

Erasmus Policy Statement of the University of Mannheim

(Excerpt from the proposal for the charter of Erasmus+ Program 2014-2020)

The University of Mannheim has set its sights on forming and educating executives for the business world, for society and academics. International competitiveness is crucial, particularly in the context of ever growing challenges on the international labor and science markets. The University of Mannheim is aware of this and strives to convey an international perspective to all its members within the scope of their function - be it as part of their studies, in teaching, research or administration. The vision for the University of Mannheim is an "international campus" that creates a warm welcome for international students, scholars and employees and puts internationality into practice on every level. As the international campus infuses every level of university life, it does not only facilitate the mobility of individuals who come to live, study and work in Mannheim from abroad, but also fosters international experiences for students and staff in Mannheim, not only through stays abroad but through everyday interaction at the university.

With regard to mobilities, it is our goal to increase the number of international students and scholars who come to Mannheim and further enhance the number of academic exchanges for students and teaching staff from Mannheim. We are focusing on making a stay abroad possible for as many students as possible. As a rule, these stays have a duration of one semester and are part of a European or non-European exchange program. With currently about 60 percent of all mobilities, the Erasmus-funded studies abroad will remain the center of our activities. In geographical terms, most partners are located in Europe, North America, South America and Asia. However, we do not focus on certain countries or regions. New partnerships are established solely based on academic quality criteria, compatibility of curricula and expected level of support for students at the host institution abroad. International accreditations and rankings, if available, are considered in the process.

The international partners provide us with an impetus for research, teaching and the strategic development of the university. Visiting scholars contribute new research perspectives as well as new content and methods in teaching and therefore enrich university life. Contact to other higher education institutions fosters concern for international quality standards and is a continuous incentive to improve teaching, research and university management.

As regards the individual groups of university members, the first target group for studies abroad are the students of the bachelor's programs. Thereby, international experience is ensured during the first course of studies and, simultaneously, a foundation is laid for a further mobility, be it in the course of a professional career or in the course of further studies. The University of Mannheim takes account of the importance of embedding international experiences in the curriculum as early as during the bachelor's program by implementing mobility windows and flexible solutions for study plans to ensure a successful integration of stays abroad in the curriculum. The mandatory semester abroad in the bachelor's program Business Administration is an outstanding example.

Stays abroad are highly encouraged for doctoral and master's students as well. Students can either chose a semester abroad or can study in double or joint degree programs. The number of these programs is to be further increased in the future. Currently, the University of Mannheim cooperates with 12 European and non-European universities on this level in various fields of study, particularly in the field of business administration.

Teaching staff mobility is funded and encouraged with the support of the Erasmus program, but also with financial means from the university. It is to be highly strengthened in the next few years. The mobility of teaching and administrative staff is part of the university's human resources development strategy. Staff mobilities as part of human resources development are a vital part of the intercultural training of our administrative staff in the central

administration of the university as well as on the school level. Those mobilities are to be even further increased in the future. This way, the university ensures that employees gain different perspectives and will be able to contribute to the development of international processes.

Strategy for the Organization and Implementation of International Cooperations (EU and non-EU)

For all international cooperation projects quality criteria are the focal point. This applies to the academic as well as to the administrative aspects of a cooperation. New cooperation agreements are planned well in advance. This includes the review of a potential cooperation with regard to advantages for students and researchers, the selection of partner institutions with regard to professional and qualitative standards as well as the consideration of administrative processes. This way, the university can guarantee that a new cooperation adheres to its high quality standards.

All cooperations that allow for the participation of students, researchers or employees are advertised publicly and transparently for the respective target group. Conditions for participation, selection criteria and application processes are communicated clearly. The International Office coordinates any administrative and organizational processes whereas the coordinators on the school level are in charge of the academic aspects of the programs. This division of tasks has proven successful for many years.

Ramifications of the Modernization of the University with regard to Political Goals

For the University of Mannheim, the participation in the Erasmus program is a part of its own modernization and internationalization strategy. The mobility of academic personnel and students as well as the participation in international cooperations is a fundamental contribution to the quality of study programs and to the students' experiences and is recognized as such. Hence, the university strives to intensify the cooperation with partners inside and outside of the European Union and promote the mobility of students and staff, including those groups that have been inadequately represented so far. By increasing the number of students as part of the general expansion programs and by improving the quality of education and support of students, the University of Mannheim can educate more students and guide them successfully until they complete their studies.

The improvement of study programs with regard to quality and relevance for the demands of the academic and non-academic labor markets as well as the promotion and recognition of excellence in research and teaching are the cornerstones of the strategic plan of the University of Mannheim. Moreover, it is the university's goal to reinforce the links between education and the business world in order to foster outstanding achievements, innovation and regional development. Close links among researchers, cooperations in the area of career development as well as the inclusion of external representatives in the strategic bodies of the university are the means to push this along. Here, the University of Mannheim can build on its numerous contacts to regional and supra-regional enterprises. The implementation of the strategic goals is supported with various financial instruments. Moreover, the internationalization strategy was rooted at the top level of the university with the creation of the position of the Vice President for International Relations.

International cooperation and exchange significantly support the continuous enhancement of quality in higher education and research. In order to successfully train future executives for the business world, for society and academics, it is pivotal to equip students with international experiences in order for them to be competitive when entering the international science and labor markets. International experiences significantly contribute to the quality of education as students with international experiences acquire skills such as intercultural sensitivity, creativeness in problem solving and the ability to communicate and cooperate more easily. Moreover, the promotion of cross-border cooperation provides important impetus for the strategic and organizational development of the university in an international context.