



Erasmus Policy Statement

(EPS) 2021-2027

In a dynamic and rapidly evolving international environment, the University of Macedonia (UoM) serves the local, national and regional society and economy by promoting knowledge in the broader spectrum of economic and social sciences, information sciences and arts, pursuing excellence as well as fostering social sensitivity and inclusion diffusing education and culture. The University's vision is to become an Institute of Higher Education internationally distinguished for its fields of specialization.

The University of Macedonia has placed internationalization at the centre of its strategic plan by adopting a policy of further openness through an international collaboration network with research and educational organizations. In view of each external focus, the University's respective strategic objectives are the following:

1. International collaborations with Institutes of Higher Education and research institutions in order to achieve research excellence.
2. Collaboration with bodies and organizations of international and regional economy and society to make the University an innovation pole.

Given its location in the city of Thessaloniki, an ageless centre of commerce and a meeting point of people and cultures, the UoM is placed in an advantageous position to develop collaborations and economies of scope with other local tertiary educational institutions and in the wider region, with research centres and various business operations, such as chambers, business associations, transnational business operators etc. This contributes to the planning and development of study programs on an undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral (PhD) level which will produce and disseminate knowledge, educate specialists and generate innovations in horizontal actions which are integrated in the regional development. Ultimately, the goal is to become the centre of a cluster of universities that will contribute to cross-border cooperation and development.

The UoM fully supports the European modernization agenda in Higher education, as well as the project of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

In view of all this, holding the ECHE 2021-2027 and participating in the new Erasmus Programme is of crucial importance for the UoM's institutional strategy.

By taking part in the Erasmus programme, the UoM becomes more open and accessible to the outside world, by revising its courses, its teaching methods as well as its student support structures, in order to attract more foreign students and lecturers and to establish new partnerships with institutions abroad.

Within the Erasmus framework, the UoM has cultivated ties with other EU and non EU universities through mobility and cooperation projects, resulting in the development of a pool of well-qualified, open-minded and internationally experienced students and staff. The UoM acknowledges the necessity of a multicultural and international active community as a key theme in its internationalization process and aims to further develop and encourage mobility and cooperation programs. The University's exposure to as many different EU

educational systems as possible, will ensure its true integration within EHEA. The internationalization efforts will effectively provide students with a wider perspective, improve their employability and also offer a supporting and stimulating professional and academic environment to its academic staff. In addition, global and technological changes require continuous updates, knowledge and skills, making the “brain circulation” and ‘know how’ transfer offered through Erasmus one of the key goals for the Institution.

In the upcoming years, the main goals are to:

- foster internationalization by increasing mobility of both students and staff but also by attracting more foreign distinguished researchers and lecturers,
- further develop strategic alliances with a strong academic environment abroad. Focus will be given on establishing collaborations with Universities with academic strength whose best practices are broadly recognized,
- align institution’s language policy to the official European one (English).

Furthermore, one of the main objectives of the UoM is to become a member of one of the European Universities’ partnerships (Erasmus KA2) which will help to establish a joint long-term strategy with other EU Universities, to improve student exchange systems to be integrated into study programs and further increase the competitiveness and attractiveness of the University.

It is clear that the Erasmus Program constitutes a vital part of the UoM’s efforts to achieve its overall institutional vision.

The UoM considers Erasmus Programme an integral part of its internationalization strategy and thus is aiming to participate in the following activities:

- Key Action 1 “Learning Mobility”. The mobility for Higher education students and staff.
- Key Action 2 “Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices”
- Key action 3 “Support to policy reforms”

The activities supported by these three actions are expected to generate long lasting effects for the University contributing to the development and transfer of good practices on educational and administrative level. Effective cooperation through the above mentioned activities contributes to the development of study programmes, the use of new teaching ICT methodologies, the improved processes of recognition and the adoption of good practices in daily administrative activities.

Key Action 1 activity

Ever since the UoM started to participate in the Erasmus Programme, one of the main focuses has been on the students and staff KA1 mobility. The UoM continuously encourages its students to participate in study exchange programmes and at the same way has always been welcoming incoming students. The University offers guidance and support before, during and after the mobility and continues its efforts to establish a smooth process in all required procedures and credit recognition gained from the learning outcomes. In the following years efforts will be made to foster the International Credit Mobility and to further expand collaborations with non EU partners. Young academic staff and less experienced administrative staff will be a special target group in future mobility actions for training and teaching assignments. Experienced members of the academic staff consider it as their duty to advise and to encourage young colleagues in making arrangements for international mobility actions. In addition, attracting new members in its international project teams is of great importance to the university.

The Internal Regulation applied for the Erasmus KA1 activities has been recently revised, to ensure fair, transparent and clear procedures for all.

The UoM Erasmus Bureau, always in line with the National Agency's directions, is responsible for implementing and carrying out the KA1 project activities and for disseminating project results both on an institutional and a departmental level. The Erasmus Bureau is supported by its Erasmus Departmental and Academic Coordinators, ensuring high quality mobility activities with maximum impact on the participants.

Key Action 2 and Key action 3 activities

Taking part in the KA2 and KA3 cooperation projects helps the university to develop triangle partnerships by connecting higher education with research and business, in order to achieve excellence and regional growth. The policy of promoting cooperation with research institutions, business and high-tech centres across borders is expected to bring new types of international cooperation, stimulating innovation, creative attitude and robust interaction, with aiming to improve the graduates' inclusion in the labor market. The university will develop strategic partnerships with other universities, enterprises of all sizes, centres of innovation and research entities, to implement international projects that will stimulate innovation, good practices, concurrency and creativity in teaching and learning.

The UoM's Research Committee has undertaken the management of Erasmus KA2 and KA3 projects, and is responsible for the financial management of the Erasmus Programme in a transparent way.

For the upcoming Erasmus programming period focus will be given to join the European Universities initiative. In this direction, the UoM has launched several actions such as the establishment of a Committee and the engagement of its academic and administrative staff in identifying strong partnerships and managing the application procedures. As a result the University of Macedonia is already a member of a European Universities consortium that has submitted a proposal in the current European Universities call of the European Commission.

The UoM strongly supports the European Universities initiative and the involvement in the project is of high priority on its international agenda.

The modernization and internationalization strategy of the UoM is based on the high quality implementation of the Erasmus+ cooperation and the establishment of sustainable strategic partnerships. The UoM is dedicated to widely disseminate and implement good practices which show that the involvement of several EU funds can ensure a better utilization of resources, and projects can be prepared more securely. Successfully completed best practices are disseminated and communicated to all faculties members on open information days and through printed and e- publications.

Participation in the Erasmus Programme significantly contributes to the University's aspirations to fulfil its objectives for the upcoming academic years. The University will be involved in critical, open and innovative interaction with international actors, a key factor for its internationalization.

International cooperation offered through the Erasmus mobility and cooperation projects, is highly beneficial to the University in terms of learning, research, employment and administration. Curricula are developed with an international dimension to provide students with the skills required for working in a global economy. Students and staff develop a global outlook, intercultural understanding, and foreign language skills. The university will deliver graduates for knowledge-intensive jobs that will reinforce European capacity and sustain a European social model. The Erasmus programme strengthens the University's international profile through: Contact with institutions, enterprises, socio-economics sectors from different countries leading to the transfer and integration of good practices, which is crucial for upgrading the quality of its services. The enhanced quality will attract more international students and visiting lecturers who will contribute to a dynamic learning environment and add to the international character of its education.

Following the commencement of the new Erasmus Programme, the UoM aims to increase the number of its inter-institutional agreements, to broaden the involvement in KA2 and KA3 projects and consequently to expand the number of students and staff who benefit from these international links.

However, being international is not limited within the Europe and EU region. Attracting actors from outside the Programme in common actions and projects will strengthen the university's value and will empower the European higher education community, enhancing teaching and learning. Modernization of higher education requires the presence of world-wide actors; good results and practices should be spread over the continents in a world - reaching environment. As a result, the university is planning to enhance the International Credit Mobility through the participation in future calls of the new Erasmus Programme.

To achieve and monitor the above mentioned, certain annual quantitative targets have been set up and they are monitored by the Quality Assurance Unit on an annual basis. More specifically, main targets include:

- 10% annual increase of Inter institutional agreements for the next three years
- 2% annual increase in incoming and outgoing students for the next three years
- annual increase of invited academic staff
- increase of courses offered in English
- increased institutional involvement in KA2 and KA3 projects either as a Coordinator or as a partner.

The UoM fosters the above expansion, through transparent, easily accessible and detailed information to encourage the participation in the Erasmus programme but also to establish new partnerships. Following a recent review of its existing partnerships, new rules were established to ensure compatible academic studies, qualitative mobility and sustainable relationships.

On line surveys through the Mobility Tool, submitted by the participants at the end of their mobility period, are extensively used as an evaluation tool by the Erasmus Bureau. In addition to this, evaluation questionnaires will be soon designed by the Erasmus Bureau in order to gather additional feedback from all learners and staff and an improved understanding of their needs.

Furthermore, the participation of the UoM in the Erasmus programme is expected to:

- enhance the institution's quality and relevance. Teaching in an international context fosters academic experience, generates flexible and innovative educational instruments and approaches. In collaboration with partners, new study programmes are being developed.
- enable the knowledge triangle work: linking higher education, research and business for excellence and regional development
- improve the University's contribution and its overall reputation within the academic community
- improve financial aspects and funding management. Funding must be efficiently used and well-targeted.

The UoM's participation in the Erasmus Programme so far has generated a significant growth in terms of the number of students' application, academic partnerships, active involvement in KA2 projects and has exposed both students and staff to different models of education. The UoM sees the participation in the new Erasmus programme crucial to its vision of becoming the center of a cluster of universities that through strategic actions will contribute to cross-border cooperation and development.