

Erasmus Policy Statement

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam has been awarded the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education for the Erasmus+ programme 2014-2021. The Erasmus Policy Statement (below) sets out our institutional strategy in relation to the Charter.

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam supports the EU Modernisation and Internationalisation Agenda for Higher Education, and the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education is integral to the realisation of our institutional plans, strategies and aspirations.

We believe that higher education is important for empowering the future generations and makes a significant economic, intellectual and cultural contribution to the world. We are committed to international excellence through the creation of world-changing research and high quality, inspirational teaching within an inclusive academic culture.

In line with our ambitions in respect of diversity, we are also developing an international culture in which students and staff feel at home and seek out interaction. The VU campus is a meeting place for people of many nationalities, from many different backgrounds. Our language policy focuses upon inclusiveness for the entire student body and workforce. Eventually, in phases, ours will become a bilingual campus with Dutch and English as its languages of communication, bearing in mind the context in which they are used.

These fundamental values expressed in our institutional strategy permeate our approach to international engagement. Central to the achievement of our vision of an international university are the benefits derived from an international diverse classroom. Our international partnerships in both participating and non-participating countries facilitate and support staff and student mobility, student recruitment, developments in teaching and learning, collaborative research and capacity building.

International collaborative partnerships are a core element in our broader strategic objectives in regard to teaching, learning and research. All successful partnerships are the result of shared commitment and mutual benefit from the relationship. Many of our partnerships result from individual links between academic staff. Others have been introduced through existing partners or other networks. Our international partner institutions are diverse, reflecting the different needs and priorities of our partners' and our own students and staff. As well as developing partnerships which are multi-dimensional and strategic, we also recognise the place of specialist, focussed partnerships for specific purposes.

In regard to mobility we are committed to extend the range and nature of the opportunities we can offer to our students, as integral or optional credit mobility components of an ever-increasing range of degree programmes, mostly, but not exclusively, at Bachelor level. This will include both a study period abroad as well as internships in participating and non-participating countries.

For decades now, VU has been sharing its knowledge across national boundaries, especially with developing countries. We have long-established relationships with South Africa and Indonesia, which have repeatedly adapted themselves to new circumstances in the course of history. The VU maintains institutional relationships with organizations in these countries, in part through research.

We encourage the international mobility of students, Phd candidates and other staff, since experience abroad prepares students for a transnational career and the quality of our research benefits immensely from intensive international cooperation. In this context we will encourage our academic staff to take sabbaticals abroad.

We will actively promote international mobility when recruiting new students (for example, at University Open Days) and to current students. We do so through numerous information sessions, online promotion and the use of social media and study abroad alumni.

At the same time we will demonstrate our strong institutional commitment to equality of opportunity, offering additional financial assistance to those from disadvantaged backgrounds. We have successfully made arrangements with partner institutions to enable students with disabilities to participate in Erasmus exchange. We will build on our experience to enhance and develop inclusive policies and practice in regard to all aspects of mobility.

In all our international activities we recognise the importance of regular monitoring and evaluation, as well as benchmarking with peers, in order to inform and influence our future practice, policy and strategy. In this context we aim to set up a preferred partner network.

We envisage that the impact of the European Union's Modernisation and Internationalisation Agenda in Higher Education will be seen at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam by:

1. Developing an appealing international campus
2. Creating an international classroom
3. Developing challenging international curricula
4. Bringing students with different backgrounds and nationalities into contact through joint events and programmes
5. Emphasizing Amsterdam's international character, culture and career opportunities.
6. Designating foreign Universities as preferred partners
7. Joining international strategic research consortia and obtain the international HR quality label for researchers
8. Investing in long term relationships in South Africa and Indonesia
9. Encouraging our students to study abroad (25% of the undergraduates takes part of their degree programme abroad).
10. Encouraging our academic staff to take sabbaticals abroad
11. Optimizing information and services for exchange and degree students, both incoming and outgoing
12. Recruiting international students, PhD candidates and staff.