

Erasmus Policy Statement 2021-2027 Arcada University of Applied Sciences

As in the application for Erasmus Charter for Higher Education 2021-2027 (05/2020). Updated with Partnerships for Excellence – Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees (11/2023) with KA3 – Support to policy development and cooperation (03/2024)

Erasmus activities included in Arcada's Policy Statement

Erasmus Key Action 1 (KA1) - Learning mobility:

- The mobility of higher education students and staff

Erasmus Key Action 2 (KA2) - Cooperation among organisations and institutions:

- Partnerships for Cooperation and exchanges of practices
- Partnerships for Excellence – European Universities
- Partnerships for Excellence – Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees
- Partnerships for Innovation

Erasmus Key Action 3 (KA3):

- Support to policy development and cooperation

Arcada's Strategy

What would you like to achieve by participating in the Erasmus Programme? How does your participation in the Erasmus Programme fit into your institutional internationalisation and modernisation strategy?

(Please reflect on the objectives of your participation. Please explain how you expect the participation in Erasmus to contribute towards modernising your institution, as well as on the goal of building a European Education Area and explain the policy objectives you intend to pursue).

Arcada's curriculum design is based on a student and competency centered, dialogical view on learning. We support an active, flexible and individualized approach to studies, as well as the integration of research in education. Arcada's pedagogical ambition is to support the student's active and life-long learning experience by taking into account diversity, choice and flexibility in learning processes. Our education strives to meet the knowledge and competence needed in future society. Therefore, presence on various social, cognitive and international arenas are valued. We believe that studying abroad in combination with the right support, has strong positive impact on personal development and a deeper understanding of self and others. It not only gives the students a global perspective on the own discipline, but also and perhaps more importantly gives students opportunities to gain professional and intercultural competences and skills needed for a good future and career in a global world. Successful exchanges lead to engaged students which we hope can contribute in creating positive and sustainable impact on society. We see mobility periods as one way in supporting our strategic work in developing multilingual and multicultural learning contexts for students and staff. We are convinced that taking part in the programme will help us in developing Internationalisation at home on different levels. We find that incoming student and staff mobility can contribute to a more diverse learning and work environment. We see diversity as a resource and a driving force for quality. In a world that is more and more collaborative, taking part in different Erasmus activities are an important part of higher education networking. Our participation supports our ongoing work with identifying key partners and developing joint courses, joint programmes and research projects with universities abroad. We want to work for Nordic values and become internationally strong by building Nordic bridges and networks.

Our research holds a high quality and our researchers publish in international top journals. It is important for us, that our research is tightly connected to teaching at all levels, and that all graduated students understand the premises of good scholarship. In research, development and innovation (RDI), we believe in a transdisciplinary approach, where we strive to develop new cross-border knowledge in multidisciplinary teams, in areas where we already have, and where we continue to build, internationally established research and networks, i.e. health and welfare, technology and business economics. Arcada's overall strategic aim is to build Nordic bridges to be globally relevant and to create smart, digital solutions for a dynamic working life. Nordic cooperation for global relevance and smart digital solutions will be Arcada's vehicles to stay relevant in a changing world. AI and machine learning, virtual and augmented reality will make both Arcada's and other partners' activities more efficient.

Erasmus Actions

Please reflect on the Erasmus actions you would like to take part in and explain how they will be implemented in practice at your institution. Please explain how your institution's participation in these actions will contribute to achieving the objectives of your institutional strategy.

On a strategic level, Arcada supports both mobility (IA), internationalization at home (IaH) and internationalization at distance (IaD).

In order to implement the study abroad period as smoothly as possible into the curriculum, there is a recommended time for studies abroad at all degree programs. We support an active, flexible and individualized approach to studies. and are in the middle of a process of building up a more agile curriculum design. This will make it even easier for students to find a suitable time for student exchange.

We inform our students about their possibilities to participate in mobility activities in a versatile way using different communication channels in order to reach as many students as possible. We offer the possibility to participate in mobility for all students who are interested. Information about application as well as the selection criteria is available online. The selection criteria for students are also presented during the information session. The selection process is done according to the selection criteria and it is fair and transparent. Not only does it take the success in studies into account, but also motivation as well as study and career related goals for the exchange. An extra point is given for students who have been active international tutors. We have an online application process for students and documents as well as the decision is archived in MoveON, our mobility management system. The international coordinators as well as both administrative and teaching staff at all degree programs support the students with the application process.

At Arcada, we are already at the point that students automatically get full recognition of all credits achieved during a mobility period abroad. Students participating in mobility (studies and traineeships) complete the Learning Agreement form prior to the mobility period. All courses successfully completed during the student exchange or traineeship and agreed upon in the Learning Agreement are automatically recognised and the credits achieved are indicated in student's transcript of records.

As soon as we receive the transcript of records from the host institution, the credits earned and agreed upon in the learning agreement will be transferred into the student's transcript of records without any delay. The same procedure will be implemented also for students taking part in future blended mobility periods. Traineeships are part of the studies and once the student has reported from the traineeship period as agreed, credits will be registered and visible in the transcript of records.

The international coordinators organize pre-departure trainings for the students going abroad in which they get practical information but also tools in order to give them the preconditions for a successful exchange. As we are aware that immersion to another culture in itself is not enough to bring about intercultural learning, we organize training and support before, during and after the

exchange. Another important part of the trainings is to make the students aware of their possibilities in gaining employability skills through student mobility. They are supported in their self-reflection and in articulating their study abroad experience into skills and competences needed when applying for a job. The returnees write travel reports that are published on our website. This is an important part of the reflection process, but also gives other students information about different partner institutions as well as overall information from abroad. The returnees are encouraged to take part in information sessions for new possible outgoing students and to become international tutors in order to welcome and support new incoming students and international degree students to Arcada.

As we know, not everyone has the possibility to take part in an exchange. In order to make internationalisation and intercultural learning more inclusive, we need to implement Internationalisation at Home (IaH) in our curriculum. We are working with finding new ways in which the students who have been abroad can share their experience so that as many as possible could gain from it. Incoming student and staff also have a big impact on IaH and contribute to a more diverse learning and work environment which we believe to be a resource and a driving force for quality. IaH in different forms can also arouse curiosity and interest for studies abroad. We also strive to offer opportunities for all students to participate in joint online-based courses with our international partners or to take distance courses at other universities.

Our partner relations are very important to us as they are of course a fundamental condition for the whole exchange context. We are in regular contact with our partners and continuously work on creating new possibilities for our students, based on common goals and interests. Staff mobility has an important role in this process as it contributes in developing longer lasting and sustainable relations to colleagues abroad. The continuity enables deeper relations.

The international coordinators inform the whole staff about their exchange possibilities on the Arcada intra and through emails. The possibilities are also individually discussed in the yearly development discussions with every staff member. Mobility agreements are made and signed prior to all mobility periods.

Incoming staff interested in coming to Arcada either contact our International Affairs or a staff member directly if they already have a contact. The international coordinators then try to find the suitable contact person for the incoming staff member. Our HR department is included if further support is needed.

Information for our incoming students can be found on our website as well as in a yearly factsheet send to all our partner institutions. All incoming students are offered an apartment on or close to campus. Everyone has an international tutor who help with the arrival to Helsinki and Arcada. We believe that this contributes to an inclusive and welcoming learning environment. We support the recognition process for our incoming students by issuing the transcript of records in a timely manner after the evaluation is completed. Final transcript of records for our incoming students are issued within a week after the student has ordered it.

The focus in Arcada's strategy 2030 is on in-depth, integrated internationalisation, innovation and transdisciplinary collaboration as well as on digitalisation and health technology applications (AI, virtual reality). This means that together with selected partners, we will during the next years actively apply for funding for cooperation in KA2 activities for development of study content and practices. In the area of research and innovation, discussions are underway in several networks that have similar interests and ambitions as Arcada regarding possible development projects in the area of smart digital solutions. Arcada is led partner for a European University application NOSEVA – Nordic Social Design for European Values – Education and research for well-being, health, a sustainably society and good life for all. The alliance unites European education and research experts from seven universities to develop an innovative European higher education (HE) consortium. Within the framework of this consortium, we want to develop new forms of collaboration, strengthen quality especially in collaborative online education and sustainable education as well as become stronger on the global research arena.

Building joint programmes (Erasmus Mundus) especially with Nordic partners are seen as one of the key activities for strengthening the Nordic profile of Arcada, which is a strategic focus. The Mundus programmes offer their students an excellent experience of working and studying in multiple countries in an international environment, getting to know European culture and life, and building abilities to create and work in multinational and multilingual environments. Arcada values profound and fruitful educational partnerships and wants to promote the quality of master education by building joint programmes, courses and micro credentials. We are in the process of planning a joint master degree programme in Health Equity coordinated by Western Norway University of Applied Sciences (Bergen, Norway) together with University of Zaragoza (Spain).

Arcada has a strategic interest in creating new master's courses and a number of new initiatives are underway with Nordic and European collaboration for new courses or profiles, among others in the field of rehabilitation and ethical health care. Arcada also wants to use its expertise in creating new master's degree programs in capacity building and is part of a KA3 application to create new master's degree programs in rehabilitation in Kenya and Tanzania. Here we can use previous experience because we have, among other things, developed and built a joint master's degree program in global health in Kenya together with another Finnish University of Applied Sciences.

Envisaged Impact

What is the envisaged impact of your participation in the Erasmus+ Programme on your institution?

Please reflect on targets, as well as qualitative and quantitative indicators in monitoring this impact (such as mobility targets for student/staff mobility, quality of the implementation, support for participants on mobility, increased involvement in cooperation projects (under the KA2 action), sustainability/long-term impact of projects etc.) You are encouraged to offer an indicative timeline for achieving the targets related to the Erasmus+ actions.

Our incoming students are overall very satisfied with their stays at Arcada and especially in terms of course content, learning support, teaching methods and gaining of new knowledge and skills. They have also been very satisfied with the support arrangements provided by Arcada. Incoming students say that they feel a good or very good degree of integration in the everyday life at Arcada. A strong majority of our incoming students are business students. This has to do with the fact that the business programmes are big in comparison to other programmes and that we offer a whole degree programme in business in English. We have a lot of active partners in this field. We will continue our work in finding more partners for our other degree programmes in order to increase the number of incoming and outgoing exchange students in these. We are in the middle of developing new competence-based curricula and believe that this will increase the flexibility and open up for new possibilities.

We will continue developing the support for outgoing and incoming staff. We want to make it as easy as possible to take part in staff mobility, but also need to think about further improving our ways to disseminate the results and learnings from the mobilities carried out in order for the whole organization to gain from the experience. Outgoing staff is quite satisfied at the moment with how the mobilities are recognized but we will nevertheless continue working with this issue also as part of the process of making staff mobility more visible and accessible for all. We see staff mobility as a great possibility for competence development and for obtaining new skills and knowledge. We need to improve in communicating this throughout the whole organization and making everyone aware of their possibilities. We believe that an important step in this process, is to involve the HR department. International and multicultural expertise among the staff, has a great focus in our new internationalisation strategy. The number of outgoing staff has been around 30 during the last years. We believe that the number of outgoing staff in the middle of the new program period realistically can be around 40, of which 15 –20 would be outgoing teaching mobility.

We intend to further develop the support given to students before, during and after the practical placements. The students that go on training abroad, are very satisfied with their training experience and the whole process connected to it. But we would like to see more students going on a training abroad and believe that a more structured support system clearly integrated in the study plans as well as a stronger focus on informing the students about their possibilities, will increase the number of students taking part in practical placements abroad. We strive to have doubled our number towards the end of the upcoming programme period to 25-30 participants per year.

The numbers of students taking part in student exchange has decreased on a national level during the past years. The ongoing situation with the Corona virus will probably not help increasing the numbers. Therefore, we need to think broader regarding development of intercultural learning and global competence in addition to traditional student exchange. We will need to focus more on both Internationalisation at Home, blended mobility as well as learning at a distance. Not only does this contribute in making internationalisation and intercultural learning more inclusive but also fosters outgoing mobility. Virtual exchange is something we will put more focus on during the upcoming period. We find it important to become more agile and flexible as we know that one size does not fit all. We strive to increase the number of students taking part in outgoing student exchange to 40 per year but at the same support more students in their intercultural and global learning through Internationalisation at Home and Internationalisation at a distance as well as through blended possibilities.

Even though we strive to an increase in numbers in all mobility activities, we put a great focus on the quality. It is of great importance that both students and staff taking part in the mobility activities, get the support needed before, during and after the exchange in order for it to be as successful as possible. Continuous learning is key.

Arcada has a large number of partners and active student and teacher exchanges with universities bilaterally in several areas. In the future, we want to develop more enduring collaborations within networks and utilize the KA2 program's opportunities for long-term development, both in terms of quality of study content and innovation activities, for example digital smart solutions. Already this year, Arcada is a partner in higher education networks that have made applications within KA2 activities. The applications aim to develop the various learning environments. One of the applications concerns systems for an inclusive study environment within higher education including central learning environments outside the university as internships. The other one focus on developing an ecosystem for entrepreneurial learning in collaboration with company networks. Furthermore, within a Baltic collaboration, we have sought funding for capacity building, which concerns hybrid simulation in nurse education.

The attractiveness and programme outcomes (application statistics, number of graduates, master thesis, RDI-projects, publications, student satisfaction) of the Erasmus Mundus programmes, are followed closely. The joint education produces skills relevant to working life and the international cooperation broadens, deepens and develops the knowledge and pedagogical competencies of the teachers and researchers. Arcada's master programmes are linked to research programmes and projects at Arcada. This means that the joint master programmes will contribute to sustainable development goals (SDG) on local, regional and international level.