

Erasmus Policy Statement (2021-2028)

Institutional Strategy

Internationalisation, as one of the focus points in our institutional strategy document *Voortvarend 2021*, supports the mission of Driestar educatief. Integral part of it is the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education.

We have identified three key motives for our international programme/strategy:

1. Internationalisation equips and enriches our students, the teachers and social professionals for tomorrow.
2. Driestar educatief wants to contribute internationally to social development via (Christian) education.
3. Driestar educatief aims to contribute to internationalisation in the Dutch education sector to strengthen the international focus of schools.

Participation in the Erasmus Programme contributes to modernizing our institute within the framework of our international strategy. The programme promotes international partnerships supportive of the mission of Driestar educatief. These partnerships facilitate the exchange of students and staff and support collaboration, including (research) projects, to enhance the quality of education around the globe.

Partnerships

Our university places great importance on valuable partnerships. We believe quality and reliability are of importance and to ensure the quality of our collaboration partners, we would rather cooperate with fewer partners than more.

The inter-institutional agreement is an expression of reliability as well as a kind of cooperation. Much effort is put into the establishment of a partnership. Personal contact is particularly important. By means of preliminary visits, we invest in relationships and become mutually acquainted. Subsequently, we assess these visits, and only when we see enough opportunities for cooperation, we will enter a bilateral agreement. We focus on realistic opportunities for collaboration in the field of research, development and exchanges for both staff and students. We make clear arrangements on both language and language level. Our partnership agreements are periodically evaluated.

- Our ambition for the near future is to discuss the Inter-Institutional Agreements with our existing partners.

Our strategic partnerships globally and in the European context focus on collaboration between universities or faculties for teacher education. Strengthened cooperation and development of curriculum design skills for more flexibility in our education will be focus points in the projects with other universities in the future. These activities will contribute to the quality of our programmes and make these more flexible.

- Our ambition is to further strengthen our partnerships and look for more possibilities to cooperate with partner institutions, educational institutes and NGOs.

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Citizenship/mobility

We equip our students with the relevant international knowledge and skills they need in their future profession in the Netherlands or abroad. We use an internationally oriented curriculum, including attention for cross-cultural/key competences, knowledge of relevant aspects of the international context, knowledge of languages and awareness of their global and European citizenship. Students develop a vision on global/European citizenship, learn to reflect on it, develop a stronger identity and acquire skills to deal with people from different cultural backgrounds.

As we believe encounter is crucial for a learning process, via partnerships our students get the opportunity to meet fellow students from various cultures in The Netherlands or abroad. During their studies in The Netherlands, students from abroad are introduced to the international dimension of their discipline. In these learning processes, elements of both formal and non-formal learning are included. Through their acquired knowledge and skills these students can contribute to education and development in their home country.

Staff members get the opportunity to meet colleagues and students abroad or from abroad and to collaborate with them by means of a (research) project or a placement. Visiting professors get the opportunity to learn to know the Dutch context of education and to contribute to it. At the same time, these activities are part of our programme for internationalisation@home. By participating in international conferences and research projects, staff members of Driestar educatief get the opportunity to further professionalisation and development of international competences. In addition, these activities are supportive of the establishment of a European Education Area.

- Our ambition is to strengthen our international (exchange) programmes (flexibility, I@H, blended).

Digital skills

In this European Education Area, digital readiness is a key condition for development because it creates more opportunities for flexibility and, meeting the needs of a more mobile society, Driestar educatief have developed a Master's programme in a blended learning concept. We intend to extend this concept to other parts of our programme. Under the leadership of an innovation manager, we initiate projects to make this possible.

- We aim to bring in more blended elements in our mobility programmes.

Impact

Internationalisation is an important topic in Dutch education policy. We support schools within our working field that substantiate internationalisation. Driestar educatief connects and supports schools, the exchange of experiences and the development of knowledge. Students from abroad are invited for internship activities in these primary or secondary schools. Staff members of these schools are invited to participate in our international activities such as conferences, guest lectures and study trips. Driestar educatief aims to inspire students, staff members and schools in a globalizing world. Our collaboration projects offer opportunities for staff and students for cross-cultural experiences. Through these projects our university becomes interconnected with other European and global institutions. These will improve the quality of our university and contribute to the development of the European Area of Education. Our students will be the teachers and social professionals for tomorrow. Through their participation in our international programmes, we enhance their global citizenship and empower them to work as teachers who are ready to teach their students to prepare them for a globalizing world. At the same time, our activities contribute to the quality development of education in the Netherlands and abroad.

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Erasmus Key Action 1 (KA1) - Learning mobility: The mobility of higher education students and staff Participation in the Programme (KA1 and KA2) will give students and staff the opportunity to encounter with other educational systems and with colleagues abroad. More (international) opportunities and challenges will have a stimulating and motivating effect on students and staff. Therefore, we promote the mobility and cooperation opportunities, the international component of the training or profession in our recruitment of students and staff. Mobility is one reason to opt for higher education.

Students get the opportunity to meet colleagues and fellow students abroad or from abroad and to collaborate with them. The international students will have the opportunity to acquire knowledge and to collaborate with Driestar educatief.

- Activities: development of materials and curricula, language classes, international classroom, eTwinning, I@H, virtual exchanges, research by students together with students/staff from partner institutions; placement/teaching practice or study abroad; an increase of international courses/joint programmes (on campus and blended); internships in Dutch schools (getting acquainted with Dutch education/school system).

Staff of Driestar educatief will get the opportunity to further professionalize by participating in international projects. Our staff policy aims at professionalism of international competencies and mobility as being integrated.

- Activities: internationally oriented policy for staffing and recruitment; internationalisation is a subject in assessment interviews; our range of courses for professionalism focusses on internationalisation; participation in international conferences and courses; development of material, working together on curriculum design skills; collaboration in international projects with colleagues from abroad; supervising international students; participating in exchanges in which colleagues operate in an executive setting: lecturing, guiding workshops, delivering opinions in the context of the Erasmus Programme.

We would rather focus on a good implementation of our mobilities and our mobility strategy than a focus on a large number of mobilities. We pay close attention to mobile participants. One advantage of the institution's small size is it guarantees a personal treatment to both incoming and outgoing students/staff. Monitoring projects is important for the progress of the projects themselves, both internally and externally.

Our **support for incoming students/staff** is as follows:

- The International Office offers support in the areas of accommodation, visa applications, insurances and organisational preparations.
- If needed, we provide a shuttle service from and to the airport or train station for incoming visitors.
- We provide an introduction programme consisting of an introductory meeting with the International Office, in which we provide information about the institution, the programme and options for social interactions. In addition, visitors are introduced to the (teaching) team, their tutor and fellow students. The visitors are made familiar with the institution so that they know who to turn to with questions.
- We link a buddy to the incoming student/colleague (to encourage their social network).
- We arrange excursions, to facilitate their integration.

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- There are interviews on a regular basis with the supervisor and the International Office to assess their stay and the programme.
- Prior to departure, an exit interview takes place to assess the period of mobility and to bring the period of mobility to conclusion.

Our support for **outgoing students/staff** is as follows:

- One year in advance, potential outgoing students/staff are informed about the possibilities of a period of study or placement abroad. They then go through a selection procedure, with a focus on motivation, aptitude and language proficiency.
- In preparatory meetings, participants are introduced to the partner institution, strategic partners, intercultural communication, culture, and language as well as the study programme or placement programme and the Erasmus Programme.
- They are introduced to former Erasmus students/colleagues.
- During the period of mobility, the tutor and the International Office will stay in touch with the student through e-mail and Skype or by a personal visit.
- After the mobility, an assessment interview will take place and we organise re-entry sessions.

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

International projects and working together with partners all over the world is part of Driestar's internationalisation strategy. International projects comprise the following conditions: sustainable character, matching the intrinsic focus; project group with participation/commitment of both staff and students; the allocation of credits to students and of fair working hours to staff; a contribution to the development of knowledge; a win-win situation.

Monitoring projects is important to the progress of the projects themselves, both internally and externally. We keep colleagues, students, and external parties informed about progress, funding and outcomes, via internal meetings, presentations, and digital means, for instance by website and electronic newsletters. The projects are also placed on the agenda of coordinators and management; during these meetings we evaluate on a regular basis the short-term and long-term outcomes.

If we work together with partners abroad, we always do a specific needs analysis with the partner to encourage involvement and sustainability of the project and its result. We applaud the initiative from colleagues (or students) to initiate new projects. We have already been able to set up some projects in the past, for example an initiated project from a colleague together with colleagues in Hungary. We developed a training session with the theme Value driven leadership together with local schools, the university and an advice centre. This project was successful and is planned to be continued, and we want to develop a joint degree programme together.

We set up a network of Dutch schools and their internationalisation coordinators in which we talk about different topics related to internationalisation. Together with these schools we participate in KA2 project with schools in Europe. We intend to continue and expand this further in the future.

We aim for international cooperation, with research and development as focal points. We look for opportunities to collaborate with the business community and we explore support from institutional funds and capital funds. But we also believe in investing in projects with our own resources. We collaborate on a local, national and international level. This is taking place already by collaboration with local municipalities and with NGOs.

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- Activities: contributing to quality improvement of international teacher training and education advisory services through advice, knowledge sharing and development of teaching materials; cooperation with development organisations; international conferences.

Within our institute, we have various expertise groups in which we develop expertise in various themes. We then try to share this knowledge in conferences and publications. We do have experience in international collaborative projects, but we ourselves have not yet applied for a KA2. We will explore this in the coming policy period.

Envisaged impact of your participation in the Erasmus+ Programme on your institution

Participation in the Erasmus Programme implies a change within the institution as well and is crucial to its future. We aim to ensure that (blended) mobility will become standard for both students and staff. In addition, we seek an international component when entering projects, such as research projects and joint programmes. In short, participation in the Programme is both an impetus to our organisation and will help us accomplish our set goals.

As we do have some years of experience and we look at our past performance, those who took part in the programme are satisfied with the programme. We see that they are left with something, with regards to language fluency, personal development and maturity development. We attach importance to the realisation of the quality of education through the mobility of students and staff and through cross-cultural collaboration.

On a local level, we see that participating in the Erasmus Programme has consequences within our institute (quality of education, professionalisation of students and staff). It contributes to different development areas in which we want our students to reflect on: Personal development: increased self-confidence, emotional stability (ability to cope with psychological stress in connection with different situations, flexibility), taking social initiative. Intercultural development: intercultural communication, cultural empathy, knowledge of foreign cultures, knowledge of the background of foreign customers; open mind with respect to other groups. Professional development – Disciplinary international competencies: students discover how their field is regarded in other countries, cooperation skills, digital skills.

Staff participating in Erasmus activities will be enriched by the international activities when teaching our students; at the same time, as our lecturers are also active in our educational advice department, their consultancy activities will be inspired by their international experiences.

It also has a wider impact, however, for our students who are future teachers in primary and secondary education. We want our students to be responsible and fruitful (world)citizens and think about how to make their future pupils more aware of this.

Evaluation of all our international routes for students is evaluated on a regular basis by our research department and during reflection sessions (quantitative and qualitative questionnaires). Our intention for the future is to do more research on the impact, not only on the development areas and practical arrangements but also in relation to all the Erasmus+ actions.

We have noticed that taking part in the Erasmus Programme has a stimulating effect on working with partners abroad. Starting with the exchange of staff and students (mobilities) creates willingness and enthusiasm to work together in other projects.

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Every year we evaluate our international mobility rate, which is very much stimulated in our educational programmes and which is also related to credits. Within the Erasmus Programme we see a small increase in the mobility for outgoing students. So far, we have 2-5 students a year who make use of the Erasmus grants. In the coming years we want to increase this number to 5-10 student mobilities (study/traineeship). At the same time, we do have a very high rate of short exchanges abroad (less than 2 months). During their education programme, almost 80 percent of the students take part in exchanges abroad (study trips, internships).

Increasing the numbers is a matter of promotion. This is what we already do consistently, but in order to increase the numbers even more, we intent to do more conscious promotion, especially in our first years, and we will hold blended sessions with testimonials in order to be even more accessible to students who do not show up in promotion sessions.

We could increase the number of our teaching assignments mobilities. When we developed our new exchange week in 2018, we strategically chose to work together with our Erasmus partners and therefore we could invest in our partners and cooperate also on the level of teaching. Our past performance is around 20-30 mobilities on a yearly basis. In the future we want to increase this to 30-35 mobilities.

We strongly believe that participating in the Erasmus Programme will increase the quality of our programmes. We regard internationalisation as a means to guarantee the quality of our courses. Internationalisation will provide teachers and students with a broader view, who acquire skills and key competencies that are important for living and working in a society that seems to be growing smaller (globalisation). We think it is important to be well equipped by proper preparation and evaluation. This will provide insights into the achievements, which will affect the atmosphere of both class and university. Furthermore, we believe internationalisation will even have a far-reaching effect, because our students will also be able to show the effects in primary and secondary schools (during their placements in Dutch schools) and in their future professions.

We will test current and future cooperation projects against our own policy, which in turn is based on the policy of Erasmus, Modernisation Agenda. We consider it important to use the Erasmus policy as a guiding principle in our institutional strategy as well. As stated before, we attach importance to accomplishing the quality of education by mobility of students and staff, and by cross-cultural cooperation. Additionally, this will increase the quality of higher education and of our institute.