

Erasmus Policy Statement, May 2020

1.1 Ostfalia participates in Key Action 131 Learning Mobility

Ostfalia has a strategic concept, which can be viewed on the university's website, and is constantly working to achieve the goals set out in it. In the current year 2020, this previous strategy concept will be revised. Internal consultations on this have begun and it is expected that all areas - teaching, research and development and organisational development - will be subjected to critical analysis. The expansion of cooperation in the EU with regard to student exchange and research and transfer will be an integral part of the new university strategy. Internationality will also be promoted at the university in the future. Internationality at Ostfalia means maintaining a worldwide network of partnerships that has been continuously expanded over the decades.

In addition, an internationalisation concept has existed for many years and is regularly updated. The concept includes that the university strives to expand its internationality by enabling its members to exchange experiences through cooperation with international universities and companies. In addition, students at Ostfalia are offered the opportunity to obtain a double qualification through international degrees. University members are supported in the preparation and implementation of a stay abroad and good study and working conditions are created for guests from abroad. An adequate infrastructure is provided and equal opportunities for men and women are taken into account in all internationalisation measures.

These concepts are complemented by close cooperation with the Lower Saxony Ministry of Science and Culture, which has set a focus on Europe and incorporates further suggestions and offers attractive calls for proposals. Internationalisation activities are also included in the university's target agreements with the Ministry. These are subject to regular monitoring.

The Erasmus programme has established itself over the years as an integral part of our internationalisation activities and the next step is to better communicate to university staff the opportunities Erasmus offers and the principles that go along with participation in the Erasmus programme. The Erasmus coordination will promote the implementation of content on the focal points of extended participation, digitalisation, inclusion and sustainability. The relevant bodies need to discuss what steps need to be taken to implement the new Erasmus Charter. Regular monitoring must accompany this process. The perspective is that implementation will have taken place by 2025. There is consensus within the university to work towards adhering to the principles of the Charter, to carry out the associated activities, to achieve the goals set and thus to implement European policy.

Goals for internationalisation and modernisation of the university: In the Erasmus programme we offer activities in Key Action 1, namely student mobility, lecturer mobility and staff mobility. Ostfalia's strategic concept provides for the following in this regard, in the areas of study and teaching supported by research and transfer and personnel management:

- the study programme is continuously developed further
- The study programmes are professionally qualifying, innovative, scientifically sound, application-oriented and attractive.
- Students are to be attracted. The counselling services for studies should reach the target group and make it easier to choose a course of study.
- Students are taken along: a successful course of study and graduation should be made possible by a conducive learning situation. Different biographies and diversity are taken into account. There is a culture of teaching and learning without prejudice.

- Internationality is promoted
- Human resource management is further developed
- Gender and diversity culture is strengthened.

Research and transfer are more closely interlinked with Erasmus, e.g. with regard to possible strategic partnerships and knowledge alliances. The university aims to increasingly realise international research and transfer projects in the Erasmus area. The basis for this can also be existing Erasmus cooperations.

Our aim is to provide our graduates with an additional qualification: The university's language centre offers 12 foreign languages, some on a certified basis. Applied foreign language skills and the experience of studying abroad increase employment opportunities after graduation.

Our goal is to contribute to the creation of a common European educational space: the Erasmus programme fits into our internationalisation strategy. As a participant in the Erasmus programme, Ostfalia can contribute to the creation of a common European education area. The EU Commission is developing initiatives to implement its vision of a European area. According to this vision, the resources of culture and education should be used in the interest of all EU countries to generate economic growth that secures jobs and social cohesion. This, in turn, is a prerequisite for education and the preservation of a European identity. In a common European education area, a stay abroad should be the norm, achievements across Europe should be recognised, the acquisition of two foreign languages should be standard and citizens' access to quality education should be guaranteed, whereby socio-economic background should not play a role. The Commission also intends to promote a sense of European identity and heritage.

As a participant in the Erasmus programme, we can implement these goals in a very concrete way at Ostfalia: We enable our students, lecturers and staff to acquire and develop foreign language and intercultural skills and promote international mobility. Our diverse international offerings are tailored to the respective faculty-specific needs and also prepare our students to work in international contexts. Beyond their subject-specific education, our graduates are prepared in the best possible way for the professional demands of working together across disciplines and countries. In this way, Ostfalia increases its attractiveness to its existing and future partners abroad and to prospective students. In this way, Ostfalia makes a significant contribution, among other things, within the framework of a continuous modernisation of the university and contributes to the 3rd Mission.

Erasmus Actions

The intention is to continue participation in the programme line Mobility of Individuals and there mobility with programme countries KA103: study visits, further education and training, guest lectureships. Internships are handled by a consortium. This programme line is implemented as follows

Measures to increase outgoing mobility: We regularly advertise and inform about the Erasmus programme with a focus on first-year students. So far, two-thirds of the 12 faculties have integrated mobility windows into the curricula of their undergraduate degree programmes and 5 have introduced simplified recognition regulations for work done abroad. We are strengthening the

curricular and extracurricular foreign language courses and aligning them with the professional needs of the faculties and strategically important cooperation abroad. The faculties are further developing the instrument of the International Summer School or International Week.

Measures to increase incoming mobility: We promote studying at Ostfalia to our partners. In this context, we provide information about the support services offered, such as arranging accommodation, orientation week, German courses. We publish an updated course catalogue online. The faculties expand the circle of their Erasmus partnerships.

Measures to increase lecturer mobility: Lecturers are regularly informed by the university coordinator via proactive programme management (invitation to information event) about the possibility of carrying out a mobility.

Measures to increase staff mobility: The Department of Human Resources is involved and promotes staff mobility via Erasmus. Once a semester, an information event takes place on this topic, which is organised by the responsible Erasmus administrator and published in the programme of continuing education opportunities at the university.

Through participation in the Erasmus programme

- our campus has become even more international. At the moment, Chinese incomings make up the largest group. European students are underrepresented. Therefore, we want to increase the mobility of incomings. If the majority of faculties offer an English-language programme, we expect more incoming students from Europe. Ideally, there should be 50 students per calendar year. This way, the proportion of Asian and European students would be balanced.
- Ostfalia students have the opportunity to study in metropolises such as Krakow, Budapest, Vienna or Lyon. At the moment, the faculties of Ostfalia have 66 Erasmus partnerships and send about 60 students per calendar year. Over the duration of the programme, we are aiming for an increase of 25%, which would be 15 mobilities in total and an increase of 2.1 mobilities per year. We strive for standardisation in the preparation of our outgoings through a compulsory event that points out intercultural aspects and includes general information and safety instructions. In addition, there is the possibility to support mobility through preparatory excursions.
- year after year, an ever-increasing number of administrative staff have been able to undertake an Erasmus mobility and thus gain an impression of the working conditions of their colleagues in other European countries. This should have a positive effect on the relationship with foreign students and lecturers at Ostfalia and lead to more understanding and sensitivity in dealing with foreign students and guests. The welcoming culture will be strengthened as a result. We would like to maintain the participation of staff mobility at the current level of 12 people.

The administration of the Students' Office and the International Relations Office is becoming increasingly modernised because administrative processes are being digitalised. This speeds up communication and improves service. We have initiated the OLA so that we will enter the implementation phase from next semester. The introduction of the digital European student card is being prepared. We are promoting the app for students. We advise our outgoings in advance and are also available as contact persons during the mobility. After the mobility, the credits earned abroad will be automatically and fully credited via the respective faculty administration.

We will inform the faculties in close coordination with the International Relations Office about the possibilities in the programme line KA 107 /Partnerships with Programme Countries and KA 2 /Strategic Partnerships, review proposals and support the application if the criteria are met. The EPS would then be expanded. Ideally, Ostfalia will have expanded its activities in the Erasmus programme by the end of the programme period.

2.1 Implementation of the new principles

The 12 faculties of Ostfalia (Deans, Examinations Office, International Relations Officers, Coordinators, Coordinators of the individual partnerships) receive the new ECHE and the following information: The faculties select students who have applied for an Erasmus mobility in a selection procedure. Great importance is attached to transparency. Transparency means that at least 2 faculty members make the selection and a protocol is drawn up. This application procedure is open to all students of the faculty who fulfil the required criteria according to the partnership agreement. In addition to academic performance, attention is paid to voluntary commitment, e.g. in the fire brigade, voluntary social year. Such commitment brings plus points.

Underrepresented groups (e.g. students with families, with physical disabilities) are not excluded but encouraged to apply. Ostfalia is a family-friendly university and offers childcare. People with disabilities study in rooms that are accessible to people with disabilities. Lifts and ramps are available. If required, special hearing aids can be provided during lectures. Make-up appointments are offered in case of communication problems. Learning coaches are available to all students. All participants in the Erasmus programme are given an Erasmus Charter for their information after nomination and before the mobility.

Incoming students are encouraged to participate in the orientation week, which lasts almost two weeks before the start of the semester. A meet and greet service is offered, as well as an intensive German course. Excursions to the surrounding area are regularly on the programme, as well as support with dealing with the authorities and enrolment. Ostfalia students accompany this group as "buddies" in order to make it easier for them to settle in at their place of study and to facilitate faster integration.

Incoming students are encouraged to participate in information events where they can report on their home universities. As representatives of our partner universities, they provide a direct and authentic insight into student life and can thus promote a stay abroad very well. They thus become part of the student community.

During their stay, incoming students have a contact person at the respective faculty and at the International Students' Office. A semester-long German course is offered on a regular basis. All information for incoming students is published in English on the homepage of the International Students' Office. The International Students' Office issues a Transcript of Records to incoming students in a timely manner.

About 20 years ago, Ostfalia was one of the first universities in Germany to introduce a digital student card. The Ostfalia Card has enabled students to access the university's infrastructure: Libraries and refectories can be used across the university in conjunction with the TU Braunschweig, TU Clausthal-Zellerfeld and HAWK Hildesheim. The semester ticket for public transport is also included and the Ostfalia Card gives exclusive access to buildings and rooms. The introduction of a European student card at Ostfalia can therefore initially only take place in parallel with the existing

system. When it is introduced, a reader can be made available. Due to the infrastructure, however, a large number of services can still be used via the Ostfalia ID card. In a first step, the Erasmus app will be made available for the winter semester 21/22, in September 2021. This app will be promoted by the faculties and the International Students' Office. Before the European student ID card is introduced, the technical requirements and interfaces will be examined. In addition, the data protection processes must be clarified. The university's computer centre is overseeing this process and is informed about the EU's digitalisation roadmap. There is a consensus that digitisation is a cross-cutting task for society and an important component of education systems. Digital technologies support the learning process and open up learning opportunities that must be accessible to all.

The university is currently working on a concept for sustainability and will place topics on it. Sustainability will therefore be an aspect of the future vision. In order to be able to take action immediately after accreditation, we will first concentrate on all nominated outgoings, who will be requested by us in writing to travel to the place of study in an environmentally friendly manner. This means that we recommend travelling to and from neighbouring countries by train and allowing more time for this. Students will still fly to countries further away. We draw their attention to the possibility of financial CO2 compensation. The advancing digitalisation is another contribution to sustainability. We work with the OLA tool and thus save resources. We advise our outgoings to get involved in voluntary work at their place of study, if possible. Ideally, each International Office compiles a list of local volunteer opportunities for incoming students across Europe. At Ostfalia, we will compile an overview of where you can volunteer at the university and in the surrounding area. This information will be made available to incoming students.

2.2 Participation in mobility measures

The 12 faculties of Ostfalia (deans, dean's offices, examination office, international officers, coordinators, coordinators of the individual partnerships) receive the new ECHE and the following information for their information: The body/person in charge of the recognition of the achievements made abroad commits to a complete and automatic recognition. The prerequisite is that the students have completed the courses agreed in the Learning Agreement, which are generally offered in a comparable degree programme, of comparable quality in a comparable study period abroad. A 1:1 examination is not required. Feedback will be sought on this in 2022 so that all 12 faculties have implemented this measure in 2025.

Since 2015, the Erasmus STT programme has been regulated by a guideline on staff mobility and has a fixed place in the human resources management of the institution: information events are regularly offered to staff members on the possibilities of further education and training at Erasmus partner universities. The heads of department are asked to give positive decisions on applications and to hold a feedback meeting after a staff mobility.

The faculties inform first-semester students and first-year students about the possibilities of a stay abroad in large events. In these events, the Erasmus programme is described and partner universities are named. Students who have already completed a stay abroad give first-hand accounts. At the faculties, professors specifically point out the possibility of Erasmus mobility to students in the higher semesters in their courses and give advice in consultation hours.

ERASMUS is described in detail on the ISO homepage. The International Students' Office ISO provides individual advice and addresses the special needs of students, one topic always being financial support. All students are regularly informed via the e-mail distribution list about calls for applications for a stay abroad.

In the future, a Europe Day is planned, which, in addition to the International Day, will be specifically focused on the Erasmus programme. An action is planned in cooperation with the Mensa. Visibility will also be created by setting up displays in the corridors and hanging posters.

The Executive Board takes note of the contents of the Charter 2020-2027 and the President commits by her signature that the goals of the Charter will be implemented at Ostfalia. Regular monitoring must accompany the successful process of implementation. Immediately after the charter has been awarded, i.e. presumably in the winter semester 2020/21, all deans, deans of studies and the international representatives will receive the text for their information together with the request for implementation. In the summer semester of 2021 - and from then on regularly once per semester - all those involved, usually the international representatives, will meet and discuss the status of the implementation of the charter at the university. This working group will successively deal with all aspects related to the implementation of the Erasmus programme. The international representatives of the faculties carry this process into the faculties. The Vice President for International Affairs reports to the Executive Board. The aim is to have all the principles of the Charter implemented by the beginning of the second half of this programme period, by 2025 at the latest.