

JICA Ogata Sadako Research Institute for Peace and Development  
Empirical Research Project on Impacts of Study Abroad in Developing Countries - based on Study  
Abroad Experiences of Academic Professionals of Major Universities in ASEAN

# **Higher Education in Viet Nam: Impacts of Study Abroad Programs on Academic Institutions**

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## **Empirical Research Project on Impacts of Study Abroad in Developing Countries based on Study Abroad Experiences of Academic Professionals of Major Universities in ASEAN:**

The JICA Ogata Sadako Research Institute for Peace and Development is currently (2018-2023) conducting research on the impact of study abroad on societal and institutional development in ASEAN. The research employs a large-scale survey and interviews with academic professionals at ten top universities in four ASEAN countries (Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia and Viet Nam) to examine the impacts of their study abroad programs on university development and their current activities at the university. Further, shifts in study abroad trends over time are identified in the data. For more details about the project, please refer to the site below.

[https://www.jica.go.jp/jica-ri/research/human/strategies\\_20180401-20210331.html](https://www.jica.go.jp/jica-ri/research/human/strategies_20180401-20210331.html)

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This report was prepared as part of the JICA Ogata Research Institute Research Project on Impacts of Study Abroad in Developing Countries, to gather essential information on the history and current status of higher education and the impacts of study abroad on academic professionals in Viet Nam. The Project commissioned Dr. Nguyen Thuy Anh to prepare this report and the work was supported by JSPS KAKENHI Grant Number 20H00094.

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## Abbreviations

AUF	Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie
GDP	Gross domestic product
HCERES	High Council for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education
HERA	Higher Education Reform Agenda
HUST	Hanoi University of Science and Technology
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
MOUs	Memorandum of Understanding
SEDP	Socio-economic development plan
SEDS	Socio-economic development strategy
UET	University of Engineering and Technology
UK	United Kingdom
ULIS	University of Foreign Languages and Studies
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
URAP	University Ranking by Academic Performance
USA	United States of America
USSH	University of Social Science and Humanities
VND	Vietnamese Dong
VNU	Vietnam National University, Hanoi

## **Executive Summary**

This report focuses on the impacts of study abroad programs within Viet Nam's higher education system. It is part of a project to research the impacts of study abroad programs among academic institutions in selected countries from the ASEAN region. The report is comprised of four main parts.

The first part of this report focuses on the development and current status of Viet Nam's higher education system, which has experienced several major transitions associated with stages of its history. Since the implementation of the Doi Moi policy in 1986, Vietnamese higher education has been significantly reformed and overhauled into a diverse system based on the international model, leading to increasing autonomy and accountability among its educational institutions. Thanks to a number of important strategic policies, Viet Nam's higher education has improved remarkably in terms of both magnitude and quality.

The first section of Part 2 presents an overview of the milestone events, policies and legal documents underpinning Viet Nam's internationalization of higher education. Of these, academic rationales can be recognized as the main driver, providing a good way for Viet Nam to increase the quality of teaching and research with the aim of meeting regional and international standards and increasing recognition. At the same time, it is notable that the international integration strategy of Viet Nam's higher education obliges the education system to develop within the context of existing commercial and trade frameworks. This marks a significant change in the conception regarding the nature of higher education, in which this sector is seen as a special service. It also highlights a trend toward liberalization and the commercialization of higher education that is emerging in Viet Nam. Following this, a thorough analysis of the reasons for the rapid growth in the number of outbound and inbound staff and student mobility is provided. The second section of Part 2 continues by presenting the notable efforts of Viet Nam in boosting its contributions to international publications and rankings. Finally, it is shown that the development of international programs and universities is considered to significantly boost academic quality, broaden options for language of instruction, diversify the field of study and attract more international students.

Part 3 presents Viet Nam's higher education internationalization at the institutional level, taking Vietnam National University, Hanoi (VNU) and Hanoi University of Science and Technology (HUST) as two case studies. For each case, the paper follows the same structure as with Part 2, starting with an overview of the university, then a summary of the institution's development strategy, followed by a discussion of staff and student mobility, international publications and rankings, and international joint programs. At the end of each case study, the paper presents the main findings of the interviews with leaders and managers of the two universities.

The conclusion in Part 4 summarizes the main findings of the report.

# 1 The Development and Current Status of Viet Nam's Higher Education

## 1.1 The Development of Viet Nam's Higher Education

With approximately 1,000 years of development, Vietnamese higher education has experienced several major transitions associated with stages of its history. These stages can be divided into the following periods: the feudal period (1076–1885), the French colonial period (1885–1945), the period of 1945–1986, and the Doi Moi period (1986–present) (Tran 2012).

Van Mieu – Quoc Tu Giam (The Temple of Literature), established in 1076, was regarded as the first national university in Viet Nam dedicated to Confucianism. During the time of monarchical systems, which began in the 11th century, Confucianism was highly appreciated by feudal governments and had significant impacts on many aspects of society, such as ideology, education and literature. (Ly 2015, 71). Between 1885 and 1945, under French colonial rule, the education system was built following the French (or European) model. Formal education in Viet Nam was geared toward training a small, mostly urban, local elite to serve the interests of the colonial administration (Tran 2012). Indochina University, established in 1906, became the first modern higher education institution in Viet Nam (Tran 2012). From 1945 to 1975, the period of revolutionary struggle and liberation war, higher education in North Viet Nam followed the Soviet model, while that of the South adopted the American model. After 1975, all colleges and universities in Viet Nam were united into one system. With the implementation of the Doi Moi policy in 1986, the higher education system was significantly reformed, especially during 1993 and 1994. Table 1.1 shows the national policies on education before and after Doi Moi in Viet Nam.

Table 1.1: National Policies on Education Before and After Doi Moi in Viet Nam

Before Doi Moi	After Doi Moi
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Education was a part of the cultural and ideological revolution</li> <li>- Education was to meet the needs of the state, especially for manpower training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Education and training are the top-priority nationally</li> <li>- Education development is to meet the needs of a multi-sector market economy and the process of industrialization and modernization</li> </ul>
Investment in education was not investment in development	Investment in education is one of the principal directions of investment for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All forms of education were state-owned.</li> <li>- No private education institutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Diversification of educational types</li> <li>- Diverse development of semi-public, private, international institutions alongside public ones</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implementation of the “closed door” policy in education</li> <li>- Integration of traditional values and socialist values</li> </ul>	Implementation of the “open door” policy in education in accordance with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Globalization</li> <li>- Common international values</li> <li>- Traditional cultural values</li> </ul>
Monodisciplinary and theoretical academic higher education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expanding the scale and diversity of higher education</li> <li>- Higher education must meet social and labour market needs</li> </ul>
The educational system followed the model of the Soviet Union	Rebuilding the educational system according to the international model

Education management was based on the centralized bureaucratic model.	- Innovating education management with modern concepts: decentralization, democratization and modernization. - Increasing autonomy and accountability of education institutions
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*Source:* Adapted from Tran (2012)

According to the 1992 Constitution of Viet Nam, the role and significance of education are determined in Articles 35 and 36. Article 35 confirmed the top priority given to education and training, while Article 36 confirmed that “The state gives priority to investment in education, encouraging other investment sources” (National Assembly 2001). According to the 2018 Higher Education Law, Viet Nam’s higher education system includes bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral education, with two types of institutions, public and private. Based on their capacity and socio-economic demands, these establishments can be identified as either research-oriented or application-oriented higher education institutions (National Assembly 2018).

In 1993, in order to reform higher education away from being a monodisciplinary system to a multidisciplinary one, the Vietnamese government established a number of multidisciplinary universities by merging several existing institutions. These universities included Vietnam National University, Hanoi (VNU) in December 1993, Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City (VNUHCM) in January 1995, Hue University, Thai Nguyen University and University of Da Nang in April 1994. Also in 1993, with Resolution No. 04 - NQ/HNTW of the Fourth meeting of the Central Committee of the Party (Term VII) on continuing to renew the education and training, dated January 14, for the first time, private educational institutions were allowed to be established (Central Committee of Party 1993). Since then, the number of private universities has significantly increased. In 2020, there were 65 non-public universities, compared to 30 in 2000 (Table 1.2).

Table 1.2: Numbers of Higher Education Institutions in Viet Nam

<i>University/Year</i>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2020</b>
<i>Public</i>	148	243	170	172
<i>Non-public</i>	30	34	65	65
<b>Total</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>237</b>
<i>Number of students</i>	899,500	1,387,000	1,772,137	1,672,881

*Source:* Data of 2001, 2006 collected from General Statistics Office’s website<sup>1</sup>;  
Data of 2017<sup>2</sup>, 2020<sup>3</sup> collected from MOET’s website

## 1.2 The Current Status of Viet Nam’s Higher Education

Viet Nam has been one of the fastest-growing economies in the world, with an average annual increase in gross domestic product (GDP) of 6.2% from 2000 to 2021 (World Bank 2022). Since 1986, with the introduction of the “Open door” policy, the country has been going through a far-reaching transformation from an inward-looking planned economy to one that is globally integrated and market-based while maintaining the principles of socialism.

In 2021, the 13<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam set up the Socio-economic Strategic Development Plan 2021–2030, which identified three ground-breaking strategies to achieve the targeted goals of becoming “a modern industrialized” nation (Central

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gso.gov.vn/px-web-2/?pxid=V1016&theme=Giáo%20dục>

<sup>2</sup> <https://moet.gov.vn/thong-ke/pages/thong-ko-giao-duc-dai-hoc.aspx?ItemID=5877>

<sup>3</sup> <https://moet.gov.vn/thong-ke/pages/thong-ko-giao-duc-dai-hoc.aspx?ItemID=7389>

Committee of Party 2018) and “a developed, high-income country” by 2045 (Communist Party of Vietnam 2021). One of the three crucial strategies is to

Accelerate the implementation of fundamental and comprehensive innovation and improve the quality of education and training, focusing on modernizing and changing education and training methods, especially higher education and vocational education; focus on training high-quality human resources, discovering and fostering talents; have outstanding policies to attract and utilize talents and experts both at home and abroad; establish a team of leaders, managers and civil servants with good quality, professionalism, dedication and devotion to serving the people (Communist Party of Vietnam 2021).

In the last 20 years, besides the improvement of other education levels, reform in higher education is considered to be essential for realizing these objectives in the sense that the sector and its institutions operate as “incubators for the innovation and creative thinking needed for an economically competitive society by carrying out research and development (R&D) and developing human resources for a knowledge-based economy” (ADB 2008, 2). Fully aware of the important role higher education plays in the development process, the government of Viet Nam has promulgated and implemented a number of plans, projects, and policies to reform its higher education system.

According to the Strategy for Educational Development 2001–2010, the goals defined for the higher education sector are to i) meet the demand for high-quality human resources for industrialization and modernization; ii) enhance Viet Nam’s competitiveness in the process of international economic integration; iii) facilitate the expansion of higher education through diversification of training programs on the basis of a system that is suited to the development framework, employment conditions, local and regional human resource needs and the training capacities of educational institutions; iv) increase the appropriateness of training to the employment needs of the society; and finally, v) empower the workforce to develop entrepreneurial skills (Prime Minister of Vietnam 2001).

Elaborating on these goals, in the year 2005, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) issued the Higher Education Reform Agenda period 2006–2020 (HERA), which maps out the following main objectives: i) dramatically increase the enrolment rate in higher education institutions; ii) simultaneously boost the quality and efficiency of the higher education system; iii) strengthen research capacity in higher education institutions in order to upgrade the quality of teaching and provide a research base for the development of industry and enterprises; and iv) improve governance of the higher education system (MOET 2005a). In 2004, the government promulgated Decision No. 1269/CP-KG, dated September 6, 2004, which designated the status of “key universities” for a group of 14 select higher education institutions to become larger comprehensive universities. They include the two national universities in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh Cities, along with 12 other institutions enrolling almost one-third of all higher education students in Viet Nam (Hayden and Lam 2007). This decision represented an endeavor in departing from a system once influenced by the Soviet model, which was characterized by small, specialized institutes and colleges (Hayden and Lam 2007). The diversity in the types of institutions and the form of education has better served the growing demands of the population and also helped generate new spaces of higher learning.

In recent years, higher education in Viet Nam has developed considerably, contributing to the intellectual advancement of the nation, human resource training, and to a number of socio-economic improvements. The number of higher education students has also significantly increased, reaching 1,672,881 students in 2020, or 1.86 times the figure in 2000 (see Table 1.2). In 1991, only 2 percent of the relevant age group (18–24 years old) participated in higher



education (Hayden and Lam 2010). Thirty years later, this portion has risen 14.32 times to 28.64 percent in 2021 (MOET 2021). It is intended that this ratio will reach 33% in 2030 (MOET 2021). In 1991, the number of university students per 10,000 people was as low as 118 (MOET 2008a). In 2021, this figure has reached 185 and is expected to grow to 230 by 2030 (MOET 2021). This growing access to tertiary enrolment in Viet Nam has been made possible by the diversification of the higher education system promoted since the early 1990s. The number of higher educational institutions has increased dramatically, from 178 in the year 2000 to 237 in 2020, of which 172 are public and 65 are non-public (Table 1.2).

In 2020, there were 73,132 higher education teaching staff members and 1,672,881 students (Table 1.2 and Table 1.4). This indicates a student/teacher ratio of 23:1, which is higher than the targeted student/teacher ratio of 20:1 set up in the “Vietnam Higher Education Renovation Agenda Period 2006–2020 (MOET 2005a). Compared to the number of teaching staff in 1987 and 2000, this number in 2020 is 3.69 times and 2.41 times higher, respectively (see Table 1.3).

Table 1.3: Current and Future Benchmarks in Viet Nam's Higher Education

	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2030</b>
<b>Access to education</b>	Number of university students/10,000 people	185		230
	Percentage of students in the population aged 18-24	28.64%		33%
	Percentage of employed workers with university degrees	10.82%		
<b>Quality assurance</b>	Percentage of university faculty with PhD degrees	28.8%		At least 37%
	Number of domestically accredited academic programs	388	1,000	2,000
	Number of academic programs accredited by international standards (ABET, AUN-QA...)	212	500	1000
<b>Quality</b>	Percentage of university graduates having jobs that match qualifications	80%		90%
	Scientific publications	Scopus 19888 ISI 7502 (WEB)	Scopus 19888 ISI 7502 (WEB)	Scopus 19888 ISI 7502 (WEB)
	Publishing rate of scientific articles/lecturer	0.375	0.85	1.7
	Ratio of intellectual property/lecturer	0.04	0.1	0.37
	International students studying in Vietnam's education programs	0.94%		1.7%

Source: MOET 2021

Table 1.4: Number and Highest Qualification of Vietnamese Faculty Members at Higher Education Institutions

Year	1987		2000		2005		2017		2020	
	No.	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
<b>Faculty members</b>	19,800	30,309		47,646		75,762		73,132		
<b>Doctorate</b>	-	4,400	14.17	6,200	12.43	16,634	21.96	21,977	30.05	
<b>Master</b>	-		25.04		32.26	45,386	59.90	44,119	60.32	
<b>College, Bachelor</b>			59.32		54.24	13,628	17.99	6,543	8.95	
<b>Other</b>			1.47		1.07	114	0.15	493	0.67	

*Source:* Compiled by author from MOET 2008b, Tran 2012 and MOET 2021

More than fifteen years ago, the most common qualifications possessed by teaching staff in Viet Nam were master's and bachelor's degrees, with only 12.43% of staff members having a doctoral degree in 2005 (Table 1.4). Moreover, the Vietnamese professorate was also aging, with as many as 80 percent of full professors and 30 percent of associate professors over the age of 60 (Fry 2009). As Fry pointed out, a good number of Viet Nam's professors were trained in the former Soviet Union, which led many scholars in the West to mistakenly write off and belittle their training. He argued, however, that while it is true that training in fields such as social sciences was weak, this is not the case in such areas as mathematics, science, or linguistics where education was quite strong (Fry 2009). Together with the break-up of the Soviet Union and the spread of English as an international academic language, the Russian language became largely irrelevant and such professors had to be retrained. This is one of the main reasons for the low teaching and research quality in Vietnamese higher educational institutions in previous years.

However, in recent years, thanks to the Government's policies to improve the quality of teaching staff and increase the number of doctorates through various scholarship schemes (discussed in the next section), the percentage of staff members with doctoral degrees has significantly increased to 30.05 percent in 2020, while only 8.95% of lecturers have college or bachelor degrees as their highest degree (Table 1.4). This ratio is expected to reach at least 37% in 2030, as identified in the Education Development Strategy for the period of 2021–2030, with a Vision to 2045 (MOET 2021).

## 2 Viet Nam’s Higher Education Internationalization: National Level

### 2.1 Strategies and Policies for Internationalization of Higher Education

As a strategy for the development of higher education, internationalization has been incorporated into several policy documents at both the national and institutional levels (MOET 2021; VNU 2014, 2021), as well as a number of academic papers (Nguyen 2009; Welch 2010; Ryu and Nguyen 2021). However, there has not been a general understanding of this concept within the context of Viet Nam. Generally, the internationalization of higher education in Viet Nam is interpreted as an enhancement of international and regional cooperation and integration in the field of higher education. In some policy documents, internationalization is understood and referred to as the integration of international dimensions into the curricula or the establishment of international education programs, the striving for international standards, rankings and recognition, the enhancement of international cooperation, and the promotion of staff/student mobility, among other activities (Nguyen 2009; Ryu and Nguyen 2021).

Table 2.1 lists the milestone policies and legal documents for Viet Nam’s internationalization of higher education. Among the most important policy frameworks for the country’s tertiary education improvement in general and its internationalization in particular are the Vietnam Higher Education Renovation Agenda Period 2006–2020 (HERA), the Pilot Renovation of the Operation Mechanism of Public Tertiary Education Institutions during 2014–2017, the Strategy for Education Development in the Period of 2021–2030, Vision 2045.

Table 2.1: Important Events, Strategies and Policies with Impacts on the Internationalization of Higher Education in Viet Nam since 1986

<b>Year</b>	<b>Events</b>
<b>1986</b>	Introduction of market economy Implementation of Open-door policy Third Education Reform
<b>1991</b>	Multilateralization and diversification of international relations
<b>1992</b>	Board of Minister’s Instruction on sending Vietnamese citizens abroad for training in new circumstances
<b>1999</b>	MOET’s regulations on foreigners studying in Vietnam
<b>2000</b>	Project 322
<b>2001</b>	Strategy for Educational Development 2001–2010
<b>2005</b>	Education Law Vietnam Higher Education Renovation Agenda Period 2006–2020 (HERA)
<b>2007</b>	Vietnam becomes the 150th WTO member
<b>2008</b>	Project 165 : “Training, Fostering Leaders and Managers using the State Budget”
<b>2009</b>	Project 911: “Training lecturers with doctoral degrees for universities and colleges for the period of 2010-2020”
<b>2011</b>	Socio-economic Development Strategy (2011–2020) (SEDS) Socio-economic Development Plan (2011–2015) (SEDP) Human Resource Development Strategy 2011–2020
<b>2012</b>	Higher Education Law 2012 Strategy for Education Development in the period of 2011–2020
<b>2013</b>	Project 599: “Training Cadres Overseas by the State Budget Period of 2013-2020”
<b>2014</b>	Pilot Renovation of the Operation Mechanism of Public Tertiary Education Institutions during 2014–2017
<b>2018</b>	Higher Education Law (86/2018/ND-CP) Decree on International Cooperation, Investment in the field of education

<b>2019</b>	Education Law 2019 Project 89: “Enhancing Competencies of Lecturers and Administrators of Higher Education Institutions Meeting Requirements for Radical Changes in Education and Training During the Period of 2019-2030”
<b>2022</b>	Strategy for Education Development in the period of 2021–2030, Vision 2045 Building "Strategic Framework for Higher Education Development in the Period of 2021–2030, Vision 2045"

*Source:* Compiled by author

The first cornerstone policy framework worth mentioning is the Vietnam Higher Education Renovation Agenda Period 2006–2020 (HERA), promulgated by the Vietnamese Government, along with Resolution No. 14/2005/NQ-CP, adopted on November 2, 2005. The agenda sets up an objective to achieve by 2020

fundamental changes in quality and scale, responding to the human resource requirements for the cause of socio-economic development and national intellectual improvement, accessing to the advanced levels in the region and the world, upgrading several universities to international level, making contributions to improving the competitiveness of human resources and the country’s economy (MOET 2005a).

The MOET document proposes some solutions in order to contribute to the “improvement in competitiveness of higher education system in the international integration process” as follows: a) Developing an international integration strategy for the national higher education system within the context of the Vietnamese-American Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA), the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) and the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS); b) Exchanging lecturers and students, implementing joint training and research programs and continuing to send teaching staff and students overseas to study in key areas by using state funding; c) Ratifying the “Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific,” and signing similar bilateral treaties and establishing organizations for the promotion of related activities; and d) Developing onsite (in-country or regional) overseas training centers with the participation of highly qualified international experts, or providing international joint academic programs in order to minimize the brain leakage (MOET 2005a).

In 2014, the Vietnamese Government promulgated Resolution No.77/NQ-CP on Pilot Renovation of the Operation Mechanism of Public Tertiary Education Institutions during 2014–2017 (Government of Vietnam 2014). Based on this resolution, twelve universities were chosen to implement a pilot autonomy mechanism, particularly in terms of the financial aspects. By the end of the academic year 2016–2017, there were 23 public higher education institutions approved by the Prime Minister participating in pilot autonomy schemes to reform operational mechanisms. The resolution has created conditions for public universities to enjoy a high degree of autonomy and to pilot the implementation of processes not yet regulated by law, such as administrative procedures within institutions. While the role of state management agencies is reduced, the pilot mechanism will ensure that the universities operate according to market mechanisms. However, they will still be subject to supervision and intervention to a certain extent by state management agencies (MOET 2022a).

After several years of the pilot program, evaluations have found that the legal basis for university autonomy is not solid, there is also a lack of synchronization, and implementation is still confusing and inconsistent. There are also conflicts of interest. Some parts of the scheme have not yet been implemented, especially support for universities, causing difficulties for those institutions. Additionally, autonomy has to be more tightly linked to university administration reform and social accountability (MOET 2022a). However, it can be said that autonomy is one of the push factors for accelerating the process of internationalization of higher education at universities in Viet Nam. It will provide a means of diversifying financial sources to facilitate the

operation and sustainable development of higher education institutions. At the same time, with the autonomy to open new academic fields/programs and the possibility of cooperation with foreign institutions, Vietnamese universities can speed up the process of internationalization.

The Strategy for Educational Development 2021–2030, which is now waiting for the Prime Minister’s approval, emphasizes the encouragement, expansion, and acceleration of collaborative relations in training and research with prestigious institutions worldwide. The Strategy should provide a means of exchanging good practices and experiences suitable for the conditions of Viet Nam and improving educational development resources. To this end, the Strategy has proposed a package of measures to promote international cooperation in education at all levels, especially in higher education (MOET 2021).

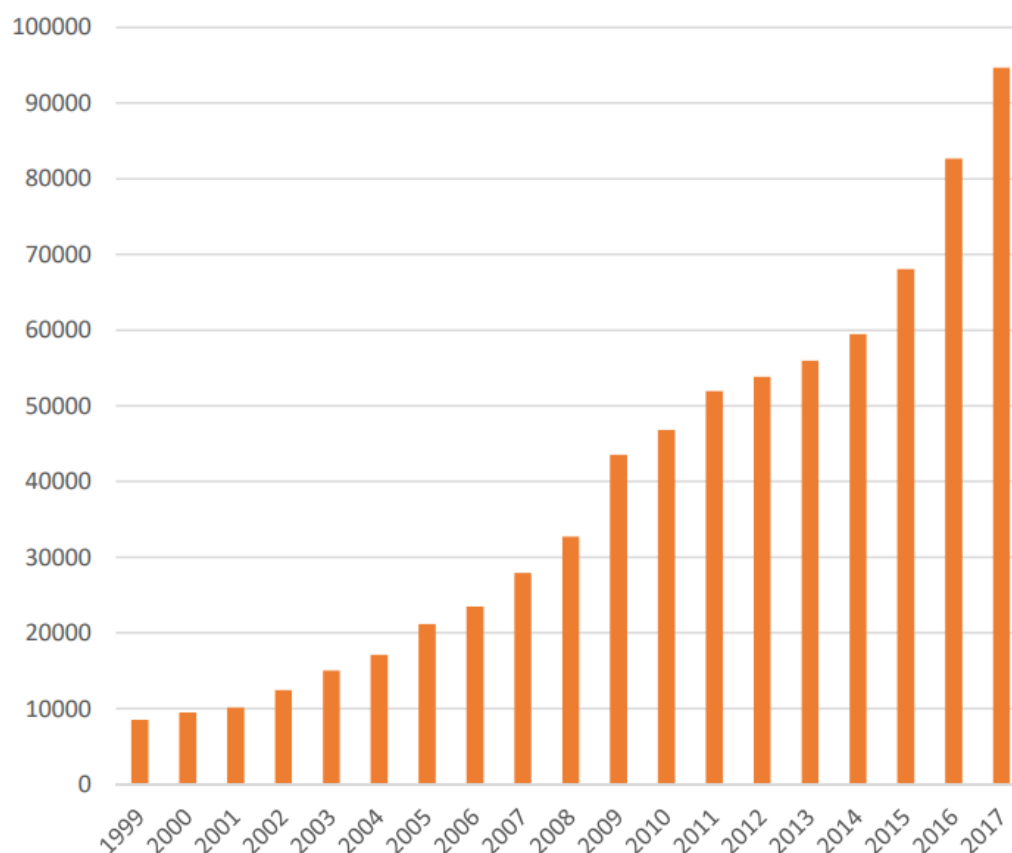
It can be recognized from the international dimensions of these policy targets that academic rationales are the top driver for the internationalization of higher education in Viet Nam. This process is expected to bring about radical reforms in many aspects of higher education. In particular, it is considered a good way for Viet Nam and its institutions to increase the quality of teaching and research with the aim of achieving regional as well as international standards and recognition. At the same time, it is notable that the international integration strategy of Viet Nam’s higher education is obliged to develop within the context of existing commercial and trade frameworks, namely the Vietnamese-American Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA), the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) and the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). This marks a significant change in the conception of the Vietnamese Government regarding the nature of higher education, in which this sector is seen as a special service. This also highlights the trend toward liberalization and the commercialization of higher education that is emerging in Viet Nam.

## **2.2 Staff and Student Mobility**

### **2.2.1 Outbound Staff and Student Mobility**

Since the implementation of the Open-door policy in 1986, especially from 1991 when the Vietnam Communist Party Central Committee decided on the policy of multilateralization and diversification of international relations, there has been significant growth in the number of outbound mobile Vietnamese students. Between 1990 and 2005, this number increased by 22.4 times from 1,139 to 25,505 (MOET 2005a). Statistical data on the number of Vietnamese students studying abroad at the undergraduate level from 1999 to 2017 show a similar picture of the flows, in which this number increased sharply from nearly 10,000 students in 1999 to more than 90,000 students in 2017, as shown in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Number of Vietnamese Students Studying Abroad at the Tertiary Level from 1999 to 2017



Source: Ryu and Nguyen 2021

Table 2.2 shows the variety of destination countries for Vietnamese students studying abroad. Accordingly, Japan has hosted the highest number of Vietnamese students, with 49,469 in 2021, followed by Australia, the USA, Canada, Korea and China. Besides these destinations, countries such as Singapore, the UK, France, Russia, Taiwan, Germany, and New Zealand are among the most favored countries for the overseas study of Vietnamese students in recent years (Table 2.2).

Table 2.2: Destination Countries with over 1,000 Vietnamese Students Studying Abroad

No.	Destination	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
1	Japan	3,000	3,000	3,597	4,033	4,373	13,000	26,439	38,882	53,807	61,671	72,354	73,389	62,233	49,469
2	USA	8,769	12,823	13,112	14,888	15,572	16,098	16,579	21,403	22,438	24,325	24,392	23,777	21,631	
3	Australia	15,844	23,755	25,788	23,738	22,551	26,015	28,652	28,524	31,000	19,708	29,989	24,270	25,570	21,260
4	China	9,702	10,396	12,247	13,549	13,038	13,328	13,000	13,000			11,299			
5	UK	5,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	-	5,118	6,000	11,000	3,153	2,889	2,818			
6	Singapore	6,200	7,500	7,300	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000						
7	France	5,000	5,000	6,000	6,664	6,700	6,235	6,500	6,500						
8	Russia	6,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	6,000	6,000						
9	Germany	2,500	3,671	3,700	3,870	4,189	4,600	5,000	5,000						
10	Taiwan	1,200	2,000	2,000	4,000	3,706	6,000	6,000	3,715	4,086	4,774				
11	Canada	2,000	3,200	3,300	3,500	3,000	3,990	4,500	4,850	7,450	13,960	20,330	18,910		
12	New Zealand	1,124	1,527	1,910	2,157	2,158	2,150	2,200	2,500	1,505	1,695				

13	Republic of South Korea	1,817	1,787	1,914	2,325	2,447	1,800	2,000	2,000	8,293	14,614	27,061			
14	Ukraine	1,027	1,027	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000						

*Source:* Compiled by author based on data from various sources

The rapid growth in the number of Vietnamese students seeking overseas study and the variety of destinations may have occurred for the following reasons:

Firstly, unlike the period prior to 1990, when Viet Nam only had educational cooperation with other socialist countries, in the past 20 years, Viet Nam has established cooperative relationships in education with more than 100 countries and territories. On average, each year, MOET signs 15 to 20 agreements and international treaties, including those related to degree recognition, scholarship programs, and legal frameworks to promote education cooperation (MOET 2021). Multilateral collaboration is enhanced, especially in the frameworks with the European Union (EU), the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), on the basis of the cooperation and partnership agreements in education between Viet Nam and the EU. Cooperation within ASEAN has also realized impressive achievements. Many of these countries and organizations provide thousands of scholarships to Vietnamese students to study in their countries or overseas (nearly 20 countries). The number of scholarships offered by foreign governments has increased from about 400 scholarships per year in 2013 to 1,400 scholarships per year in 2019 (MOET 2021).

Secondly, cognizant of the country's urgent need for qualified human resources, in 1992, the Board of Ministers issued "Instruction No. 270/CT on sending Vietnamese citizens abroad to study in the new circumstances" (Board of Ministers 1992). The document clearly identified that "dispatching Vietnamese citizens abroad to study is an important direction to nurture human capital, train managers, businessmen, technology specialists and skilled workers to meet new demands for national building and protection, and quickly upgrade the nation's science and technology to attain a world standard" (Board of Ministers 1992). This important document provides a cornerstone for other later policies relating to student mobility, as it emphasizes the necessity to diversify the destination countries, types of training, and financial resources necessary to send students abroad. In some cases, privately funded students who want to study abroad would be considered and allowed by MOET. With this green light, together with the increase in family incomes, Vietnamese students are increasingly pursuing studies abroad without utilizing official financial help.

Thirdly, since 2000, the Vietnamese government has established projects to promote and train lecturers at universities and government officers at both the national level (Projects 322, 599, 165, 911, 89) and provincial level (Projects Mekong 1000, Ho Chi Minh 500, Danang 100, Haiphong 100). This has been one of the strongest factors in boosting the number of outbound staff and student mobility in Viet Nam in recent years. Table 2.3 summarizes the most popular nine Vietnamese government scholarship programs.

Table 2.3: Summary of Vietnamese Government Scholarship Programs

Level	Title	Implementing Agency	Implementation Period	Aims
Central	Project 322	MOET	2000–2010	To train scientific and technical staff at doctoral, master and bachelor levels
	Project 911	MOET	2010–2025	To produce 20,000 PhDs for tertiary institutions

	Project 599 (Previously MOET 322)	MOET	2013–2020	To provide overseas training and postgraduate education for government officers and talented graduates
	Program 165	Central Committee of the Communist Party	2008–2015	To provide postgraduate-level overseas education for government officers and talented graduates
	Project 89	MOET	2019–2030	To provide 10% of university teaching staff with PhD degrees; ensure that 80% of lecturers at cultural, arts and sports educational institutions have master’s degrees or higher
<b>Provincial</b>	Mekong 1,000	Mekong Delta Region Provincial Governments	2005–2015	To provide overseas training at the postgraduate level to foster the industrialization and modernization of the Mekong Delta
	HCMC Project 500	Ho Chi Minh City	2001–2020 (Phase I, II, III)	To foster cadres with postgraduate degrees, who can contribute to the development of Ho Chi Minh city
	Project 922 (Previously Danang 100)	Danang City	2004	To provide overseas training at the postgraduate level for government officers and talented graduates to strengthen human resources
	Haiphong 100	Hai Phong City	2008	To provide postgraduate level overseas education to government officers and talented students of Hai Phong city

*Source:* Compiled by author based on  
<http://www.austrade.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/3507/Summary-table-of-VN-Govt-scholarship-programs-Oct%202013.pdf.aspx>

The MOET project, “Training Scientific and Technical Cadres in Institutions Overseas with the State Budget” (also known as Project 322), was the first in which the Vietnamese Government used its own budget to “train and nurture science and technology cadres at doctoral, master’s and bachelor levels at foreign training and research institutions or in collaboration with overseas organizations, in order to serve the demands of the country’s industrialization and modernization” (MOET 2000). Priority training sectors included telecommunications, information technology, biological technology, and new materials. Vietnamese students receiving government scholarships could be trained entirely abroad, at a Viet Nam-based foreign training institution, or jointly by a domestic institution and an overseas one. After ten years of implementation from 2000 to 2010, the project had spent more than VND 2,500 billion, officially sending 4,590 people abroad to study (MOET 2011).

When Project 322 expired, it was soon replaced by a new scholarship program called Project 599 for the period of 2013–2020, with a total state budget of about VND 2,070 billion, approved by the Prime Minister in 2013 (Prime Minister of Vietnam 2013). Although this project was considered a successor to Project 322, its objective was to provide high-quality training abroad at only the master’s level for lecturers of higher education institutions, officials of scientific and technological research institutes, and state agencies; at the university level for young talent in the fields of basic sciences, key sciences and technology; and in special aptitude areas (Prime Minister of Vietnam 2013). At the same time, Project 599 overcame the limitations of Project 322



with a commitment requirement associated with financial guarantee terms. Graduates who do not return to work for the sending organizations or the organization that sends their employees to study do not accept them when they return from abroad must repay the money spent from the budget (Prime Minister of Vietnam 2013).

Table 2.4: Significant Vietnamese Government Scholarship Programs

<b>Project 322</b>			
<b>Number of people sent</b>	4,500	PhD	49.41%
		Masters	25.75%
		Interns and university bachelors	24.84%
<b>Educational institutions</b>	822 institutions, from 34 countries		
<b>Expenditure</b>	Total: Over VND 2,500 billion ≈ USD 152 million USD 33,000/student		
<b>Project 911</b>			
<b>Types of education</b>	Study abroad	Collaborative training	Domestic training
<b>Number of recipients (expected)</b>	10,000	3,000	10,000
<b>Number of candidates selected/year (expected)</b>	2010–2013: 800–1,200 2014 onwards: 1,300–1,500	2010–2013: 300–350 2014 onwards: 450	2010–2015: 1,200–1,500 2016 onwards: 1500
<b>Number of actual recipients between 2012–2016</b>	2,926 (34% total target)	4/1,300 (0.3% total target)	2,062 (36% total target)
<b>Total estimated cost</b>	VND 14,000 billion		
<b>Actual expenditure</b>	VND 1,400 billion		
<b>Project 89</b>			
<b>Number of people sent</b>	10% of university teaching staff	Study abroad	7%
		Collaborative training	3%
<b>Total (expected)</b>	7,600	PhD	7,300
		Master's degree in culture, arts and physical training and sports	300

*Source:* Compiled by author based on data from various sources

Another important state-funded scholarship program is Project 911, approved by the Prime Minister in 2010. The aim of this project was to give an additional 23,000 lecturers the opportunity to study for a doctoral degree by 2020 of whom 10,000 PhDs would be trained abroad, 10,000 trained domestically, and 3,000 in collaborative programs (Prime Minister of Vietnam 2010). Although the project was expected to last for ten years from 2010 to 2020, it was abandoned in 2017 due to its inefficiency and failure to reach the targets. From 2012 to 2016, as set up in the project, the targets were to enroll 12,800 doctoral students including 5,700 domestically, 5,800 abroad and 1,300 in joint programs. However, up to 2016, only 4,024 doctoral students had successfully enrolled in research programs, accounting for 31.4% of the 2016 target and 17.5% of the whole project target. The number of candidates who dropped out of school from 2012 to 2016 was 143 out of 2,062, which accounted for 6.9% of the total number of students who passed the entrance requirements. The number of PhD candidates who finished the study period was 703, with only 222 successfully completing the course and receiving their degrees, accounting for only 32% of those who enrolled.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> <https://dantri.com.vn/giao-duc-khuyen-hoc/vi-sao-phai-dung-dao-tao-de-an-tien-si-voi-kinh-phi-14000-ty-dong-20171226082407617.htm>

The lack of success of Project 911 was claimed to be due to setting overly ambitious targets without careful research and assessment of the difficulties. The poor coordination among related ministries and branches also led to slow implementation of the financial mechanisms, with inappropriate contents affecting the progress of the project. In particular, the guidance and administration of MOET were not well-defined, and there was a lack of synchronous coordination mechanisms to implement tasks among units related to the project. Additionally, the funding level of the project was low, while the requirements for responsibility and commitment of the PhD candidates were much stricter, leading to difficulties in recruiting suitable candidates for the scholarship program.

On June 27, 2008, the Central Committee of the Vietnamese Party issued Announcement No.165-TB/TW on the project “Training, Fostering Leaders and Managers using the State Budget,” known as Project 165. This project aimed to provide overseas study at the postgraduate level and short-course training for government officers and talented graduates to strengthen the human resources capacity of the country (Central Committee of Party 2008). After five years of implementation (since 2009), in the first phase, the project provided master’s and doctoral opportunities and enhanced foreign language skills for 11,690 officials. Among the 941 candidates enrolled in master’s and doctoral degree programs, there were 158 doctoral and 444 master’s students who studied abroad, and 339 master’s graduates who studied domestically in joint programs. Up to 2014, 621 cadres had completed their programs, with 282 who trained abroad (with excellent and good results accounting for 34% and 44%, respectively), and 339 masters students who studied in Viet Nam. Among the total number of 6,474 staff participating in short-term courses in 22 countries, there were 31 members of the Central Committee, 336 deputy ministers and the equivalent; 40 general directors, deputy general directors and directors of state-owned enterprises; 4,329 senior officers; and 460 cadres from different departments. Accordingly, with the objective of enhancing foreign language ability at work and knowledge of international relations to meet the requirements of integration, 4,275 cadres participated in training to foster and upgrade their foreign qualifications. Of these, 1,746 officers were sent abroad for training courses in various foreign languages such as English, Chinese, Lao, Cambodian, French, German, Russian, Japanese and Korean (Nguyen 2014).

At the provincial level, Project Mekong 1000, Ho Chi Minh City Project 500, Danang 100 and Hai Phong 100 were expected to train local officers together with scientific and technical cadres abroad. On October 31, 2005, a training program known as Mekong 1000 and proposed by Can Tho University was approved by MOET in Decision No. 6143/QD-BGD&DT. This program allowed 1,000 scientific and technical cadres in 13 provinces/cities in the Mekong Delta to study abroad. Accordingly, with the overall objective to train staff abroad at graduate levels to promote the process of industrialization and modernization in the Mekong Delta, the specific target of the project from 2006 to 2011 was to give at least 1,000 young staff the opportunity to study at the masters and doctoral levels with different disciplines to meet the needs of the development of the region.

Can Tho University’s responsibilities were to select the appropriate candidates and send a proposal to partner institutions for screening and approval. The candidates who lived in the Mekong Delta were chosen from outstanding students and young staff. They needed to be under 30 years old to apply for a master’s degree and under 35 for PhD study. They also needed to be willing to work in the Mekong Delta after graduation (MOET 2005b). Can Tho University was responsible for a 6–12 month intensive English training course for the candidates to upgrade their language skills as well as their professional abilities. Under the project, the total targeted number of masters and doctoral students was 1,015 (825 masters and 190 doctoral degrees), with a total budget of more than USD 49.3 million.<sup>5</sup> Up to April 2015, 13 provinces/cities in the region had

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<sup>5</sup> <https://baocantho.com.vn/dap-ung-nguon-nhan-luc-chat-luong-cao-vung-dbscl-a45526.html>

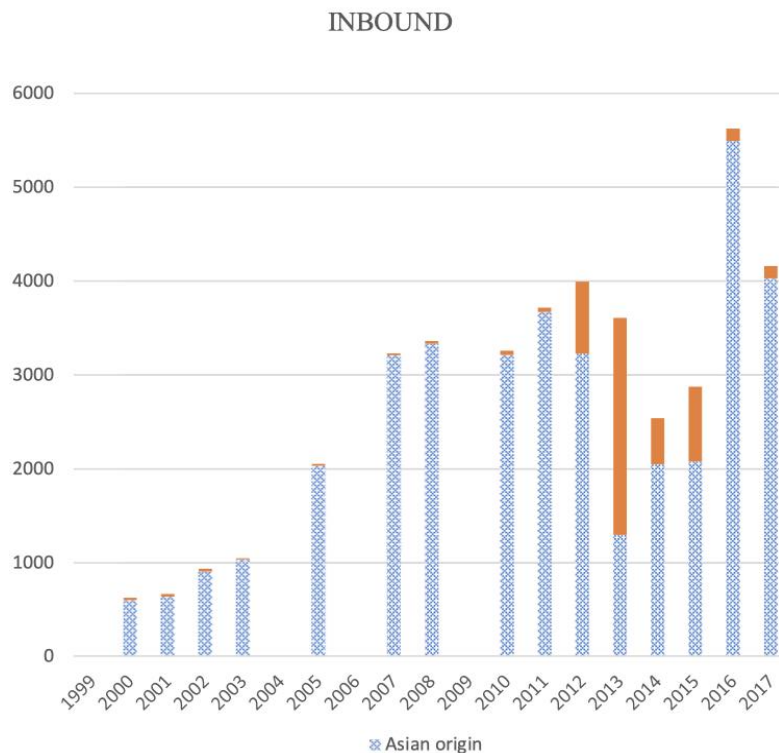
sent 552 cadres, including 50 doctoral and 502 masters students, to study abroad at 160 institutes and 23 countries across four continents. The total expense was USD 19 million.<sup>6</sup>

Other provincial-level projects such as the Ho Chi Minh City Project 500 (2001–2020), Danang100 (2004), and Haiphong 100 (2008) also aimed to provide overseas training at the postgraduate and undergraduate levels to strengthen the human resource capacity of the cities across a range of areas, as well as bolster the human resources of the locals.

### 2.2.2 Inbound Staff and Student Mobility

Besides sending students abroad, Viet Nam has also been hosting international students. Especially in the last few years, the number of foreign students has significantly increased in Vietnamese higher education institutions, both in exchange and degree programs. In 2008, MOET set a target number of 15,000 foreign students by 2020. In order to reach this target, MOET and Vietnamese higher education institutions have made substantial efforts to increase the attractiveness of the system generally and each individual institution particularly.

Figure 2.2: Number of International Students Studying in Viet Nam at Tertiary Level from 1999 to 2017



Source: Ryu and Nguyen 2021

Although Viet Nam ranks first among ASEAN countries in terms of sending students abroad to study, the ratio of international students in Viet Nam is quite modest, at only 0.3%, in comparison with 27% in Singapore, and lower than that of both Indonesia and Thailand (Nguyen 2021). According to a report of the Department of International Cooperation and MOET, in the period 2016–2021, there were 155 Vietnamese educational institutions that received and taught more than 45,000 foreign students from 102 countries and territories, of which 26.6% were under agreement types and 73.4% belonged to non-agreement types. From 2016, there were at least

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ctu.edu.vn/tin-tuc-su-kien/hoi-nghi-so-ket-chuong-trinh-mekong-1000.html>

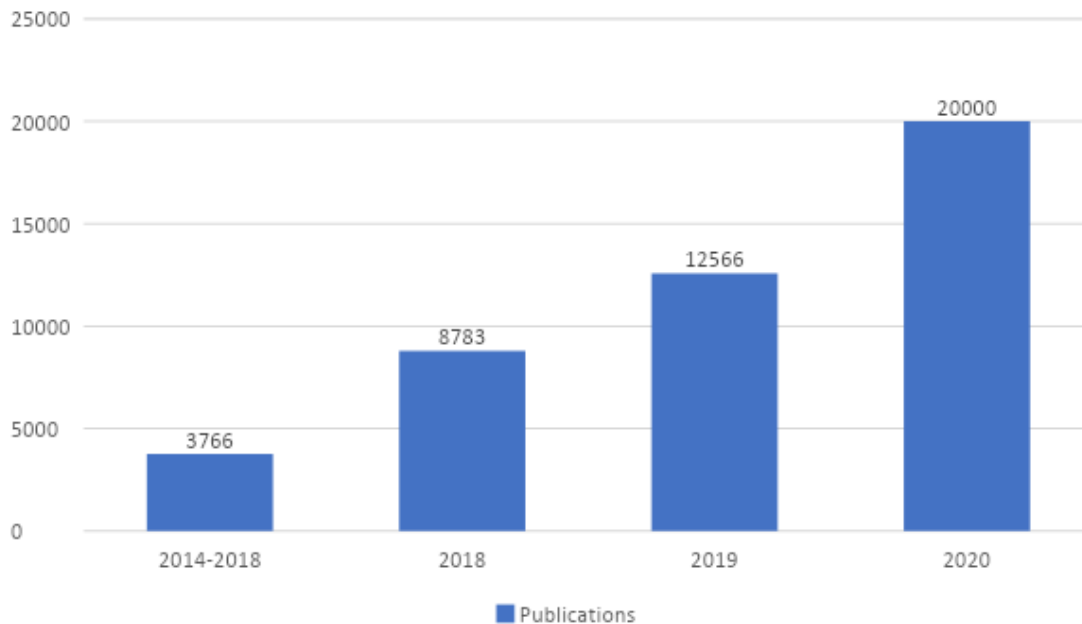
4,000 and upwards of 6,000 foreign students newly admitted to Viet Nam each year, reaching over 6,300 in 2019, Viet Nam’s highest number of international students. However, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, in the two years of 2020–2021, only about 3,000 foreign students were accepted each year.

Foreign students mainly join university-level short courses. The number of those studying at the master’s and doctoral levels is relatively modest, and most of these students are from Laos or Cambodia, while others include Chinese, Korean and Japanese students majoring in Vietnamese studies. Students from Laos and Cambodia account for 80% of international students in Viet Nam. Countries like Korea, China, France, Japan, etc., have a large number of students studying in Viet Nam due to the well-developed economic relationships in recent years between Viet Nam and these countries.<sup>7</sup> It is expected that the ratio of international students in Vietnamese academic programs will reach 1.7% in 2030 (Table 1.3).

### 2.3 International Publications and Rankings

In recent years, Viet Nam has made great efforts to boost its contributions to international publications and rankings, which are considered important ways to internationalize the country’s higher education (Prime Minister of Vietnam 2012; MOET 2021). Before 2010, Viet Nam’s international publications were limited, far behind other countries and universities in the region. However, over the past ten years, the number of Vietnamese scientific articles published internationally has increased by an average of 20% per year, reaching the rank of 49th in the world in 2020, and the country is now in the high-middle group of Asian countries (Nguyen et al. 2020; Nguyen 2021).

Figure 2.3: Number of Viet Nam's Scopus/ISI publications



Source: Adams et al. 2019, MOET 2021

<sup>7</sup> International Cooperation Department, MOET retrieved at [http://icd.edu.vn/372/giai-doan-20162021-viet-nam-dao-tao-hon-45000-luu-hoc-sinh-tu-102-quoc-gia.html/BPF/vi-VN/CMS\\_Cat/Tin-Giao-Duc-Quoc-Te/CMS\\_Detail/2068](http://icd.edu.vn/372/giai-doan-20162021-viet-nam-dao-tao-hon-45000-luu-hoc-sinh-tu-102-quoc-gia.html/BPF/vi-VN/CMS_Cat/Tin-Giao-Duc-Quoc-Te/CMS_Detail/2068)

Therefore, in terms of quantity, Viet Nam has made significant achievements, and according to Adams et al. (2019), the country has increased its indexed publication volume more than five-fold since 2009. However, the quality of international publications has not improved as impressively. In the period of 2009–2019, the citation index of Viet Nam's ISI publications has remained stationary compared to other Asian countries (Nguyen 2021). Viet Nam is therefore aiming to create a dramatic improvement in the quality of scientific research in higher education institutions, focusing on the connection between training and scientific research, especially at graduate levels. It is expected that scientific publications, especially publications in prestigious international journals, will reach the ratio of 0.85 articles per lecturer and 1.7 articles/lecturer by 2025 and 2030, respectively, in comparison with the current ratio of 0,375 articles per lecturer in 2021 (MOET 2021).

Thriving for international rankings is another important aspect of internationalization that Viet Nam's higher education has been aiming at. In 2018, for the first time, Viet Nam had two universities, VNU and VNUHCM, ranked in the top 1000 best universities in the world, according to the 2019 QS World University Rankings.<sup>8</sup> In 2021, five Vietnamese universities entered the list of the world's top universities, according to various prestigious university rankings. These higher education institutions include: VNU, VNUHCM and Hanoi University of Science and Technology (HUST), ranked in QS2021<sup>9</sup> and Times Higher Education (THE)<sup>10</sup>; Ton Duc Thang University in both THE and the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU)<sup>11</sup>; Duy Tan University in THE<sup>12</sup> and ARWU.<sup>13</sup> Viet Nam has established the goal of having at least ten higher education institutions ranked among the top 500 Asian universities by 2030, and that Viet Nam will become one of the four best university systems in the ASEAN region (Le 2022).

## 2.4 International Programs and Universities

In recent years, Viet Nam has developed international programs and universities that are supposed to significantly boost academic quality, broaden options for language of instruction, diversify the fields of study, and attract more international students.

As of December 31, 2021, there were 408 joint training programs, of which 186 programs were approved by autonomous universities and 222 programs were approved by MOET (2022b). These programs were implemented by 85 Vietnamese higher education institutions in partnership with universities from 26 countries, among which the United Kingdom was the top country with 101 programs (Figure 2.4). With regard to the levels of education, out of 408 international programs, 282 were undergraduate (69.1%), 106 were masters (26%) and 20 were doctoral programs (4.9%) (Figure 2.5). Economics and business, and science and engineering are the most popular fields of study, accounting for 64% and 25% of the total international programs, respectively. The other program majors were social sciences and humanities (Figure 2.6).

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/world-university-rankings/2019>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/world-university-rankings/2021>

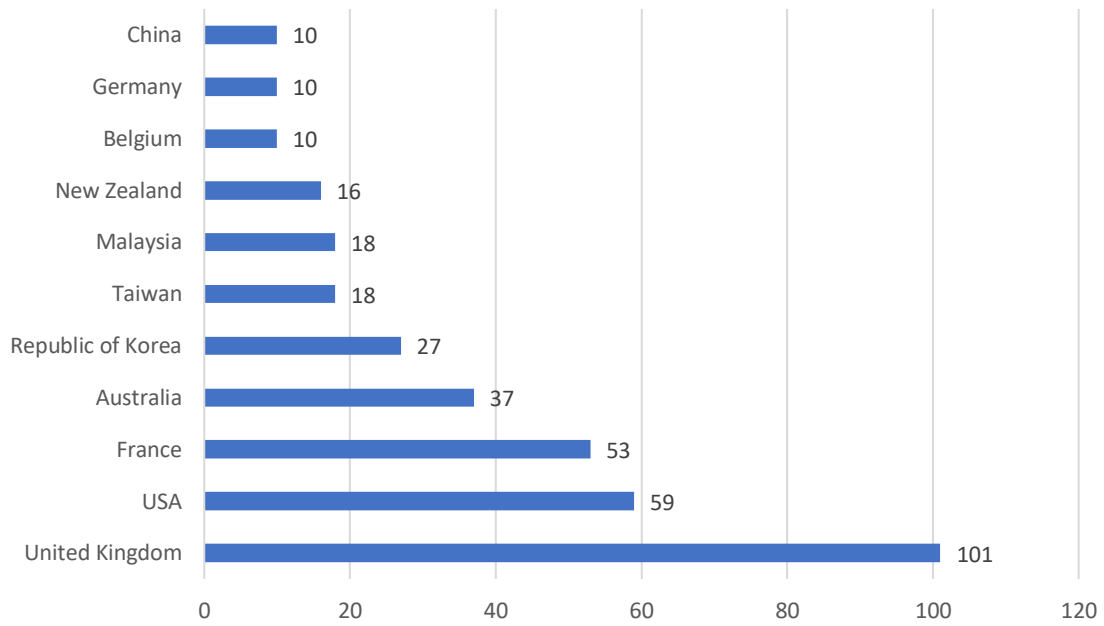
<sup>10</sup> [https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2022/world-ranking#!/page/0/length/25/locations/VNM/sort\\_by/rank/sort\\_order/asc/cols/stats](https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2022/world-ranking#!/page/0/length/25/locations/VNM/sort_by/rank/sort_order/asc/cols/stats)

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.shanghairanking.com/rankings/arwu/2021>

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2022/world-ranking#!/page/0/length/25/locations/VNM/sort\\_by/rank/sort\\_order/asc/cols/stats](https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2022/world-ranking#!/page/0/length/25/locations/VNM/sort_by/rank/sort_order/asc/cols/stats)

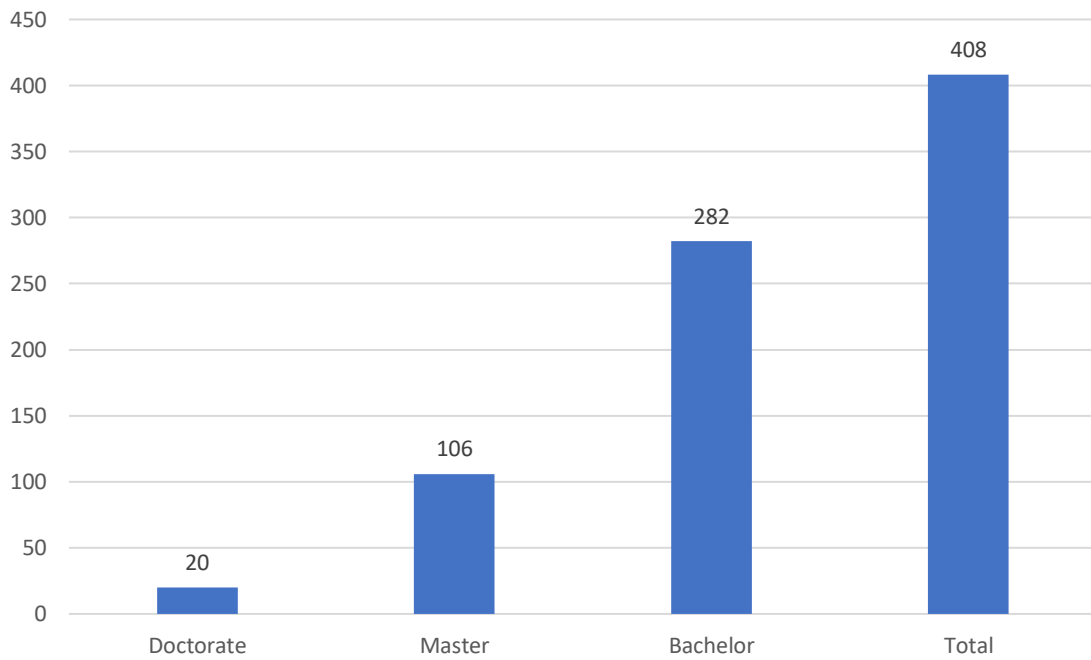
<sup>13</sup> <https://www.shanghairanking.com/rankings/arwu/2021>

Figure 2.4: Distribution of International Programs (Country-wise)



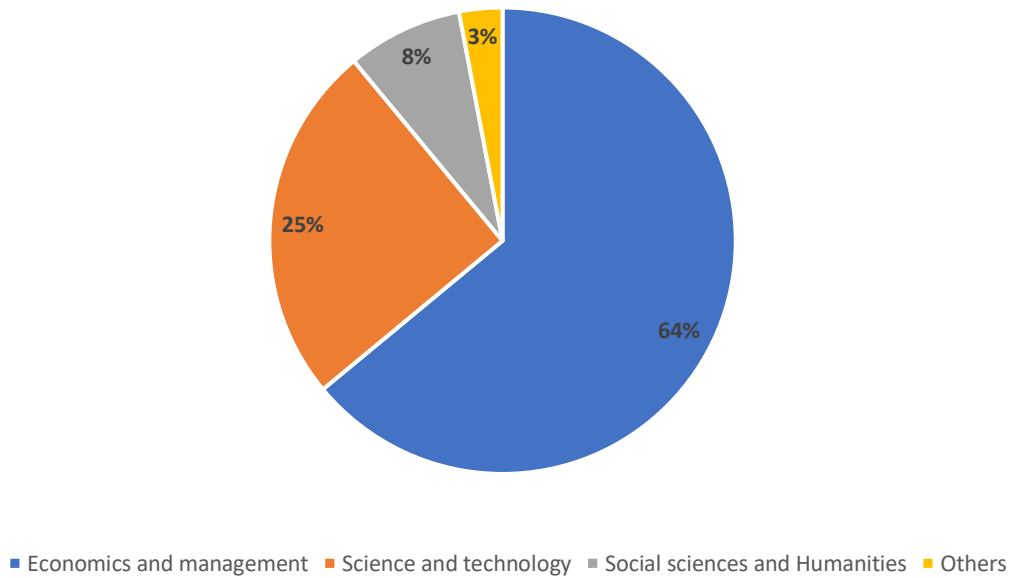
Source: MOET 2022b

Figure 2.5: Training Levels of International Programs



Source: MOET 2022b

Figure 2.6: Training Majors of International Programs



Source: MOET 2022b

From the year 1988 to 2022, there have been 605 foreign direct investment projects in education from 33 countries, with registered investment capital amounting to over USD 4.5 billion (MOET 2022b). According to MOET, 13,008 students are now studying at five universities that have received foreign investments, accounting for 0.68% of the total number of students in Viet Nam (MOET 2022b). Besides the classical international programs and universities (Ryu and Nguyen 2021), in recent years, Viet Nam has developed a new type of international higher educational institution, known as “binational” universities. So far, three universities of this type have been established and implemented through agreements between two national governments: Vietnamese German University (VGU), University of Science and Technology of Hanoi (USTH or Vietnam France University), and Vietnam Japan University (VJU). Although these binational universities are expected to advance the quality and recognition of Viet Nam’s higher education, there have been questions and problems regarding the management model, as well as the efficiency and sustainability of this university model during the implementation and operation process.

### 3 Viet Nam’s Higher Education Internationalization: Institutional Level

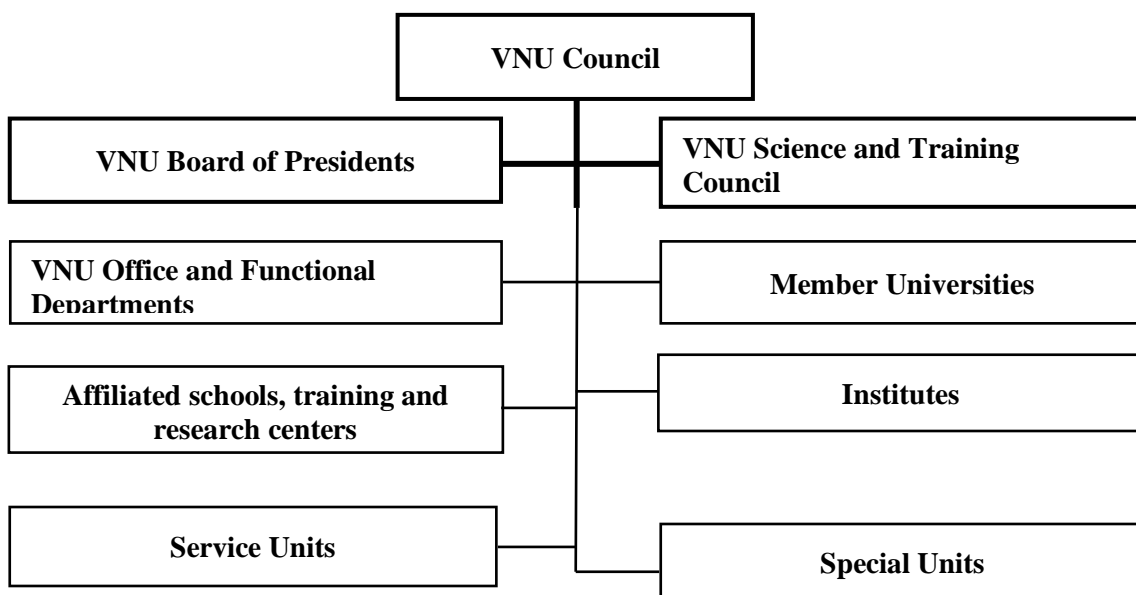
#### 3.1 The Case of Vietnam National University, Hanoi (VNU)

##### 3.1.1 Overview of VNU

Vietnam National University, Hanoi (VNU) was the first modern university ever established in Viet Nam. VNU has a long history with various stages of development. The University of Indochina, founded on 16 May 1906, Vietnam National University (November 1945), and the University of Hanoi (June 1956) are the precursors of VNU. In December 1993, according to Governmental Decree No. 97/CP of October 12, 1993, VNU was reorganized on the basis of the amalgamation of three major universities in Hanoi (Government of Vietnam 1993). As a leading national university, VNU holds a special position in Viet Nam’s higher education system. VNU reports directly to the Prime Minister and has high autonomy in the organization of its personnel, training programs, scientific research and technological development, planning and finance, international relations and other areas. VNU is entitled to work directly with ministries, ministerial-level organizations, and governmental bodies, as well as people’s committees of central cities and provinces, concerning affairs related to VNU. VNU’s colleges and institutes maintain their juridical person status as higher education and scientific research institutions, as regulated by the Law on Education and the Law on Science-Technology (VNU 2009).

In terms of VNU’s structure and organization, the university currently consists of 37 affiliated members, including nine universities, three affiliated schools, seven research institutes, two training and research centers, and 16 service units (VNU 2022). In addition to each affiliation’s specific functions and responsibilities, these institutions have the critical characteristics of being open, interconnected, intensively and extensively cooperative and highly specialized. They promote intra-flows and utilization of resources under the general guidance and coordination of VNU in order to enhance the quality, efficacy and competitiveness of education, technology and service products. In its developmental orientations, VNU continues to develop its structural organization using the model of a modern comprehensive research university (VNU 2009). Figure 3.1 shows the organizational structure of VNU.

Figure 3.1: Organizational Structure of VNU



Source: Adapted from VNU website <http://vnu.edu.vn/eng/?C2239> retrieved on 27/08/2022



According to VNU’s statistical data, the university has 4,754 staff members, including 2,634 academic staff. Among the total staff members, 1,639 are Doctors of Philosophy and Doctors of Science (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: VNU Statistics on Staff and Students in 2022

<b>STAFF</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>4,754</b>
	Academic staff	2,634
	Professors	67
	Associate Professors	431
	Doctors of Philosophy and Doctors of Science	1,639
<b>STUDENTS</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>64,864</b>
	Secondary and High School Students	6,085
	Undergraduate Students	51,012
	Graduate students	6,773
	International students	994

*Source:* VNU 2022

*Note:* The total in the staff row represents the sum of the academic staff and the administrative staff. Because some academic staff also hold administrative positions, they are counted twice in the sub-totals but not in the staff row total.

Currently, VNU offers 506 training programs of all levels, including 190 undergraduate programs, 198 master’s programs and 118 doctoral programs (Table 3.2). At the present time, VNU has 64,864 students, among whom 51,012 are undergraduate and 6,773 are graduate students. Notably, VNU is now hosting 994 international students from different countries (Table 3.1).

Table 3.2: VNU Training Programs

<b>Training programs</b>	506
<b>Undergraduate programs</b>	190
<b>Master’s programs</b>	198
<b>Doctoral programs</b>	118

*Source:* VNU 2022

### 3.1.2 VNU’S Development Strategy

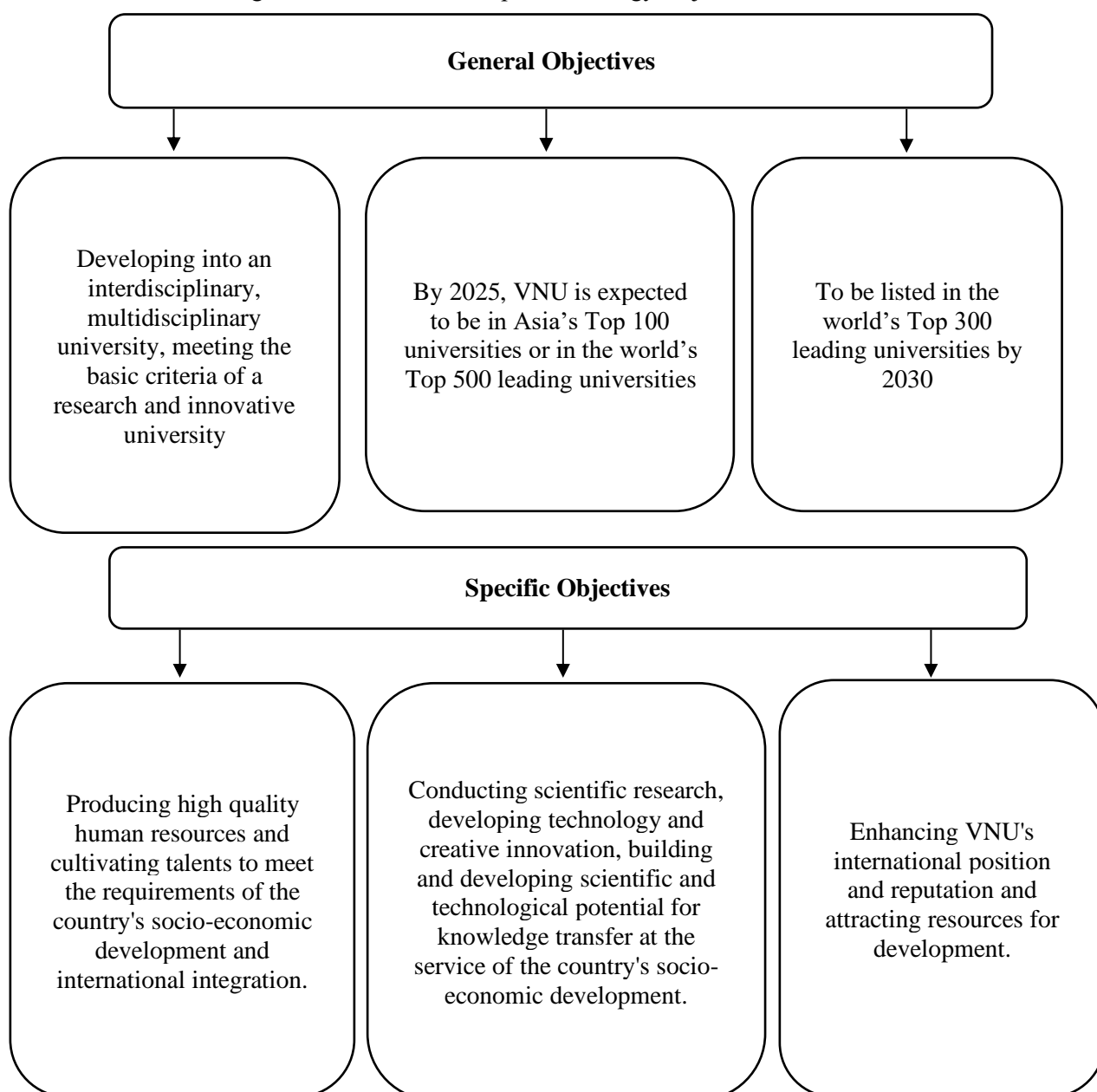
As identified in the Development Strategy up to 2030, Vision 2045, VNU’s mission is to produce high quality human resources and cultivate talents; promote advanced science, technology, renovation and knowledge transfer; and play the role of a pioneer in the reforming of Viet Nam’s higher education system. With its core values: “Innovation - National Responsibility - Sustainable Development”, VNU has set up a vision to be one of the leading interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary research universities in Asia and the world by 2045 (Table 3.3). In order to reach this vision, VNU identifies its general objective to be ranked in the world’s top 300 universities by 2030. This general objective is broken down into three specific ones of human resources and talent cultivation, science and technology development, and international reputation and resources attraction (Figure 3.2). It can be seen from the development strategy that internationalization is one of the core pillars of the university, especially in terms of striving for international recognition and ranking.

Table 3.3: VNU's mission, vision, core values and motto

<b>MISSION</b>	Producing high quality human resources and cultivating talents
	Promoting advanced science, technology, renovation and knowledge transfer
	Playing the role of a pioneer in the reforming of Vietnam's higher education system
<b>VISION 2045</b>	To be one of the leading interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary research universities in Asia and the world
<b>CORE VALUE</b>	Innovation – National Responsibility – Sustainable Development
<b>MOTTO</b>	Excellence through Knowledge

Source: VNU 2021b

Figure 3.2: VNU's Development Strategy Objectives



Source: VNU 2021b

As for “internationalization,” in the previous years, the term was not defined and rarely used in the official documents of VNU. Instead, “international cooperation” or “international integration” were more commonly used to indicate a variety of activities that involve foreign elements, ranging from the establishment and expansion of international relationships and cooperation, the implementation of international joint training programs, striving for international standards and international rankings, and the promotion of international publications and the enhancement of outgoing and incoming students and staff mobility (Nguyen 2010). Although VNU has not had a strategy document specifically for internationalization, many aspects of this process have been strongly promoted and its various contents are manifested in a variety of strategies, plans and activities taken by the institution. In 2014, for the first time, VNU set up a set of criteria to measure the level of internationalization that focused only on measuring the number of incoming and outgoing students and staff for exchanges and academic activities (VNU 2014).

Also in this document, the term “internationalization” was used under the category of “international integration” to “increase the level of internationalization of training programs, especially those belonging to the strategic tasks” (VNU 2014). This shows the narrow understanding and application of the term “internationalization” in the university’s official documents. In 2021, VNU issued the Development Strategy up to 2030, Vision 2045, in which it identifies concrete targets for attracting international students and teaching staff and promoting international publications. Specifically, VNU aims to reach 15 percent of international students of all categories by 2030, up from the current 2 percent. The same target is set for international lecturers who come to Viet Nam to teach at least one subject or have teaching/research time at the university for at least three consecutive months. With the current ISI/SCOPUS publication rate with international cooperation standing at 67 percent, VNU hopes to increase this criterion to 75 percent by 2030 (Table 3.4).

Table 3.4: VNU's Current and Targeted Internationalization Indicators

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Current index</b>	<b>Target 2025</b>	<b>Target 2030</b>
<b>International students</b> Percentage of international students (certificate level, short-term exchange, full- time study) divided by total number of students	2%	10%	15%
<b>International Lecturers</b> Percentage of international lecturers (teaching at least 1 subject or have teaching/research time at the university for at least 3 consecutive months) divided by total number of lecturers	7%	10%	15%
<b>International cooperation on research</b> ISI/SCOPUS publication rate with international cooperation	67%	70%	75%

*Source: VNU 2021b*

### 3.1.3 Staff and Student Mobility

Ensuring that VNU staff and faculty members have the opportunity to upgrade their skills, knowledge and qualifications is considered a crucial way for VNU to enhance the quality of teaching, learning and research. To this end, VNU has implemented a number of policies. For example, the university creates favorable conditions for faculty members and staff to study abroad under state-funded scholarship schemes through Projects 322, 911, and 165, or by gaining

financial support from other sources and donors. Lecturers can retain tenure while they take a leave of absence to pursue further studies overseas. In recent years, opportunities to study abroad have become greater for VNU staff and students. From 2013 to 2018, 4,242 VNU teaching and administrative staff were dispatched abroad to conduct research, teach, or take part in doctoral, master’s and internship programs, with 603 persons departing in 2017 (Table 3.5). Each year VNU also hosts an average number of 500 foreign lecturers, researchers and staff members who come to the university to teach, conduct research or do cooperative work (Table 3.5).

Table 3.5: Statistical Data on VNU Staff and Student Mobility

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>VNU academic staff going abroad to lecture, study or do research</b>	1,320	973	995	351	603	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Foreign academic staff coming to VNU to do research, work or study</b>	702	439	481	414	465	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Outgoing VNU students (study &amp; exchange)</b>		144	440	374	577	-	-	-	124	10
<b>Incoming foreign students (study &amp; exchange)</b>	978	1,079	1,273	1,050	1,163	-	1,163	819	994	994

*Source:* Compiled by author based on data provided by VNU’s Cooperation and Development Department 2018; VNU 2021a, 2022

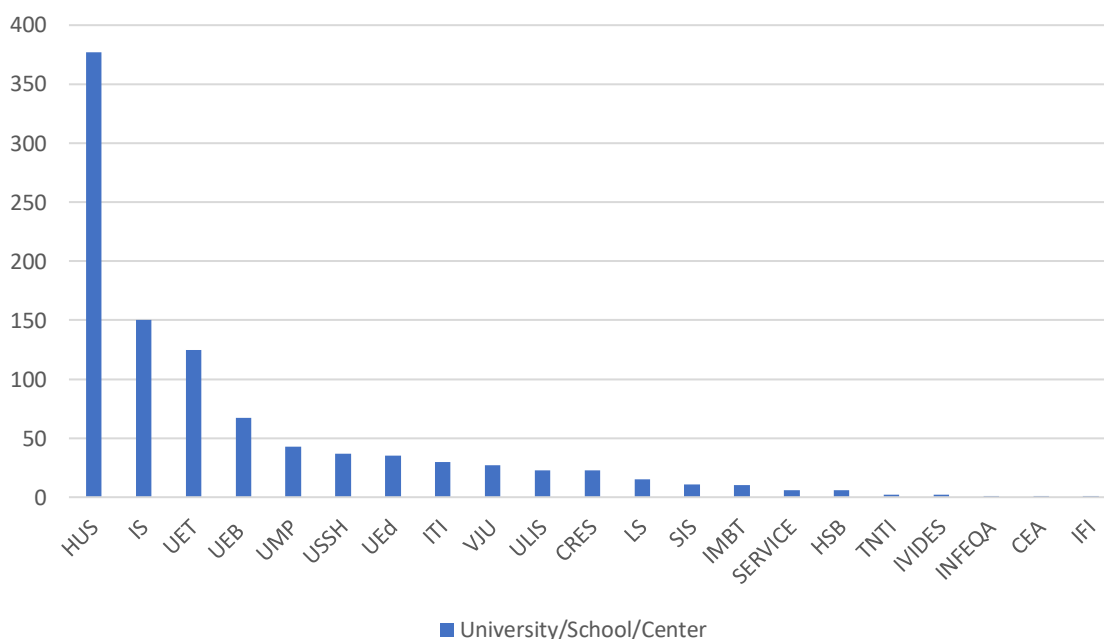
Staff mobility is an area that seems to have been the focus of VNU’s internationalization process ten years ago. In recent years, however, the university has been strongly promoting student mobility, both in terms of VNU students going abroad and incoming international students. The number of VNU students sent abroad to study—especially to take part in exchange programs with other countries and foreign institutions—has been steadily rising since 2014. This is due to the increasing number of Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) that VNU has signed with foreign partner universities and organizations, with many MOUs including articles on student exchange activities. Student exchange activities are mostly carried out with Asian and European universities and organizations, such as AUN, UMAP, and EUSHARE, a project to enhance higher education for students from ASEAN universities (VNU 2021a).

In the process of striving for better international rankings, VNU considers student exchange activities an important indicator to promote. Additionally, the rise in the number of VNU exchange students and foreign exchange students to VNU also serves as a motivation for VNU’s affiliated members to diversify and develop training programs in foreign languages, especially in English, innovate teaching methodologies, digitize training management activities in line with the trend of international integration and the requirements of the society (VNU 2021a). In 2021–2022, due to travel restrictions caused by COVID–19 pandemic, these activities became more diverse, with 802 international students and 157 staff and lecturers studying, teaching, researching, and engaging in exchange programs at VNU in both face-to-face and online formats (VNU 2021a).

### 3.1.4 International Publications and Rankings

Boosting international publications is one of VNU’s main methods for accelerating internationalization and increasing the institution’s prestige as a leading national university, with the goal of increasing international rankings and recognition. Each affiliated university of VNU emphasizes and invests in improving the research capacity of faculty staff. By the end of 2022, VNU had 1,509 scientific articles published on ISI and Scopus-indexed journals (Table 3.6). According to Figure 3.3, by August 2022, Hanoi University of Science—one of the oldest members of VNU and the one with the highest number of international publications—was followed by one of the youngest but very active member universities of VNU, the International School.

Figure 3.3: Number of VNU’s ISI/SCOPUS Publications by Member Units (August 2022)



Source: VNULIC website: <https://lic.vnu.edu.vn/vi/content/vnu-hot-news-thang-082022-gan-1000-cong-bo-quoc-te-isiscopus-cua-dhqghn>

Table 3.6: VNU's Science and Technology Activities

34 RESEARCH GROUPS
28 Strong research groups
6 Promising research groups
210 LABORATORIES
01 National key laboratory
09 VNU key laboratories
38 Target laboratories
140 Specialized centers/laboratories
22 General practice centers/laboratories
1,610 SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY PRODUCTS
1,509 ISI and/or SCOPUS articles

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86 Inventions and utility solutions

15 Startup and transferred products

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*Source: VNU 2022*

In the past, international publications used to be dominated by natural science fields. However, in recent years, the number of ISI/SCOPUS articles in the fields of economics and business, as well as social sciences, have been significantly enhanced among VNU academic staff (Figure 3.3). This is the result of the university and its affiliates' intensive investments in laboratories and the establishment of strong and promising research groups, as well as other policies to encourage academic staff to publish internationally. For example, in 2021, VNU financially supported 141 international publications with more than VND 2.5 billion. The recipients of this funding were main authors, corresponding authors or co-authors who had works published in either the top 5% most prestigious journals in their respective fields, Q1, Q2 or higher groups' journals, and/or ISI/Scopus- indexed journals (VNU 2021a). Other policies are briefed in VNU's 2022 annual report, as follows:

VNU's lecturers can choose to spend more time either on scientific research or teaching. As authors of scientific products exceeding the norm, lecturers can enjoy a reduction of up to 50% of their mandatory teaching hours. Special financial support is also given to non-funded projects. In addition, the new regulations allow lecturers to work remotely, and special investment is granted to excellent works and strong research groups. VNU's researchers completing the total working time of the year and having the number of research hours exceeding the norm are further financially supported.

VNU has also issued a financial support policy for young scientists as one of its numerous breakthroughs to increase income for young scientists so that they can concentrate on their work, teaching, and research to increase the quantity and quality of research products and contribute to improving the innovation index of VNU. Beneficiaries of this policy are young scientists (under 40 years old) with a doctorate degree or higher. Accordingly, VNU supports non-funded academic articles published in Q1 or Q2 journals according to Scimago Ranking with the minimum support levels as follows: 100 million VND/article in the top 5% industry/field journals; 70 million VND/article in Q1 journals; 50 million VND/article in Q2 journals. For basic sciences, young scientists having been employed by VNU for less than 5 years are given financial support by assigning tasks to ensure an average income of at least 15 million VND/month (VNU 2022).

As previously mentioned, being listed in the world's top 300 universities by 2045 is a core objective of VNU. In order to reach this goal, the university has promoted various factors to meet the criteria of these international rankings. In 2022, VNU became the first Vietnamese higher education institution to receive the Recognition of Improvement Award, an award given to institutions for their significant improvements in rating results based on the improvement in their average rankings, according to the QS World University Rankings. Also in 2022, according to the QS World University Rankings, VNU was ranked 162nd, listed in the top 21.3% of Asia's leading higher education institutions, and 36th in Southeast Asia<sup>14</sup>. Notably, five disciplines were listed in Group 500 globally—Mathematics, Physics and Astronomy, Business and Management Studies, were all ranked No. 1 in Viet Nam (VNU 2022). According to Times Higher Education (THE), VNU maintained its ranking in four subjects, namely: Computer Sciences and Social Sciences (both in Group 601–800 globally), and Engineering and Physics Sciences (both in Group 801–1000 globally). At the same time, VNU had two additional ranked subjects with Business

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.topuniversities.com/universities/vietnam-national-university-hanoi>

and Economics, and Life Sciences both listed in Group 501–600 globally (VNU 2022).

### **3.1.5 International Joint Programs**

International joint training programs have been promoted at VNU since the 2000s. By 2021, there were 26 international joint training programs, including ten bachelor's and 16 master's programs, accounting for 15% of total programs (VNU 2021a). These joint degree programs are granted by either VNU or by both VNU and partner institutions. VNU has been selective in cooperating only with partner universities that are accredited and have high rankings, according to international university rankings. The implementation of these international joint degree programs offers opportunities for students to study advanced curricula and greater access to digital libraries and modern study environments. VNU's faculty and professionals can improve their qualifications via curriculum exchange and technology transfer, accessing and utilizing knowledge and teaching materials of international standard, and learning from experiences in curriculum development, teaching methods, as well as management skills. At the same time, international joint programs are considered a means to attract more international students to the university and promote academic exchange and scientific research.

### **3.1.6 Impacts of Study Abroad**

In order to investigate the impact of study abroad programs at the institutional level, in August 2018, interviews were conducted for this study with leaders and managers of VNU and its member universities for their perspectives on the impacts of study abroad of faculty and staff members on personal and institutional development. The interviewees were coded according to their institutions and genders as follows: Female (F), Male (M); VNU Headquarters (VNU); University of Engineering and Technology (UET), University of Social Sciences and Humanities (USSH), and University of Foreign Languages and Studies (ULIS).

At the VNU level, one interviewee (VNU-F) told us that it is quite difficult to evaluate the impacts of study abroad for faculty and staff members. There needs to be concrete criteria such as the number of international publications produced by the faculty after returning to the university, or the variety of international activities they can initiate or take part in as well as the academic networks they build upon their return. In general, VNU-F believes that most faculty and administrative staff members, after graduating from the programs abroad, have positively contributed to the development of VNU in general and their institutions in particular. More specifically, the number of international publications has significantly increased in recent years in line with the increased number and proportion of PhDs trained abroad among faculty members of VNU.

This opinion is shared among other interviewees, such as USSH-M, UET-M, and ULIS-F. One issue pointed out by USSH-M is the ability to re-integrate into the culture and academic environment of the university of those who have graduated abroad. There are two possibilities mentioned by USSH-M. The first one is that more popular faculty members can quickly join and contribute to the operations and development of the university without too many obstacles. However, another possibility is that some faculty members, after a long time living and studying abroad, feel that it is difficult to develop acquaintances and become familiar with the working, behavior and relationships within the Vietnamese institutional culture. "On the one hand, some people think that they are now better than people who don't have overseas study experience and disregard their opinions. On the other hand, some people are not accepted by the old generation, especially when proposing and initiating new ideas and stating their different critical opinions" (USSH-M).

The interviewee UET-M only emphasized the positive aspects of those graduating from abroad.

For example, they are very active in building and developing strong research teams, contributing significantly to the international publications achievements of the university. “I see there are no difficulties so far since the number of faculty members at UET with some kind of study abroad or research experience is very high, and therefore, they work smoothly with one another and develop a good understanding. The working culture in the university is shared among all staff members” (UET-M). “The university can strongly benefit from the academic network of faculty members. For example, many of the research projects and jointly supervised PhD students<sup>15</sup> are brought about by faculty members who have their own relationship with overseas higher education institutions and/or professors” (UET-M).

Developing a more international environment and approaching international standards are two other points mentioned by ULIS-F: “Our university has faculty members graduating from various countries in Asia, Europe, America and elsewhere. Therefore we can build up a multicultural environment and understanding, which is very important in the process of internationalization of the university” (ULIS-F).

Brain drain, however, is a negative impact of study abroad, as pointed out by some of the interviewees. “In the last ten years, the percentage of faculty members coming back to work at UET is quite low. However, at the same time, our university can attract lecturers and researchers from other Vietnamese universities after they finish their studies abroad. Therefore I call this process brain circulation rather than brain drain” (UET-M).

## 3.2 Hanoi University of Science and Technology (HUST)

### 3.2.1 Overview of HUST

Established in 1956, Hanoi University of Science and Technology (HUST) is Viet Nam’s first multidisciplinary technical university. The university has been the industrial engineering training center of the country during the development process and the cradle of high-quality human resources for national modernization and industrialization. In 1960, HUST inaugurated the construction of its new campus based on Soviet specialists’ design.

In line with the world’s integration and development tendency, and with open cooperation policies aimed at improving the quality of research and technology transfer, HUST is a prestigious address for foreign and domestic technology development investors, businesses and financial institutions. Through over 60 years of building and development, HUST has constantly been reforming its leadership and management practices, upgrading training programs, advancing the expertise of its lecturers and staff, and modernizing facilities and equipment for teaching and research activities, to gradually close the gap in its robust development of global education. Table 3.7 shows the significant events of HUST since 1956.

Table 3.7: Major Milestones of HUST

Year	Event
1956	Resolution No. 147/ND on the Establishment of Hanoi Polytechnic University/Hanoi University of Technology;  First cohort, consisting of 848 students of 14 majors from 04 cross-faculties

<sup>15</sup> Doctoral students who are jointly supervised by an overseas professor and a domestic one.

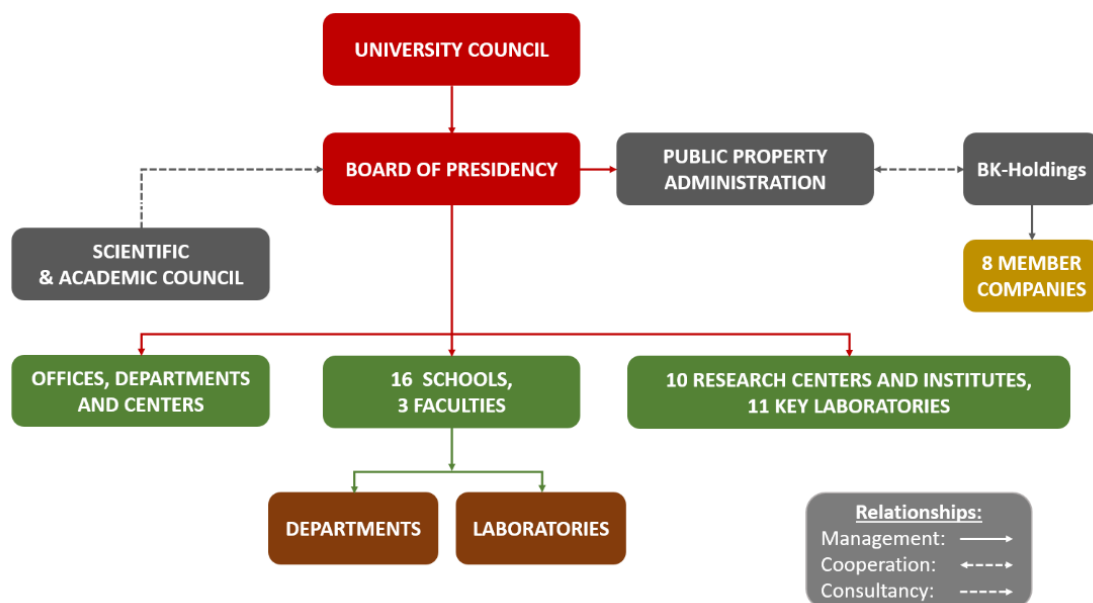


<b>1960</b>	Inaugurating the construction of the new campus on the grounds of Indochina boarding school.
<b>1966–1967</b>	Separation of Civil Engineering and Mining/Metallurgy faculties into the National University of Civil Engineering and the University of Mining and Geology;  HUST opening postgraduate training programs; providing core cadres for universities in Central and Southern Vietnam
<b>2010</b>	English name changed from Hanoi University of Technology to Hanoi University of Science and Technology (HUST)  Piloting Autonomy at the University
<b>2011</b>	ISO 9001–2008 Certificate for Administration System
<b>2013</b>	#1 university in Vietnam by URAP
<b>2015</b>	Becoming an official member of the Asia-Oceania Top University League on Engineering (AOTULE)
<b>2016</b>	#1 in Vietnam and #577 in the World by SCImago
<b>2017</b>	Accredited by the High Council for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education (HCERES - France)
<b>2020</b>	#301–400 among universities offering engineering and technology subjects (World University Rankings)

Source: Adapted from HUST website: <https://en.hust.edu.vn/milestones> retrieved on 26.08.2022

With an organizational structure starting with the Board of presidency (six members) and Board of trustees (19 members), HUST applies a three-level administration model: University, Faculties-Schools-Centers, and Departments. The University has three faculties, 16 schools, ten research institutes and centers, eleven key laboratories, and over 210 laboratories and workshops for academics and research (Figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4: The Organizational Structure of HUST



Source: HUST website from <https://en.hust.edu.vn/organizational-structure1> retrieved on 27.8.2022

According to statistical data from HUST, as of 2021, there are 1,650 employees, of whom 1,200 are faculty members, including 23 professors and 217 associate professors (Table 3.8). The number of undergraduate students at HUST in January 2021 was 32,000, with a further 1500 graduate students. HUST is also hosting 150 full-time international students (Table 3.8).

Table 3.8: HUST Statistics on Staff and Students in 2021

<b>Academic and administrative staff</b>	Administrative staff	450
	Faculty members	1,200
	Professors	23
	Association professors	217
<b>Students</b>	Undergraduate students	32,000
	Graduate students	1,500
	Full-time international students	150
<b>Academics</b>	Academic programs	148
	Master's programs	40
	Doctoral programs	43
	Bachelor/Engineer programs	65
	Bachelor's joint academic programs with international partners	14
	Bachelor's Advanced Programs	13
	Talented Engineering Programs	7
	Excellent Engineers Training Programs	3

Source: HUST's official website <https://en.hust.edu.vn/quick-facts1>

Currently, HUST offers 148 academic programs, including 65 bachelor/engineer programs, 40 master's, and 43 doctoral courses, as well as 14 joint programs with international partners and other academic programs of various types (Table 3.8).

### 3.2.2 University Development Strategy

With its commitment to human development, high-quality workforce training, scientific research, technological innovation and knowledge transfer that serves the country and global society, HUST promises to realize the vision of being a leading research university in which engineering, and technology are at the core of the institution and contribute to the development of the knowledge economy, peace and security, and Viet Nam's higher education (HUST 2017). To this end, the university has identified five core values: (i) Excellence & Effectiveness, (ii) Dedication

& Commitment, (iii) Integrity & Respect, (iv) Individual Talent & Collective Brainpower, and (v) Inheritance – Creativity (Table 3.9).

Table 3.9: HUST's Mission, Vision and Core Values

<b>MISSION</b>	Commit to human development, high-quality education, scientific research, technological innovation and knowledge transfer for the betterment of our nation and society
<b>VISION 2045</b>	Strive to become the leading research university in which engineering, and technology are at the core of the university and to contribute to the development of the knowledge economy, peace and security, and Vietnam's higher education
<b>CORE VALUES</b>	Constantly in pursuit of becoming a pioneer research university in Vietnam and Asia, a hub for scientific and technological intellectuals, and an attractive environment for nurturing talent. Core values: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Excellence &amp; Effectiveness:</b> Offer education programs that are committed to excellence and effectiveness through our education process</li> <li>2. <b>Dedication &amp; Commitment:</b> Promote dedication and honor commitment as our long-standing values</li> <li>3. <b>Integrity &amp; Respect:</b> Value integrity and respect dignity and diversity in all aspects of university life</li> <li>4. <b>Individual Talent &amp; Collective Brainpower:</b> Consider individual creativity and intellectual differences as key elements for success and innovation</li> <li>5. <b>Inheritance &amp; Creativity:</b> Inherit intellect and values from prior generations in promoting innovation and sustainable development</li> </ol>

*Source:* HUST's official website <https://en.hust.edu.vn/mission-vision-core-values>

Internationalization is one of the pillars of the development and institutional autonomy of HUST. The university has promoted this process in various ways, including widening networks and international cooperation, enhancing students and staff mobility, striving for international standards and rankings, and enhancing international publications.

Currently, HUST is a member of nine organizations and international university networks worldwide (Table 3.10).

Table 3.10: Organizations and International University Networks of which HUST is a Member

<b>No.</b>	<b>Network</b>
1	Association of Universities of the Francophonie (Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie, AUF)
2	The ASEAN-European Academic University Network (ASEA-UNINET)
3	ASEAN University Network (AUN)/Southeast Asia Engineering Education Development Network (SEED – NET)
4	Greater Mekong Sub-region Academic and Research Network (GMSARN)
5	Passage To Asean (P2A)
6	South East Asia Technical Universities Consortium (SEATUC)
7	Asia-Oceania Top University League on Engineering (AOTULE)
8	The Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE Asia-Pacific)
9	UK Vietnam Higher Education Partnership

*Source:* HUST's official website <https://en.hust.edu.vn/international-network> retrieved on 27.8.2022

### 3.2.3 Staff and Student Mobility

HUST has been sending its faculty members abroad to study since 1971. In the first two decades of this program, the destinations of the limited number of lecturers going abroad were mostly Russia and other Eastern European countries belonging to the socialist block. Since the 2000s, the destination countries have become more diversified, including Western European countries, North America, Asian countries and others. From 1998, HUST has sent 245 faculty members to study abroad (see Table 3.11), most of whom are scholarship recipients from various sources. It is notable that, since the year 2013, the number of HUST staff going abroad to study has dropped drastically. This fact is due to a change in the recruitment policy of HUST, in which the university has prioritized job applicants who already have doctoral degrees over those without them. By doing so, the university does not have to face the risk of brain drain when faculty members pursue long-term education abroad.

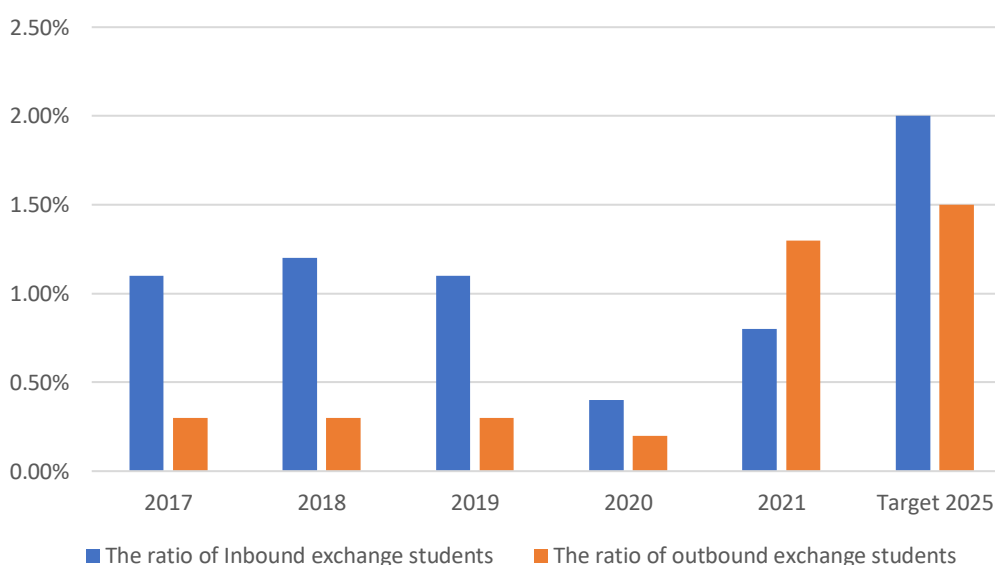
Table 3.11: The Numbers of HUST Faculty Members Studying Abroad from 1998 to 2008

1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
1	2	5	13	13	9	13	20	15	25	33
2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total
32	30	17	10	3	1	2	1	0	0	245

*Source:* Compiled by author based on data provided by the International Cooperation Department, HUST

In terms of student mobility, since 2013, the number of international students coming to HUST has steadily increased each year. International students, especially those from European countries who are required to complete a three-month experience abroad, can come to HUST to take part in exchange programs, undertake internships, join in research projects, or take coursework in one of the ten joint programs offered by the university. The number of outgoing students from HUST has also increased during the past few years. Each year HUST sends 60 to 90 students abroad, mostly to participate in exchange programs. HUST sets up a target to have two percent of inbound exchange students and 1.5 percent of outbound exchange students by the year 2025 (Figure 3.5).

Figure 3.5: The Ratio of Inbound and Outbound Exchange Students

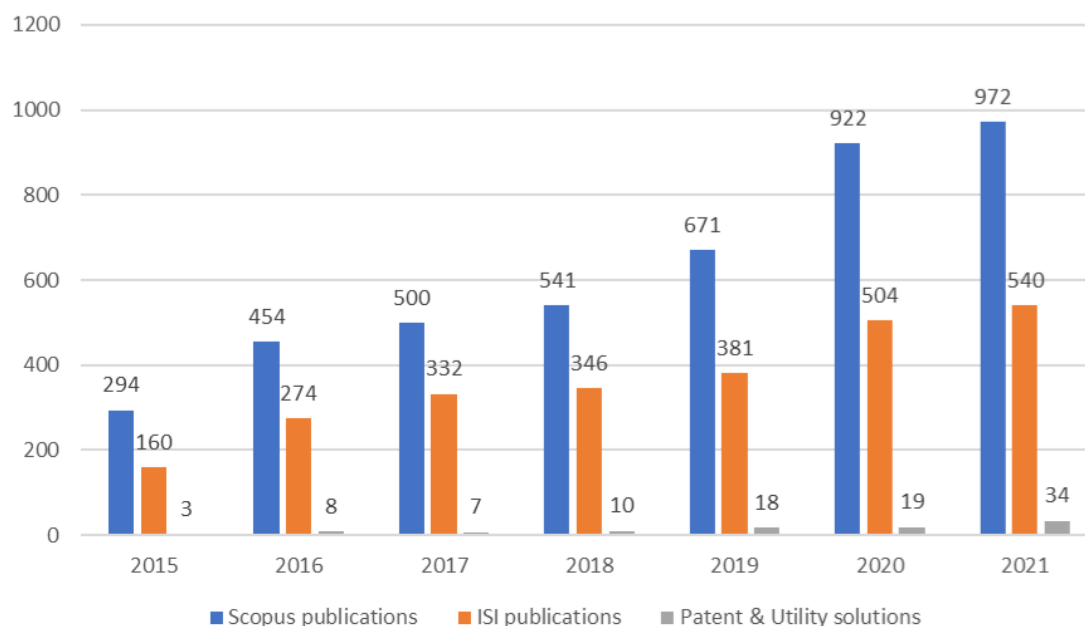


*Source:* HUST 2021

### 3.2.4 International Publications and Rankings

As a leading research university, HUST focuses on boosting international publications and patents. The university has paid attention not only to the quantity but also the high quality of its international publications. With more than 120 strong research groups, the university is implementing approximately 350 research projects, with USD 5 million in research funding.<sup>16</sup> As a result, as shown in Figure 3.6, the number of ISI/Scopus-indexed articles has steadily increased since 2015. Policies to encourage and reward research activities among students are also being applied in order to promote research and publications.

Figure 3.6: HUST's Scopus/ISI Articles, Patents and Utility Solutions



Source: HUST 2021

In 2021, HUST was listed in the top 251–300 Asian Universities, according to the Times Higher Education University Rankings. Similarly, according to Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) Asia University Ranking, HUST was among the top 301–350 (HUST 2021). This is a recognition of the university's efforts in striving for international standards and recognition.

### 3.2.5 International Programs and Universities

HUST was one of the first universities in Viet Nam to implement joint training programs with internationally accredited universities. These joint programs are considered a way to not only help the university to diversify its financial resources in the context of cutting off state funding and implementing institutional autonomy but also a good way to attract international students and develop capacity building for faculty and staff members. Currently, the institution is offering six academic programs in partnership with various universities from Australia, Germany, Japan and the USA (Table 3.12). These international programs are comprised of two types. The first type of joint international program is through a degree offered by HUST. The other type is with a degree offered by a foreign university. According to the International Cooperation Department, before 2014, the number of international students coming to HUST to undertake coursework and join local degree programs was low. Since then, thanks to the implementation of these international programs, HUST has been able to attract more foreign students of the first type.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.hust.edu.vn/en/about/quick-facts-550662.html>

Table 3.12: Academic Programs Delivered in English at HUST

No.	Programs	Partner Institutions
1	Mechanical Engineering	Griffith University (Australia)
2	Electronics and Telecommunications	Leibniz Hannover University (Germany)
3	Mechatronics	Leibniz Hannover University (Germany)
4	Mechatronics	Nagaoka University of Technology (Japan)
5	Business Administration	Troy University (USA)
6	Computer Science	Troy University (USA)

*Source:* HUST's official website  
<https://www.hust.edu.vn/en/academics/undergraduate-programs/joint-international-training-programs-554813.html>

### 3.2.6 Impacts of Study Abroad

The researcher conducted an interview with a manager from HUST, who was in charge of international cooperation at the university in August 2018. The interviewee is coded as HUST-F. According to HUST-F, in general, study abroad of faculty and staff members has had good impacts on personal and institutional development at HUST. The wide academic network developed by faculty members is especially important for the development and international cooperation activities of the university. For example, almost all international joint research projects conducted at HUST were brought about by those who have graduated from abroad. HUST has also implemented the so-called sandwich doctoral programs, in which PhD candidates are co-supervised by a Vietnamese adviser and a foreign adviser from a university abroad. This type of program is made possible by utilizing the networks of faculty members, most of whom have had international experience.

Coming back to the university after graduation from overseas, faculty members bring back new knowledge, advanced technologies, and good textbooks, as well as modern teaching and research methodologies that can be applied to the university. These are the key factors in developing and delivering lectures for international joint programs, which are mostly taught in English and use the curricula and textbooks of foreign partner universities.

Besides the positive impacts that studying abroad brings about, some negative points were also mentioned by HUST-F. "From my observations, it may be difficult for faculty members to re-integrate into the activities of their faculties and the university. The reason is that after a long time abroad, they may have lost their domestic academic networks, and it can be difficult for them to build new ones. When they return to the university, there may already be research groups and project teams that will not easily accept them as a member. Moreover, those who study abroad may feel unfamiliar with the working environment and culture in Viet Nam, and it may take them some time to resolve their feelings of reverse-cultural shock" (HUST-F).

Interviewee HUST-F explained the reasons for the decline in the number of HUST faculty staff going abroad to study in recent years, of which brain drain is an important factor. She said, "From the 1990s to early 2010s, HUST had sent quite a lot of its faculty members abroad to study using various financial resources. However, only about 50% of them have returned to work at the university. Some of them remained in other countries to live and work, while others have returned to Viet Nam but have left HUST to work for other institutions in Viet Nam. Therefore, in recent years, HUST has given a higher priority to recruiting those who already have PhD degrees in order to prevent brain drain. Faculty members who have gone abroad during previous years have gone mostly for short-term research, teaching or internship projects in other countries."

## 4 Conclusions

Internationalization has been significantly promoted in Viet Nam as essential to developing the national education system. To boost this process, the country has implemented various policies and strategies, among which sending staff and students abroad to study is crucial. Since the year 2000, student mobility and the number of outbound staff have rapidly increased thanks to a number of Vietnamese government projects at both the national and provincial levels. The findings of this research show that, overall, studying abroad has had significant positive impacts on the institutional development of the universities. Faculty members returning from abroad play active roles in building and developing strong research teams, thereby contributing to international publications and ranking of the universities. The university also benefits enormously from the new knowledge, advanced technologies, modern teaching and researching methodologies, as well as the academic networks of faculty members and a multicultural environment and understanding. Besides the positive impacts, study abroad may lead to adverse outcomes, such as brain drain, cultural shock and difficulties in re-integrating into the working environment.

In order to promote the positive impacts of the study abroad programs, it is necessary that the Vietnamese government has to take into careful and serious consideration the effectiveness and efficiency of every strategy, policy and plan. The government and institutions also need to maintain and implement appropriate policies to attract and better utilize those who come back from abroad to avoid the risk of brain drain. At the same time, they need to consider ways to promote brain circulation to involve those who choose to stay abroad in ways that will contribute to national and institutional development.

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