

# Erasmus Policy Statement (2014-2020)

## Internationalization strategy

At Aalto University internationalization is embedded into the University strategy. Internationalization is strategically positioned as a strategic enabler, a key element in ensuring the university's excellence at its very core: teaching, research, artistic activities and societal impact. The strategic objective that guides all internationalization activities is for Aalto to become an increasingly multicultural research and teaching community where international mobility is a natural part of the community members' daily lives.

Internationalization is understood as a way to enrich and diversify the academic community and to build our staff and students' global competence. University's service units work in unison with the academic departments on the key areas of development, set by the strategy: improving the University's international visibility, international recruitment, promoting staff mobility, developing language strategy, encouraging and developing international teaching and studying and promoting international partnerships.

Aalto University forms a research, education and innovation cluster unique in its operating models and working culture. Through international networking and partnerships, the University contributes to national and European research, education and innovation strategies.

Aalto University is actively working on sharpening its partnership agenda. As a heritage of the three merger universities that formed Aalto in 2010, there are an extensive number of mobility agreements. The aim is to evaluate all partnerships thoroughly and with better focus to ensure better resourcing and assure the quality of all operations. The Erasmus framework functions as the model on which the other mobility activities are also built on. Additionally, Aalto University seeks to establish a small number of more strategic partnerships where the cooperation is multifold and extends to a large number of different actors within the university. Aalto also participates in international networks of leading European – and global - universities in the fields of business, technology as well as art and design (e.g. Cumulus, Cluster, Nordic Five Tech, CEMS and PIM). In these networks, mobility is vital part of the activities.

Aalto is an internationally networked, multicultural learning community with a partnership portfolio that covers the whole world. A current mobility trend indicates that students are more interested in overseas destinations while there are more opportunities within Europe. In selecting partners to accommodate student mobility, Aalto University follows a criteria where the partner's academic quality, suitability of curriculum and course offerings (vis-à-vis credit transfer), language of instruction and service structure are evaluated. Students' exchanges are supported through flexible credit transfer and scholarship systems.

Promoting staff mobility is one of the key areas of development within Aalto. The value of mobility is in strengthening research cooperation, improving the content and quality of teaching and learning new service practices. International experience is emphasized as a merit in one's career development. Institutional commitment is demonstrated by a comprehensive sabbatical system for tenured tracked professors as well as arrangements for reciprocal visiting professorships with key international partners.

Both student and staff mobility have received a boost under the network of Aalto's design factories. The original Design Factory at Aalto's Espoo campus has produced cooperative sister factories in Shanghai, Melbourne and in Santiago, Chile. Similarly, as Aalto internationalizes, there is an international element in everyone's job descriptions. Apart from the internal trainings, Aalto is actively promoting mobility for all staff and also organizing international staff meetings for partner universities to visit Aalto. Mechanisms and better support services are developed to advance mobility within the whole community.

Double degree programmes are developed together with first rate foreign universities either on a bilateral basis or within clusters of several universities. Aalto is participating in Nordic Five Tech (N5T) initiative of developing joint M.Sc. programmes. The programmes are determined according to the N5T areas of expertise and within fields where the participating universities have a long-standing research and education tradition and capacity to carry out a good quality program. Dual degree programme model has been developed within the European CLUSTER network. The model is now being reshaped to fit into collaboration with a Chinese university network.

Aalto is also a partner in five Erasmus Mundus programmes, one being at Doctoral level. Furthermore, Aalto offers the EIT ICT Labs Masters Programme, International Design Business Management (IDBM) and bilateral double degree programs in the field of business.

### **Strategy for the organisation and implementation of international cooperation projects**

Developing multidisciplinary collaboration and building strong partnerships in research and education both within Finland and internationally is an important part of Aalto strategy. International cooperation projects are built, among other things, to further the development of diverse research community, to utilize multidisciplinary opportunities, increase mobility and mobility funding, student recruitment, support doctoral education, curriculum development as well as enforcing and increasing University's visibility and branding internationally.

EU/International collaboration projects are also specifically incorporated in to the strategic work of the Aalto schools to ensure the international recognition of their study programmes, development of new and innovative learning programmes, high-quality research, corporate collaboration and entrepreneurship support as well as widening societal interaction and impact.

Aalto University's support services assist in the promotion and implementation of international projects: the International Relations manages the partnership portfolio of the university and provides support in partner selection and communication; the Strategic Support for Education and Research provides pedagogical support vis-à-vis teaching development and the Research Support Services provides legal support as well practical assistance in research project management. More strategic focus is also being placed on the project and partner selection.

Internationally compared the proportion of HE graduates in Finland is high: 36% of the 25-34 years-olds (Education at a Glance 2011). Aalto University is committed to improving the student- teacher ratio aiming to offer high quality teaching for smaller groups. This is expected to decrease the number of drop-outs and increase the number of graduates. Aalto will also seek to recruit more international students on master/doctoral level. An on-going

dialogue with the public as well as private sector ensures the societal and labor market relevance.

The high quality of education is secured through an ambitious academic curriculum that is supplemented by a culture of creativity and entrepreneurship while not forgetting the relevance of preparing the students for professional life. Research, artistic activities and education are developed in concert; every teacher and scientist is engaged in both research and teaching. Teaching is based on the core theoretical and conceptual foundations of each field. In the longer run the emphasis is on Master and Doctoral education.

## **Reference to European Union's Modernization Agenda**

Aalto is already an internationally networked, multicultural learning community. Better focused partnership portfolio will enhance the benefits and quality of international cooperation. Student exchanges are supported through flexible credit transfer and scholarship system. In the future student exchange will be integrated even more extensively into the curricula throughout the university and different forms of mobility are being developed.

Aalto University's success is linked to its ability to understand and influence the needs of the society, both within Finland and internationally. This requires systematic and creative forms of dialogue between the university and its many different stakeholders - businesses as well as the public sector. Cooperative platforms such as Open Innovation House (a base for collaborative creation and interaction and hosts numerous corporations as well as start-ups) and AppCampus (mobile application development programme, which combines the work of Nokia, Microsoft and Aalto University) ensure natural connections between science and industry. The expertise generated by an internationally competitive university also attracts foreign investors, serving to diversify domestic business life.

Since its establishment in 2010, Aalto has been committed to modernizing and improving its governance, service as well as funding structures. The University Board, consisting of external members only, also ensures that the University is responding to the broader societal needs. The traditional university administration has been replaced by modern and professional service staff. The financial structure has also been remodeled: Aalto is a foundation university and the autonomous schools carry the financial responsibility to balance the distribution of basic funding as well as external funding mechanisms.

## **Aalto's Codes**

**Erasmus Charter for Higher  
Education reference**  
**Erasmus ID code**  
**PIC code**

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