

## Erasmus Policy Statement: Erasmus Declaration on Higher Education Policy

An **active and dynamic internationalisation policy** is a key objective of the St. Pölten University of Applied Sciences (UAS) and therefore prominently anchored both in the mission and the strategy. The qualitative and quantitative expansion of all international activities aims at further promoting an open learning and innovation culture. In this context, special emphasis is placed on the promotion of **interdisciplinarity, internationality and innovative strength** in order to contribute to a knowledge-based, open society and to lay the foundation for lifelong learning. The St. Pölten UAS strives to enable its students to think globally, in networks and in terms of society as a whole. Furthermore, they are taught to develop an astute **social commitment** and act as competent and responsible citizens who see themselves as part of a united European community. The Erasmus programme and the alignment with **common principles of the European Higher Education Area** play a central role in pursuing these objectives.

The St. Pölten UAS is committed to the continuous improvement of its intensive collaboration with partners and universities in other countries within the framework of European **cooperation projects** and research activities as well as the language and intercultural skills of students, teachers and administrative staff, and the attractiveness of the St. Pölten UAS for international students, teaching staff and researchers. The ambitious strategic goal is to ensure that every graduate of the St. Pölten UAS has gained at least one international and/or interdisciplinary experience during her/his time at the UAS.

By means of the increased expansion of **English-language as well as intercultural and interdisciplinary study programmes**, the St. Pölten UAS makes an effort to become an attractive place to study for international students. International networks of teaching and administrative staff play a central role in this context.

The **academic mobility of students, teachers and administrative staff** remains at the core of the internationalisation agenda of the St. Pölten UAS. The target is to generate high-quality mobilities with an annual growth rate roughly 5% in academic mobility. The mobilities to and from Erasmus programme countries are the most important component in terms of these figures. The consistent compliance with the quality standards of the Erasmus programme (use of ECTS, learning and training agreement, diploma supplement, etc.) applies correspondingly as a guideline for other mobility programmes as well.

The UAS service unit International Relations **informs, advises and supports** all incoming and outgoing persons in organisational and administrative matters pertaining to their mobilities. A particular focus is placed on counselling non-traditional students and encouraging them to engage in international exchanges. International coordinators in the study programmes are a key interface between teaching staff and the service unit International Relations. The “International Student Network” features student advising and supporting incoming fellow students.

Most (but not all) mobilities take place with **partner universities**. Incoming and outgoing mobility in the form of so-called “free movers” is encouraged but happens to a considerably lesser extent. Another goal is networking

with the cooperation partners in the fields of teaching and research. The mobility activities have their **geographical focus** within Europe. Partner institutions are selected primarily according to the compatibility of study programmes and the teaching language(s). However, the ties to partner countries predominantly in the USA and South Africa are supposed to be strengthened and expanded through the new **global component** of the Erasmus programme generation. Additionally, the St. Pölten UAS strives to make increasing use of the opportunities offered by the **KA107 “International Credit Mobility”** in this context.

A key strategic goal is the promotion of the **internationalisation in the curricula**, particularly including the advancement and adaptation of mobility windows in all study programmes, the use of digital tools such as MOOCs, the internationalisation of courses and the implementation of short-cycle mobilities such as blended learning, summer schools, etc. The experience gained through successfully implemented, currently ongoing international semester formats like the “iLab” and the “European Project Semester” is invaluable in this endeavour.

**Short-cycle formats** as an affordable and low-threshold type of mobility are supposed feature prominently in addition to “traditional” semester mobility in the form of studying and internships abroad. The idea is to further promote inclusion by reaching a larger group of persons, e.g. part-time students (which comprise a continuously growing number of students) and non-traditional students. The St. Pölten UAS intends to work out and implement a concept for recording these mobilities. In this context, a special focus is placed on the expansion of **Blended Mobilities** by using the corresponding opportunities offered by the Erasmus programme 2021-2027. The annual inter-departmental **International Week** is to be developed further to include as many study programmes as possible and to make the week an integral part of their curricula.

A mobility software is used to promote the **digitalisation**, professionalisation and administrative simplification in the handling of mobilities and cooperation agreements. In this way, the St. Pölten UAS also strives to implement the targets of “Erasmus without Paper” and, as a consequence, to support the efforts for the realisation of the European Student Card.

In order to achieve the internationalisation goals, the St. Pölten UAS plans to increasingly **participate in cooperation projects under Key Action 2** as well as knowledge transfer projects in general. In this respect, the submission of an application of a **“European University”** deserves special mention. In 2020, the UAS took the lead in a consortium which submitted a project with the objective of empowering European regions and promoting collaboration of medium-sized towns in smaller EU countries – with a focus on entrepreneurship and innovation. In case the European University project application is not granted, the St. Pölten UAS strives to implement selected aspects of the project with the currently involved institutions (and potential new partners), provided that the financial, personnel and temporal resources allow for such an endeavour (which may take place under Key Action 2 such as Strategic Partnerships or Knowledge Alliances). In the course of the next Erasmus programme generation, the submission of an **Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Programme** is planned as well. The already submitted **Knowledge Alliance**, **Sector Skills Alliance** and **Strategic Partnership** projects will – if they are approved – make further important contributions to the internationalisation and modernisation of the curricula, the teaching and learning methods, and the intensification of the relationships with the respective project partners and sectors. Within the constraints of

temporal, financial and personnel resources required for the submission and implementation of such projects as well as the dissemination of the results, the St. Pölten UAS is planning on increasing its active participation in Erasmus cooperation projects. The service unit International Relations offers professional assistance in the execution of the projects.

The Board of the St. Pölten UAS has launched a **sustainability** committee. Climate-friendly mobility forms by bus or train as an alternative to air travel and a focus on Blended Mobilities offer possibilities to make internationalisation activities as sustainable as possible. Furthermore, plans are being made to gradually increase the range of activities pertaining to sustainability and digitization in teaching in research, provided that these endeavours are adequately financed and approved nationally.