Appendix H.

from 15 May 2025

Alfred Nobel University

Interview with Nataliia Shpak, Director of the Department of International Affairs

(Translated from Ukrainian)

Form of data collection: Google Form

Strategic impact and institutional priorities

Q: How has Russia's full-scale invasion affected your university's international priorities and strategies?

A: The full-scale Russian invasion influenced the university's international priorities and strategies by defining internationalization as an inter-institutional priority that ensures the provision of quality education, resilience, and competitiveness under martial law conditions.

Q: Has the role of internationalization at your university fundamentally changed since the beginning of the war?

A: The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine shifted the focus of internationalization from a purely academic goal to a strategic priority aimed at ensuring education quality, academic mobility for students and staff, and institutional resilience.

Alternative pathways and adaptation

Q: What alternative forms of international activity (virtual mobility, online collaboration, twinning projects, international research) have been implemented at your university? How effective have they been?

A: The University is implementing digital collaboration formats, including virtual mobility within Erasmus+ programs (Jean Monnet, KA171), twinning with Coventry University, UK (in the "City Management" program), and the launch of English-taught online courses. Participation in the SIN-NEC project ("Sustainability and Capacity of Internationalization for Modernizing Higher Education in Eastern Partnership Countries") enabled a comprehensive self-assessment to identify strengths and weaknesses in international activities and to outline development priorities and improvements in cooperation with international partners.

As a result of the project, the university:

- developed a Handbook of Good Practice on Virtual Exchange, featuring best practices for integrating online education into university curricula;

- conducted a training for International Relations Office staff on implementing best practices in online and distance education;

- purchased equipment to upgrade classroom infrastructure and established a Fusion Room — an innovative space for interactive learning.

These tools have proven effective in sustaining international activity during wartime.

Resilience and psychological support

Q: How has internationalization contributed to the psychological resilience of students and staff (through support networks, symbolic or material solidarity, mental health)?

A: At the University, community mental resilience is supported through projects such as Heavenly Culture, World Peace, Restoration of Light (HWPL) Education, Mental Health for Ukraine (MH4U), as well as French-language schools and assistance from the Agence universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF). Participation of students and staff in international programs fosters a sense of support, continuity of education, and professional development.

Q: Can you share an example of flexibility or resilience shown by your team or students in supporting international activity during the war?

A: An example of flexibility and resilience is the university's continued participation in Erasmus+ mobility projects and the French language summer school in France, which foster a sense of support, contribute to psychological balance, and demonstrate solidarity among partners.

International solidarity and partnerships

Q: What support has your university received from international partners or global educational networks during the war (resources, advocacy, technical assistance)?

A: As part of a university partnership, 227 personal accounts were provided to students, faculty, and staff for access to the "English4Ukraine" platform and courses on Reallyenglish, which offer adaptive and interactive English language learning at all levels, IELTS and TOEFL preparation, and the development of digital skills.

Q: How has participation in consortia (e.g., the Alliance of Ukrainian Universities) contributed to international cooperation and collective response to the challenges of war?

A: The university became an associate member of the Alliance of Ukrainian Universities on August 8–9, 2024, by decision of the Alliance's rectors. This partnership has supported the development of international cooperation by enabling the formation of project teams for participation in international grant competitions and by expanding international opportunities for students of the member universities.

Q: How have international partnerships supported physical or infrastructural resilience (humanitarian aid, equipment, campus support)?

A: Through funding from the SIN-NEC project, equipment was purchased to modernize a university classroom and create a Fusion Room — an innovative space for interactive learning. The equipment includes a Rode Wireless GO II microphone system for high-quality voice transmission, a Xiaomi Mi 4K Laser Projector 150 (BHR4152GL) for creating a sense of physical presence for online audiences, and a Wacom Intuos M Black (CTL-6100K) wireless graphic tablet.

Educational and cultural diplomacy

Q: How has your university implemented cultural and educational diplomacy strategies through internationalization during the war (promotion of Ukrainian culture, international events, media participation)?

A: The university actively promotes Ukrainian culture, European values, and academic opportunities through participation in initiatives such as Begin Group, Jean Monnet, French-language initiatives by AUF (e.g., French Spring), educational games by the British Council, and various public events.

Post-war recovery planning

Q: Does your university plan for post-war recovery in the context of internationalization? What strategies are being developed to restore international partnerships and projects?

A: The university, in collaboration with Coventry University (UK), is implementing a 1.5-year English-taught dual degree master's program in City Management, accredited in the UK. The program focuses on training professionals in the field of urban governance and sustainable development based on the Smart City concept and the principle of "Build Back Better".

Lessons and recommendations

Q: What key lessons has your university learned about supporting internationalization in times of crisis?

A: The key lesson is that virtual and internal internationalization proved to be the most resilient forms of international engagement during the crisis.

Q: What recommendations would you give to other educational institutions affected by war or crisis?

A: Develop flexible educational models, establish dual degree agreements, engage students in international grants and competitions, and build consortium-based partnerships.

Forms of internationalization

Q: How has the war affected the physical mobility of students and staff?

A: The war significantly reduced the physical mobility of students and faculty due to security risks, travel restrictions for men of conscription age, and additional government limitations, which particularly affect private higher education institutions.

Q: What types of virtual mobility were implemented (COIL, virtual Erasmus programs)? How effective were they compared to physical mobility?

A: The university launched the “Nobel Virtual Programme”, its own distance mobility platform. In partnership with U.S. universities, it offers English-taught programs — for instance, in fall 2024, the “International Business and Marketing in Tourism and Hospitality” program with Carson College (WSU) featured online lectures from top U.S. managers for Ukrainian students. The university also implements the COIL project “Global Challenges” with Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, uniting 40 students from Ukraine and Poland. These virtual mobility tools help sustain the international component by allowing students to develop intercultural communication skills and analyze global issues with peers abroad. However, it is important to note that virtual formats cannot fully replace physical exchanges — while online courses and conferences expand access to international knowledge, they lack the immersive cultural experience of being in another country.

Q: How have academic programs been adapted to preserve or strengthen the international component (new English-taught programs, joint/double degrees)?

A: ANU adapted its educational programs by expanding their international component. It now offers a unique BA (Hons) in International Management with a British degree, and in 2024 launched a dual master’s program in City Management in partnership with Coventry University (UK). The university also runs dual degree programs with ISMA (Latvia) in management. English-taught courses are widely implemented across multiple disciplines (marketing, management, IT, etc.) to attract international students and support an English-speaking academic community. Additionally, guest lectures and masterclasses by international experts have been

introduced. For example, in October 2022, Assoc. Prof. Mart Reimann from Tallinn University visited ANU to discuss joint educational and research projects, guest lectures, and internships.

Q: Has your university implemented elements of "Internationalization at Home" during the full-scale invasion? How exactly?

A: In the context of the war, where the physical mobility of students and faculty is severely limited due to security risks, mobilization restrictions, and state regulations (especially for men of conscription age and private universities), this concept (internationalization at home) has gained particular importance. Its implementation at the university has been supported but faced several challenges:

- Technical limitations: unstable internet access, electricity disruptions, and lack of modern equipment (computers, cameras, software), especially among students affected by the economic crisis.

- Financial difficulties: private institutions face limited funding for implementing digital technologies, purchasing educational platform licenses, and receive insufficient state support for such initiatives in the private education sector.

- Organizational challenges: shortage of qualified personnel capable of developing and delivering intercultural or globally focused digital courses; limited experience among many faculty members in using digital tools for intercultural learning.

- Psychological and social barriers: students and faculty under wartime stress may have reduced motivation to engage in international initiatives, and limited language proficiency among some participants hinders effective interaction in international digital environments.

Q: Have international research projects been preserved or expanded? Has the war affected their topic or format?

A: The war in Ukraine has had a significant impact on international research projects, yet many were not only preserved but expanded and adapted to new realities. Project themes have partially shifted to focus on security, humanitarian challenges, infrastructure recovery, psychological support, and Ukraine's unique wartime experience. International partners have shown growing interest in exploring Ukraine's context, particularly in areas such as societal resilience, cybersecurity, energy independence, educational adaptation to crisis conditions, and notably, gender-related issues — including the role of women in science, support for female researchers, and the pursuit of gender equality during war. Special attention has been given to gender-focused projects, which explore the war's impact on women, their participation in research and social

processes, and provide mentorship programs, research grants, and initiatives aimed at removing gender-based barriers to resources and opportunities. These studies also examine how the war has affected gender equality in higher education and science, including the increased role of women in international projects due to mobility restrictions for men.

Q: Which form of internationalization proved to be the most resilient at your university during the war? Which was the least resilient? Please rank the forms of internationalization in your institution from most resilient (5) to most vulnerable (1) and explain your choice.

A:

Virtual mobility – 5

Virtual mobility is the most resilient form, enabling continued international collaboration without the need to travel, through joint courses and projects conducted online.

Internationalization at home – 5

Internationalization at home is relatively stable, as it involves on-campus activities. ANU has reoriented this form to internal resources (English-language courses, cultural events), though its scale depends on funding and support.

Institutional partnerships – 4

Institutional partnerships remain stable, with active memoranda and contracts; the university maintains ties with EU and U.S. institutions (Coventry, UWTSD, AMU, WSU, etc.), although most cooperation has shifted online.

International research – 3

International research is moderately resilient; while the format has shifted online, projects (e.g., Erasmus+, EU grants) continue thanks to external funding.

Internationalization of the curriculum – 3

Curriculum internationalization (English-taught courses, dual degrees) is also relatively resilient—programs continue, and students can earn international degrees remotely (e.g., the BA (Hons) with a British diploma or the City Management program with Coventry).

Physical mobility – 1

The physical mobility of KSE students and staff has continued but faced certain challenges, particularly for male students due to restrictions on leaving the country.