Internationalization of Turkish Research Universities
WHAT IS THE ITRU GROUP?

The Turkish Higher Education System has developed significantly in the last few decades in terms of both quality and quantity. Today 180 public and private Turkish universities offer degrees in line with the Bologna Process and the number of universities offering programs taught in English is increasing. There are now seven Turkish universities in the top 100 university list, and three of them are in the top ten (Times Higher Education BRICS & Emerging Economies Rankings 2014).

The Internationalization of Turkish Research Universities (ITRU) group is an initiative of the International Offices of five of Turkey’s top public and not-for-profit research intensive universities. It aims to bring together their expertise to create new synergies and strengths, and in the long term contribute to further improve the quality of the Turkish higher education system in the area of internationalization.

At present the group is comprised of representatives from the International Offices of:

◉ Bilkent University (BU), Ankara (Not-for-profit/Foundation)
◉ Boğaziçi University (BOUN), Istanbul (Public/State)
◉ Koç University (KU), Istanbul (Not-for-profit/Foundation)
◉ Middle East Technical University (METU), Ankara (Public/State)
◉ Sabancı University (SU), Istanbul (Not-for-profit/Foundation)

In time, we expect to broaden this informal initiative through activities and advocacy to include other high level Turkish research universities. More information about the Turkish university system and universities is available at http://studyinturkey.gov.tr/
WHY AN ITRU GROUP?

On the practical level, the group was born out of the need to create an informal framework with which to share the expertise and best practices of our International Offices and to formulate solutions to common problems in the process of the internationalization of teaching, learning, research, and campus management activities.

The value of this informal alliance is to achieve shared strategic institutional goals that would be more difficult to realize as individual universities. In late 2014, we began to discuss the following joint activities: An annual forum/lecture series on international higher education in Turkey and the region; structured dialogue with national, European Union, and other international stakeholders; topic or regional working groups or task forces; benchmarking best practices; joint doctoral summer schools and internship programs; joint research and education projects; and representation at major international conferences on higher education.

From a strategic perspective, the track records of the members of ITRU in research, teaching, international reputation, international partnerships, and International Offices offer great potential for helping Turkey achieve its goal of becoming a global education hub. The Republic of Turkey is now investing more resources to attract 200,000 international students annually, increase its research partnerships with universities in the European Union and other parts of the world, attract international research talent, and develop strong industry-university links for innovation.

PRINCIPLES

Shared values
ITRU draws together the International Offices of Turkish public and not-for-profit, research-intensive universities with common values such as a global outlook, a commitment to educating future national and global leaders, diversity, and international collaboration.

Flexibility
Each university determines the extent of its involvement in the activities of ITRU to suit its particular objectives and constraints. There are no formal agreements to join the initiative and collaborate with the activities of the group.

Strategic collaboration
ITRU aims to foster new and substantially deeper and more wide-ranging collaborations between its International Offices that build on the existing teaching and research-based institutional collaborations.

Advocacy
ITRU articulates the value of international education on the national level both at home and abroad in order to influence policy or secure resources. It focuses its efforts on positioning Turkey as a research destination, and developing competences in international higher education in Turkey and the region.
Bilkent University is recognized and ranked worldwide as one of the premier institutions of higher education in Turkey. Located in Ankara, a vibrant metropolis of 4.5 million, the university serves a hub of academic, social, and cultural activity.

Bilkent University was founded in 1984 as Turkey’s first private, non-profit institution of higher education. With world-renowned scholars among its faculty and top-notch facilities throughout its campus, Bilkent attracts many of Turkey’s brightest high school graduates. The university hosts over 13,000 students pursuing degrees in 29 undergraduate and 51 graduate programs.

Bilkent University prides itself on its truly international perspective. The medium of instruction at Bilkent is English, and its international community of scholars and students forms an essential component of the university’s academic and social life. International faculty and instructors make up more than a quarter of all academic staff, representing 40 different countries. There is a growing body of full-time international students as well as exchange students visiting from more than 250 partner institutions.

Bilkent campus has a lively cultural and social atmosphere. Located in the campus, the University dormitories, which offer free on-campus accommodation for incoming exchange students provide a peaceful, secure and comfortable living environment for more than 4,000 students. The 500-hectare campus is only 12 kilometers from the center of Ankara, with easy access to the city’s parks, shopping areas, cultural activities, museums, and entertainment venues. In addition, Bilkent’s location in the historically rich Anatolian heartland allows easy access to other cities, traditional villages, stunning landscapes, historic sites and places of great cultural interest throughout the country.

Chief among the factors that ensure a high standard of education at Bilkent is a faculty actively engaged in research. As mentors and instructors, they interact with students in modern classrooms and state-of-the-art laboratories, connected by an extensive computer and Internet infrastructure. Bilkent actively invests in new educational and research technologies. Undergraduates may take part in projects conducted in high-tech facilities.

Bilkent University provides a rich and diverse environment for learning and intellectual growth.

Come to Bilkent and discover Turkey!
Boğaziçi University was established in 1863 as Robert College, the first American institute of higher education founded outside the borders of the United States. In 1971, it was transformed into Boğaziçi University, an elite Turkish public research university that has maintained its liberal arts education tradition and English as the language of instruction. As a public institution, the University has expanded its undergraduate and graduate programs and added new campuses.

Boğaziçi University pursues high impact research with 32 academic departments, six graduate institutes, and 19 research centers covering a wide range of disciplines. The university attracts research funding from both national and international research funding organizations as well as from industry. Partnerships with leading academic institutions across the world have strengthened the university’s prominence in research. Boğaziçi University is looking to expand its programs to include research-based exchange of students and scholars with integrated research internships, and thematic joint summer schools that will possibly lead to carefully crafted joint degree programs.

Boğaziçi University is one of the leading universities in Turkey. With outstanding undergraduate and graduate programs in natural and social sciences, humanities, engineering, education, and applied disciplines; world-class faculty; top-notch laboratories and facilities; and breathtaking campus overlooking the Bosphorus, it is the most sought after university for students in Turkey and the region. The total number of students has reached 15,000 with more than 4500 graduate students. Seven percent of the student body and fifteen percent of the faculty are international. Boğaziçi University maintains an active portfolio of high caliber academic partners from 34 countries. The university receives approximately 800 incoming students and sends about 500 students for exchange programs around the world every year.

Boğaziçi University takes pride in its lively and colorful campus life. To complement and enrich the academic experience, the university supports student clubs, the arts, and sports activities. It provides a variety of services from health care to counseling for students and staff. Campus life contributes to a liberal, democratic and happy Boğaziçi community.
Koç University (KU), founded in 1993, is a not-for-profit university with a total student population of 6000+ and 400 faculty members (ratio of 12:1). The academic offering comprises 22 undergraduate programs, and 30 master and 18 Ph.D degrees in:

- Sciences and Engineering
- Social Sciences and Humanities
- Business and Administrative Sciences
- Health Sciences
- Law

The university has successfully introduced undergraduate double majors to extend an interdisciplinary approach beyond research. As a result, nine percent of the 2014 class graduated with double majors.

Koç University invites partner universities to experience this center of excellence.

Koç University has developed a global network of over 200 partners, fifty-three percent of which are ranked in the top 100 universities worldwide. The aim is to develop a selective network of Strategic Partners based on joint research and publications, symposiums and workshops, and joint/dual degrees.

Koç University is among the top three universities in Turkey in terms of publications per faculty and citation record:

- Ranked 1st in Turkey for number of awards given to young researchers by the Turkish Academy of Sciences.
- More than 400 externally funded, active research projects.
- More than $50 million in funding received for active research partnerships.

With a graduate admission rate of seven percent, Koç University attracts the best students from Turkey and abroad. At undergraduate level, eighty-four percent of students currently come from the top three percent in Turkey, according to the national university entry exam results.

These students learn and work with the faculty and succeed in producing high-impact research and post-doctoral placements. Ninety-five percent of all full-time faculty hold doctoral degrees from leading universities in the United States and Europe.

Top 10 research clusters at Koç University:

- Molecular Medicine/Molecular Biology and Genetics/Nano medicine
- Computational Biology/Bioinformatics
- Biomedical Visualization/Photonics/Optics/Optical Microsystems
- ICT/Broadband and Wireless Networking
- Energy/Clean Energy
- Archaeology/Art-History
- Social Policy Research/Psychology of Children and Family
- Migration/International Relations
- Cognitive Psychology/Neuroscience
- Creative design/Human-Machine interaction/Creative industries
Middle East Technical University-METU (known as ODTU in Turkish) was established in 1956 as a state university with an international mandate. English is used as the language of instruction at all levels in all disciplines. The university has three campuses: Ankara (main campus, established in 1956), Mersin-Erdemli (established in 1975), and Northern Cyprus (established in 2005).

METU/ODTU has 42 BS (first cycle) programs under five faculties and 167 MS/Ph.D programs (second and third cycles) under five graduate schools. The number of students in BS programs are 19,500 and 8,400 in MS and Ph.D programs with more than 270 Ph.D graduates each year. The number of academic staff exceeds 2600, with 1250 teaching staff.

METU/ODTU is a leading institution in various areas in Turkey including but not limited to research, technopark (technology development zone), internationalization policies and activities as well as in social responsibility activities. It was ranked the top university in Entrepreneurial and Innovative University Index in 2013 and 2014 by the Scientific and Technological Council of Turkey (TUBİTAK). In research, METU/ODTU has the highest share in EU competitive research funds brought to Turkey (eleven percent among all institutions), and similarly enjoys being the top institution in national competitive funds.

METU/ODTU has 2300 international degree-seeking students from more than 80 different countries and hosts about 400 exchange students from all over the world. The number of Erasmus+ inter-university institutional agreements exceeds 600 along with an additional 500 agreements worldwide (excluding the EU Erasmus+ zone). Since its foundation, METU/ODTU, as an international research university, has been the leading university in Turkey in terms of depth and breadth of international ties and the amount of funds generated from international research projects.

The University completed the process of Institutional Evaluation by the EUA in 2002 and in 1991 all of its engineering programs were accredited by the United States Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET). METU/ODTU is rising in the international rankings. Presently it is 85th on the Times Higher Education Best Universities in the World list and among the top 60 on the Most Reputable Universities list. METU/ODTU is among the top universities in Turkey in other ranking systems such as QS, Webometrics, and others. ODTU has 70 Turkish university partners in Turkey to train academics for newly established Turkish universities.
Sabancı University (SU) is a non-profit, English-medium university, established in 1994. At SU, academic activities are performed within the framework of interdisciplinary programs at three faculties without departments: The Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences, the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, The School of Management, and the School of Languages. SU has 13 undergraduate, 23 masters and 12 Ph.D programs; with 265 full-time academic staff, 4097 students.

SU prides itself on being one of the most innovative and research-oriented universities in Turkey. As part of its philosophy, SU directs its research efforts primarily towards applied and strategic research, with the objectives of advancing knowledge, supporting teaching, and contributing to the progress of the community.

In addition to the faculties, SU is also home to the SU Nanotechnology Research and Application Center, the Istanbul Policy Center, and the Istanbul International Center for Energy and Climate, as well as research units such as the Competitiveness Forum, the Corporate Governance Forum of Turkey, and the Gender and Women’s Studies Forum.

International relationships have been initiated with 33 countries worldwide. SU aims to develop further relationships with dynamic universities to foster research and student understanding of current and future global challenges.

SU ranks highly in national and international rankings like the Entrepreneurial and Innovative University Index (Ministry of Science, Industry and Technology), Times Higher Education, and Quacquarelli Symonds:

- 1st in the Entrepreneurial and Innovative University Index 2015
- 13th in the THE 100 Under 50 Rankings 2015
- 15th in the THE BRICS&Emerging Economies Rankings 2015
- 17th in the QS Emerging Europe&Central Asia Rankings 2014-2015
- 21st in the THE Asia University Rankings 2015
- 182nd in the THE World University Rankings 2014-2015
- 471st in the QS World University Rankings 2014-2015