



# ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT of the UNIVERSITY OF CANTABRIA E SANTAND01

**Erasmus contribution towards modernising the UC  
and building a European Education Area.**

<b>Pursued policy objectives .....</b>	<b>2</b>
Mobility .....	2
Development of cooperation projects among organisations and institutions.....	3
Development of integrated transnational teaching contents and activities .....	3
Reinforcement of strategic partnerships and creation of new alliances .....	3
Attraction of international students and staff .....	4
Internationalisation at home .....	4

**UC participation in Erasmus actions and contribution  
to achieving the objectives of its institutional strategy .....**

<b>A) KEY ACTION 1: "Learning Mobility", The mobility of higher education students and staff.....</b>	<b>5</b>
A.1) For student mobility for studies (physical, blended or virtual) and traineeships.....	6
A.2) For staff mobility for teaching and training.....	8
<b>B) KEY ACTION 2: "Cooperation among organisations and institutions" and KEY ACTION 3: "Support to Policy development and cooperation".....</b>	<b>8</b>

# **Erasmus contribution towards modernising the UC and building a European Education Area.**

## **Pursued policy objectives**

The University of Cantabria (UC) is firmly committed to strengthening its international dimension, which permeates all university activities as stated in its most recent Strategic Plan. Internationalisation is approached as a transversal process closely related to the rest of the objectives of the Plan, namely modernisation of the teaching model, consolidation of high-quality research and knowledge transfer, comprehensive digital transformation, improvement of students' employability and entrepreneurial skills, and enhancement of the local and regional impact of the institution in a socially responsible way.

Considering the adverse global impact caused by the COVID-19 outbreak in international education and the uncertainty of the near future, the Erasmus Programme, more than ever before, is considered the cornerstone of the UC Internationalisation strategy. The policy objectives of the programme are well aligned with the institution's goals (Action Line 5: Objectives 11 and 12 of the Plan) and provide for an essential instrument to implement its main priority action lines:

### **Mobility**

Increasing high quality physical mobility of students, teaching and administrative staff and fostering virtual and blended mobility for learning and training, making it accessible to a wider and more diverse population. The UC will strive to raise the participation of students of all academic levels (undergraduate, Master and Ph. D. candidates) coming from all backgrounds.

The UC will design and adopt a pro-active scheme to address participants with social, economic or cultural disadvantages and with disabilities or learning problems, in close collaboration with other university departments and services within the overall strategy concerning mobility, two priorities will be established, namely to develop creative and meaningful schemes of blended types of mobilities, reinforcing on-line formats and virtual cooperation, and to boost international credit mobility by optimising the use of research cooperation partnerships and consolidating the existing ones.

Mobility experiences are to be further integrated in the university core activities and a set of meaningful indicators will be established to assess their impact and results, at individual and institutional levels, and in terms of the key competences acquired by the participants. The quality of all mobilities will be improved by the design of a purposeful strategy, which includes better cultural preparation, easier administrative processes, good risk-management protocols and the provision of a reliable and complete range of services.

An effort will be made to increase and improve teaching and staff mobility, so that it contributes to the modernisation of the teaching and the overall university organisation, and has a positive impact on the visibility and recognition of mobility periods and their outcomes towards the participants' careers. This type of mobility will also contribute to strengthen the synergies between research and teaching and will help to better identify common areas of interest, increase the participation in research and cooperation projects and foster the partnerships established at a doctoral level concerning European doctorates and thesis co-tutelles.

## **Development of cooperation projects among organisations and institutions**

One of the most important action-lines in the Internationalisation strategy of the UC within the Erasmus Programme is to increase its participation in all types of Erasmus cooperation projects among organisations and institutions, and specifically, in the European Universities: Partners for Excellence Initiative. To this aim, the UC will resort to its long-term strategic partners both within HEIs and other private and public institutions and agents, and will identify and establish new institutional and discipline-oriented relations. The UC will actively strengthen the offices that deal with the management of these projects.

## **Development of integrated transnational teaching contents and activities**

The design and participation in transnational teaching activities is a priority, which will reinforce the synergies with other university innovative teaching initiatives and will increase mutual academic recognition among universities and countries. The aim is to increase the number and impact of modules, courses and undergraduate and graduate double-joint-multiple degree programmes with a special focus on the development of Erasmus Mundus Masters and Jean Monnet modules. A clear and informative regulation of these activities will be developed and will be included in the general academic regulations of the university, after having been approved by the University Council, and experienced administrative support will be provided to facilitate the management of the activities. Current transnational programmes like the "Introduction to Global Studies" course taught in collaboration with UNC Charlotte (USA) will be strengthened and used as a model for future collaborative projects, including virtual formats.

## **Reinforcement of strategic partnerships and creation of new alliances**

The UC is endowed with an array of reliable and enduring strategic university partners all over the world, and participates in several European and International networks such as the SGroup of universities, CINDA or AIUP. Geographically, the strategic areas of cooperation have been the EU countries, North America (with over 20 MoUs, some of which with Ivy League institutions) and Latin America (Mexico, Chile and Argentina in particular). For international credit mobility outside the EU, the main cooperation areas have been Central Asia, Japan, India, Russia and Northern African countries such as Morocco and Tunisia. This reliable network of strategic partners will be reinforced by

identifying new compatible or complementary HEIs, and by optimising the synergies between academic and research areas at the UC.

Together with this network of reliable university partners, the UC is solidly embedded in its regional environment and is deeply engaged with local and regional public bodies and institutions (the Regional Government of Cantabria and the Santander City Council in particular) and other private stakeholders such as Banco de Santander and other private local companies.

## Attraction of international students and staff

The UC aims at raising its international profile and attractiveness to incoming students and academics by consolidating the scope and quality of its academic offer in English, not only concerning individual courses but also, undergraduate itineraries with at least 30 ECTS credits, full undergraduate and Master programmes and also, summer programmes. The UC Strategic Plan also envisages courses delivered in other languages.

It will also work at stepping up the number of guest academic lecturers and at strengthening the integration of incoming students within the campus and within the local environment by engaging them in civic and social activities through volunteering and traineeships schemes.

Finally, the UC will work towards creating an alumni exchange student database in collaboration with the CEOE Cantabria (Confederation of Employers) with a twofold purpose: to promote the role of "university ambassadors abroad" and to increase the catalogue of companies and institutions offered to our students for traineeship mobility.

## Internationalisation at home

Regardless of the number of participants benefiting from mobility, there will always be a high percentage of non-mobile students and staff. To address the non-mobile population, the UC will design an inclusive strategy that intends to help **all** students to develop an international mind-set and acquire multicultural competences, by means of the following actions:

1. To raise the English proficiency of the university community.
2. To develop a set of courses duly recognised and certified and a set of non-formal purposeful international activities recognised with micro credentials, designed for the development of global competences. The UC already issues a Certificate for International Intensification, which will become an option for all undergraduate students, as it will be converted into a transversal optional course.
3. To foster the design of pilot teaching initiatives to internationalise the curricula content of programmes and courses.

The UC designed and published its Strategic Plan in 2019. Since then, the world has been living in a completely new scenario due to the COVID-19 pandemic that has and will deeply affect the heart of international education, at least in the short term. Travel restrictions, social distances and the shift to on-line classes will have a significant impact in the experiencing of traditional mobility. However, these challenges could be turned

into opportunities by re-defining mobility and adding to it a virtual component, making it more inclusive, reinforcing its engagement in the Universities' communities and making use of cooperation projects to search for solutions to real academic and societal problems.

The award of the Erasmus University Charter and the active participation in the Erasmus Programme is considered essential for the accomplishment of the objectives included in the UC Internationalisation strategy. The impact of the programme actions will be critical for the modernisation of the institution in the period 2021-2027. It will contribute to the delivery of a competence-oriented and well-rounded education to all students, and to the creation of a global campus with a strong European identity and solid European values within the European Education Area.

## **UC participation in Erasmus actions and contribution to achieving the objectives of its institutional strategy**

The University of Cantabria has a proven a wide and solid experience in Internationalisation actions at home and abroad, and in almost all of the activities encompassed by the Erasmus Programme. The institution has developed a centralised model to manage mobility and cooperation projects through a well-established International Relations Office (IRO) depending on the Vice-rectorate for Internationalisation and Cooperation, which is responsible for the implementation of the Erasmus Programme. The IRO is in charge of the administrative managing of mobility, and works in close collaboration with a network of academic coordinators at each Faculty or School. It organises all the stages of the mobility processes for both outbound and inbound students, teaching and administrative staff and researchers, and provides for administrative and service support. It also organises the promotion, information and dissemination through the website and through specific publications, informative and orientation meetings and sessions, social media, and events. It is also responsible for fostering and managing the participation in Erasmus Cooperation Projects in collaboration with the Office for European Projects.

The UC is interested in participating in all Erasmus projects activities included in a) Key Action1 "Learning Mobility for students and staff", b) Key Action 2 "Cooperation among organisations and institutions" and c) Key Action 3 "Support to policy development and cooperation".

### **A) KEY ACTION 1: "Learning Mobility", The mobility of higher education students and staff**

As mentioned previously, major traditional inbound and outbound mobility mechanisms and procedures are run by the IRO for all types of mobilities including future virtual and blended schemes. The IRO is responsible for negotiating and establishing the interinstitutional agreements for students and staff mobilities with compatible university partners, which are identified according to the mobility strategy of each Faculty and

School and the quality of former mobilities. The agreements are signed, with the prior authorization of the coordinators, following an established procedure and in compliance with the conditions required by the programme. Future agreements will be virtually signed using the Erasmus Dashboard.

For all types of mobilities, public calls of the available opportunities and grants are periodically published and disseminated so as to reach the whole university community and all prospective participants through all the available media: web-site, e-mails, social media, informative sessions and in some cases, local media. In the case of calls targeted at incoming students and staff for international credit mobility, they are published and disseminated by the partner institutions, also in compliance with the principles of the ECHE.

The calls include all the necessary information about the eligibility requirements and non-discrimination principles, application procedure and the selection criteria. The Commission for Internationalisation chaired by the Vice-rector transparently awards grants, taking into consideration the short-list proposal of the academic coordinators at each Faculty and School or by the partner university, in the case of international credit mobility. From the academic year 2021-2022 and throughout the lifetime of the programme, a specific call will be published for underprivileged participants with specific inclusive criteria.

The list of selected candidates is published on the website including the list of substitutes. When candidates formally accept the offers, the IRO nominates the selected candidates to the host institution and starts the necessary procedures to assure the overall quality of the academic, cultural, administrative, personal and institutional elements involved in the mobilities.

### **A.1) For student mobility for studies (physical, blended or virtual) and traineeships**

The UC complies, in the organisation of its outbound and inbound mobilities, with the ECTS rules included in its Users' Guide related to the recommended workload, and the automatic recognition of the successful outcomes of the exchange period. For both students and staff, the UC provides for a complementary insurance, which covers limited health costs, repatriation and civil liability of the inbound and outbound participants.

#### **Before mobility**

Outgoing Students are summoned to participate in a well-structured pre-departure programme that includes multicultural training and a set of sessions where they are informed about the steps to follow in the preparation of their exchanges: application at the host university, search for accommodation, mandatory insurance, administrative Erasmus requirements for their grants etc. They are specifically informed about how to elaborate their Learning Agreement (LA) with their Faculty or School academic coordinators and through the university virtual campus, which will be connected in 2020-2021 with the Erasmus virtual OLA. Students for traineeships also receive assistance to complete their Training agreements and obtain the required signatures. The IRO has the intention to further develop the pre-departure programme in a virtual

format with the participation of International Relations Officers from partner universities and former Erasmus students. Concerning language preparation, the UC Language Center offers language courses that are partially financed by the programme.

Incoming students are given all the necessary information on the website concerning the application procedure, updated course catalogue, reference of their academic coordinator and general information about academic calendar, mandatory insurance coverage, accommodation, Welcome Programme and orientation sessions. In the case of International Credit mobility students, the IRO issues the electronic acceptance letter for visa purposes and sends it by e-mail. Concerning finding accommodation, the ORI facilitates the assistance of an independent organisation that deals directly with house providers, helps the student to find accommodation in private flats and orients and supervises the contracts and utilities supplies throughout the students' stay.

### **During and after mobility**

Outgoing students are paid the Erasmus grant upon arrival at their host institution and are closely monitored by the IRO staff and their corresponding academic coordinators during their learning period through a series of numbered systematic and individual e-mails and other social media. The risk and crisis management protocol will be improved to complete the set of actions that are already being implemented. At the end of their study period, automatic academic recognition is guaranteed for all successful learning components included in the LA. The Transcript of records of the students and their Diploma Supplement include information about the Erasmus mobility experience and the grades obtained.

Incoming students: upon arrival, students are academically registered at the IRO, are given the same treatment, and have the same rights and duties as local students. The ORI organises a Welcome Programme, which consists of informative sessions and social activities such as excursions in the city of Santander and the region of Cantabria. Students are accompanied by local buddy students. The student organisations, ESN and AEGEE help students in their social and cultural integration on campus and in the city, and facilitate their participation in social, sport, travel, music and film activities and events. The Language Center offers Spanish lessons in an intensive and extensive format prior and throughout the semester. Students also participate in the UC International Day and International events. Students are put in contact with their academic coordinators so that they receive academic orientation, advice and close follow-up of their academic performance during their stay.

At the end of the exchange period, students can personally download their digital transcript of records from the virtual campus, which currently includes the ECTS grading system correspondence, but will also include grade distribution scales according to the EGRACON principles in the academic year 2021-2022. In the case of international credit mobility for students, the IRO is in charge of paying their grants upon arrival and of issuing or reimbursing their flight fare.

Both outgoing and incoming students are given information about emergency contacts and instructions and are contacted in case of any risk or safety crisis. Emergency protocols will be further developed and improved and will engage several departments of the university. As mentioned later in this application, the UC will fully implement the Student Card Initiative which will contribute to ease the administrative

workload of mobility management and will facilitate that all participating students use the Erasmus App as soon as it is fully available

## **A.2) For staff mobility for teaching and training**

### **Before mobility**

Staff is informed concerning the requirements of the Erasmus Programme related to their mobilities, including the necessary mandatory insurance. They complete the mobility agreement including the daily activity programme as well as the expected outcomes and have it duly signed by home and host institutions. The IRO is responsible for paying the grant. The UC will intentionally promote the staff mobilities that are related to learning delivery in transnational modules, courses or degree programmes, and also, to the participation in CLIL/EMI methodology international courses, so as to improve language and teaching international competences of the staff. It is worth mentioning that the UC organises an annual staff week for international credit mobility staff participants to facilitate the management of the programme by partner institutions and to foster new cooperation relations among partners. This staff week will include representatives from EU partners in future editions.

### **During and after mobility**

After mobility, participants are given an official certificate of the mobility activity to be included in their CVs and used in the academic or administrative careers. For international credit mobility, the IRO helps to organize the travel and the mandatory insurance, preferably through the university travel agency, and pays the participant the corresponding individual grant upon arrival at the university. The IRO organises interdisciplinary meetings in order to extend the existent cooperation to other disciplines and degree programmes.

## **B) KEY ACTION 2: “Cooperation among organisations and institutions” and KEY ACTION 3: “Support to Policy development and cooperation”**

One of the top priorities of the UC’s International strategy is to increase its participation in Key Action 2 and 3 activities. The Vice-rectorate will perform a needs analysis in different disciplines and will develop a communication strategy to foster discipline and management-oriented initiatives within the staff. These initiatives will be reinforced by a firm commitment from the Rectorate to strengthen and increase the human resources devoted to project design and management. A university recognition scheme for the staff participation in these projects will also be applied.

Concerning Key Action 2: European Universities; Partners for Excellence initiative, the UC is already participating in one of the application consortia that was submitted last February in the last Erasmus+ call. The participation in this action is a top priority of the Rectorate’s Internationalisation strategy and there is a firm commitment to devote all the necessary resources to attain this objective.



The projects' activities will provide the opportunity to cooperate not only with HEIs but also with local and regional public and private agents which already work with the university in the project "Campus de Excelencia Internacional" and specially, with the Office for European Projects of the Cantabria Regional Government. These collaborations will increase the social impact of the activities and their sustainability and will contribute to the development of the region.

As for project management resources and with the objective of optimising the existing expertise and the synergies of the financial rules of all European projects, the Office for European Projects and the International Office will collaborate in managing new KA2 and KA3 projects. In order to have a clear distribution of tasks, responsibilities will be developed and organised throughout the different stages of the lifetime of the projects, maintaining a collaborative approach. It is worth mentioning that currently, UC is participating in a Strategic Partnership Association project which has been submitted in the last 2020 call and which pretends to develop a Peer Review methodology among the partners to improve the number and quality of the Erasmus projects submitted by each individual partner.