

Erasmus Policy Statement of the University of Coimbra

The impact of internationalisation is everywhere apparent in the daily life of the University of Coimbra (UC). The scientific activities are developed in international, inter-personal and inter-institutional networks enhancing innovation and updating learning contents, project incubation, curriculum development, scientific research and training.

European Cooperation is the main priority of the UC's policy for internationalisation. Within ERASMUS it welcomes around 500 students annually and more than 400 UC students are given the opportunity to experience a period of study in Europe. It also participates in Comenius, Leonardo da Vinci, Tempus, Jean Monnet and other EU projects as is the case with TUNING. Great importance is also given to the integration of the European dimension in curricula, teaching activities, student mobility and R&D. On this basis it should be apparent that the main goal of our ERASMUS strategy is to increase UC's European Cooperation and enhance the quality of its activities. It maintains student mobility as the first priority looking forward to increasing the mobility of second and third cycle students.

Another priority is the expansion of the offer of joint degrees and joint curriculum developments. The UC is a partner in important European networks such as the Utrecht Network and the Coimbra Group both of which actively support teaching and non-teaching staff exchange. We will develop such mobility taking advantage of new opportunities. The participation in Intensive Programmes, Multilateral Projects and Thematic Networks will continue to be supported and encouraged. To support its ERASMUS Policy the UC will co-finance student and staff mobility and will give financial incentives to those willing to develop new joint programmes.

To encourage and support those activities the UC has a central International Relations Unit in permanent contact with the faculties. In this Unit there is a single office that provides information about the various opportunities available to the students who are contemplating adding an international dimension to their education and gives all necessary assistance to those who have already decided to undertake a period of study abroad or an internship in a European organisation. This Unit promotes all these activities with the ERASMUS label which is also visible in the Welcome Guide, in the ECTS information package and in its web page. Most of the activities have also a great impact in the media.

The EUC and the EPS will be published online and will be disseminated by the faculties. The UC has a special Office to provide information and technical support to disabled students and staff and students with economic needs receive financial support. There is a specialised office for counselling and psychological support to enhance the integration of all students. Students at the UC live in a relaxed and tolerant multicultural environment and all are treated equally regardless of gender and nationality.

The ECTS is the main tool to ensure high quality in academic mobility. For that purpose there is an internal network in which the coordinators in the different departments work directly with the institutional coordinator. They meet regularly to evaluate the process and to share good practices. The ECTS Information Package is online in Portuguese and in English and provides information to both incoming and outgoing students on a range

of relevant issues. The students prepare their Learning Agreement with their departmental coordinator before departure and the incoming students have to submit such an agreement in order to be accepted by the department at the UC.

The application process and the attribution of scholarships to outgoing students is also the responsibility of the International Unit. It also provides information about accommodation for incoming students and tries to find places at university residences. The student's association also assists their new colleagues in finding a room. This Unit has a complete file on each outgoing student starting with the application and finishing with the recognition of their courses on their return. It also has the complete files of the incoming students. The UC is fully committed to facilitating the social integration of incoming students and organises, in cooperation with its ERASMUS students association, highly successful social and cultural events. Apart from EILC, the UC organizes free of charge a large range of Portuguese Language Courses for incoming students such as the Intensive programmes at the beginning of each semester and annual courses at different levels. It also offers free courses in other European languages to their students to prepare their mobility. Staff mobility is also coordinated by the International Unit which provides all the necessary information and assistance as a means of encouraging the participation. For the same purpose the UC provides financial support both for student and staff mobility.

The employability of their students in a European context is an important issue for the UC. It has already organized partnerships with organizations and companies in Europe. These partnerships take into account the following criteria: to provide a better preparation for the future integration of students in the global world of employment; to insure the geographical diversity; the design of the working programme in order to complement the academic education in the labour market; the provision of the possibility of experiencing new forms of learning in a multicultural international context.

Most of those partners have already links with the departments which facilitates the negotiations in order to fit the student's profile to the main goals of each placement. The students are selected by the academic supervisor on the basis of their academic curriculum and motivation. The student supervisor discusses and approves the working plan before the departure of the student in order to recognise and integrate the internship in his/her curriculum. When the placement is not integrated in the curriculum it is registered in the Diploma Supplement. In both cases Europass Mobility is provided. A Cooperation Agreement is signed between the UC and the institution and specifies the duties and rights of all the involved parts in accordance with the Partnership Quality Commitment. The student also receives a linguistic and cultural preparation before or at the beginning of the placement. The academic and the partner supervisors monitor the work in progress and when necessary adjust the programme. The final evaluation of the internship begins in the host institution and a report is sent to the academic supervisor who takes it into account in the final evaluation. The Central International Unit is responsible for all the practical arrangements such as travel, insurance and support for accommodation and for the establishment of the cooperation agreements and LdV contracts of each trainee.