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Multiple contexts for developing the internationalization of postgraduate studies

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Abstract: This research, within the field of Human Sciences and with the use of a qualitative approach, attempts to map the development of internationalization at a public university in Rio Grande do Sul (Brazil), considering its multiple contexts and the institutionalization strategies for management and actions in the Graduate Program in Physical Education. This descriptive study presents a case study as a strategy and procedure for bibliographic and documentary analysis, which allows for the necessary in-depth analysis to explain the phenomenon studied. In order to map the legally established internationalization actions, we have used institutional and regulatory documents of institutional policies, as well as evaluation reports of the graduate programs available on the Sucupira Platform. The documentary analysis was carried out using Bardin's (2011) content analysis method, and the results have pointed out similar scenarios; among these, we should highlight the establishment of management processes that foster internationalization and adherence to major calls for promoting initiatives with impact on the quality of the graduate programs investigated. This is compounded by the challenges faced during the pandemic: the isolation of researchers and the use of remote activities as a strategy to maintain internationalization processes. Moreover, it should be highlighted that reports on all internationalization activities are not available on public domain platforms, which thus hinders in-depth analysis of some practices.

Keywords: higher education; internationalization; graduate studies; assessment.

1 Introduction

The concept of internationalization has been widely studied and debated by national and international scholars. Knight (2020), a leading authority in this field, defines internationalization as the process of incorporating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose and functions of higher education. According to this perspective, the process occurs at the institutional level, and all academic activities that seek to integrate an intercultural curriculum are considered internationalized to some extent, as they connect institutions globally and overcome physical barriers.



However, it is important to note that the concept has evolved since the 1980s, when it was known only as exchange. Nevertheless, internationalization cannot be restricted to exchange programs because they do not cover everyone of interest to the academic community. For one thing, they are expensive and require intense preparation.

Morosini and Dalla Corte (2018) argue that the internationalization of a higher education institution (HEI) is not solely related to participation in international events, such as conferences and seminars. A policy focused on synergy between teaching, research, and extension is necessary, one that recognizes the potential of countries involved in international cooperation processes.

According to Nez and Morosini (2020), internationalization has become more than just a strategic axis in institutional policies and plans. It has become part of the university's mission to address current challenges in higher education, promote international solidarity and cooperation, and strengthen South-South relations in a globalized world.

As internationalization is intertwined with the mission and Institutional Development Plans (IDPs), it is affected by internal factors (economic, cultural, and identity issues) and external factors (wars, tensions, immigration, and other situations), which affect internationalization directly and indirectly (Nez; Morosini, 2020). This emerging context¹ suggests the need for constant adaptation in the face of new daily demands.

Thus, when drawing up strategic plans, each university seeks to critically and prospectively consider organizational and institutional practices that can meet the demands of existing internationalization models. Martinez (2017) questioned the role these policies play in higher education institutions (HEIs) and found a change in the epistemological basis of the relationship between the Global South and North. This challenges historical and social relations. This is a concern for Brazilian universities, which distances them from common understandings of internationalization in the Global North. To this end, institutions emphasize interculturality as a central aspect of internationalization.

¹ Term suggesting that emerging contexts are “configurations under construction in higher education observed in contemporary societies and which coexist in tension with pre-existing conceptions, reflecting historical trends” (Morosini, 2014, p. 386).

One of the policies implemented in Brazil was the Internationalization Program (PrInt), which was launched in 2017. The program aims to encourage the internationalization of higher education institutions by developing strategic plans, research networks, and academic mobility programs, as well as by integrating actions that strengthen international cooperation and the quality of postgraduate education. The program received proposals from 108 universities and research institutes (CAPES, 2024). CAPES aimed to serve up to 40 institutions, but only 36 were approved. The program ended in 2024.

In 2018/2019, the necessary documentation, drafts, processes, regulations, and information for executing the program began to be processed. During the pandemic, from 2021 to 2022, HEIs changed their plans, necessitating adaptation of the institutional project due to the need for social isolation caused by COVID-19².

Based on these introductory aspects, the following questions arise: How have HEIs in Rio Grande do Sul implemented their internationalization processes? How has CAPES/PrInt impacted the promotion of internationalization actions in participating universities? How is internationalization present in the Graduate Program in Physical Education?

This article aims to map the development of internationalization at a public university in Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, and to understand its multiple contexts. Additionally, it analyzes institutionalization strategies within the context of management and actions located in the Graduate Program in Physical Education. When collecting significant data for this investigation, it is important to note the difficulty of fully implementing the proposal as initially planned. In 2024, the actions were completed in other Brazilian states, but in Rio Grande do Sul, they continued until March 2025. The delay was due to the environmental disaster that struck the state in May 2024.

This article is linked to the Study Group on the University: Interculturality, Internationalization, and Integration of Knowledge (GEU/Int) and is part of a research project concerning interculturality, internationalization, and integration of knowledge. The project is funded by the Rio Grande do Sul State Research Support Foundation

² Printing was directly affected by the pandemic, declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) and spread across various regions of the planet. Higher education had to reinvent itself in the face of quarantine and lockdown, which persisted for months. This paralyzed all educational activities around the world, including mobility in and out. It was a time of change and historic transition in the short/medium and long term, in which an international crisis took hold (Nez; Morosini, 2020).

(FAPERGS). To this end, the text has been divided into five parts: 1) the introduction, presenting the initial considerations and theoretical frameworks of the research; 2) the methodological approaches used in conducting the research; 3) the institutional context of internationalization at UFPel, addressing the university's management of the process; 4) the internationalization movements in the institution's graduate program in Physical Education, where the results found in the documents are further explored, describing the institutional contexts of internationalization at PPGEF; and 5) the final considerations, which provide a summary that reinforces the main findings of the study.

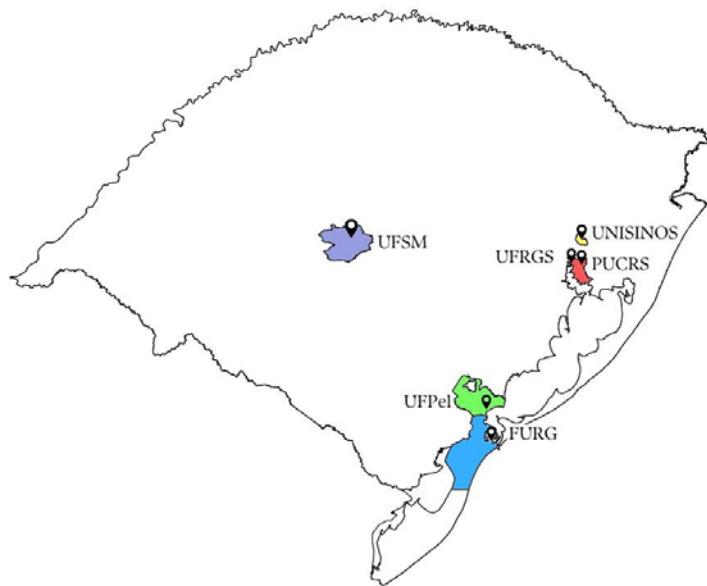
2 Methodological Approaches

This article is based on a research concept grounded in the above-mentioned concerns and a meticulous search for truth. It is, therefore, a detailed and systematic study aimed at discovering and establishing facts or principles related to a field of knowledge (Cellard, 2008) — here, specifically, in the context of universities in the state of Rio Grande do Sul.

PrInt first attracted attention in 2018 when projects were implemented in Brazilian higher education institutions, at which point the scope of this investigation began to take shape. The topic investigated here has long been of interest to GEU/Int researchers. As challenges arose during the implementation process, whether globally (e.g., the pandemic) or locally (e.g., floods), the subject took shape and guided the analysis of partial results until this study was completed, yielding the insights that can be highlighted at this point.

The program covered six higher education institutions (HEIs) in the cities of Porto Alegre, Pelotas, Santa Maria, and Rio Grande: Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), Universidade Federal de Pelotas (UFPel), Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul (PUCRS), Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos (Unisinos), Universidade Federal de Santa Maria (UFSM), and Universidade Federal de Rio Grande (FURG). See the map illustrating the locations of the institutions involved.

Figure 1 – Distribution of projects in the state of Rio Grande do Sul and their respective institutions



Source: The authors (2025).

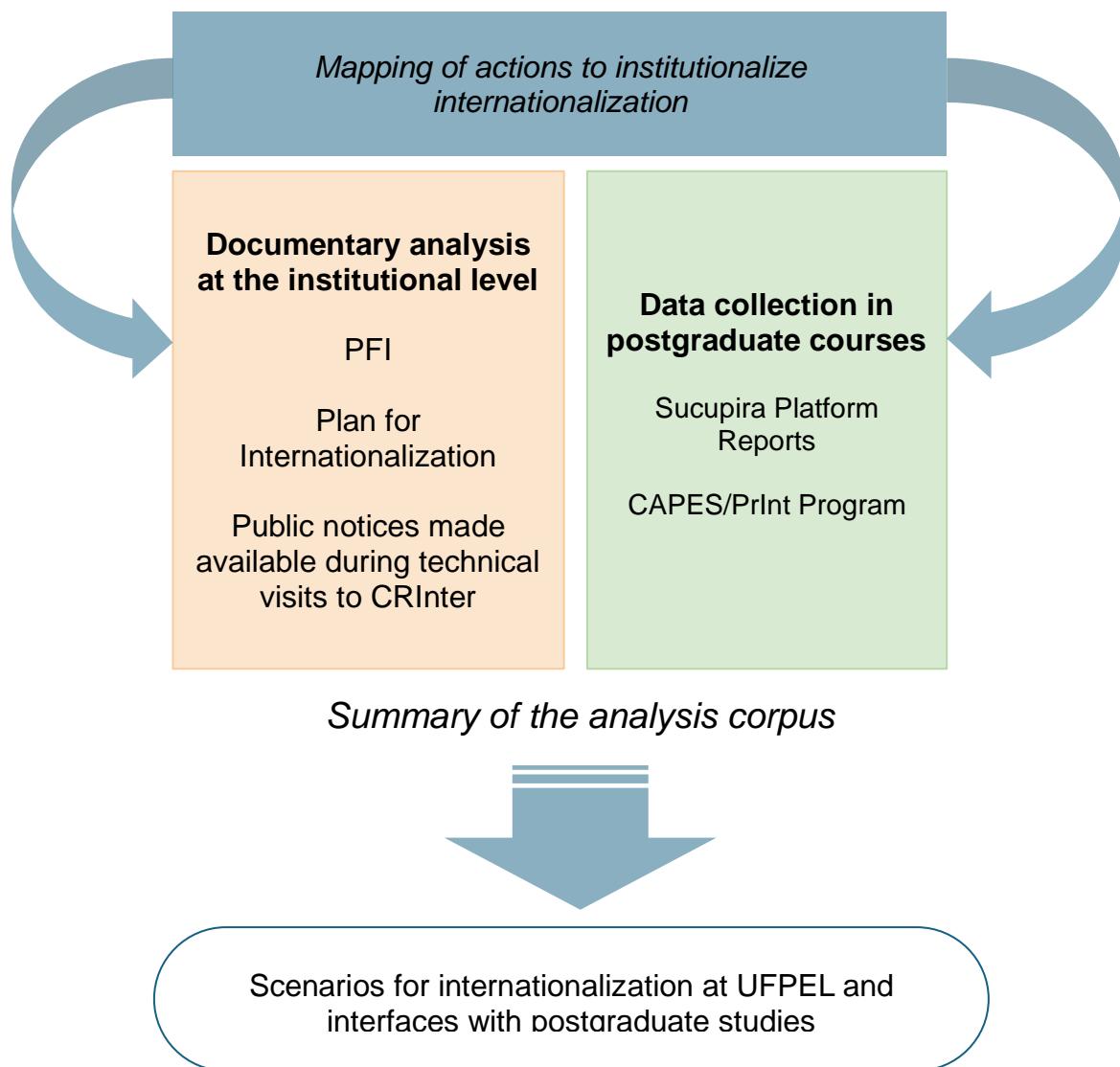
This part of the research focuses on the Universidade Federal de Pelotas (UFPel). It is a descriptive study based on case study methodology (Yin, 2010), which provides the necessary depth to explain the phenomenon under study.

UFPel is located in the far south of Rio Grande do Sul, in the city of Pelotas, a strategic location with a strong regional presence. The university offers 101 undergraduate courses, 97 of which are classroom-based and four of which are distance-learning courses. At the postgraduate level, UFPel offers 32 doctoral programs, 47 master's programs, five professional master's programs, 25 specialization courses, 13 medical residencies, and 16 professional residencies (UFPel, 2023).

The investigation involved the following procedures: a bibliographic survey, document analysis, and thematic content analysis (Cellard, 2008). The analysis corpus consisted of institutional documents available on the IES website. As Morosini (2006) points out, this phase of "mining" focuses on understanding emerging contexts through document analysis, which allows for approximations of productions on the internationalization of higher education.

To this end, the institutional evaluation report of the Graduate Program in Physical Education (PPGEF) at UFPel was analyzed on the Sucupira Platform³. The document examined strategies and questioned the existence of institutional "actions" related to commitment to internationalization. The flowchart below illustrates the analytical process carried out in this investigation.

Figure 2 – Flowchart of the organization of the analysis of the research corpus



Source: The authors (2025).

³ This platform centralizes all evaluation activities and is now used to collect information, perform analyses and evaluations, and serve as the reference base for the National Postgraduate System (SNPG). For more information, visit: <https://sucupira.capes.gov.br/>.

To analyze the corpus in light of the conceptual and theoretical objectives, content analysis (Bardin, 2011) was employed. Content analysis is an analytical procedure that uses various techniques to describe the content produced in the process of researching a phenomenon. Content analysis comprises systematic procedures for surveying indicators that can be supplemented quantitatively, allowing for the inference of new knowledge.

Following Bardin's (2011) analytical approach, an initial pre-analysis was conducted consisting of a preliminary reading of the collected materials to define the scope of the research. Next, to explore and detail the material, the record units were flagged to identify common ideas and themes in the analyzed texts. Categories were also constructed to give meaning to the results found in the analyzed documents.

It is worth noting that the ethical precautions recommended in Resolution No. 196 of October 10, 1996, from the National Health Council, as well as the determinations of the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Federal University of Pelotas, were followed. Approval was granted with Opinion No. 7,088,417. This procedure lends veracity and ethical support to the collection of information in the field research of this investigation.

3 The institutional context of internationalization at UFPel

Turning to the specific topic at hand, the Higher Education Census (INEP, 2022) reports that Brazil has 2,595 higher education institutions with 9,443,597 enrollments in 44,951 undergraduate programs. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (*Organização para a Cooperação e Desenvolvimento Econômico* - OCDE) notes that 1.4% of Brazilian students study abroad (active internationalization), while only 0.4% engage in passive mobility.

The Georeferenced Information System of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (Georreferenciadas da Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior - GEOCAPES) revealed that of the total scholarships offered in 2020, 2,463 were for sandwich doctorates and 786 were for visiting professors. The main destinations were countries such as Australia, Canada, the United States, and France (CAPES, 2022).

The International Relations Directorate (IRD) noted significant diversification of international partnerships and an increase in the flow of Brazilian scholarship recipients

studying abroad during the period 2015-2020, excluding data from foreign study funding agencies. Regarding passive mobility, 23.9% of foreign students enrolled in Brazil in 2020 came from Africa, with the most coming from Angola (CAPES, 2022).

According to Nez and Morosini (2020), internationalization is a key factor in the development of any university, whether public or private. It is an essential strategy for scientific and technological progress and for providing the academic community with opportunities to earn credentials. It can affect institutional systems and policies. Thus, internationalization is a topic of discussion at this level of education due to evaluations proposed by national agencies and recommendations of multilateral organizations.

Chart 1 shows the internationalization movements at UFPel, which were constructed from an analysis of the PDI and the internationalization plan, as well as technical visits. We found that a relevant context for promoting internationalization in higher education institutions (HEIs) is their organization, which involves constructing an agenda engaged in a consistent process of internationalization driven by goals. These actions include internationalization at home, improving academic curricula to align with global needs, including foreign language courses, and encouraging strategic partnerships. These processes are managed by the International Relations Coordination (Coordenação de Relações Internacionai - CRIInter), which was created in 2018 and is linked to the rector's office (UFPel, 2018).

It is important to emphasize the need to think about internationalization in a contextualized way, in accordance with the institutional mission and the objectives established for the professional training of those involved in the process. It is more than simply meeting a demand; it must be thought of comprehensively, as Hudzik (2011) argues. He suggests institutional commitment and the introduction of comparative and international perspectives through teaching, research, and service missions.

Chart 1 – Summary of internationalization movements at UFPel

Dimensions of analysis	Institutional management actions ↓ Document analysis/technical visits
<i>Understanding the internationalization process</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Management concerned with the systematization and evaluation of the internationalization process;✓ Formulation of international agreements;✓ Expansion and organization of the sector responsible for internationalization (CRIInter);✓ Organization of international partnerships and research programs;

Consolidated shares	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Development of a Strategic Internationalization Plan (<i>Planejamento Estratégico de Internacionalização PEI</i>) ✓ Restructuring of CRInter to ensure better response to demands; ✓ Adherence to CAPES/PrInt; ✓ Promotion of language courses for foreigners.
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Source: The authors (2025).

In 2018, CRInter developed a Strategic Internationalization Plan (*Planejamento Estratégico de Internacionalização - PEI*) for students and teachers (both residents and foreigners), with the goal of furthering internationalization at the university. The plan focused on academic, teaching, technical-administrative, and research exchanges, as well as all activities related to international cooperation (UFPel, 2018).

The plan was based on a diagnosis using a tool called a SWOT⁴ analysis, which evaluated the institution's internal and external environments. This analysis revealed practices that could be enhanced and challenges that could be overcome to improve the planning of future goals and objectives (UFPel, 2018).

The PEI expresses UFPel's intention to promote internationalization as a means of improving academic activities while considering the institution's social and regional role. It seeks to leverage border relations and the institution's strategic location near Uruguay and Argentina while prioritizing topics of global interest and local impact (UFPel, 2018).

According to the goals outlined in the document, the International Relations Office implements a differentiated reception policy that provides monitoring, support to foreigners, and encourages language learning (UFPel, 2018). Upon observing the organizational strategies implemented, we noticed different language policies, including the provision of courses and Portuguese Programs for Foreigners (PPE). We also identified teacher-training courses, the development of teaching materials, and the promotion of exchanges.

Based on our analysis of the document and the PDI, as well as the internationalization plan provided by CRInter, we determined that institutional internationalization efforts focus on planning, coordinating, and executing activities

⁴ It is a business management tool that can be used to assess the situation of a company or project. The acronym comes from English and stands for: *strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats*. More information at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lrp.2023.102304>

related to international relations, with an emphasis on multilateral collaboration. According to the PEI, UFPel's objectives are:

Receive and forward proposals from units to international funding agencies, and monitor the implementation of respective activities. Manage, in coordination with various university sectors and public and private national and foreign funding entities, to raise funds for developing plans, studies, and projects in areas of knowledge. Enable and maintain international cooperation agreements and/or partnerships with foreign institutions with various university sectors. Promote and maintain exchanges with universities and other international organizations to encourage developing studies, internships, courses, and research in various areas of knowledge. Maintain relationships with other organizations performing related activities to improve them constantly. Disseminate information about courses, events, conferences, programs at foreign institutions, and scholarships (UFPel, 2018).

Based on the materials provided by the coordination team during technical visits to CRInter, it was possible to infer that UFPel receives approximately 60 foreign students, visiting professors, and researchers per year. UFPel is also responsible for over 50 international cooperation agreements with higher education institutions in 26 countries, promoting academic mobility and the internationalization of the institution.

The work of CRInter and the Coordination of Agreements and Contracts is also noteworthy. Recently, they have established processes and regulations that streamline the processing of international cooperation agreements. The CRInter Translation Center provides support for translating documents necessary for cooperation, mobility, and joint supervision agreements. It also assists UFPel students and faculty who have participated in mobility programs abroad with documentation such as letters of introduction, work plans, certificates, reports, and transcripts. Finally, we would like to highlight the Languages Without Borders (IsF) network, of which UFPel is a member. The network offers foreign language courses to the entire community, as well as Portuguese courses for foreigners and specific preparation courses for proficiency tests such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language – Institutional Testing Program (TOEFL ITP) and CELPE-Bras⁵.

According to Stallivieri (2004), universities should take the lead in international cooperation by promoting integration, reducing barriers between peoples and nations,

⁵ The TOEFL ITP is an English proficiency test used to assess the English level of students and non-native speakers. The Certificate of Proficiency in Portuguese for Foreigners (Celpe-Bras) is the official Brazilian exam for certifying proficiency in Portuguese as a foreign language. The exam is administered twice a year in Brazil and abroad by the Anísio Teixeira National Institute for Educational Studies and Research (Inep), with support from the Ministry of Education (MEC) and in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

and enhancing scientific, technological, social, and cultural development. It is crucial to acknowledge the necessity of institutions taking the lead as vital educational spaces for fostering the development and integration of individuals.

CRInter serves students and foreigners interested in international mobility. It is responsible for international agreements and implements international relations policies, including project management for initiatives such as CAPES PrInt. This program has brought the issue of internationalization to some universities, causing them to reorganize their strategic plans and mobilize their institutional actions to meet this demand. It is one of the largest internationalization programs carried out at the national level lately.

Regarding CAPES PrInt specifically, its objectives were:

Promote the development, implementation, and consolidation of strategic plans for the internationalization of institutions in priority areas of knowledge; Encourage the formation of international research networks with a view to improving the quality of academic production linked to postgraduate studies; Expand actions to support internationalization in postgraduate studies; Promote the mobility of teachers and students, with an emphasis on doctoral students, abroad and from abroad to Brazil, linked to stricto sensu graduate programs with international cooperation; Foster the transformation of participating institutions into an international environment; Integrate other CAPES promotion actions into the internationalization effort (CAPES, 2024).

At UFPel, CRInter coordinated activities in the following postgraduate programs: Dentistry; Animal Science; Food Science and Technology; Epidemiology; Education; Plant Health; Biotechnology; Family Farming Systems; Physical Education; Social Memory and Cultural Heritage; Architecture and Urbanism; Biochemistry; and Bioprospecting.

As previously reported, internationalization actions and strategies were modified during the pandemic (2021-2022), and the institutional project as a whole was adapted at UFPel. Videoconferences called "UFPel Talks" were held to discuss topics of international relevance with the internal and external academic community, including students and researchers from different countries: Colombia, Chile, the United Kingdom, Spain, Japan, and Brazil.

Based on this contextual and institutional analysis, UFPel's approach to internationalization aligns with the comprehensive model proposed by Hudzik (2011). This model includes the following dimensions: articulated institutional commitment,

administrative and structural leadership, curriculum and learning outcomes, teaching policies and practices, student mobility, and collaboration and partnerships.

The analysis of the PEI reveals that several of the planned actions align with Hudzik's (2011) findings. However, a closer look is needed, and future actions should focus on the curricular issue of offering subjects in other languages and cultural contextualization. This institutional bottleneck needs to be addressed.

In addition to committing to internationalization by offering more faculty and student, mobility programs aimed at international experience, the institution aims to increase knowledge of internationalization processes among all sectors of the university to promote proactivity and increase its visibility in the regional and global landscape.

4 Movements toward internationalization in graduate studies in Physical Education

In this section, we provide an in-depth analysis of the results found in the documents and describe the institutional contexts of internationalization in the PPGEF. This *stricto sensu* program is relatively new, as the master's program began in 2007 and the doctoral program started in 2014. According to the latest quadrennial evaluation by CAPES (2017-2021), it currently has a grade of 5.

The program is structured around two major areas of concentration: Biodynamics of Human Movement and Human Movement, Education, and Society. These areas are organized into six lines of research: Motor Behavior, Human Performance and Metabolism, Epidemiology of Physical Activity, Sociocultural Studies of Sport and Health, Physical Exercise for Health Promotion, and Professional Training and Pedagogical Practice (UFPel, 2024).

According to a document analysis, the program has approximately 150 ongoing research projects, most of which relate to these lines of research. There are also a considerable number of courses that allow students to obtain credits and develop the skills necessary for their future careers at both the master's and doctoral levels. The most recent evaluation highlighted the quality of the laboratories and infrastructure, which support the lines of research and their respective projects.

Over the four-year period, the PPGEF maintained an average of 17 faculty members who met the area's criteria in relation to the institution's work regime and the

Program's workload. Most faculty members have compatible qualifications and experience in teaching and research.

According to the Sucupira Platform report, the program has the following internationalization indicators: institutional conditions that favor mobility, products (such as articles, books, and book chapters) with international collaboration, projects developed with foreign research groups and institutions, cooperation agreements, and participation in international research networks. It is important to note that the planning process is based on the guidelines outlined in the university's regulations and aligns specifically with CAPES' institutional evaluation policies.

Based on the findings regarding the documentary search and the various stages of the investigation involving different stakeholders, we compiled a list of internationalization strategies within the scope of institutional movements and actions. The following table illustrates the information collected.

Chart 2 – Elements of the internationalization process in the PPGEF

Internationalization strategies adopted↓	
Document analysis (institutional reports)	
<i>Institutional/collective actions of the PPGEF</i>	✓ Participation in CAPES/Print calls for proposals; ✓ Approaching researchers from other areas; ✓ Organizing international partnerships and research; ✓ Participating in calls for proposals with funding; ✓ Offering courses in foreign languages; ✓ Including master's and doctoral students in international research.
<i>Individual actions by teachers</i>	✓ Individual movements built on professional and academic trajectories since initial training; ✓ Constant pursuit of teaching qualifications; ✓ Building an international curriculum; ✓ International publications in scientific journals; ✓ Learning foreign languages; ✓ Opportunities for technical visits to universities; ✓ Seeking partnerships and collaborations in research and publications; ✓ Seeking calls for proposals and grants.

Source: The authors (2025).

When analyzing the internationalization actions of the Graduate Programs of the Technological Center of the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC) in the last quadrennial evaluation, Stallivieri, Snoeijer, and Melo (2022) point out that the adopted strategies focus mainly on academic mobility. They also mention work missions abroad and the publication of scientific papers in international journals, which

indicates results similar to our findings at UFPEL. Another relevant issue is the difficulty of investing in teacher training and offering foreign language courses, which aligns with the results of our investigation.

Clearly, the PPGEF has become more internationalized due to the actions developed by CAPES/PrInt, which aim to increase exchanges with foreign institutions, researchers, and students. In this context, the program emerges as an opportunity for integration into institutional spaces because several graduate programs were involved, enabling interdisciplinary partnerships in various thematic areas.

Other consequences of including PPGEF in CAPES/PrInt were the opportunity to send students abroad for sandwich doctorate internships, the offering of English courses to promote academic mobility, and the improvement of international scientific production quality. Therefore, it can be observed that existing practices at UFPel align with those of HEIs, which have always operated with an international outlook, particularly regarding teaching, institutional research, and student and faculty exchanges.

Silva Junior and Kato (2016) highlight the work of the Special Commission for Monitoring the National Postgraduate Plan (Plano Nacional de Pós-graduação - PNPG) 2011/2020. In 2017, the commission published a report outlining the Brazilian postgraduate scenario after the first five years of the Plan. The report was based on achievements up to 2015 and presented projections and recommendations for the final five-year period up to 2020.

Regarding internationalization, the PPGEF complies with the recommendations of Silva Junior and Kato (2016). These recommendations include developing policies that increase the participation of foreign students and professors in Brazilian university graduate programs, continuing internationalization programs, and implementing more comprehensive institutional policies that focus less on sending Brazilian students abroad and on individual partnerships between researchers or small groups.

Examining the PPGEF closely, we see that internationalization actions in the Biodynamics of Human Movement concentration have been strengthened through CAPES/PrInt. Network research consortia have been enhanced to generate evidence through clinical studies, knowledge synthesis, and the formation of global observatories in health.

The PrInt program provides scholarships at American universities and enabled its faculty members to complete postdoctoral internships at the University of California, San Diego, as visiting professors. Students, on the other hand, completed sandwich postdoctoral fellowships at the University of Alabama in Birmingham. The results revealed that a partnership with the University of Alabama at Birmingham could be established through CAPES PrInt and the Global Observatory for Physical Activity [1]. This partnership enabled student mobility under the guidance of PPGEF professors. A similar partnership was established with the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia, which provides opportunities for student mobility for sandwich doctorates.

One specific institutional action that could be tracked was the offering of the Research Seminar II course in English. Taught by course professors or external guests, the course evaluated research papers published in national and international journals, as well as theses and books in the course's area of concentration, in weekly meetings. As part of PrInt, the Study Group on Physical Activity Epidemiology (*Grupo de Estudos em Epidemiologia da Atividade Física - GEEAF*) held seminars at ESEF/UFPel.

Another identified action was the EPICOVID19⁶ study, which was developed in the state of Rio Grande do Sul with support from the Ministry of Health in 2020 and expanded to a national scale. This study produced numerous significant publications that greatly advanced our understanding of the virus, establishing itself as the world's leading epidemiological study to assess the occurrence of SARS-CoV-2 infection.

Figure 2 shows the challenges still faced by the PPGEF program, as identified through an analysis of documents made available by its coordination, especially its quadrennial self-assessment.

⁶ More information about the project at: <https://www.gov.br/saude/pt-br/assuntos/saude-de-a-a-z/e/epicovid-19>.

Figure 2 – Challenges and confrontations necessary for internationalization



Source: The authors (2025).

Two analytical points are relevant: institutional challenges related to internationalization and the actors involved in the process, such as faculty and students. One challenge at the institutional level is the difficulty of raising funds for impactful research that enables researchers to gain qualifications. Additionally, there is a shortage of calls for proposals that address internationalization, faculty and student mobility, and research and publication support. Finally, when an open call for proposals is issued, it is difficult to meet the necessary bureaucratic demands to apply for the grant.

Other notable issues include a lack of policy for welcoming foreign students and difficulty preparing students to apply for calls for proposals. There is also a clear lack of mobilization for international training, sustained by cultural barriers that could be mitigated through exchange programs. Lastly, issues of fluency in another language and bureaucratic issues for leaving the country were mentioned.

Regarding the other actors involved in the PPGEF internationalization process, the self-assessment on the Sucupira Platform identifies reflective elements such as proficiency in another language, lack of financial resources to compete for calls for proposals, and bureaucratic aspects once again. These results are also evident in

other studies of undergraduate degrees in Physical Education and other Health Sciences. In these studies, the language barrier is a factor in choosing an exchange location, as are bureaucratic requirements such as course/credit validation in Brazil, which is a condition for participating in a mobility program (Ribeiro; Afonso, 2021a; Ribeiro; Afonso, 2021b).

Regarding teachers, the actions carried out within the program are specifically due to their initiative and are influenced by demands inherent to their work. Furthermore, It is noteworthy that there is a lack of support for participation in conferences and/or technical visits, as well as shortened deadlines and limited dissemination of available resources for this purpose. The analyzed documents clearly demonstrate the necessity of understanding the concept of internationalization and adopting a proactive approach to meet the various proposal deadlines.

Regarding this topic, Neves and Barbosa (2020) note that Brazilian universities face many challenges. These challenges range from the priority institutions give to internationalization to the establishment of profiles for selecting strategic partners. These factors influence the development of policies that affect competition for excellence and quality in this area. It is clear that the internationalization of universities has changed substantially over the last three decades, either in response to or as an agent of the forces and opportunities of globalization.

Considering the specific context of the PPGEF at UFPel, we believe there is significant progress in this direction; however, more organization is needed to address the various demands within the HEI. This study is relevant to the academic space in question because it deepens the debate on the impact of internationalization on higher education in Brazil. A long road lies ahead for the implementation of internationalization processes in this academic space.

5 Final considerations

The mapped scenarios demonstrate the institution's commitment to internationalization, presenting various management actions that have facilitated this process. The organizational strategies implemented reveal a systematization process involving contextualization, awareness raising, addressing, and operationalizing procedures to meet the demands of internationalization.

The analyzed documents reveal "internationalization movements," such as participation in international events, development of scientific collaboration networks, exchange opportunities, and research missions with established institutions on all continents. Graduate faculty constantly search for funding and external resources to develop research. Adherence to available funding opportunities contributes to the advancement of the internationalization process in the investigated graduate program.

Regarding organizational planning, there are different language policies at UFPel, including offering courses and Portuguese Programs for Foreigners (PPE) with Portuguese language and teacher training courses, developing teaching materials, and promoting exchanges. It is important to note that many of the internationalization initiatives promoted by CAPES/PrInt fostered the formation of new institutional dialogical scenarios, strengthening national and international research groups and networks.

This enabled a greater understanding of the processes of internationalization for strengthening research in different areas, specifically in the area of Physical Education, as discussed in this study. In addition to the exchange of experiences among CAPES/PrInt participants, institutional management processes were impacted, consequently qualifying the PPGEF.

However, some challenges were noted, especially those experienced during the pandemic. These challenges included the isolation of researchers and the use of remote activities as a strategy for maintaining internationalization processes. Furthermore, we believe it is necessary to align institutional proposals with PPGEF actions to enhance internationalization development and ensure a positive impact on graduate studies.

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