The service

The International Office manages and administers everything that revolves around internationalization issues, with a focus on mobility programmes, including the Swiss-European Mobility Programme (SEMP). The service is mainly dedicated to supporting the student body, academics and staff wishing to undertake a stay outside the canton, as well as to advising, welcoming and organising incoming mobility at SUPSI. Internationalization encompasses every measure that contributes to making a higher education institution competitive in the areas of teaching, research and various services within an international and intercultural context. With this in mind, the International Office is, in various respects, a platform for information and transversal exchange for the departments and SUPSI in general. Although not directly involved in the international activities of Research and Graduate and Post-graduate Studies (direct mandates), it actively participates in the development and maintenance of networks with national and international partners.

Overview

The year 2022 was characterised by the evaluation of the student and staff mobility process, an integral part of the Quality Assurance System (QAS), aimed at assessing and improving activities and service. The implementation of the Mobility Online tool for student mobility management continued, which facilitates and streamlines the administrative process for the International Office, departmental coordinators and students.
P20 Student and Employee Mobility Process Evaluation

Quality within SUPSI is guaranteed by a QAS based on the - Quality Policy and Strategy (QPS) - Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) - SUPSI Quality Handbook (SUPSI QH)

The SUPSI QH Handbook is composed of 22 processes recognised as key activities considered priorities by SUPSI Direction to ensure quality development. Among them there is also a specific process dedicated to mobility defined as "Student and Staff Mobility Process (P20)" interconnected with other processes related, for example, to staff or to the student life cycle.

Continuous improvement of the QAS is based on well-known approaches in quality assurance such as:
- the development of the quality of the entire institution through the adoption of a continuous improvement cycle for each individual process
- periodic critical comparison of quality assurance methods by comparison with external peers (external evaluation).

The Student and Staff Mobility Process (P20) also underwent a two-year evaluation by the International Office and the departmental mobility coordinators, a four-year internal evaluation with stakeholders and an external evaluation by a panel of experts. In 2021, the International Office team therefore started work on the internal self-assessment report, which is a key element of the external evaluation of the P20 process. The report covers the work of the International Office and the mobility coordinators over the past four years. On the basis of Standards defined by the Swiss Agency of Accreditation and Quality Assurance (AAQ) applied to mobility-related activities, people directly involved in the process (International Office Team, Mobility Network and Quality Manual process managers) were met, as well as those who contributed to the realisation of one or more mobilities (partners, other SUPSI stakeholders) and those who carried out the mobility (students and IN and OUT staff members), for a total of around forty people.

In addition to confirming the achievement of the standards, the panels proposed actions and activities to strengthen and improve the process, which were incorporated into the self-assessment report.

This report was the basis for the evaluation, which was conducted by a panel of external experts in February 2022 who, in addition to evaluating the P20 process, the report and the supporting documentation of the mobility activities, met once again with all the participants in the self-evaluation for feedback. The external evaluation report not only confirms the achievement of the standards, but also presents practical and strategic suggestions for improving the mobility process.

What has been done with the feedback received?

All the input from the various reports has been compiled into an action plan - which will accompany the International Office and the group of departmental mobility coordinators over the next few years - within which opportunities and challenges faced in recent years have also been taken into account, such as new forms of mobility (remote, mixed, short-term), the increased focus on internationalization projects for curricula, digitalisation and a greater need for flexibility and resources. In addition to this, the plan takes into account the recommendation made by the commission of experts on institutional accreditation in the 2021 evaluation report, in which it is recommended that a strategic reflection on internationalization be initiated at an institutional level, to be then channelled at the level of the different units, in order to enhance, enrich and make the activity more visible and expendable, offer and potential. This reflection was central to all the other reports.

On a practical level, in addition to more operational activities, the International Office is already working on the following issues:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIGITISATION</th>
<th>STUDENT LIFE CYCLE</th>
<th>HUMAN RESOURCES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Digitalisation of mobility-related activities with the implementation of the Mobility Online management tool</td>
<td>Continuous collaboration with services and associations related to the student life cycle in promotion and support activities (visas, permits and insurance)</td>
<td>Collaboration with the Human Resources department in identifying the different types of outgoing and incoming mobility and in defining content and administrative procedures and documentation</td>
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</table>
Ukraine Emergency and Support for Refugees

The service was introduced following the conflict in Ukraine, but it concerns all students and researchers in difficulty. SUPSI has been active from the outset to provide all the necessary support with:

- Dedicated web page: https://www.supsi.ch/en/support-to-academic-refugees
- e-mail: emergency@supsi.ch
- Activation of the incoming file management flow

SUPSI also provides refugees with a Buddy programme and the use of the Counselling helpdesk and psychological help (https://www.supsi.ch/en/counselling-helpdesk-and-psychological-help)

SUPSI has developed and implemented an action plan involving the International Office as the reception and collection point for enquiries, and the following services for the academic assessment of dossiers:

- Integrated Career, Experience and Guidance Service (CEO)
- Administrative Management and Basic Training Development Service (GeAS)
- Heads of reference for degree or research courses

Number of incoming requests to the International Office since the outbreak of war in Ukraine in February 2022:

- Students 48
- Researchers 8
- Lecturers 1

Challenges encountered
- Language barrier
- Scholarship search
- Incomplete documentation
- Eligibility criteria and skills assessment

In 2022, SUPSI enrolled 6 students with S status (permit for persons in need of protection). Before the outbreak of the war, another 6 had already enrolled.

Funding
As far as medium- and long-term prospects are concerned, in most cases, the financing of the various support instruments for Ukrainian students is not yet guaranteed and is currently supported by normal university funds or private initiatives. The situation is similar with regard to the recruitment of researchers, as the financial support from the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) is limited to one year and the funds for 2022 have quickly run out. Further funding solutions will have to be sought through fundraising.

Scholars at Risk
A working group for this activity has been set up within the Scholars at Risk (SAR) network, to which our school also belongs. The organisation is an international programme ready to welcome teachers, researchers and other members of the academic community who suffer serious threats to their lives, their freedom and their right to study. The Swiss section, to which some 40 universities belong, promotes the values and work of Scholars at Risk, sharing good practices and initiating joint activities.

Uni4Refugees
SUPSI participates in Uni4Refugees, a project run by several affiliated partners in the field of asylum, integration and education, in particular Swissuniversities, the State Secretariat for Migration, Scholars at Risk Switzerland and cooperation between various Swiss higher education institutions and stakeholders in the field. Uni4Refugees has provided a Sharepoint platform for the exchange of information and good practices related to the integration of refugee students.
The numbers of SUPSI students’ participation in mobility programmes are once again on the rise. In the 2021-2022 academic year, there was a sharp increase in activities thanks to constant promotional work undertaken by the mobility coordinators of the affiliated departments and schools.

For the 2021-2022 academic year, over 70 incoming students chose to study or undertake an internship at SUPSI and over 130 SUPSI students are interested in an experience outside our institution. In the end, more than 140 mobilities were carried out, with a good balance between study and internship mobility.

Student Mobility Report AY 2021-2022

Outgoing student mobility

During the AY 2021-2022 we had a good turnout of students interested in an experience either outside the canton or outside the national borders. Of the more than 130 SUPSI students interested, more than 70 undertook a mobility period in Switzerland, Europe and outside Europe. The favourite destination for our students remains Italy, followed by Swiss mobility. Right behind are the Netherlands, Spain and Germany on the European scene, while Uganda is the favourite country for mobilities in non-EU countries.

Some 60* students from the Department of Education and Learning (DFA) were also able to take advantage of Movetia Mobility Programme for Teachers (NALE) and receive a small amount of financial support for their two-week Francophone internship. (*not counted in the statistics).

The most popular areas of study for outgoing mobility are healthcare, social work and economics.
Incoming student mobility

In the area of incoming mobility, too, there were more than 70 applications from partner universities. Many of the mobility placements were carried out by students from neighbouring Italy, due to the fact that they offer degree courses in the Italian language. This was followed by Germany, Spain and Belgium.

The most popular areas of study for incoming mobility are healthcare, design, and information technology and technology.

Staff Mobility Report AY 2021-2022

There were many applications, in line with previous years, for mobility funding under the SEMP programme received for the academic year 2021-2022, both for teaching and training activities. As far as the SEMP programme is concerned, the International Office tracks and supports all requests. The service is also involved for other types of mobility (visiting professors, post-docs, confederation fellows), although not systematically; these types of mobility (visits and collaborations) are managed directly by the departments.

Despite the unusual situation dictated by the Covid-19 pandemic affecting a large part of the activities up to and including 2021, the actual number of mobility placements performed increased significantly compared to the previous academic year, with over 30 outgoing mobilities and almost 40 incoming mobilities.

Most of the SUPSI employees who went on mobility carried out a teaching activity, i.e. teaching assignments or providing training at a European university institute.
As part of its activities, during the 2021-2022 academic year, the International Office handled all the paperwork for students arriving from non-EU/EFTA countries from the four departments and the Teatro Dimitri Academy, who need visas and permits to enter Switzerland and thus access studies at our institute. Work was carried out with the canton on the documentation that students must present to their country’s consulate and a complete package in Italian and English was prepared to serve as a guideline for the preparation of their dossiers. Students were accompanied throughout the procedure (permit application and standard health insurance/access to Swisscare student insurance), starting with checking the documents to be filed, and followed through any problems or additional requests for documentation from the Migration Office. Out of 22 students who applied, 17 were granted visas and were able to start their studies here.

With the conclusion of the Erasmus+ programme 2017-2021, most of the SEMP agreements were also renewed for the period 2022-2027.

Also for the academic year 2021-2022, the aim of the International Office’s activities was in fact to maintain existing partnerships and create new ones, supporting our institution wherever possible in educational collaborations related to exchanges and mobility, reaching 109 active SEMP partners with 24 different countries.

Italy, also due to language sharing, remains the preferred partner (34), followed by Spain (22), Germany (20) France and Belgium (12 each).

With some 40 European partners, the Department of Business Economics, Health and Social Care (DEASS) remains the department with the most SEMP agreements, followed by the Department of Environment Constructions and Design (DACD).
Internationalization of the Curriculum (IoC) Project

In November 2022, the Internationalization of the Curriculum: Moving ahead together, organised in cooperation with four Swiss universities: BFH, HES-SO, SUPSI, ZHAW, was held at the EST Campus in Lugano-Viganello.

The internationalization of the curriculum (IoC) is a process of transformation in higher education that starts, first and foremost, with a commitment. During this event, four Swiss universities (BFH, HES-SO, SUPSI, ZHAW) presented their joint efforts to promote the IoC in Swiss higher education in a synergetic and structured manner. Together with speakers from different parts of the world, participants were able to reflect and exchange experiences on the potential and challenges of making internationalization a formal component of study programmes. They also discussed how to move from intention to action and how to obtain financial support for innovative initiatives. The event was characterised by lectures and parallel interactive sessions.

International Community of Practice (ICP) meeting 2022

In April 2022, DEASS hosted the annual ICP meeting with the aim of sharing and promoting best practices for internationalization and university mobility.

The ICP is a working group to which numerous business schools from European universities and UASAs belong. The three-day meeting, organised by the lecturer Michela Ornati (DEASS Mobility Coordinator of the Bachelor in Business Administration and Leisure Management, as well as SUPSI representative for the ICP group) took place at the SUPSI campuses in Suglio and Viganello, involving approximately twenty participants in a packed programme of presentations, visits and external activities. Speakers at the event included Luca Crivelli, DEASS Director, Carmine Garzia, DEASS Research and Services Manager and Andrea di Stefano, Bachelor in Leisure management scientific collaborator.

Some of the ICP members also took part in a management meeting with the heads of the International Office and a visit to the Lifestyle Tech Competence Centre in Manno, with a demonstration of the project to digitise Bally’s historical archives. In addition to the annual meeting, Wolfram Schönfelder, professor at the Hochschule Augsburg, gave three lectures in English to DEASS students and staff and the Department of Innovative Technologies (DTI).

Besides appreciating the welcome, the participants were favourably impressed by SUPSI and expressed strong interest in developing future collaborations on teaching and research projects.
Collaboration with Penn State University

Between 12 and 19 February, a group of students from SUPSI’s DTI and DACD visited Penn State University (PSU) as part of a collaborative project on the topic of recycling involving them, remotely, throughout the spring semester of 2022, and to attend a series of courses on the topic of intercultural communication.

The students were accompanied by the Head of the Degree Course in Computer Engineering, Prof. Sandro Pedrazzini, together with Amos Brocco and Vanni Galli, respectively Senior Lecturer and Lecturer-Researcher at the Institute of Information Systems and Networking (ISIN) of the DTI, and Chiara Napolitano, International Relations Coordinator of the DACD.

The students, divided into mixed groups of 4-5 members, started work on the joint projects, defining the activities to be carried out and the roles. The fruitful collaboration between SUPSI and Pennsylvania State University began in 2019 thanks to the initiative of the College of Engineering, which wanted to organise a study trip to Europe with its students. In the first year, a joint workshop was offered at DACD on communication skills in engineering, which was transformed into a semester-long online module during the pandemic and will be held again this year, partly in the United States and partly in Switzerland. The joint module involves all DACD degree courses and, as of 2021, also DTI degree courses, and enables participating students to develop important communication, technical and interpersonal skills, which are necessary for a successful professional placement.

In May 2022, SUPSI hosted a visit by students from Penn State University to conclude and present their projects.

In addition to its didactic purposes, the collaborative initiative between SUPSI and PSU aims to bring together young people from different cultural and educational backgrounds to help them become professionals capable of working in multidisciplinary and multicultural teams.

Visit of a HEIG-VD student delegation to the DTI and DACD campuses

In February 2022, SUPSI had the pleasure of welcoming a class of students from the Haute Ecole d’Ingénierie et de Gestion du Canton de Vaud (HEIG-VD). The delegation, accompanied by Prof. Pallotta, consisted of students from the interdisciplinary Innovation Management course. They visited the DTI campus and various laboratories, such as the Start-Up Garage, the Entrepreneur and the Dalle Molle Institute for Artificial Intelligence Studies ( IDSIA). Later, at the DACD campus in Mendrisio, they visited the FabLab, the Institute for Applied Sustainability to the Built Environment ( ISA-AC) and the DynaMat interdepartmental laboratory ( LDM).

It was an opportunity to share experiences and consolidate and enhance collaboration between Swiss institutions.
EAIE Barcelona 2022

The International Office team attended the annual EAIE conference in Barcelona, where they had the opportunity to establish new collaborations with European partners and strengthen existing ones. EAIE Barcelona 2022 was the biggest ever, with 6400 participants from over 95 countries. After two years of virtual meetings, it was great to be able to meet colleagues from other universities in person and participate in interesting workshops, many of them on the topic of IoC and sustainability, topics that are very much on the minds of all institutions.

Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAQ</td>
<td>Accreditation and Quality Assurance</td>
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<tr>
<td>BFH</td>
<td>Berner Fachhochschule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Career, Experience and Advisory Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DACD</td>
<td>Department of Environment Constructions and Design</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEASS</td>
<td>Department of Business Economics, Health and Social Care</td>
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<tr>
<td>DFA</td>
<td>Department of Education and Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>DTI</td>
<td>Department of Innovative Technologies</td>
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<tr>
<td>EAIE</td>
<td>European Association for International Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>SNSF</td>
<td>Swiss National Science Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>GeAS</td>
<td>Administrative Management and Development of Degree Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>HEIG-VD</td>
<td>Haute École d’Ingénierie et de Gestion du Canton de Vaud</td>
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<tr>
<td>HES-SO</td>
<td>Haute école spécialisée de Suisse occidentale</td>
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<td>ICP</td>
<td>International Community of Practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDSIA</td>
<td>The Dalle Molle Institute of Artificial Intelligence USI-SUPSI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IoC</td>
<td>Internationalization of the curriculum</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISAAC</td>
<td>Institute of Applied Sustainability to the Built Environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISIN</td>
<td>Institute for Information Systems and Networking</td>
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<td>QAAM</td>
<td>Quality Assurance Model</td>
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<td>SUPSI</td>
<td>SUPSI Quality Handbook</td>
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<tr>
<td>NALE</td>
<td>Movetia Mobility Programme for Teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>QPS</td>
<td>Quality Policy and Strategy</td>
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<td>PSU</td>
<td>Penn State University</td>
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<tr>
<td>P2O</td>
<td>Student and Staff Mobility Process</td>
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<tr>
<td>QAS</td>
<td>Quality Assurance System</td>
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<td>SAR</td>
<td>Scholars at Risk</td>
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<td>SEM</td>
<td>State Secretariat for Migration</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEMP</td>
<td>Swiss-European Mobility Programme (SEMP)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSI-UoM</td>
<td>Conservatorio della Svizzera Italiana – University of Music</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZHAW</td>
<td>Zürcher Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaften</td>
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