

Erasmus Policy Statement (EPS) 2021-2027

The current Witten/Herdecke University (UW/H) Internationalisation strategy starts with the following preamble:

Since its foundation in 1983, crossing borders has played a vital role in the vision and mission of UW/H. Borders between theory and practice, between disciplines and faculties, but also actual physical borders between national states. UW/H is a proud member of an international research network spanning over all five continents; it permanently extends its network of partnerships on student and faculty exchange as well as research co-operation with universities world-wide. Furthermore, education at UW/H does not stop at merely studying a subject, it is a simultaneous process of personal and intellectual development. Hardly anything is as formative as gaining international experience. Hence, we strongly encourage our students – and our staff as well – to gather experience abroad during their studies or research, but also through practical experience and border-crossing student initiatives. It makes us proud that many of our alumni have taken up international careers and serve as UW/H ambassadors abroad. By the same token, we cordially invite the world to Witten: Join us for studying, teaching, research, intercultural learning and the crossing of borders!

Erasmus+ is one of the main components of our internationalisation strategy, bringing in international students every semester and allowing our students to experience life abroad.

The UW/H identifies as a European university and strongly supports many of the policy objectives of the European Education Area such as the importance of accessing high-quality education irrespective of one's socio-economic background and the belief that education qualifications should be recognised across the EU. The internationalisation strategy also aims to increase the number of students and staff spending time abroad to study, research, learn and teach and sees the benefits of strengthening a European identity, which celebrates Europe's shared values and differences: United in diversity.

Erasmus+ initiatives such as EWP also help to drive modernisation and digitalisation within the university, which goes on to benefit the community as a whole.

In the past, the Managing Director of the Faculty of Economics was also the Chief Internationalisation Officer for the university. After his departure in 2019, the university created a new position as Head of Internationalisation, which is a role dedicated entirely to the topic and responsible for the university as a whole. This role was filled in February 2020. Part of this role is to evaluate our current internationalisation measures and create a strategy to increase the internationalisation of the university.

The Erasmus+ programme for student and staff mobility as well as research partnerships are a big part of this. We will also strive to strengthen inter-institutional ties and get more involved in pan-European projects in the form of increasing the number of double degree programmes and identifying ways we can contribute to partnerships of excellence and policy development.

The new internationalisation strategy builds on our current strategy and the Erasmus charter and will be developed over the next year. We look forward to submitting it when it is finalised in one of our interim reports. Until this time the current strategy, which is already in line with the Erasmus charter principles, is in place.

Internationalisation is an important goal for the university, which is reflected in the appointment of the Head of Internationalisation this year. The university internationalisation project goes beyond Erasmus+, including global partnerships and internal processes such as establishing English as a second institutional language. However, Erasmus+ plays an important role in supporting this process as the more international mobility and research the university is involved in, the easier it is to achieve the other internationalisation goals.

For example, the university now has two English-speaking master degrees, which attract non German speaking students. The measures put in place to support Erasmus students: international buddy programme, documents translated into English, International Office support and the student initiative Erasmus Student Network (ESN) also directly benefit these international students. New measures put in place to support the international full-time students such as more central communication in English and increased intercultural awareness amongst administrative staff, have a positive knock on effect on the Erasmus students and so it becomes a virtuous circle of improvements.

Below are some more details on the individual actions within the Erasmus+ programmes:

KA1

Student Mobility: Erasmus student mobility is a cornerstone of our current internationalisation strategy. It allows our students to experience life and education abroad. The incoming students bring diversity to the classroom and enrich the university. The feedback from past mobilities is predominantly very positive. In the next Erasmus cycle we hope to increase the number of incoming and outgoing students.

Planned measures include:

- Increasing communication about the opportunities: via the website, internal newsletters, interviews and a new platform to share exchange testimonials.
- Strengthening relationships with partner institutions: by visiting key partners, sending marketing material, strategically reviewing partners and creating new partnerships to increase student exchange flows and quality.

Staff Mobility: this is an area we can improve on. We would like to increase the number by encouraging more inter-institutional research and projects. This also ties in with the aims of KA2.

Planned measures include:

- Raising awareness of opportunities through internal newsletter, updated website/intranet, publishing testimonials and setting up an ambassador scheme for staff.

KA2

Double Degree programmes: the new Head of Internationalisation is tasked in setting up double degree programmes within the faculty of Management, Economics and Society. As part of this process, Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees will be explored. This is a close collaboration between the International Office and the newly formed Faculty of Management, Economics and Society and thus a strategy still needs to be developed.

Research and Innovation Partnerships: We hope to increase the number of research partnerships and partnerships for innovation by raising awareness of the opportunities and increasing support for applications. The main channels are through the internationalisation working groups within the university as well as in partnership with the funding office.

The internationalisation strategy of the university aims for an overall increase in international mobilities and partnerships and also takes into account the different needs of each faculty.

For the **Faculty of Management, Economics and Society** the aim is to have more courses offered in English and potentially new programmes open to international students. This change will take place iteratively with a focus on increasing the English speaking courses and then adding more English programmes in the future.

This will lead to Erasmus students having more choice of subjects, which will hopefully result in an increase in Erasmus incomings. Getting UW/H students used to studying in two languages early on, will presumably increase their confidence in studying abroad and create a higher number of outgoings. The increase in international students will also lead to a demand for English speaking programmes, thus resulting in a more sustainable internationalisation strategy.

The current internationalisation strategy for the faculty focuses on a 5 year period from 2017 – 2022. Targets include:

- Increase of the number of international students, both graduating and non-graduating by 30%.
- Increase of percentage of UW/H students spending part of their university education abroad up to at least 30%.
- Qualitative and quantitative expansion of the faculty's partnership network by five new partnerships per year.
- Increase of percentage of classes taught in English up to 40%, with particular emphasis on undergraduate level.
- Active strategy to recruit international academic staff.
- Introduction of international visiting research/faculty exchange programme with strategic partners in the network.

The new Head of Internationalisation will evaluate these goals and then develop a follow up strategy with measurable targets, which will be available in 2021 for the next 5-year period building upon the targets mentioned above.

The **Faculty of Health** as a whole has a more national strategic focus, however the School of Psychology and Psychotherapy is actively working to become more international and there are many international research projects going on.

Many medicine and dentistry students also choose to do their internships abroad; either in Europe as an SMP or further afield.

The Faculty of Health has appointed an Internationalisation Task force that meets once per semester to identify and support further internationalisation measures. This is co-chaired by the Faculty Internationalisation Representative and the Head of Internationalisation.

Current goals include:

- Increasing the number of psychology modules taught in English.
- Increasing the number of psychology incoming and outgoing students.
- Offering English language summer schools.
- Increasing European research partnerships as part of KA2.
- Establishing an online presence for the faculty in English (update website).

The Faculty of Health targets and goals will also be included in the new internationalisation strategy, which will be available in 2021.

The overall goal is that every student within the university has the opportunity to study or work abroad and that the number of students making use of this opportunity increases year on year. This also applies to staff mobilities. The goal is giving all members of staff the opportunity to work or train abroad. However, this is a long-term strategic goal where the concrete steps still need to be defined. The staff mobility opportunities offered by Erasmus+ will be a central element.

The benefits of being a small university (just 2,500 students) is that the communication routes are short and the student participation is high. Staff and students are involved in developing and implementing the internationalisation strategy. Whenever there are worries about quality, it is communicated quickly, either through internal university processes, such as student representatives, ESN or direct feedback to the International Office, or external feedback such as the Erasmus+ feedback tool as part of the mobility report.

The Erasmus+ coordinators are in direct contact with the Faculty management. The Head of Internationalisation reports directly to the Chancellor of the university. The Erasmus+ coordinators make sure all the processes are followed and the forms filled in correctly. The financial payments are also checked by the Head of Internationalisation and the responsible person in the controlling department.

In May 2020 our former Erasmus+ coordinator was appointed to become the university's Equalities and Inclusion Officer for 3 years. She will be taking her decades of experience within the Erasmus programme to develop the university wide policies on inclusion and equality and make sure that all the charter principles are met and exceeded.

Part of the future strategy is to improve our documentation of international activities so that they can be better tracked and measured. Erasmus+ is currently well documented via the tools offered by the EU and DAAD. This can serve as an inspiration for our other internationalisation processes.