THE ORGANISATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL OFFICE
PART 1
ORGANISING INTERNATIONALISATION AT AN INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL - CENTRAL VS. DECENTRAL MODELS
WHO AM I?

- Worked in the International Office for 12 years
- Been head of the student mobility unit (8 staff) for 5 years
- Been through several organisational changes at AU
  - 2006 – 2012: University mergers
  - 2011: Centralisation of administration
  - 2014/15: Decentralisation of administration
MAIN TYPES OF ORGANISATION FOR INTERNATIONAL OFFICES

1) Centralised model
   • Decentral units primarily handle course approvals

2) Decentralised model
   • Level of decentralisation varies
CURRENT ORGANISATION AT AU

Central International Office

- Student Mobility
- International recruitment
- AU Summer University
- Housing

Decentralised international units at all four faculties

- Organised differently and number of staff members vary
NUMBER OF EXCHANGE AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS PER FACULTY

2015

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TASKS PLACED AT CENTRAL INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

- University-wide agreements or networks
- University-wide events for outgoing students
- Erasmus+ grants / grant agreement
- Admission of exchange students (administrative part)
- Welcome events for international students
- IT systems and webpages
- Delegation visits
TASKS PLACED AT FACULTY OFFICES

- Departmental or faculty-specific agreements
- Erasmus agreements
- Nordplus agreements and grants
- Study abroad advising
- Academic advising
- Departmental or faculty-specific webpages
- Faculty part of welcome events and delegation visits
WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AU MODEL?

- Many overlaps in tasks require close coordination between central office and decentral units
- Many opinions to take into consideration – many voices to be heard
- Different budgets – different student numbers – different needs
- Faculty agendas differ from institutional strategy
- Strategic decisions mainly at faculty level
- Development goals at central level require the support of the faculties
- Difficult or even impossible to speak with “an institutional voice”
- Internal battles / disagreements take up resources and time
HOW DO WE COOPERATE & COORDINATE?

- Strategic level
  - Internationalisation band meets every other week
  - Differences in budgets and goals are challenging

- Operational level
  - Lots of correspondence on a daily basis
  - Meetings when needed
  - Well-functioning cooperation → “we go as far as we can together”
PART 2
ORGANISING THE INTERNATIONAL OFFICE - INBOUND/OUTBOUND, BY REGION OR PROGRAMME
WHO AM I?

- International Coordinator for 7 years
- Worked at 3 different Faculties (Arts, BSS and Health)
- I’ve tried many different organisational models
- Change is good!
- As long as it does not happen too often, and as long as the management remembers to include staff at all levels in the process of building the new office structure.
TYPES OF INT. OFFICE ORGANISATION

- Incoming/Outgoing
- Geography (Regions/Countries)
- Study Programme
- Variations/combinations of the above
MAIN TASKS OF THE INT. OFF. STAFF

Incoming:
- Admission
- Course Enrollment
- Introduction
- Transcripts
- Housing
- Counselling
- Partner Portfolio

Outgoing:
- Application
- Study Fairs
- Allocation
- Credit Transfer
- Erasmus Grants and documentation
- Counselling
- Partner Portfolio
PRIORITISING

Every organisational model has its pros and cons

Things to consider / determining factors:

- Accessibility (to students, academic staff and partner universities)
- Study programme insight
- Available resources
- Efficiency
- Job satisfaction

- Workload
- Task solving durability / sensitivity to staff absence
- Staff Pool
ORGANISATION BY INCOMING-OUTGOING

Pros:
- Resource Saving
- Easily accessible to outsiders
- Manageable task portfolio
- Better time and focus for projects within work area
- In-depth knowledge of tasks
- Efficient/Lean

Cons:
- Monotonous
- Limited knowledge of partners
- Limited knowledge of study programmes
- Sensitive to staff absence
- Who has responsibility for Partner Portfolio?
ORGANISATION BY GEOGRAPHY

Pros:
- Easily accessible to outsiders
- Partner Portfolio easily divided
- Variation in work tasks
- Less sensitive to staff absence

Cons:
- Limited knowledge of study programmes
- Big task portfolio
- Resource demanding
- Less efficient / lean
ORGANISATION BY STUDY PROGRAMMES

Pros:
- In-depth knowledge about study programmes
- Aligned with internal university structures
- Variation in work tasks
- Less sensitive to staff absence

Cons:
- Big task portfolio
- Resource demanding
- Less efficient / lean
THE PERFECT INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

There is no such thing 😊

But you can get close by:

- Including all the staff in the process of deciding and implementing the office structure.

And

- Considering all the different factors that go into the making of a great and successful work environment.
GROUP WORK
WORKSHOP QUESTIONS

- What is most important? Efficiency or job satisfaction?
- What are good student services?
- Is it a good idea to have an international staff member in your office?
- Who do you represent? Your unit or the organisation as a whole?