

Strategic Objectives of Education at Ghent University

Ghent University's Vision Statement

Ghent University aims to be a world player building innovative research and education, based on international excellence. It commits itself to spearheading scientific and social debates and training people who dare to think today about the challenges of tomorrow.

Ghent University's Mission Statement

Ghent University holds a unique position in Flemish academia. This is reflected in its mission statement, which serves as a touchstone for its day-to-day policy and is the basis for its strategic policy plans and any change processes at all levels.

Ghent University ...

- distinguishes itself as a socially committed and pluralist university, which is open to all students regardless of their ideological, political, cultural and social background
- positions itself in a broad international perspective, all the while stressing its own individuality in terms of language and culture
- aims to encourage its students to adopt a critical approach within a creative, development-oriented educational and research environment
- offers a broad spectrum of high-quality research-based study programmes that are constantly being adapted to the most recent scholarly and scientific developments
- aims to develop in a selective manner the advanced degree programmes, as well as postgraduate and permanent education
- aims to situate its educational and research activities within the broader social context and to remain in continual dialogue with all parties concerned
- aims to promote and further develop fundamental independent research in all faculties and to be a world player in the selected fields of endeavour
- aims to be an enterprising university with a focus on the social and economic applications of its research findings
- attaches particular importance to the social facilities made available for students
- creates a stimulating environment for its staff and provides them with the fullest scope of opportunities to develop their potential
- attaches particular importance to the participation of students, staff and community representatives in the formulation of policy
- desires strong interaction with its alumni

- opts for a decentralized, dynamic organization model.

Strategic Objectives for Education

The strategic objectives for education listed below illustrate how Ghent University sees high-quality education. These objectives all reflect one global philosophy of education, namely multiperspectivism, which is the embodiment of Ghent University's motto "Dare to Think" and is also closely related to its mission statement. Multiperspectivism is a way of encouraging people to think outside of the box. We are all stuck in a box, one way or another, and this allows us to see certain things but also blocks our view from other things. We can overcome this by accepting the box for what it is, seeing it for what it really is, and ultimately opening new perspectives. In other words, it is versatility, not one-sidedness, that we should strive for.

Strategic objective for education n° 1: Education should focus on daring to think and promoting multiperspectivism

Description: Ghent University encourages critical thinking and the courage to think for yourself. It aims to achieve this by incorporating openness, changing perspectives, pluralism, and tolerance towards deviating viewpoints, approaches, paradigms and theories into its educational processes. In this sense, multiperspectivism does not only refer to the fact that dissonance is used as a means to encourage learning, but it takes on a broader meaning, which is reflected in the other educational objectives.

Strategic objective for education n° 2: Education is based on and invariably connected with research

Description: Education should be closely related to the dynamics of the scientific research itself. Fundamental scientific discoveries are often associated with paradigm shifts (i.e. changes in the way known information is reorganized into new theories). In this process, the accumulation of dissonant information is crucial, as this information does not fit into any of the existing paradigms. If education is to boost students' creativity, it should tie in with these dynamics of scientific change: it should confront students with anomalies and make them aware of the transitory nature of all knowledge, to name but a few things. If anything, students should be encouraged to take up new and unexpected perspectives. Other essential aspects are multi-, inter- and transdisciplinarity: combining the perspectives of different disciplines to formulate and solve problems and form theories.

Strategic objective for education n° 3: Education should contribute to the talent development of students and staff

Description: Talent development is the key to a versatile and creative university, one which nurtures a multitude of perspectives and considers this to be a strength. The university therefore aims to contribute to the talent development within its community.

Specifically, it strives for the following:

- Cultural, social and gender diversity is an added value that should be stimulated.
- The self-development of staff should be promoted and actively supported
- For students, two principles are applied:
 - a principle of equal opportunities: everyone should have equal opportunities to develop their talents, including the greater talents
 - a principle of second chances: talent should not go to waste because someone fails the first time; it is only fair that people are given a second chance, at which point the selection process can really start

Strategic objective for education n° 4: Education is fostered by the participation of stakeholders

Description: The university is not an isolated place, but rather a hub connecting multiple perspectives. It is a place where the interests of the students and their parents, the university staff, the government and the work field (both public and private) all meet. To guarantee an education of the highest standards, all these stakeholders should leave their mark, in an ethically responsible way, on both content and form. Ghent University therefore takes all these perspectives into account in the design of its education and the evaluation of its study programmes, by ensuring and organizing the participation of students and people from the field in its policy-making, while still safeguarding the independence of academia. At Ghent University, student participation and student rights are core values.

Strategic objective for education n° 5: Internationalization is key

Description: Ghent University aims to promote cross-border cooperation, in terms of both education and research. Exchanging students and lecturers, cooperating on projects and forming sustainable alliances are all means to foster academic quality. Ghent University endeavours to offer its students and staff maximum opportunities to acquire international and intercultural competences. International contacts, a natural consequence of recruiting foreign research staff, allow staff to question and adjust their own viewpoints, as they are invited to look at things from a different perspective.

Strategic objective for education n° 6: Ghent University meets internationally recognized standards for reliable quality assurance

Description: This objective is applicable regardless of the specific concept of quality at Ghent University (i.e. the previous objectives). It allows us to verify whether the content-related objectives are sufficiently met by the way the educational processes are integrated into the study programmes, faculties and governing bodies at Ghent University. In particular, study programmes should meet the following requirements:

- They should have a clear vision, in line with the philosophy of education and general education concept at Ghent University
- The intended competences of the programme should meet national and international benchmarks in terms of content, level and orientation

- The structure of the programme should be logical
- The intended competences, teaching methods and evaluation methods should all be interconnected
- The test principles and policy should be tailored to the intended learning results and processes
- There should be a permanent culture of quality assurance
- All information about the programme and the quality of the programme should be shared with all stakeholders

Table:

<p>1. Dare to think & Multiperspectivism <i>Critical thinking, changing perspectives, openness, pluralism and tolerance towards deviating viewpoints are at the heart of education</i></p>
<p>2. Education based on excellent research <i>The education is based on excellent research and the most reliable scientific knowledge in the field.</i></p>
<p>3. Talent development of students and lecturers <i>The education gives students and lecturers the opportunity to develop their talents and offers them the information, guidance and challenges needed to achieve this.</i></p>
<p>4. Internationalization <i>The education gives students the best opportunities to acquire international/intercultural competences. To this end, Ghent University pays special attention to internationalization projects and strives for optimal student and staff mobility, as well as Internationalization@Home and virtual mobility.</i></p>
<p>5. Involvement of stakeholders <i>Students, lecturers, alumni, and people from the field are actively involved in education, and take part in policy and evaluation.</i></p>
<p>6. Educational quality <i>The programme has a clear vision and strives for competences which are nationally and internationally verified and considered relevant, and which meet all requirements in terms of content, level and orientation. The structure of the programme is logical and there is a clear link between the learning results, the programme and the teaching methods. The test principles and policy applied in the programme are tailored to the learning results and the learning process. The programme has a culture of permanent quality assurance and improvement. The programme shares information and communicates with all the parties involved.</i></p>