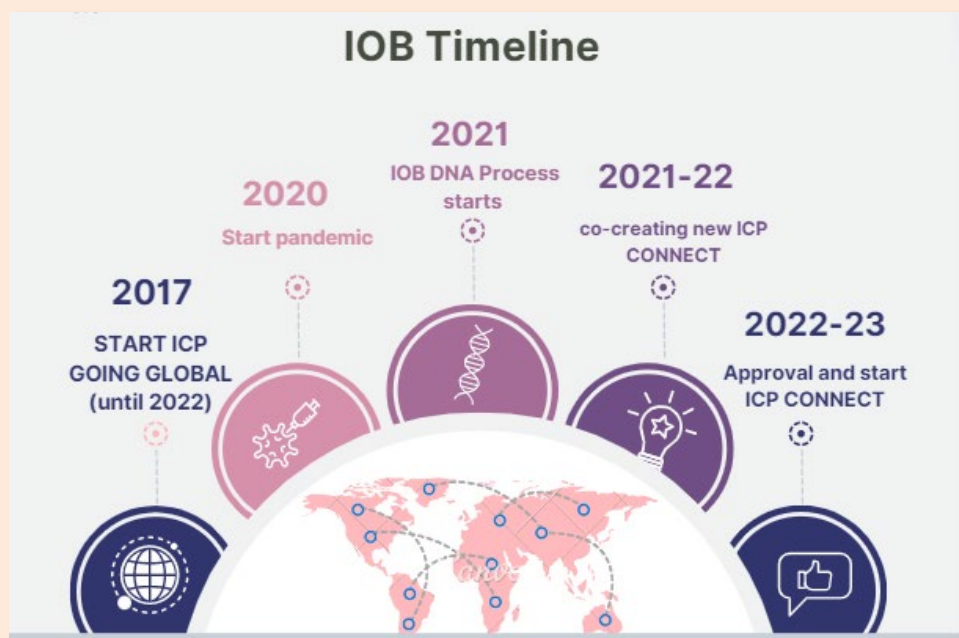
In 2016 VLIR-UOS launched a funding call. International Master Programmes (ICPs) could apply for

1. scholarships for students coming from the Global South and
2. additional funding (referred to as ICP incremental funding) to strengthen the South dimension of these programmes by linking them with the local context of one or more countries in the Global South by means of for example student and/or staff mobility and/or partial delocalisation of the programme to (one of) these countries.

IOB successfully applied for this funding and was able to start up the project henceforth referred to as **“ICP Going Global”** (2017-2022). The ICP Going Global Mid-term evaluation<sup>1</sup> took place in 2019-2020 with very positive results. In 2021, VLIR-UOS launched a new call for funding – referred to as **“ICP Connect”** (2022-2027)- to deepen and broaden the South dimension of the ICPs that received incremental funding (and were positively evaluated). IOB again applied with success (ICP Connect proposal [DEM](#)- [GOV](#)- [GLOB](#))

For IOB these funding opportunities allowed us to take the next step with our partners in the Global South. For the first funding phase we developed a project which we called **“[ICP Going Global](#)”** (2017-2022, 12 scholarships and 100.000 Euro per master per year), the second period builds on this and is referred to as **“ICP Connect”** (2022-2027, 10 scholarships and 100.000 Euro per master per year).

## Box 3: Time line ICP Going Global and ICP Connect



Alongside the VLIR-UOS funding incentive, there were also two international tendencies that highlighted the need for change. On the one hand, the evolution from the Southern-oriented Millennium Development Goals towards global Sustainable Development Goals, on the other hand the woke-movement and the decolonisation debate which questions the legitimacy of a Northern based development studies institute. These tendencies indicate the importance of constructing a social license for our existence/functioning and the need to support platforms where actors, scholars and practitioners from the Global North and South can exchange and engage in joint knowledge creation - teaching and outreach/impact.

An important facilitator for change is of course the wider university environment in which the IOB is embedded. At that level, we have encountered a lot of good will and flexibility to support us in our endeavors. From the administrative point of view there is a willingness to be flexible and support us, but also from the policy level we feel strengthened and endorsed given the university commitment to global engagement which is laid out in this [paper \(Action plan Global Engagement\)](#)<sup>8</sup>.

**In a nutshell, ICP Going Global and ICP Connect are crucially important vehicles because they deliver important contributions to multi-perspectivity, internationalisation and the nexus education-research.**

In the following sections, we set out to discuss where we stand with regard to these three topics.

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<sup>8</sup> See education portfolio: [https://pintra.uantwerpen.be/bbcswebdav/institution/Faculteiten\\_en\\_instituten/IOB/03 Education/04 CIKO - UFOO/02 External quality assurance/2023 International peer review/Supporting documents ZER 2023](https://pintra.uantwerpen.be/bbcswebdav/institution/Faculteiten_en_instituten/IOB/03_Education/04_CIKO_-_UFOO/02_External_quality_assurance/2023_International_peer_review/Supporting_documents_ZER_2023)

## 4. Multi-perspectivity in education

Multi-perspectivity is about bringing together **different, including very contrasting perspectives** on facts, events, theories, models, methodologies and paradigms in studying development actors, policies and processes. Establishing a dialogue between different perspectives implies stimulating critical reflection in the classroom with and between IOB students coming from very diverse backgrounds.

### 4.1. Vision

The ultimate goal is that teaching staff and students have a more holistic, inclusive, and empathetic understanding of development issues/challenges in the past, present and future. This calls for **modesty and humility** because all scientific endeavors are bound to be limited/incomplete by the particular 'paradigm' or worldview that underpins it. From this perspective, we need to create space for other traditions, including non-western ways of knowledge production. The classroom should therefore be a safe space for exchange, dialogue and (critical) (self-)reflection on one's ideas and one's position. As such, the teachers' role goes beyond 'teaching'. It is our aim to empower students to bravely speak up, to question and challenge. Our future vision of education is that **IOB offers high quality education in a brave, dynamic learning environment that embraces multi-perspectivity and diversity.**

### 4.2. Good practices

#### **Diversity is enshrined in our mission, vision and recruitment**

Diversity and multi-perspectivity can be found in our commitment to **the 3Ms: Multi-disciplinarity, Mixed-methods and Multi-level research** on development issues. Given the nexus education-research (see topic 3) the 3Ms are brought to the class room and students are confronted with this diversity and multi-perspectivity.

Staff hiring policies reflect this diversity. There has been a serious effort **to internationalise our staff**, while balancing out the 3Ms above mentioned. Given the (historical) expertise on the Great Lakes Region, special efforts to hire pre- and post-docs from this region were counterbalanced with attempts to attract staff from other regions, to strike a balance between disciplines, research methods and to balance out micro versus macro level research.

The result is that today, IOB-staff is very diverse, not just in terms of nationalities, but also coming from very different disciplinary backgrounds, and referring to very different epistemological, ontological, methodological and ideological preferences.

Alongside an increasingly diversified fixed staff, we have engaged with filling certain geographical (Global South) gaps through engaging with temporary teaching staff, guest lecturers, scholars in residence etc, to deepen this diversity and multi-perspectivity.

#### **Diversity in teaching**

We have created space to institutionalise multi-perspectivity through **team teaching** in the different modules. We encourage diversity in teams so that staff members bring very different, even conflicting ideas into the class room about what development means or is, where it comes

from, what it should or could be, how it could or should be researched, and which (radical or gradual) pathways for change may exist. For example in Research Methods I **different research paradigms** and the values that underpin them are discussed in class. Exposing the students to this diversity and its contradictions; inviting students to know and understand different perspectives, is what we consider the unique selling point and the strength of our Master programmes. It allows students to make informed choices about which perspectives they prefer (not) to work with. So, staff challenges and confronts the students, but students need to make their own decisions. The whole decolonisation debate and the DNA process IOB is undergoing, has deepened this process as it has triggered all lecturers to revise their course materials, to bring in (even) more perspectives and to actively engage with what a **decolonial perspective** might mean for their courses.

Another level of diversity concerns the **teaching formats/methods**. Next to “classical lecturing”, lecturers guide our students in different courses or units to learn via group work, class discussions or debates, action labs, peer to peer evaluations, institutional visits, etcetera.

#### Box 4: Example study visit

Students in the master Governance and Development, following the track “From Violent Conflict to Peace and State Reconstruction” go on a study visit to the Africa museum in Tervuren each year. The visit is part of a thematic cluster dealing with transitional justice, here applied to the context of colonial pasts, including but not limited to Belgium, and its colonial past in Central Africa. The student trip consists of a guided tour to the Africa museum in the morning, followed by a mock debate and seminar on transitional justice and colonial pasts, held in a seminar room at the museum. During the mock debate, students engage in a discussion on the basis of a number of propositions that they need to either defend or oppose.



#### VISIT AFRICAMUSEUM

The advanced Master's students of Governance and Development, specialising in the track *From Violent Conflict to Peace and State Reconstruction*, visited the AfricaMuseum in Tervuren on 28 April 2022. Previously known as the Royal Museum for Central Africa, the museum had undergone recent renovations. Following a guided tour, the students participated in a simulated debate regarding the implementation of transitional justice techniques to address the aftermath of colonial histories. ■





We thus encourage **student interaction and active learning** as much as possible within the timeframes of the busy course schedules. In the general [UAntwerp programme evaluations](#)<sup>9</sup>, IOB students gave an average score of 5.22 on 6 for the statement “The programme expected that I actively participated and thought along.”. The statement “In the programme, a good mix of educational methods was used.” was given an average score of 4.98 on 6. “In the programme, a good mix in assessment methods was used” gets an average score of 4.95 on 6. This means **IOB students very much agree with these statements**. (In general, scores higher than 3.5 on 6 in surveys are labelled as good at UAntwerp).

At the same time, students have also shown appreciation (in different surveys and focus group discussions) for the fact that **teaching staff is very approachable**.

Since our students mainly come from the Global South, from different regions, different disciplinary and professional backgrounds, the **classroom setting already contains multiple perspectives**.

Added to this we promote multi-perspectivity by bringing in **more voices from the Global South**: inviting guest lecturers (**both online and live in class**), inviting our partners (**both online and live in class**), but also diversifying our reading materials to authors from the Global South, working towards co-creation of courses (see section internationalisation) and gradually increasing the role of partners. In parallel, lecturers who were less involved in the ICP Connect programme have also actively worked to strengthen and or increase multi-perspectivity in their courses. More recently, in Theories of Development (Module I, september-november), two units out of four were co-created and co-taught with professors and/or post-docs from our partners in the South (DRC, Nicaragua and Guatemala). The closing debate of Theories of Development is always about discussing different perspectives on a particular development topic.

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<sup>9</sup> In the programme evaluations final year students are asked about their global satisfaction and how the UAntwerp vision on education is recognised in the programme.

<sup>9</sup> See education portfolio > [https://pintra.uantwerpen.be/bbcswebdav/institution/Faculteiten en instituten/IOB/03 Education/01 Educational commission \(OWC\)/02 Meeting documents/2022-2023/2022-12-05/UAntwerp programme evaluations](https://pintra.uantwerpen.be/bbcswebdav/institution/Faculteiten%20en%20instituten/IOB/03%20Education/01%20Educational%20commission%20(OWC)/02%20Meeting%20documents/2022-2023/2022-12-05/UAntwerp%20programme%20evaluations)

### Box 5: An innovative best practice for multi-perspectivity in teaching

This year the closing debate of Theories of Development consisted of an assignment: students got tickets to watch the Hollywood movie “The Woman King”. This movie is a historical drama on the slave trade and colonisation from the perspective of the Kingdom of Dahomey (current Benin). This kingdom was unique in that its army consisted of female warriors. The closing debate was online with the historical advisor to this movie, Léonard Wantchekon, who delved deeper into the rise and demise of the female warriors of Dahomey and the role of colonisation and slave trade. Alongside the debate relating to the movie, an opinion poll and an experiment were set up so as to control if the information provided by the movie and an alternative source of information regarding the historical accuracy of the movie had a differentiated impact on perceptions of empowerment and decolonisation. What was really interesting was that, in spite of some important historical inaccuracies, the movie did have a positive impact on a feeling of empowerment and decolonisation.

#### The Woman King

Students were invited to watch the movie ‘The Woman King’. This is an atypical Hollywood blockbuster, as it treats with a part of African history, namely the rule of King Ghezo over Dahomey and the role played by slave trade and women warriors (the Agojie) in his kingdom. After watching the movie, students were invited to fill out an opinion poll on the movie and how it may (or may not) contribute to women empowerment and decolonizing minds. Finally, on November, 7 we discuss the results of this opinion poll, and had an occasion to exchange with [Prof. Leonard Wantchekon](#), who acted as a historical advisor for the movie, and who is currently writing a book on the Agojie of Dahomey.



### Use of existing systems to monitor multi-perspectivity, diversity, decolonisation

Strong yet **flexible quality assurance mechanisms** allow us to **experiment, monitor**, and have a very short feedback loop. For example, a [survey on decolonizing development studies](#) at IOB was sent to the students at the end of AY 2020-2021 and showed us some critical comments and elements for improvement. While IOB staff started working on these elements (during the DNA days, during meetings of the Education Commission, and at an individual teachers' level) a **focus group** in June 2022 questioned students on whether multi-perspectivity was sufficiently welcomed in the classroom, and what ideas they had to improve this. The results from this focus group were again discussed during different meetings with teaching staff resulting in more lecturers taking a critical look at their course contents, teaching methods and their own position as a researcher/teacher. In the **course information sheets** <sup>10</sup> and **assessment sheets** <sup>11</sup> we can

<sup>10</sup> Course information sheets are updated every year, see most recent versions here: education portfolio > [https://pintra.uantwerpen.be/bbcswebdav/institution/Faculteiten en instituten/IOB/03 Education/03 Master programmes/01 Course information/2022-2023](https://pintra.uantwerpen.be/bbcswebdav/institution/Faculteiten%20en%20instituten/IOB/03%20Education/03%20Master%20programmes/01%20Course%20information/2022-2023)

<sup>11</sup> Assessment sheets are updated at least every 4 years, last update in 2022: education portfolio > [https://pintra.uantwerpen.be/bbcswebdav/institution/Faculteiten en instituten/IOB/03 Education/04 CIKO - UFOO/01 Internal quality assurance/06 Assessment sheets/2022](https://pintra.uantwerpen.be/bbcswebdav/institution/Faculteiten%20en%20instituten/IOB/03%20Education/04%20CIKO%20-%20UFOO/01%20Internal%20quality%20assurance/06%20Assessment%20sheets/2022)

see that some courses are gradually transforming (see the above-mentioned examples for the course ‘Theories of development’). For example unit 4 from the course ‘Research Methods II’, was transformed into a new unit called “Transformative methodologies in development”. Students that picked this optional unit could even choose to be involved in a university wide participative research exercise on the UAntwerp’s colonial history and decolonial future. On 31 March 2023 the involved IOB students will present their research for a broader audience (see [Academic event | Aula Lumumba | University of Antwerp \(uantwerpen.be\)](#)).

In November 2022 an **education policy day** was organised, where all teaching staff at IOB was invited to follow a workshop on ‘multi-perspectivity in the classroom’ (moderated by Fanny Matheusen, a Deep Democracy<sup>12</sup> facilitator).

The focus group held in January 2023) tried to evaluate, amongst others, how students viewed multi-perspectivity in the first module of the master programmes this academic year. The 11 students present in the focus group, all confirmed that lecturers at IOB are offering many perspectives from the Global South, that lecturers welcome different opinions, and that students felt safe during classes. Students explicitly mentioned that the course “Theories of development” brought different – including decolonial - perspectives. “IOB lecturers are of the Western professors that are not shy to talk about decolonisation. IOB teachers talk very critically about this and are open and enlightened to showcase that the Western way is not the only way, and emphasizing that development should come from the realities of every context.” The self-critical perspective of some teachers on their own background and position was very much appreciated. On a more critical note however, students also noticed the fact that most teachers mainly refer to Africa in their teaching. The students would appreciate more reference to Latin America, Asia, the Middle East and Europe. Students mentioned there is no staff originating from Asia. These comments are taken seriously, but not easy to tackle, see the challenges under section 5 and 6.

### Safe or brave spaces?

Every academic year a “gender and diversity” workshop takes place with the incoming students. This is facilitated by external experts and leads to the formulation of a **student code of conduct** in order to avoid gender/race based intercultural tensions and misunderstandings (see also the next section).

For staff, a similar document – the “**team charter** <sup>13</sup>” - has been produced during the DNA discussions and approved by the Board in February 2022. This charter reminds us how we should interact with each other in a non-violent way. Since the adoption of the charter, the principles of non-violent communication are regularly referred to. This communication style however does require a constant level of sensitivity and alertness, which – in academic circles – is not always evident given our ‘critical’ bias and sometimes very direct debating styles.

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<sup>12</sup> More information on this website: <https://deep-democracy.be/>

<sup>13</sup> See education portfolio > [https://pintra.uantwerpen.be/bbcswebdav/institution/Faculteiten en instituten/IOB/03 Education/04 CIKO - UFOO/02 External quality assurance/2023 International peer review/Supporting documents ZER 2023](https://pintra.uantwerpen.be/bbcswebdav/institution/Faculteiten%20en%20instituten/IOB/03%20Education/04%20CIKO%20-%20UFOO/02%20External%20quality%20assurance/2023%20International%20peer%20review/Supporting%20documents%20ZER%202023)

Also **amongst students** outside the classrooms, we try to create and support **safe spaces** where every voice can be heard. In the academic year 2021-2022, some student representatives initiated the concept of “brown bag lunches”: students gathered the last Friday of every month and listen to a student’s presentation of about 30 minutes and 30 minutes of Q&A, while having lunch. Such initiatives allowed for informal discussions, so that students can **also learn more from each other**. In the focus group of June 2022, students were very enthusiastic about “the brown bag lunches”, as these were very safe (informal) spaces, where they could say anything. They recommended organizing this every year, hence the concept and format was passed to the new group of students at the start of this academic year.

Although safe spaces ‘sound’ quite important, we also acknowledge that in reality safe spaces are not void of power dynamics, nor does the wider context disappear in the classroom. In real life, a lot of spaces are not safe, and there the braveness is sometimes what needs to be nourished.

### 4.3. Challenges and possible future actions

#### Focus versus multi-perspectivity & interaction in the classroom

**Striking a balance** in class between bringing in more perspectives, allowing for more interaction, dialogue and debate and at the same time ensuring sufficient in-depth focus is a challenge. Added to this, facilitating more interaction, dialogue and debate in class may lead to increased tensions. Given that many students come from very different backgrounds and may think very differently about topics, this may lead to conflict. **Professors are however not skilled in conflict mediation**, nor are we trained to teach students about non-violent communication. We are interested to exchange ideas about this tension and to learn how other teaching programmes face this challenge.

#### Mainstreaming or concentrating?

Given the above constraint, question is thus if all courses must fully embrace multi-perspectivity (mainstreaming it), or if throughout the year specific activities take place which focus on looking at a topic from multiple perspectives. The mainstreaming strategy will lead to unavoidable **management challenges** because all shifts at unit, subunit, module level need to be monitored and coordinated, within modules, but also between modules. Mainstreaming may lead to diluted or shallow forms of multi-perspectivity. Specific, concentrated, focused events around multi-perspectivity might be easier to monitor in terms of quality, but these run the risk of being perceived as something ‘separate’. Focused activities will also require time investments of staff and if we want it to be taken seriously by students, attendance should be compulsory hence, ECTS<sup>14</sup> need to be allocated. It would thus require a re-allocation of ECTS within the programmes. This too needs to be managed. One suggestion to marry a mainstreamed and a focused approach was to develop a ‘learning track’ on multi-perspectivity that runs throughout the whole year and the entire curriculum. In order to keep workload manageable for students, this would entail dropping substantial sections of existing courses. Other suggestions were made to include

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<sup>14</sup> The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is a tool that makes studies and courses more transparent. ECTS information of courses makes it easier for students to move between countries and to get their academic qualifications and study periods abroad recognised. Courses typically have a certain amount of ECTS which gives an indication of the weight of the course in terms of work load for the student.

activities/debates/seminars at the end of each module to stimulate interaction and exchange among different perspectives. We would very much like to get inputs on these dilemmas.

### **Managing micro-changes and aggregate effects**

Many lecturers have been critically revising their own courses: bringing in perspectives from the South, either through literature, or inviting guest speakers, or teaming up with scholars from our partner institutes from the Global South. The micro-level changes, at an aggregate level may lead to larger shifts. Managing this is a challenge. Although we have coordination mechanisms at the level of the courses, they have become a bit dormant, so we are undertaking initiatives to revive them again. Coordination between courses is usually guaranteed through the Programme Director, but given the many dynamics and changes, this role needs to be taken up with more emphasis than before, and maybe requires more support and attention. Should we now have at least once or twice a year, an open Education Commission where we check and re-check the main issues/changes in modules? Given the workload however and the general 'meeting' fatigue we also need to be careful not to overdo these exercises... In order to monitor micro level changes we can use the existing student surveys and add some questions on multi-perspectivity so that we can keep track of the courses and if and how they deal with multi-perspectivity.

### **Managing confusion and contradictions**

Tensions between perspectives can lead to staff standing in stark opposition with each other, and it can lead to major confusions for students.

To start with there is disagreement between staff on how to deal with these tensions: should we accept these differences, agree to disagree and allow these to exist in relative isolation from each other? Alternatively, must/can we bring them into a dialogue? Is a dialogue even possible?

Next, there is uncertainty about how to bring this to the classroom. Many students come to IOB looking for answers for the development challenges they see. However, instead of giving answers we confront them with different, even conflicting perspectives. This may profoundly confuse students. Taking this argument one-step further may also lead to norm fading, which can be risky, because where does the questioning stop? If everything can be questioned (including 'evidence', what is evidence? What are facts? What is science? What is knowledge?) Then how do you draw boundaries between fact and fiction, between what is scientific and what isn't? Where do we draw the line? In addition, can we find collectively shared boundaries to distinguish 'academic quality'?

Staff – in theory – seems to agree that teaching is not about convincing students that one perspective is better or worse than the other, nor should it be the case that certain research paradigms are labelled as 'conservative', 'neo-liberal', or 'activist' and thus considered as inferior/superior. At the same time however, it has been forwarded during meetings that certain staff members feel threatened and put in place by arguments that directly or indirectly (are perceived to) claim moral superiority. These ideological tensions have surfaced quite visibly during the last dissertation defenses (September 2022) where some students were confronted with assessors who fundamentally questioned the legitimacy and relevance of the research question, design, the literature review, the theory chosen, the methodology chosen and the nature of the policy recommendations. Not only did this take away the opportunity for the student to actually talk about the substance of the dissertation, it was also perceived as an indirect way of

questioning (attacking?) the research paradigm of the supervisor of the dissertation. We have discussed this at length in several meetings and we jointly decided that whichever paradigmatic disagreements exist between staff, this should never ever be taken into the evaluation of a student. We have therefore decided on very clear rules of the game:

- a session coordinator is in charge of communicating and monitoring the rules of the game
- assessors are allowed to ask a critical question relating to the deeper underlying choices for the research paradigm/research design,
- but the assessors need to give due attention to the core substance of the dissertation and allow the student to defend him or herself within those parameters.

If and how this will work however remains to be seen.



## 5. Deepen and Broaden Internationalisation

Internationalisation is IOB's core-business, at two levels: internationalisation at home, and international mobility of staff and students.

**Internationalisation at home:** We do research and teach about topics that are international in general and more specifically about (global) development actors, policies and processes with an emphasis on development challenges in low-income countries in the Global South. Within the University of Antwerp, IOB also offers courses on these topics for students from other UAntwerp faculties: for example, the course Global Justice is taught by IOB staff, but is an optional course for all faculties (this year 176 students enrolled). For the 10<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, the lecture series '[Debating Development](#)' engages a broader UAntwerp audience of students, staff as well as professionals in debates and reflection on topics of global development (theme in 2022: "People on the move: Leaving no one behind?"; theme in 2021: "Dystopic development and the temporalities of transformation": respectively 192 students (in 2022) and 156 students (in 2021) participated). Moreover, IOB staff teaches 11 courses in other UAntwerp faculties.

The international outlook is also visible in our students and staff profiles. Our students mainly come from the Global South (this year 62 new students, 26 different nationalities, 7 high income, 7 upper-middle income, 25 lower-middle income, 23 least developed countries). Our 9 research assistants (AAP) have 8 different nationalities. The 32 (paid) BAP have 15 different nationalities<sup>15</sup>.

**International mobility:** IOB staff is actively engaged to teaching abroad: 10 courses are being taught at universities in (partner) universities abroad. We also have a long tradition of institutional cooperation with academic partners in Africa, Latin and Central America and Asia. Initially this was mainly focused on joint research and in some cases on societal outreach but recently shifted to education as well (see below for the info on ICP Going Global and ICP Connect).

**However,....** In spite of its very international outlook, IOB remains a Northern based institute with predominantly European, white, male and middle-aged professors. Given the decolonisation debate, and the global challenges, IOB, in consultation with its long-term partners in the Global South, developed a vision of its future as a Northern-based development studies institute, and it has undertaken some steps to tackle these challenges.

### 5.1. Vision

It is our vision that the future of our IOB Master programmes, in terms of content, format and modalities, will be truly international through the **co-creation and co-implementation** of the programmes with our partners in **a global network**. We refer back to section 3 here, where we emphasise the importance of the projects ICP Going Global and ICP Connect to realise this vision.

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<sup>15</sup> Given that IOB is constantly growing/changing, small inconsistencies between different datasets could be possible based on the precise moment on which the specific snapshot was provided. Overall trends and patterns however are clear and consistent.

## 5.1. Good practices

In what follows we highlight some good practices in internationalisation focusing on respectively structural partnerships, students and alumni.

### Structural Partnerships

ICP Going Global was, as a whole, a vessel for experimenting with good practices. Good practices are based on good principles; hence we decided that we needed to:

- build on existing partnerships (at that time with universities in the DRC, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Philippines, Tanzania),
- engage in matching demand and supply,
- strengthen the nexus education, research and outreach/impact, and
- handle an incremental, gradual approach with diversified levels of ambition, given the different historical trajectories of the different partnerships. The ‘younger’ partnerships, and/or the partnerships in more conflict ridden contexts formulated weaker levels of ambition (ex. to start with joint research/teaching activities in the Philippines, to organise a module in Bukavu, DRC on Governance of Natural Resources and on community based monitoring at Mzumbe University, Tanzania), while the ‘older’, more institutionalised partnership opted for thinking towards a joint Master programme in the long run (e.g. with Universidad Centroamericana in Nicaragua).

We also wanted to make sure that partnerships would move from individual initiatives to more institutionalised forms of cooperation. In order to do so, working with our partners became part of the job-description when hiring new staff.

As mentioned earlier, in 2017 we received generous funding from the Flemish Interuniversity Council (VLIR-UOS) to start realizing this vision to “glocalise” our master programmes (“Going Global”). In particular, it allowed us to implement a number of pilots to experiment with student and staff mobility.

**Student Mobility** was promoted by the **mobility window** in our master programmes: during Module I, for the course “Research Methods II”, IOB students could apply for a research internship to work on an ongoing research project at partner universities (in DRC, Nicaragua, Philippines, Tanzania, and Uganda). In 2021-22, 5 students, participated in a 6 weeks research internship at Mzumbe University, Tanzania. During Module IV – the dissertation module - students could also apply to do **field work for their dissertation** with one of the partner universities or to other countries of the global South. 12 % of the students of AY 2021-22 went on fieldwork abroad for their dissertation. Travel grants are available for both the mobility window programme and the fieldwork mobility.

**Staff Mobility** was organised in both directions (from IOB to partners and partners to IOB), and stimulated as part of ICP Going Global and now also in ICP Connect. Mobility of academic staff leads to contributions in education (guest lecturers, co-teaching modules, involvement in benchmark or curriculum development, ...) and/or research and outreach activities at both IOB and the partner universities.

Alongside student and staff mobility, through ICP Going Global and ICP Connect, we initiated the **development of joint modules & curriculum support**. IOB and partners have jointly created several modules/short courses. The overall ambition is that these modules can be used as stand-alone modules (micro credentials), but also as building blocks for both (new) master programmes in the partner countries and for the IOB masters. Below the overview:

#### **DRC:**

- A short course on [Governance of Natural Resources](#) has been developed, as a joint educational module with input from lecturers at Université Catholique de Bukavu (UCB) and at IOB. The module has been organised already four times (December 2019, February 2020, November 2021, June 2022)
- IOB staff has supported the curriculum development of the DEA en Economie at UCB (DRC) which was organised in February 2021. The short course on Governance of Natural Resources has been integrated into the third cycle programme.

#### **Tanzania:**

- A co-created course on community based monitoring (CBM) has been developed with partners from the De la Salle University (DSLU) in the Philippines and is taught at IOB as a subunit in Module III (LIPR). An action lab linked to this topic/ course has been developed jointly with Mzumbe University through the action research project ([Fuatilia Maji & Women Water Watch](#)) in which students (both IOB and partner) learn about the practice of community based monitoring in the rural water sector.
- IOB staff has also been supporting the development of the new Master in Development Evaluation which will be organised at Mzumbe University. The course and action lab on CBM will be integrated into this new master and the collaboration with other academic institutions will be even broadened more to include new partners.

#### **Nicaragua:**

- An innovative field methodological course on research and co-creation of knowledge in/for development was co-designed and implemented in Nicaragua. This course offers students the opportunity to interact with a community of development practitioners, researchers, community members to experiment with and critically reflect on methodologies for co-creation of knowledge ([see video](#))
- An online course on research methods for development: “Emancipatory Horizons: Theories and Research Methods for Rethinking ‘Development’” was co-organised by Nitlapan-UCA and IOB UA. Two version were implemented, first in 2021 with 19 participants and then, in shorter version, in 2022 with 12 participants. The IOB LIPR Module inspired this course but received important adaptations in terms of content (e.g. more contextualised course content, specific attention to decolonial approaches, more focus on supporting the research work implemented by the students).

We committed **to deepen and broaden** the existing collaborations and to move **from bilateral to multi-lateral networks**, which allows for more South-South cooperation. Additionally, we also invited new partners (e.g. Centro de alternativas al desarrollo (Cealdes-Colombia) Uganda

Christian University (UCU), Universidad Andina Simon Bolivar (UASB - Ecuador), Pontificia Universidad Javeriana (PUJ-Colombia),) Université de Lumubashi (UNILU, DRC).

A first step to allow for deeper and broader interaction was the **Partner week** that took place from 5 to 9 September 2022. It allowed the South partners to get to know each other's research and teaching interests (for example: Nicaraguan scholars wanted to follow the module organised in Bukavu, the Philippine partner wanted to collaborate with Tanzania, etc...).

Alongside the funded programme, we have involved our partners in the **benchmark exercise for the dissertations** (end of August to 5 September 2022). Together with other external experts, our South partners participated in our dissertation conference, they read and evaluated dissertations and we asked them to evaluate the whole dissertation and assessment process. This helped us to define some elements to improve the process ([see report of the benchmark exercise](#))<sup>16</sup>.

We also started to **involve staff from our partner/friends institutes as co-lecturers in our teaching programme in Antwerp**. In Module I, Theories of Development, two units were co-taught with partners from DRC, Nicaragua and Guatemala. In Module III Local Institutions and Poverty Reduction, two subunits, 'Theories and Concepts' and 'Community based monitoring' were co-taught with partners from respectively Nicaragua and the Philippines. We would like to consolidate and expand this so that our partners' inputs become more visible, more heard and more prominent in Antwerp.

### **The class room and students' Intercultural competencies**

At the core of the internationalisation at IOB, is the unique wealth of diversity (nationalities, cultural, academic background, professional and life experiences, ...) among the students. In surveys, students and alumni indicate that they learn a lot in terms of intercultural communication, awareness, and knowledge and openness to the world. The latter is a result of the **diverse student population** and an intense **interaction in the classroom**, but even **beyond** in everyday activities of living together with different nationalities and in a city of the Global North. Several activities within the IOB curriculum are specifically geared towards stimulating this rich interaction as well as coping with the difficulties that living/ working together with many different perspectives inevitably entails.

To stimulate the students getting to know each other and bonding as a group, a **kick off weekend** is organised at the beginning of October. During this weekend, team-building activities specifically geared towards intercultural awareness and bonding, are led by an external facilitator. After the kick off weekend, a **workshop on gender and diversity** is organised by UCOS<sup>17</sup> (the University Centre for Development Cooperation, a recognised Belgian NGO that aims to strengthen the global citizenship skills among students in higher education) in which external facilitators with IOB students work on opportunities and challenges of intercultural interaction and gender. The kick-off weekend and the workshop are always positively evaluated by the

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<sup>16</sup> See education portfolio > [https://pintra.uantwerpen.be/bbcswebdav/institution/Faculteiten\\_en\\_instituten/IOB/03\\_Education/04\\_CIKO\\_-\\_UFOO/02\\_External\\_quality\\_assurance/2022\\_Benchmark\\_dissertations/2022\\_Benchmark](https://pintra.uantwerpen.be/bbcswebdav/institution/Faculteiten_en_instituten/IOB/03_Education/04_CIKO_-_UFOO/02_External_quality_assurance/2022_Benchmark_dissertations/2022_Benchmark)

<sup>17</sup> See website: [www.ucos.be](http://www.ucos.be)

students. After the workshop, a student team works on developing a **student code of conduct** in which IOB students jointly identify the basic principles of how they want to engage with each other.

Clearly, in the lectures **several types of education formats** are used to actively stimulate this intercultural interaction and learning, such as debate, group work, assignments on student's own countries/ experiences and action labs. IOB lecturers and guest lectures / practitioners from around the world share their expertise with students.

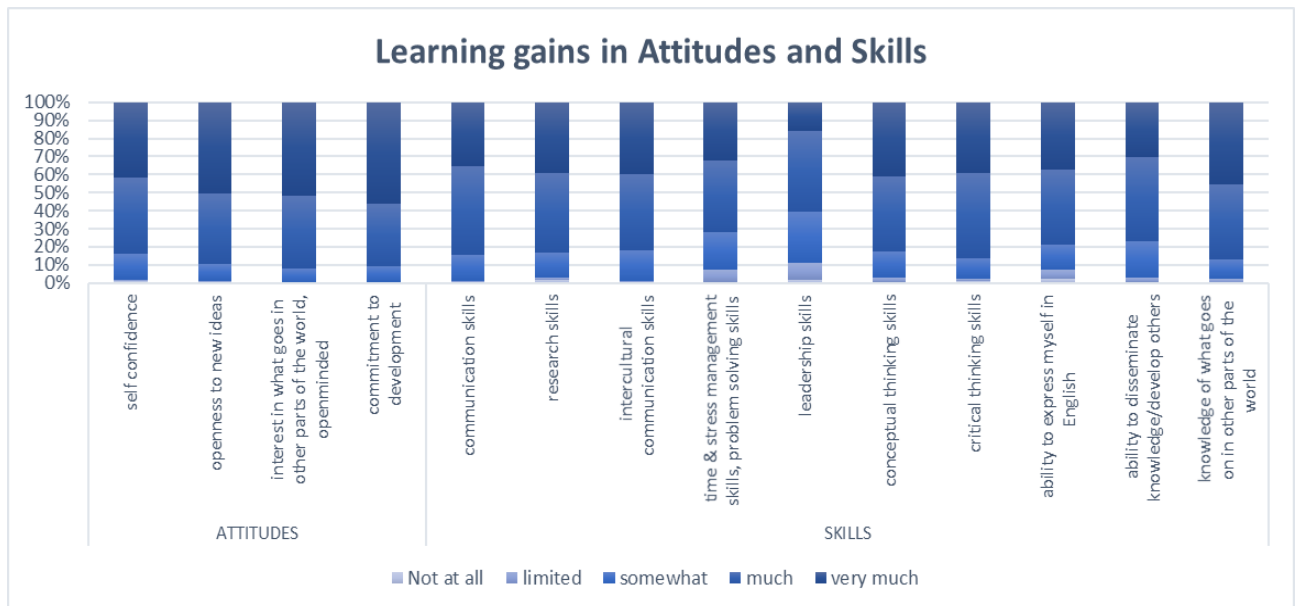
Results of the general [UAntwerp programme evaluations](#) <sup>18</sup> of 2022 indeed highlight the importance **IOB students attribute to the topic of internationalisation**: "During the programme I developed international competencies to function in a global society." gets an average score of 5.1 on 6. "The programme offered sufficient possibilities to develop international competencies without having to go abroad." gets an average score of 4.7 on 6. This means IOB students very much agree with these statements. (In general, scores higher than 3.5 on 6 in surveys are labelled as good at UA.)

Similarly, also the results of the alumni barometer study confirm the importance of internationalisation and the nexus research-education (see section 6) in the IOB programmes. In the 2019 alumni survey, IOB graduates indicated they had learned a lot through their study experience at IOB: graduates gained (very) much **knowledge** (95 %) and **skills** (85 %), but equally importantly **new ideas and perspectives** (93 %) and even **networks** (65 %) ([see also impact summary video](#)).

In terms of deepening ideas and attitudes, results show that the study experience (very) much increased their confidence (84%), being more open (90%), having deepened their commitment to development (91%), and showing more interest in what goes on in the world (92%). On average, all attitudes score above 4 on a five-point scale, with commitment to development scoring slightly higher (4,47).

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<sup>18</sup> In the programme evaluation final year students are asked about their global satisfaction and how the UAntwerp vision on education is recognised in the programme.  
See education portfolio > [https://pintra.uantwerpen.be/bbcswebdav/institution/Faculteiten\\_en\\_instituten/IOB/03\\_Education/01\\_Educational\\_commission\\_\(OWC\)/02\\_Meeting\\_documents/2022-2023/2022-12-05/UAntwerp\\_programme\\_evaluations](https://pintra.uantwerpen.be/bbcswebdav/institution/Faculteiten_en_instituten/IOB/03_Education/01_Educational_commission_(OWC)/02_Meeting_documents/2022-2023/2022-12-05/UAntwerp_programme_evaluations)



On enhancing **skills**, top scoring skills are critical thinking (87%), knowledge of what goes on in other parts of the world (87%), intercultural communication (82%), communication (85 %), research (83%), and conceptual thinking skills (83%). More than 75% of all graduates stated that they have improved their skills significantly except on leadership, a skill not actively promoted in the IOB development studies programme. These results support the central positions attributed to internationalisation and the nexus between education and research at IOB ([based on reports/articles barometer project](#) ).

### Alumni in a broad IOB community (students- staff- partners- alumni)

Another important element of internationalisation in realizing the ambitious goal of globalizing and localizing our Master programmes is the [Alumni](#) policy. The IOB alumni **policy** is based on [eleven engagement dimensions](#) all of which have been translated into specific alumni activities, spaces and strategies. The goal of the alumni policy is to create networks and activities that stimulate collaboration and exchange among the broader IOB community (IOB alumni, students, staff) to support our IOB graduates in their professional trajectory and our joint role as agents of change. Several types of **communication channels** facilitate our keeping in touch with and stimulating networks among alumni members. IOB alumni can keep in touch through the [IOB alumni Facebook group or via LinkedIn](#) and can stay up to date on what is going on at IOB through IOB's alumni magazine, [Exchange to Change](#). To stimulate exchange and collaboration, a variety of [activities](#) are organised (meet and greet, alumni seminars, impact award, IOB community network event, ...), both online, at IOB, and in various countries around the world. Several national **alumni networks** have been set up in several (partner) countries (Tanzania, Uganda, DRC, Nicaragua, Philippines, Belgium, ...). Next to the national/regional alumni chapters, IOB is also experimenting with **knowledge networks**, which bring together topical expertise and experience within the IOB community (students, alumni, staff, partners) such as for example [COMMUNITOR](#), the Community of Practice on citizen science (see below). Supporting our graduates already starts during the master programme, through the **Life after IOB trajectory**, in which students are offered a variety of information sessions and workshops (how to make a video, write a policy brief or a PhD proposal, improve data visualisation, pimp your CV or



LinkedIn profile, ...) and network events linking them purposefully to IOB alumni and the broader IOB community to support them in their professional development.

### 5.3. Challenges and future actions

In terms of the challenges linked to internationalisation, we highlight some issues with all stakeholders involved: IOB staff, partners, IOB students, students at our partner institutes.

#### IOB and partners: a chain is only as strong as its weakest link?

It has already become clear, that IOB Partners and “friends”<sup>19</sup> play a crucial role for IOB education, research and outreach. However, working with partners also entails some challenges.

There is quite some **diversity in the partnerships**. While some partnerships have started decades ago, other partnerships are very young and therefore more fragile. The latter is often reflected in the ambitions set for joint activities and programmes: the longer the institutional cooperation has existed, the more institutional foundations there are to put forward goals that are more ambitious. In that sense the Master Globalisation and Development, working with our longstanding Nicaraguan partner has the quite ambitious goal set out to offer a parallel blended Master in Globalisation and Development, in which the partner plays a prominent role as a regional hub. For the MA in Development Evaluation and Management, and for Governance and Development, the partnerships are somewhat younger, so an incremental approach is used, experimenting with joint activities, see what works and build further on those.

Another challenge we have been confronted with is the effect of external factors making collaboration and activities extremely difficult, such as **political changes, political instability or COVID 19 limitations**. Political turmoil or conflict has had an effect on activities in Nicaragua and to a lesser extent in DRC and Tanzania. Under these circumstances, it has been a challenge and a struggle to continue to work with our partners. Flexibility and a willingness to adapt is one thing but of particular importance is the solidarity between partners and a continued support, because we are in this together for the long run.

Partnerships are also made difficult as accountability relations and ownership concerns often are generated by the way the funding of the project is designed. Case in point, much of the (financial & administrative) **accountability relations** with VLIR-UOS projects are set up bilaterally between IOB and VLIR-UOS, even though the partners are key actors in the projects. This puts IOB in the accountability ‘broker’ position, whereby partners need to report to IOB who can then report to VLIR-UOS. The set up creates power differences, weakened and blurred accountability relations. In terms of ownership, the timeline for submission, financial/ administrative/ resource/ responsibility divisions of projects and unequal workload often does not allow for the time and space to generate broad **ownership** of the projects at all involved institutions. The multiple challenges surrounding working with partners is excellently reviewed and summarised in our [Going Global working paper](#).

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<sup>19</sup> The difference between partners and friends is that partners have been involved in previous cooperation arrangements (such as VLIR-UOS projects) and thus an institutional relationship exists, whereas friends are relatively new contacts which are incrementally taken up in the ICP Connect programme.

Added to this, at IOB we are also aware that we ourselves are at times the weakest link. When integrating our partners in teaching for example, we were (wrongly) assuming that they were guided and supported to find their way in the **administrative 'labyrinth'** of Course Information Sheets, Assessment Sheets, Congruence Tables, etc... Apparently, there are gaps, overlaps and assumptions about the roles/mandates of promoters, course coordinators, the programme director and the chair of the Education Commission. These issues must become part of a conversation and ultimately result in a clear protocol and division of labor.

### **Core staff: how to internationalise?**

Although internationalisation is at the core of what we do, core staff remains difficult to internationalise. Our ZAP remains predominantly white, male (4 females, 8 males) and middle aged.

Open vacancies result in scholars from the Global South having to compete in a pool with scholars from the Global North. Due to very heavy teaching workload in universities in the South, and less research funding available, the **lower academic output** puts southern scholars in an unfavorable position.

We recently started to limit the recruitment pool to scholars who earned their initial degree in the Global South. So scholars from the Global North were not considered as valid candidates. This was an interesting experiment because, indeed, the competition becomes fairer, between Global South scholars, but then the gender balance challenge may become bigger. Once a scholar from the Global South is selected however, experience taught us that there is no guarantee that they will actually come to Antwerp, or stay for the long term. Several factors contribute to this:

- In comparison to other universities in Europe and the US, the salary is perceived to be low and non-negotiable at UAntwerp.
- We hold strict regulations regarding income generated through consultancy.
- There is an obligation to learn Dutch.
- The workload in terms of internal service delivery is very heavy due to the relatively small size of IOB.

## Ethical considerations in diversifying staff

There are of course also ethical considerations when we want to diversify our staff.

The first challenge is to avoid **tokenism**. Promoting diversity in color, geographical background in order to just 'look' international is something we need to avoid. This has sparked a debate within IOB on what internationalisation actually means and which nationalities or identities are relevant. What about addressing the gender balance? Or better reflecting the diversity of Belgian society in our institute by hiring more staff coming from more disadvantaged (ethnic) groups? Is hiring international staff the only way to internationalise? Or is bringing in more partners, and promote partner networks a good enough form of internationalisation?

A second, related, challenge refers to **brain drain**. One thing is to snatch a southern scholar away from other institutes in the Global North, another is to hire someone who is working in a university in the Global South and thus taking part in brain drain by exporting global scholars from their universities in the Global South, thereby weakening these universities. As such, the desire of Northern-based institutions to hire scholars from the Global South may become a common pool resource problem with developmental consequences. How can we avoid being part of the problem?

## IOB-students: too little global north?

Even though the diversity among **IOB students** is very rich, another thing that remains difficult to internationalise, is to bring more Global North students into our programmes. Several online (online presentations, ambassadors, targeted mail campaign, Facebook/LinkedIn/Instagram campaigns, ...) & offline (presentation in UAntwerp classes, adverts in student magazine, promotion activities, brainstorm sessions with students, ...) activities were organised to attract more students from 'the Global North'. In AY 2021-22, IOB had 21% European students, which is more than the target (15%), yet in AY 2022-23 there were only 10%. However, given the volatility of these numbers, IOB should still continue the efforts to attract more students from the Global North. The question is how? We have tried several things, but so far, no clear positive trend can be discerned. It might be attractive for Northern students to be able to go to countries of the Global South, so maybe putting the mobility window more in the spotlight might be an interesting strategy. At the same time, this might put additional burdens on our partners. Another strategy would be to consider internships as an add-on after completion of the master programme. Also building more on the central UAntwerp promotion activities (social media campaigns) and networks (e.g. YUFE) could possibly help. Overall however, we need to monitor not to go 'overboard' on this because our most important target group are Global South students.

Finally, our partners have repeatedly asked to try to identify ways to also facilitate **South - North or even South - South mobility** for their students. In this way, internationalisation for all students involved could be increased by having students from partner universities participate in IOB courses or in courses organized in partner universities. How can we honor these requests given the limited funding? In addition, if we can honor them now due to the received funding, how can we make this sustainable in the long run? Within the ICP connect programme, a first experiment of financing mobility of Ugandan masters students (from UCU) to participate in the joint course on community based monitoring in Tanzania will be organised in 2024, while also exploring possibilities to stimulate mobility of Filipino students.

### Internationalisation is not decolonisation

In theory, it is possible to internationalise our staff, without however decolonizing our institute/teaching programmes. Many institutions in the world have an international staff, but if all are groomed in Eurocentric educational systems, or Ivy League schools and universities, the diversity might not include other perspectives, decolonial perspectives in particular. In that sense, some discussions at IOB, revolve around the trade-off between focusing on attracting certain Global South nationals, versus attracting scholars specialised in decolonial perspectives (which might not come from the global south). Added to this, even if we undertake serious decolonisation efforts – for example in trying to bring about more equal partnership relations, we cannot change the (Global North dominating) funding structures, rules and regulations which de facto give more power to the Northern institutes.

All the efforts mentioned above, and in particular the efforts relating to ICP Going Global and ICP Connect, are crucial vehicles to realise the long-term vision of the MA programmes and IOB more broadly speaking. The last 5 to 6 years these efforts have been mainly absorbed by the promoters of these projects and a small supporting group of staff. This has placed the burden of these huge **investment costs** on a relatively small group of people. As such, IOB is confronted with collective action problems relating to the production of **public goods** (free-riding) and the potential overuse of **common pool resources** (staff).

## 6. Nexus education-research

The fact that our Masters are advanced Masters makes the link between education and research quite crucial. Our education is thus research-driven, particularly in module II and III, while in Module IV, the dissertation is about the student doing research based on what was taught in the master programmes.

### 6.1. Vision

In the overall IOB vision, it states that “IOB offers high quality research driven education”. However, during the IOB DNA retreat this vision was more contextualised and updated into **“IOB fosters a global network of academic partners, in which high quality research-driven education is offered. With our research we bring together different kinds of knowledge to co-create alternatives in the promotion of justice, solidarity & ethical relations”**.

The latter clearly highlights the *nexus* principle of striving to work as much as possible at the intersection of education- research- outreach, as we believe this to generate added value for all three of those arenas.

### 6.1. Good practices

The IOB programmes offer many opportunities for students and graduates to engage and benefit from the nexus of research- education.

In the general [UAntwerp programme evaluations](#) of 2022<sup>20</sup>, **IOB students gave very high scores to the topic nexus education-research**: “During my programme I have learned to approach a problem in a scientific way.” gets an average score of 5.05 on 6. “I have learned to conduct scientific research.” gets an average score of 4.93 on 6. “During the programme I learned to act with scientific integrity.” gets an average score of 5.08 on 6. This means IOB students very much agree with these statements. (In general, scores higher than 3.5 on 6 in surveys are labelled as “good” at UAntwerp.)

### Mobility window

The mobility window in Module I offers the opportunity for IOB students, who have already sufficient theoretical knowledge of research methods, to apply for a six weeks **research internship programme** with one of the partner universities. The partner universities put forward several (joint) research projects that could benefit from interns’ inputs. In what follows, students can apply for the internship based on the requirements for that project and the partners and IOB jointly select the students. Students are then immersed in the (action) research project and often ‘twinned’ with a local student/junior researcher to jointly engage in the research. A presentation at the partner university, a research report and an internship report are prepared by the student and jointly evaluated by the partner and IOB staff. In Tanzania, the mobility

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<sup>20</sup> In the programme evaluation final year students are asked about their global satisfaction and how the UAntwerp vision on education is recognised in the programme.

See education portfolio > [https://pintra.uantwerpen.be/bbcswebdav/institution/Faculteiten\\_en\\_instituten/IOB/03\\_Education/01\\_Educational\\_commission\\_\(OWC\)/02\\_Meeting\\_documents/2022-2023/2022-12-05/UAntwerp\\_programme\\_evaluations](https://pintra.uantwerpen.be/bbcswebdav/institution/Faculteiten_en_instituten/IOB/03_Education/01_Educational_commission_(OWC)/02_Meeting_documents/2022-2023/2022-12-05/UAntwerp_programme_evaluations)

window has been explicitly linked to the action research project '[Fuatilia Maji](#)' and recently also "[Women Water Watch](#)" on community based monitoring of water services. [Joint blogs/reports and publications](#) have been produced based on the mobility window programme. Unfortunately, the available projects have been limited in recent years based on political situations, travel restrictions and the covid-19 situation in the partner countries. Therefore, the Mobility window programme has been broadened to include more partners/friend universities (e.g. DRC, Uganda, ...). Participation in research projects on Mapping the sand/stone value chain, [Driving Change](#) (transnational supply chain initiatives for responsible minerals) in DRC and covid vaccination willingness in Uganda/Tanzania were offered to students. Since the start of ICP Going Global, 19 students have participated in the mobility window programme.

### Academic process: research- writing- presenting- publishing

In Module II (starting in January) and III (starting in March), students need to prepare an End of Module Paper (EOMP), which they present during the **EOMP conferences**. Besides presenting, students also act as a discussant for other students' presentations. During the (collective) brainstorm sessions, students are supported to construct how their respective EOMP papers will build on each other, and form stepping-stones for the dissertation. The **dissertation process itself (module IV, starting in June)** is a student-driven, student-oriented process where they organise their own research-design, the data collection and analysis, and finally the writing up and presentation of the dissertation at the dissertation conference at the beginning of September. Important to mention is that several students actively engage in **fieldwork and collect original data**. Student and alumni evaluations clearly highlight these academic research skills (including writing and presenting) as one of the key competencies gained from studying at IOB. The three best dissertations are selected for the prize of Development Cooperation of the Province of Antwerp, and, several dissertations (depending on the quality and the available budget) are selected for a **valorisation grant**: financial support that enables the graduate to invest time and resources in the transformation of the dissertation into an academic article.

### Action labs

The **Action labs** in Module II (Evaluating Development Effectiveness) within the Master of Development evaluation and management were introduced in the curriculum several years ago based on requests from students in focus groups/ surveys to make the module more practice oriented. In the action labs, students are immersed during an entire week in a 'professional-like' setting where they apply the knowledge on quantitative or qualitative evaluation methods / political (economy) analysis to real case studies. During this week, students in small groups, with intensive guidance and feedback from the lecturer, go through the entire process of designing the evaluation, the data collection, analysis and presenting the evaluation results. Students highly value the action lab experience and some regret not being able to participate in multiple labs (as they are organised in parallel).

### Knowledge networks

IOB experiments with other innovative types of learning away from the classical classroom approach: a **Community of Practice (CoP)** on Community Based Monitoring/citizen science ([Communitor](#)) has recently been launched bringing together expertise from IOB & partners staff, students, alumni and external experts which allows creation of a global expertise network,



strengthening the nexus education/research/outreach. The expectation is that this interactive platform will allow to establish a '**local in global**' approach (exchange of localised knowledge among actors working on the same topic in different contexts) as well as to valorise other types of (student) knowledge and expertise. IOB master students have been invited to join the CoP, participated in live and online activities (e.g. launch event in Tanzania, call for papers, workshops, ...) and some students have presented their dissertation in the CoP.

### Partners and Alumni in the nexus

Partners and alumni are playing a crucial role in **education** through extensive co-teaching and as guest lecturers in all three master programmes, in short training programmes, and in the recent dissertation benchmark exercise (see page 3 and page 17). Similarly, they are key in **research and outreach**.

With our partners, joint research projects, sometimes funded by very different funding organisations, often find their way to educational/outreach outlets. Finding and building synergies between different research and teaching activities strengthens the partnerships and sometimes offers opportunities for deeper forms of collaboration. A good example is where the recruitment of an IOB teaching and research assistant (who would have to work with our Nicaraguan partner) was selected by a selection committee which included members of the Nicaraguan partner.

In terms of our alumni, 56% of our AAP and 36% of the current **PhD students are alumni**, and several come from our institutional partner institutions (ICP Connect). We can also see this in the IOB publications, with some 29 % of all IOB publications with a South author are with an alumnus/a.

Another example of how alumni are involved in the nexus between education and research is the [Alumni barometer research project](#). In this research, the entire process, constructing the theory of change of impact of the study experience, the design of the research and data collection instruments, data collection, analysis, publishing and disseminating the findings was done jointly with the seventeen IOB alumni, based in six country teams (Nicaragua, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda, Philippines and Vietnam) and the IOB team. The co-creative research process was highly valued by all stakeholders and was perceived to increase the quality and uptake of the research.

## 6.2. Challenges and future actions

### Education vs. research?

Even though IOB teaching staff is privileged by being able to lecture advanced master courses, with relatively small groups of highly motivated, diverse and interesting students, on topics close to their own research, still **several factors constrain high quality research driven education**.

The nexus becomes more difficult to maintain/manage because **UAntwerp is favoring research professors** over regular professors. The latter entails 'regular' IOB professors taking up more teaching and doing less research, de facto a shift towards a segregated ZAP staff: research vs teaching.

A similar tension between (time) investment in education and research is felt at the level of the **post-doctoral colleagues at IOB**. The number of post docs has increased tremendously over the last years (see above from 15,10 FTE BAP in 2017 to 28,60 FTE in 2022). The level of integration of postdocs in the 'mainstream' IOB activities depends largely on the promotor, the type of project and the post doc himself/herself. Recently, a move occurred to involving more post-doc staff in teaching at IOB – partially based on pragmatic response to ad hoc teaching needs, partially inspired by motives to improve education, strengthen the multi-perspectivity in the course contents and allow post doc staff to share their expertise and gain teaching experience. However, the call for more teaching also met with some resistance as post-docs- a very heterogeneous group- are faced with a very high pressure to publish. They therefore by default need to have a rather short-term 'survival' perspective that does not stimulate big long-term investments in education. In an effort to align the post-doc incentives with investment in IOB public goods (like education), IOB has started a process of consultation with BAP. Moreover, we will design an intake process to welcome new post-docs, in which from the beginning of their trajectory these issues can be discussed and agreed upon in a constructive and transparent manner, including the provision of support for the administrative side of education.

### **Innovation in education: Experiment- evaluate- mainstream**

With highly motivated lecturers, small groups of mature, motivated students, a culture that values education, an active support staff, IOB is a **fertile breeding ground for experimentation in education**: new subunits, student research as part of the course work (e.g. life stories of undocumented migrants, transformative research on decolonial history of UAntwerp), simulation games, research on students (e.g. effects of a movie and additional information on students' empowerment), mobility windows, intercultural workshops, community of practice, brown bag lunches, fruit for thought, action labs, life after IOB, a buddy system, micro credentials, ... Many experiments have started, monitored, evaluated, improved and mainstreamed into the 'IOB standard education policy'. However, if too many ideas, innovation activities, pilots are organised, in the long run it might **not be sustainable** both in terms of time investment (work load) and in terms of financial resources (especially given that ICP connect funding will end in 2027). There is therefore a need to even more monitor and evaluate effectiveness and efficiency to filter out which ones are sustainable.

### **Global tendencies**

The last decades, data show that worldwide the space of political and civil freedoms is shrinking <sup>21</sup>. Political authorities limit academic freedom, freedom of speech, voice and accountability. At the same time, certain (sometimes politically very powerful) voices question the value, the importance and legitimacy of science and scientific research. In such a world, the nexus research-education becomes more difficult. Given the potential risk for our students and staff doing fieldwork in sometimes (semi-) authoritarian contexts, we need to carefully monitor these tendencies.

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<sup>21</sup> [https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/FIW\\_World\\_2023\\_DigitalPDF.pdf](https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/FIW_World_2023_DigitalPDF.pdf)

## 7. Conclusions

This report has shown that IOB has a long and strong record of accomplishments in many dimensions of multi-perspectivity, internationalisation and the nexus education-research. At the same time we are at a crossroad with many different junctures yet little roadmaps on how to get where we want to be.

Our vision of the future MA programmes is clear: more Global South, more partners, more venues, more perspectives, more synergies... But how to get there without getting lost is a different story. Every exciting step of the way raises more questions than answers. The 'unknowns' pile up during every meeting and require a lot of ad hoc problem-solving for which no structures or procedures exist. In a way we are dealing with a wicked problem where we need to 'improvise on the fly'<sup>22</sup>. We have no clear answers for the bigger concerns such as: the long-term financial sustainability of our Master programmes, the scholarships, the impact on workload for all staff, the managerial concerns relating to all education related procedures, quality control, participation and decision-making and the role, influence and place of our partners in the Global South in all that.

**One of the most pressing challenges IOB is faced with is the limited time frame of the VLIR-UOS funding** because it will have a profound effect on internationalisation, multi-perspectivity and the nexus education-research. In a couple of years, the funding for the scholarships and our activities with the partners will end. While the latter will have an important effect on the resources for joint activities with the IOB partners, the former threatens the very core of the IOB master programmes because the scholarships enable professionals from the Global South with limited financial resources to study at IOB.

*How will IOB maintain its vision of bringing together change agents from all over the world, including those with limited financial resources to study at IOB if there are no scholarships available?*

- Attracting more self-financing students (and possibly creating IOB managed scholarships) is certainly a possible and desired strategy, but how do we ensure access for more vulnerable countries/candidates?
- Alternatively, there are also explorations ongoing at VLIR-UOS level about continue to offer (only!) scholarships to ICP programmes which have obtained a 'certification' status.
- Looking for alternative scholarships through new masters in the context of Erasmus mundus joint masters could potentially also provide possibilities (even though also several challenges are linked to this scenario).
- Starting a new ICP master programme might allow for VLIR-UOS funding (an additional 100.000 € + scholarships) but this is a long term option because of the required accreditation procedures
- Increase the number of short education programmes (such as micro-credentials) to attract more short term students

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<sup>22</sup> Andrews, M., Pritchett, L., Samji, S., & Woolcock, M. (2015). Building capability by delivering results: Putting Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA) principles into practice. *A Governance Practitioner's Notebook*, 123.

- Organise a post-graduate network and PhD Training to attract self-financing students

The second very pressing challenge IOB is facing is how to deal with major tensions between staff concerning the pace, scope and direction of change/transformation. The internal disputes revolving around decolonisation and the future DNA of IOB may seem to suggest a deep cleavage. At the same time, such periods of 'crises are not new. Over the last decades, we have had deep disagreements about future directions, with heated discussions and recurring frictions. Notwithstanding we have always managed to redefine our role and mission in the international arena. We indeed need to find a way in which we establish a state of co-existence, where respect for the different visions can be found and combined. Freedom for different visions can be translated into education programmes. IOB could stimulate learning from the open, honest and respectful interaction among those visions, thereby even strengthening its programmes and providing students and staff an enriching learning experience within IOB to engage in a debate that is taking place all over the globe.

We hope this self-evaluation report also shows that staff at IOB is very eager to learn, and curious to get feedback from other experts. We therefore warmly invite the peer reviewers to give concrete tips and feedback on our future actions and on the challenges we are facing.

IOB - University of Antwerp  
Lange St.-Annastraat 7  
2000 Antwerp

**Tel** +32 (0)3 265 57 70

**e-mail:**

[iob@uantwerp.be](mailto:iob@uantwerp.be)

**website:**

<https://www.uantwerp.be/iob>

Find us on **Facebook:** IOBANTWERP

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