



Erasmus Policy Statement

Our Strategy

Conscious of its role as an institution dedicated to the learning and personal development of its members, especially students, the University of Alcalá fully commits to the vision set out by the European Commission for the creation of a European Education Area by 2025 in which learning, studying and carrying out research will not be hampered by borders.

Founded in 1499, the University of Alcalá was the world's first planned university city. It was the original model for the ideal urban community that the Spanish culture brought to the Americas and it also served as a model for universities in Europe and elsewhere. Faithful to its past, the University of Alcalá, whose historical precincts have been inscribed in the World Heritage List, is today a globally connected comprehensive medium-sized university with deep humanistic roots.

As an influential body in civil society, and due to the long-term role of its graduates in creating cohesive and tolerant communities, the University of Alcalá unreservedly upholds the Sustainable Development Goals as an urgent call not just to states and governments, but as one that must permeate our approach to international engagement as an educational institution.

This engagement also mirrors the necessities to respond to current concerns about the future in a quickly changing world, a world that offers new opportunities but that also brings uncertainty. In this respect, rapid technological changes present opportunities and challenges that not only require refocused efforts to improve learning environments and their outcomes, as well as the capacities of our university to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education, but also promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

The uncertainties do not stop there; they also cast a long shadow on Europe's place in the world. As laid down in the Communication "Building a stronger Europe", "education and culture heighten our awareness, understanding and appreciation of Europe's rich shared cultural heritage, history, experiences, convictions and values."

At the core of the strategy for internationalisation of the University of Alcalá lays the assumption that learning mobility fosters knowledge, skills, competences and experiences –including personal and social competences, and cultural awareness– that are crucial for participating actively in society and the labour market, as well as for promoting a European identity.

However, while regarding international learning as an important objective for all, the University of Alcalá is utterly conscious that only a relatively small number of students has been involved in student exchange and that this low participation rate could be related to both personal factors and organisational issues. Long-term exchange for large numbers of students in the average curriculum has often been difficult to arrange, due to logistics and shortage of financial means. Likewise, lack of complete academic recognition could also be another risk that deter many from participating. Moreover, when exchange is not an organic part of the curriculum, students and staff might feel no academic need for it.

The University of Alcalá, therefore, attaches a crucial importance to the development of a diversified institutional mobility policy that helps building an inclusive higher education system. This involves not only a robust approach to quality assurance, but also the exploration of combinations of existing mobility strategies based on credit mobility with more structured degree mobility models and the



development and implementation of flexible short mobility programmes –including blended methodologies, when applicable–, thus contributing to removing obstacles to the mobility.

This goal-oriented, flexible and scalable mobility policy will additionally hinge upon enhancing staff as a key to the internationalisation of the University of Alcalá. Through mobility schemes, lecturers and administrative staff have the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills, to be inspired with new ideas and, thus, to stimulate positive changes in Alcalá that will bring forth innovative teaching methods and will result in new joint modules, projects or collaborations.

At the same time, in order to forge the creative pathways that its internationalisation strategy should continue to have and in order to increase its local impact on the two regions where it is established, the University of Alcalá is also conscious of the fact that it will have to develop a key role in providing new flexible ways of learning and lifelong learning opportunities. Thus, our institution will help filling the gap between formal education and the fast-changing knowledge development and labour market needs.

Moreover, Alcalá duly recognises that it cannot do all this alone, but needs to make use of the multiplying energies generated by uniting with institutions that face similar challenges, complementing them –when possible– and advancing with them together. Therefore, this internationalisation strategy is underpinned by a commitment to the Erasmus+ Programme as a vehicle for enhancing such mobility and as an integral part to the realisation of the institutional plan and to the modernisation and aspirations of the University of Alcalá.

During the past years, Alcalá has been able to draw connections from one end of the Europe 2020 strategy to the other, juxtaposing seemingly unrelated initiatives, ideas and policies. Thus, it has collaborated in the design of relevant and efficient digital management of mobilities, it has favoured policies of internationalisation at home, and it has supported students and graduates' transition from education to the labour market, to give some examples, using Erasmus+ funding schemes both as a beacon and as a springboard to this end.

Far from being wrapped in self-complacency, the University of Alcalá is willing to invest on exponential internationalisation processes and to stimulate discussion on expanding institutional strategic partnerships through all the key actions envisaged within the Erasmus+ Programme, from learning mobility to cooperation with other organisations and institutions, through support to policy development and cooperation, and thus bringing together a new generation of Europeans.

Therefore, the Erasmus+ Programme gives the University of Alcalá a unique opportunity to harmonise internally the past efforts with European Union funded programmes, learning from peers in areas currently underdeveloped in our university, helping others in those that we have been able to gain traction, progressing together towards the creation of a truly European Education Area devoted to a student-centred learning and research, and being a beacon for our city and region.



Implementation of Erasmus+ Actions

The holistic approach to innovation in education that defines our institutional plan, modernisation agenda and local and international aspirations towards the vision set out by the European Commission for the creation of a European Education Area by 2025 requires the University of Alcalá to take part in all the key actions envisaged within the Erasmus Programme.

Firstly and foremost, the University of Alcalá will participate in the **Erasmus KA1 - Learning Mobility** as the stepping-stone for our university to cement its internationalisation strategy, having the same goals for students, lecturers and staff: to promote mobility, to help creating more flexible and better tailored mobility periods –including blended mobility and Collaborative Online International Learning schemes–, to reduce barriers in administrative processes, and to give new impetus to flexible and scalable innovative mobility models.

With this in mind, the University of Alcalá should work towards clear targets for our Faculties, Schools and Departments –including a gradual shift from quantity to quality in setting up inter-institutional agreements with other higher education institutions– and towards clear, straightforward, and responsive support systems and student services that are internationally focused.

Secondly, the University of Alcalá will take part in the different activities envisaged within the **Erasmus KA2 - Cooperation among Organizations and Institutions**, in which this higher education institution will carefully choose the right instrument according to a step-by-step approach in its long-term strategy, reflecting also its internal structure to that end, as well as taking into account geographical and subject area priorities and our institutional capacity to participate actively and implement the project outcomes. In particular,

1. The University of Alcalá will continue to play an active role in forging **Partnerships for Cooperation and Exchange of Practices** with institutions that face similar challenges and in jointly building a higher education which is more inclusive and accessible, more participatory, more forward-looking and more international. We will pay special attention to those initiatives that have as its core the introduction of more flexible mobile formats, a better support to language learning, to environmental and climate goals, and to active citizenship and ethics in lifelong learning, and innovative practices in a digital era.
2. At the more general level, the University of Alcalá took a keen interest in the **European Universities initiative** at an earlier stage, looking for the most appropriate place for its own internationalisation strategy in bottom-up networks of universities across the European Union that would enable students to combine studies internationally and to contribute to the international competitiveness of European universities. With this in mind, the University of Alcalá has been integrated in one of the networks that have applied for the second pilot of this initiative.
3. This is not the only **Partnership for Excellence** that the University of Alcalá will propose to create in its quest for academic excellence in Europe. We will also take decided action on building successful consortia for the creation of **Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees** as the result of our commitment to a diversified institutional mobility policy and to the international competitiveness of our institution.



4. Finally, the University of Alcalá will seek an active role in building up **Partnerships for Innovation** in which our academic community will explore transnational and result-driven activities in cooperation with other non-university stakeholders, thus cementing its influential role in civil society and aiming to foster innovation, entrepreneurship, creativity, employability, knowledge exchange and multidisciplinary teaching and learning.

Lastly, together with other initiatives in line with its internationalisation strategy –such as Jean Monnet activities–, the University of Alcalá sees its participation in the **Erasmus KA3 - Support to Policy Development and Cooperation** as the natural complement to the other initiatives and as an expression of our responsibility as a social actor that is willing to learn from peers in areas currently underdeveloped in our university, to help others in those that we have been able to gain traction, and to progress together towards the creation of a truly European Education Area, particularly in the areas of social inclusion and common values.



Impact in the University of Alcalá of her participation in the Erasmus+ Programme

The University of Alcalá is conscious that a purposeful employment of all the European Union funding schemes available may lead to a feasible internationalisation policy and that securing a long-term impact of the initiatives so funded is a mark of our responsibility as a social actor.

Though we often measure the impact of internationalisation from a rather insular and imperfect viewpoint, which comes down to simply counting the number of globally mobile students and staff, the University of Alcalá needs to go beyond the rhetoric of numbers and rigorously measure the impact on campus at the level of individuals as well.

Indeed, an underpinning factor in the continued enhancement of our university's core mission through internationalisation –and in the use of all the key actions envisaged within the Erasmus+ Programme as a vehicle to that end– is a commitment to developing more robust systems for measuring progress in key areas. This extends in particular to the measurement of international experiences and the measurement of the student experience. At the same time, the development of a diversified institutional mobility policy requires new approaches to the measurement of the student experience.

The **following key indicators** provide an overview of progress towards the aims and objectives that the University of Alcalá seeks to achieve over the next six years:

1. During the next Erasmus+ Programme, the University of Alcalá will increase its data management awareness and thus **improve the quality of (mobility-enabling) university partnerships, gradually shifting from quantity to quality**, from “partners” to “partnerships”, in the setting-up of inter-institutional agreements with other higher education institutions.
2. Though the target of 20 percent of our **student cohorts participating in mobility programmes** remains an aspiration for the European Education Area, the University of Alcalá understands that it should go beyond the rhetoric of numbers and rigorously measure the impact on campus at the level of individuals as well. Alcalá thus expressly admits that there is an identified need to lay down different targets in order **to dismantle existing obstacles to mobility**.
3. As part of both its strategy towards effectively tackling existing obstacles to mobility **and its efforts to develop a diversified institutional mobility policy**, the University of Alcalá will implement an **innovative short-term mobility scheme in the form of an international winter/summer school**, which, by meeting social inclusion as a priority, will contribute to progressively incorporate new joint and flexible curricula, as well as to enrich its international attractiveness.
4. The University of Alcalá is conscious that while individual circumstances might keep students from going abroad on mobility, several institutional and structural barriers stand in the way even for those willing to undertake studies or a traineeship in a different country. Likewise, it is aware of the fact that to enable students **to integrate mobility into their studies, mobility needs to be integrated into their curricula**. On this reading, Alcalá will gradually explore embedded mobility at all levels –including Bachelor, Master and Doctoral– as a desirable standard feature of its mobility schemes.
5. Upon the basis of **an integrated curriculum with embedded mobility paths**, the University of Alcalá will explore and support those cases in which there are opportunities in a multi-partner collaboration (common degrees).



6. Together with the **generation of a continuum of models for curriculum collaboration and mobility**, each being appropriate for the collaboration envisaged according to the opportunity analysis made by academics and programme managers, the University of Alcalá will gradually invest in those new teaching methodologies which better fit with models of blended mobility and collaborative online international learning models.
7. It will be equally important to use this broad base of infrastructure generated as part of the drive towards a **diversified institutional mobility policy**, to try to maximise staff engagement with this agenda by supporting new short-term teaching mobility schemes, and to support staff training opportunities abroad, including job-shadowing.
8. Next to a well-known record in managing mobilities within the past Erasmus+ Programme, the University of Alcalá has participated in or led several cooperation projects that have obtained the recognition of several national agencies. Other projects have become beacons in the design of the future Erasmus Programme. In the next six years, we will keep this rhythm of international cooperation, shifting, as indicated above, from quantity to quality, from “partners” to “partnerships”, including **Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees** in those fields that we will identify, together with our partners, as a result of the gradual implementation of our goal-oriented, flexible, diverse and scalable mobility policy.
9. As part of those efforts to improve the way our university utilises data, the University of Alcalá will request **internal impact assessments** as an integral part of its involvement in activities within Key Action 2 - Cooperation among Organizations and Institutions, not only helping to identify areas of improvement and to deliver better overall outcomes, but also helping to focus on how they affect individuals –particularly faculty and students– at different stages of their engagement.
10. As far as the implementation of the **Student Card Initiative** is concerned, the University of Alcalá will align its strategy towards implementing a fully digital mobility management with the roadmap drawn by the European Commission and will closely monitor the most recent developments to that effect.