

## **THS - Erasmus Policy Statement (Overall Strategy)**

"Stockholm School of Theology (THS) offers programmes on undergraduate (Bachelor) and postgraduate (Master) levels in both Theology and Human Rights. Through cooperation agreements with other universities in the Nordic countries THS also provides PhD studies. PhD studies can be conducted in English, while Bachelor and Master level courses are offered in English to a varying degree. THS is the major provider of religious and human rights education in the Stockholm region.

Stockholm School of Theology gives training to some 500-600 students annually, in both fulltime and part time courses. The School welcomes students from a variety of denominational and non-denominational backgrounds, in a climate of academic rigour, international contact, and challenging issues.

Most courses are in Swedish, but some courses or seminars are offered in English depending on need and interest. A wide network of international academic and other institutional contacts provides a resource base for international exchanges, for both students and professors, as well as a flow of international guests, both students and visiting scholars."

The international strategy can be summed up thus:

A) THS international relations and partners are listed and described on the web page, thus forming a basis for the information strategy for international participation. The agreements THS have signed have been negotiated to serve the objectives both partners have established. Each one of those contacts and agreements have their own specific history, but central to the all is that they are all in their own way conforming to THS strategy to provide content and challenges to stimulate THS educational policy and vocational competence. Students THS have sent to the US and the Philippines have been first and second cycle students, there are ambitions to support second cycle students.

B) The geographical areas for these relations over many years have been the USA, South East Asia and Middle East but also to some smaller degree Europe.

C) The objective has always been the broadening and deepening learning and professional skills for students and teachers in our theological program. THS educational strategy also gives high priority to support students to apply for Minor Field Studies (MFS) to facilitate travel in developing countries and work on papers for the completion of a first cycle degree. In the last years there has not

been any teaching staff exchange with our US partners, but a number of exchanges with several Asian partners.

At present work is being done to revise and update our strategy of international exchange on several levels. Currently THS has offered a full semester of courses in English (2012) on the Masters level and Spring 2014 THS is announcing another such term to our US partners who have expressed wish that THS should offer a full year (see web). This program is also offered to our partners in Manila and Yangon, and for those students THS will have to find economic resources. There are significant numbers of requests from abroad from students interested in THS theological as well as Human Rights program that we currently are not able to respond to because of lack of resources.

Five strategic documents for research are in place at THS on the web efor the Theological and the Human Rights programs. Those documents explain the policy to provide the regular teaching staff up to a 33% of full time to devote to sponsored research by THS.

Four strategic research goals are prioritized within the context of THS cooperation with the recognized partners in the US and elsewhere, but also within Sweden and the Nordic countries. In those strategic goals research, teaching with significant relevance are all intertwined with a sharp focus on THS international and Nordic contexts:

- 1) Support and furthering research projects with international partners.
- 2) In particular, support of research projects and initiatives that transcends traditional academic subjects and programs.
- 3) Support research that will secure high competence in the institution for future recruitment of teaching staff in theology and Human rights.
- 4) Broaden the PhD program so as to include doctoral candidates in Human rights as well as in theology.

On the web:

[http://www.ths.se/site/forskningsstrategi\\_ths\\_2011.pdf](http://www.ths.se/site/forskningsstrategi_ths_2011.pdf) (to be translated in English).

<http://www.ths.se/site/index.php/forskning/aemnen/maenskligaraettigheter.html>

<http://www.ths.se/site/index.php/in-english/research/research-program-on-human-rights-and-peace-building.html>

<http://www.ths.se/site/index.php/forskning/aemnen/exegetisk-teologi/forskningsprogram.html>

<http://www.ths.se/site/index.php/forskning/aemnen/systematisk-teologi/forskningsprogram.html>

2014 THS will offer a Master degree under the project name Children of Abraham, in cooperation the University of Volda (Norway), Åbo Academy (Finland), with teaching staff and students from all three institutes.

### **THS agenda for implementation of the formulated strategy:**

1) Creation of an International office: rektor of THS and coordinator, registrar and one student representative. Goal: to organize and govern all the aspects of the international relations and agreements to secure highest quality of student and institutional competence and performance.

2) Intensified and structured information policy to be implemented at THS, in dialog and joint effort with THS partners.

3) Special attention and work on the financial support of mobility and internalization.

4) To make the above (C1) mentioned strategic agendas for research and teaching available in English on the web giving evidence for the potentialities of research cooperation between the partners.

5) To develop a pedagogical strategy over a five year period for cross-cultural teaching and learning.

6) The president of THS and the coordinator of International affairs shall in 2014-2016 visit all international partners to secure and enhance relations and set up common strategies and goals for cooperation, on student, teachers and research levels.

7) Expansion and broadening in dept of THS European partnerships and with institutions in Africa. Informal contacts with the University of Stellenbuch and the Africa University are already undertaken. Contacts in England are established and explorations about possibilities to partner with Universities in Scheffield, Birmingham, and London are among those under consideration.

In view of the Swedish increasing multi-cultural and inter-religious society will be guiding factors among other concerns for relevant decision.

8) THS can offer cooperation on all three programs, short, the first, second and third cycle, all of these possibilities will be depend on factors such as human and economical resources.

9) Projects within the MFS should be developed. The coordinator will pay a visit to or partner in Yangoon/Myanmar during summer 2013 to explore shared interest.

### **A Response to COM (2011) 567 final:**

#### ***COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS***

#### ***Supporting growth and jobs - an agenda for the modernization of Europe's higher education systems.***

Concerning all of these key issues THS will respond with approval in the following way:

#### ***Increasing attainment levels to provide the graduates and reserchers Europe needs***

1) We do need more educated individuals and research must be conducted with relevance to our current needs in our societies, not least in Sweden. It is against that background and basic understanding that THS has developed and diversified its academic programs to include Human rights up to first cycle and in cooperation with Uppsala University even offers a second cycle degree.

In addition to that THS offers a masters degree in Intercultural relations. These programs are designed to meet the challenges that the modern multicultural society with its inter-religious complexity. Together with our theological program that has been extended to include degrees in the second cycle, THS is also, in cooperation with other institutions, giving degrees on the second cycle. Last, but not least THS has a vital cooperation with other universities where some eight students of THS are working towards doctoral degrees. THS is right in strategic planning.

#### ***Improving the quality and relevance of higher education***

2) The history and development of THS to where it is today shows the necessary signs to conclude that THS steady progress goes in the direction of improved quality and relevance of the courses and programs we offer. Curricula develop-

ment has a high priority in THS and there is always a work to do in finding the right tuning of progression in the programs and flexibility within the same order. There are always a need for active and demanding pedagogical development in teaching with a focus in understanding and furthering of learning processes for the individual. The modern devices in terms of eLearning are deployed and in concurrent focus, but also new approaches of context based learning in close symmetry and reciprocal exchange between observation, analysis, and critical interaction with sociological and other factualities. A prognosed need for a cross-cultural and multicultural pedagogics that seriously takes into account that there are divergent ideals and praxis in different parts of the world will have to be met. When people from China, Asia and Europe and the US meet in the same class / program there are differences to discover and challenges for teaching to be met with care and diligence. Learning outcomes and teachers professional development in juxtaposition.

### ***Strengthening quality through mobility and cross border co-operation***

3) Cross cultural cooperation, cross border co-operation, provides excellent learning opportunities that need to be recognized in full and met with proper attitude and professionalism. That is the way forward and there is no way back to previous generations of academic attitudes and style.

### ***Making the knowledge triangle work: Linking higher education, research and business for excellence and regional development***

4) THS has great potentiality not least in the combination of extended research programs and teaching informed by and based upon relevant research and in the realization of the international and local context where all learning eventually should prove to be relevant. Innovation and creativity, flexibility and persistence all in combination should be stimulated.

### ***Improving governance and funding***

5) Provided that THS will find strong economic support there are multiple possibilities to be able to be a strong contributor to the goals set. Strong and active governing of THS is required.