
Erasmus Policy Statement for the Open Universiteit (2021-2027)

The Open Universiteit () has been awarded the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE) for the Erasmus+ program 2021-2027. The Erasmus Policy Statement (below) sets out our institutional strategy in relation to this charter. The policy update aligns with the goals set-out in the "[Institutional Plan 2023-2027: With an open mind](#)." and "Strategische uitvoeringsagenda 2025-2030".

Institutional Strategy and Vision

Background and Context

Founded in the 1980s, the Open Universiteit's mission is to develop, innovate, and offer open academic education to diverse target groups, particularly those for whom traditional campus education is unsuitable. We remain committed to enhancing our role as a leader in distance and online education. International cooperation plays a vital role in modern higher education, and this Erasmus policy aligns with our core mission of providing accessible academic education by focusing on inclusivity, innovation, and embracing the opportunities that international collaboration presents in the digital age.

The open Universiteit aspires that by 2030, it will be a broadly connected university, with connections at various levels—departments, faculties, services, institutions—within the Netherlands, Flanders, and beyond, particularly focusing on Europe and European initiatives. The Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE) serves as a framework for these international collaborations.

To realize this vision, Open Universiteit will focus on three key areas:

- 1) strengthening our unique position,
- 2) working together for impact and
- 3) increasing visibility.

These key areas are divided into eight themes

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| 1) education | 3) value creation | 5) agility | 7) reputation and |
| 2) research | 4) talent | 6) connection | 8) community. |

The Erasmus+ program will have a significant impact on each of these themes, particularly in *education*, *research*, and *connection*.

International policy

The Open Universiteit's international policy focusses on European collaboration and a commitment to contributing to the international academic community. International collaboration is primarily oriented toward Europe and European initiatives, using the ECHE framework as a guide.

Strategic Internationalization Goals

- Strengthen research capacities and reputation by actively engaging in international collaborations and knowledge exchange through the Erasmus+ framework,
- Further promote the Erasmus+ program among students and staff,
- Implement a feedback system for students and staff to continually refine and improve Erasmus+ program experiences, ensuring the evolving needs of participants are met,
- Examining the implementation of digital support services.

Current implementation and partnerships

Institutional level

EADTU Membership

A cornerstone of the Open Universiteit's international policy is its active role in the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU). EADTU is the leading institutional university network for online, open and distance higher education. It is at the heart of innovation in the European Education Area, and in particular in the European Higher Education Area. The OU was one of the founding members of EADTU in 1987. EADTU membership provides a platform for international projects sharing best practices. Within this network the Open Universiteit is working on a range of research projects, including:

- Education: further development of microcredentials and innovations in hybrid (combinations of online and face-to-face) education,
- Artificial intelligence,
- Diversity and inclusion.

OpenEU

The Open Universiteit is one of the core members in an alliance to create the pan-European Open University under the name **OpenEU** (<https://www.openeu.eu/>). In 2024 the European Commission selected the OpenEU initiative from over 50 proposals submitted for [Erasmus+ European alliances](#) and will support this alliance for the next four years. This alliance will focus on strengthening the digital, green and social dimensions of European higher education. OpenEU is formed by seven other online, open and distance universities in Europe, together with two on-campus universities. The alliance is supported by 17 partners, including several other universities, networks, civil society organizations and industrial and private institutions. In addition to the above-mentioned initiatives, there are numerous collaborative activities in research, education and in the field of valorization from one or more of the faculties of the Open University.

Sustainability

The socially relevant contribution of the Open Universiteit in the field of Sustainable Development (SD) is highly valued both at national and international level. The collaboration with UNESCO has led to the establishment of the UNESCO-chair *Technology-enhanced Learning for Sustainable Development*.

Collaborative projects

The OU is involved in various international projects, often in collaboration with other EADTU members. Some notable examples include

- The European Short Learning Programs for Continuous Professional Development and Lifelong Learning (**E-SLP**) project, aimed at increasing flexibility in higher education.

- The **Empower** project, which focuses on the renewal of higher education in Europe. Experts from the Open University are participating in this project, which was set up in collaboration with the Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Union.
- The **DigiTel Pro project**, which was set up with the support of the European Commission during one of the COVID lockdowns to strengthen the professional development of digital education. The project encourages distance learning to be taken out of the sphere of 'emergency remote teaching'.
- The project Modular Continuing Higher Education by Micro-credentials (**MCE**), which seeks to expand the use of micro-credentials

Faculty level

In addition to the above-mentioned initiatives, there are numerous collaborative activities in research, education and in the field of valorization from one or more of the faculties of the Open Universiteit. Some noteworthy examples include:

- The faculty of science has joined **the Z-Inspection initiative**, a collaboration between various universities in Europe and beyond on the theme of Trustworthy AI. The mission of the Trustworthy AI Lab at the Open University is to bring together a community of experts to advance AI research, education, and policymaking,
- The Faculty of Law actively collaborates with other open and campus universities in Europe within the framework of **EDELNet** (European Distance Education in Law Network),
- The faculty of educational sciences is part of the a European project in which three companies and the Open Universiteit will set up a virtual studio called **CloudClass**. With CloudClass, teachers can easily and cheaply integrate techniques such as Augmented and Virtual Reality and 3D modelling into their online education. They can use templates and the standard mobile and cloud technologies.
- Several ongoing projects that are funded by Horizon Europe, such as [WISER](#), [BlueGreen Governance](#) and [frugal and reverse innovation with the EU](#).

The Erasmus+ program 2021-2027

Priorities and objectives

Open Universiteit aims to position itself as a prominent driver of lifelong learning (LLO) in the Netherlands, reinforcing its commitment to addressing the evolving needs of society and the labor market. By participating in the Erasmus+ program, the Open Universiteit is committed to provide a strong contribution and envisages achieving a sustainable impact in relation to the European Union's Modernisation and Internationalisation Agenda in Higher Education:

- **Open Education and Lifelong Learning:** Building on our legacy of open education, providing flexible, accessible, and inclusive learning opportunities that cater to diverse and non-traditional student groups, including those seeking lifelong learning and skill development.
- **Quality Teaching and Learning:** Prioritizing the development and implementation of innovative teaching methods and technologies to deliver education relevant to current societal and workforce demands, increasing student satisfaction through our revised education model.

- **International Collaboration and Partnerships:** Strategic partnering with institutions worldwide, focusing on those that share the vision of open education, carefully selected based on mutual interests and potential for high-quality collaboration, with an emphasis on Europe.
- **Closer links between education, research, and innovation:** Connecting the "knowledge triangle" to strengthen our exploitation of innovation potentials, internal improvement cycles in education and research, and international reputation.
- **Sustainability, Diversity, and Inclusion:** Integrating themes of sustainability and inclusivity within our educational content, research endeavors, and organizational culture, ensuring alignment with modern societal values and needs.
- **More effective governance and funding mechanisms for higher education:** contributing to better management and innovations towards our vision of inclusive and equitable open high-quality Education for all through distance and online higher education and related research.
- **Digital Transformation:** Fostering digital capabilities across all levels to prepare students and staff for the increasingly digitized future.

Key actions and activities

The Open Universiteit actively engages in the Erasmus+ program, participating in both Key Action 1 (learning mobility of individuals) and Key Action 2 (cooperation among organizations and institutions). While we recognize the value of collaborative projects (KA2), our core mission of providing high-quality, accessible academic education drives us to prioritize Key Action 1 – specifically mobility for students and staff (KA131 and KA171). We believe that these exchanges are crucial for fostering innovation and enriching our educational practices. Mobility experiences broaden perspectives, enhance intercultural competence, and ultimately contribute to a more vibrant and internationally connected learning and research community at Open Universiteit. Therefore, we are fully committed to providing robust academic and administrative support to ensure successful and enriching Erasmus+ exchanges for both students and staff.

Student mobility (KA131, 171)

While recognizing difficulties associated with our unique profile as a distance higher education institution without a central campus and primarily Dutch-language instruction, we encourage students to participate in outgoing mobility projects. We offer international experiences within the EADTU framework through exchange programs and the development of micro-credentials. With the launch of the OpenEU alliance, we are taking steps towards a pan-European open university, focusing on strengthening the digital, green, and social dimensions of European higher education, including the development of joint degree programs. An internal application procedure outlines options and necessary actions.

Staff mobility

. A variety of Erasmus+ mobility opportunities—from teaching assignments and training courses to research collaborations and job shadowing—are promoted among all staff members, including research and support personnel, to foster professional development and enhance institutional collaborations

Beyond individual mobility projects, the Open Universiteit actively supports staff participation in other Erasmus+ initiatives, particularly Key Action 220 (Cooperation Partnerships). These collaborative projects enable our staff to engage in longer-term international partnerships, contributing to innovative projects and strategic alliances. To ensure successful participation, comprehensive support

is provided at multiple levels - departmental, faculty, and central administration - including assistance with application processes, project management, and implementation of activities. This multi-layered support structure reflects our institutional commitment to meaningful international engagement and continuous professional development of our staff.

Implementation

Support and Inclusion measures

The Open Universiteit is committed to ensuring that all students and staff members have equal access to mobility opportunities, regardless of their background or circumstances. We provide comprehensive support mechanisms that align with Erasmus+ guidelines. Additionally, we are setting up a dedicated administrative staff to provide comprehensive support for both incoming and outgoing participants, ensuring smooth transitions and positive mobility experiences. This integrated support system reflects our commitment to inclusive education and ensures that all participants can fully benefit from their international experience.

Selection of partners

The faculties of the Open Universiteit are responsible for the selection of partners for international collaboration, focusing on partnerships with other Open Universities and educational organizations worldwide sharing a common vision on Open Education.

Standards and approval

High standards are defined for the acceptance of new partners, ensuring alignment with our institutional values and strategic objectives. Partner selection follows a careful evaluation process, requiring final approval from the head of academic affairs before formalizing any relationship through a Memorandum of Understanding.

Main criteria for the selection of new partners include a common vision on Open Education, international recognition, robust student support systems, and the potential for meaningful collaboration in both current and future initiatives. To ensure transparency and accessibility, all active partnerships and their associated Memoranda of Understanding are publicly available on the Open Universiteitwebsite

Review and Evaluation

All established partnerships are subjected to triennial reviews. These evaluations assess multiple dimensions including academic outcomes, mutual benefits, resource efficiency, and strategic alignment with Open Universiteit's institutional objectives. Through this careful stewardship of our international collaborations, we maintain a dynamic and effective network of partnerships that continues to serve our students, staff, and broader institutional mission

Practical information

- Our Erasmus ID code is NL HEERLEN10.
- Relevant information pertaining to the mobility of staff and students can be found on our [website](#).
- Our Erasmus support team can be reached via subsidieadvies@ou.nl

Commitment to Sustainable Mobility

The Open Universiteit is committed to promoting sustainable mobility practices in alignment with European green initiatives and our institutional environmental responsibilities. We actively encourage participants in our mobility programs to choose environmentally conscious travel options, such as train travel for shorter distances and direct flights when necessary.

Governance

The Open Universiteit ensures robust governance and resource allocation to support its Erasmus+ activities. Regular assessments and reviews of partnerships and strategies are conducted to maintain high standards. Faculty and departmental plans will align with this policy, ensuring cohesive and strategic implementation.

Conclusion

As detailed above, the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education is integral to the realization of Open Universiteit's institutional vision, plans and strategies.

By adhering to these principles and strategies, the Open Universiteit seeks to advance its mission of making high-quality education accessible to all, promoting international academic excellence, and contributing positively to the European and global educational landscape.