

ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT

Western Norway University of Applied Sciences (HVL) is one of the largest higher education institutions in Norway and as such has high ambitions regarding internationalisation. Participation in the Erasmus programme is a key part of the strategic quality work at HVL. Through close cooperation with civil society and industry, HVL aims to contribute to regional, national and international knowledge development within its core areas of research: health and social sciences, engineering, business administration and teacher training.

Through the different Erasmus actions HVL expects to develop close ties between research and education and to inter alia develop innovative tools for learning and for research as well as to increase quality in education and arrangements for mobility for students and staff alike. Participation in these projects also up-skills HVL staff in term of digital competence, project management and intercultural communication skills. More specifically, participation in the Erasmus programme ties in with the institution's strategic objectives.

European Education Area

Spending time abroad, learning languages and developing competences for lifelong learning are valuable effects of participation in the Erasmus programme. A key strategic element at HVL is to educate candidates with state-of-the-art skills and relevant knowledge for today's global work environment thus HVL welcomes the initiatives developed to establish a European Education Area. Key policy objectives HVL intends to pursue include mutual recognition, the European Universities Initiative and the European Student Card Initiative. Details follow below and in the section on Erasmus actions HVL will take part in.

Internationalisation strategy

Increasing internationalisation in research, innovation and education is an integral part to fulfil HVL's development targets and strategic objectives. As part of the 2020-2023 HVL Strategy, the organisation aims for an increase in externally funded activities. It is our ambition that all faculties strategically participate in all Key Actions. This is underlined in HVL's Action Plan for Internationalisation for 2021-2023 (AP); where promoting internationalisation in education and research both at home and abroad is an explicit objective.

HVL intends for more students to be involved in higher education cooperation projects through Erasmus. The majority of HVL's study programmes include placements in local industry and organisations. Students are thus involved in practical and research-based education from bachelor- through to Ph.D.- level. Through the Erasmus programme, HVL aims to engage in extended cooperation with European enterprises and industry inter alia through traineeships, joint projects and theses done in cooperation with private actors. This will further connect the university, industry and society and create synergies.

To be an attractive partner in Erasmus projects HVL focuses on close cooperation with local industry and society. External experts are engaged to teach students at HVL, and many students conduct projects in cooperation with local industry as part of their theses. To ensure that HVL stays responsive to the needs of the labour market, HVL also conducts a biannual "Candidate Survey" where employers report on the quality and relevance of our candidates' qualifications.

The AP and faculty strategies emphasize how the organisation shall take advantage of international networks to identify opportunities for international cooperation and projects with regional business players. HVL plans to submit more high-quality EU project applications in collaboration with regional clusters and local business.

Increased mobility both in and out, and at all levels, is essential for HVL to remain an attractive international partner and to educate candidates with relevant competences. Increased mobility within Europe is in line with national priorities and should be an integrated part in research projects where possible.

Modernisation strategy

Participating in the development and implementation of EU-launched digital tools and procedures, such as simplification of staff- and student exchange procedures, is prioritised by HVL. A project dedicated to digitalising the Erasmus process for outgoing students is underway and a similar project for incoming students will be set up in autumn 2020. This will propel HVL to digital exchange arrangements for both incoming and outgoing students in line with HVL strategy objectives of sustainable development and innovation.

HVL also follows the national development in digitalisation of the student exchange process closely where Erasmus Without Papers (EWP) is indicated as a key part of the roadmap for student administrative systems. HVL participates in a working group, hosted by the Norwegian Directorate for ICT and Joint Services in Higher Education & Research (Unit), looking at the digitalisation needs of the sector, and which forms the basis of the development work Unit will undertake over the next few years.

Digitalisation of teaching and learning is high on the agenda at HVL. HVL has introduced digital examinations and classrooms are equipped with the latest technology. HVL has the most advanced simulation facilities in Norway where e.g. nursing students can train before doing placement in surgical wards. Through Erasmus HVL aims for more international cooperation that utilize our facilities and cooperation on developing this area further.

HVL uses the European Qualifications Framework to define the learning outcomes for all courses and EMREX for the exchange of results is integrated into the national database; Common Student System (FS). Participation in Erasmus+ projects serve to speed up digitalisation and modernisation processes by facilitating digital collaboration forms, data-sharing, and production of digital tools and outputs as an integrated part of many projects. HVL is currently looking at new ways of teaching and are phasing in Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL). Following the developments in the European Student Card Initiative, as outlined by Unit, will be important to ensure that the exchange of student information is seamless, and that personal data protection is paramount.

HVL's strategy centres around the institution's working life-oriented profile. Through education, research and development HVL aims to create new knowledge and expertise, anchored internationally and with solutions that work locally. We consider both Key Actions 1,2 and 3 to entail sub-programs of high relevance to HVL's strategic outlook and developmental targets. HVL plans to take part in the following activities:

KA1

Partnerships

The initiation of inter-institutional agreements (IIA) are first and foremost based on academic development objectives (R&D) although students' preferences are also considered. Agreements are signed on a faculty or institutional level and are registered in a national database. Overall HVL's geographical priority areas are in line with Norwegian national policy that focuses on the BRICS countries, Japan, Europe (particularly the Nordic Countries, France and Germany) and North America.

HVL endeavours high quality partnerships with synergies between staff- and student mobility, collaborative education projects and research collaboration. HVL exercises equal criteria for mutual student- and staff exchange as outlined in the Erasmus Handbook.

HVL has developed a quality assurance checklist for inter-institutional agreements to ensure that important academic and practical issues are considered before signing. The assessment criteria include academic interests, subject-area balance, geographical location and presence of relevant industry, possible synergies between research and educational cooperation, and prospects for future expansion of the collaboration. All agreements are reviewed annually by the departments with support from AFII and periodically more comprehensively by the study programmes. This process is anchored in the quality of education guidelines at HVL.

Mobility

Information about mobility opportunities is communicated through websites, calls for applications, open meetings, brochures, social media, fairs, emails, counselling and through online learning platforms.

For staff mobility, AFII is the main contact point for international partners. However, many visiting staff initiate contact through their colleagues at department level. As stated in the AP, HVL shall develop flexible schemes for international mobility for employees and develop an action plan for the recruitment and integration of international staff.

For student mobility, AFII works closely with study advisers within faculty administration and academic coordinators at department/programme level. An example is that AFII assists students filling out their Online Learning Agreements which is signed by the academic coordinator. The division of tasks is specified in institutional procedures.

Study advisers are the first point of contact for students looking to go on exchange. They are also responsible for the recognition process after the mobility. Together, the study advisor and the academic coordinator ensures close dialogue with the student both prior to and during the mobility period. The departments, through academic coordinators, are responsible for the quality assurance of the academic content of both student and staff mobilities while AFII is responsible for securing agreements, providing practical information and to assist students and staff in the Erasmus process before, during and after their stays.

A project aimed at digitalising the Erasmus process for students and green promotion of the programme are key elements of HVL's strategy to increase the number of outgoing students. By July 2020 going on exchange will no longer require any printed paper from HVL's side and

HVL will promote Erasmus+ in a digital fashion. The project to this end is further described under implementation of the new principles below.

KA1 contribution to achieving objectives of institutional Strategy

Participation in KA1 opens opportunities for students and staff alike to improve skills, enhance employability and gain cultural awareness. These are all vital elements to achieve HVL's strategic ambitions of educating candidates with relevant skills for the current professional life.

As part of HVL's strategy international campuses are an important element. Through various social and academic activities, integration of international students is strengthened. HVL offers a buddy programme for international students where Norwegian and international students participate in joint activities. Student assistants are responsible for such activities at all campuses, a function HVL continues to develop to enhance our response to local and international student's requirements.

A better balance between in- and outbound students is a target at HVL. The Erasmus-programme is key to achieve this as most of our incoming students come through the Erasmus programme. To further increase the number of incoming students HVL evaluates the course catalogue annually to make it relevant and attractive for international students. Another measure is to develop course packages to make it easier for the students to choose courses for one complete semester (30 ECTS). In addition, a project looking at how to simplify the application process for incoming students will be undertaken.

HVL offers joint courses and programmes with designated partner institutions within areas of international and institutional relevance. We have several joint programmes with other Norwegian universities, 5 English taught master's degrees of which one is a joint master in Maritime Operations (120 ECTS) with the University of Applied Sciences Emden/Leer in Germany. Although under development for some years already, HVL aims to formalise a dual master's degree in early childhood education with Beijing Normal University and East China Normal University during the next Erasmus period.

KA2 and KA3

Administrative support services at HVL is tailored to strengthen the scope, quality and synergies between projects in education, research and mobility. HVL's ambition for 2021-27 is to increase participation in Erasmus+ project applications for KA 2 and 3, both as partner and as coordinator, and has invested in administrative capacities to reach this end.

AFII promotes the two Key Actions across HVL and works on mobilisation for applications. Each project within KA2 and KA3 has a designated project manager at HVL who is responsible for HVL's input to the application with support from AFII. A dedicated project finance coordinator is also assigned the project. The project finance coordinator provides guidance to faculty staff and project managers regarding accounting, budget and financial project follow-up. They also provide technical support related to contracts and external/internal reporting.

A project to strategically plan the use KA 2 and KA3 to increase quality in education within priorities fields at HVL is expected to finish end of 2020. We expect both more and better

applications in 2021 and onwards as a result. Further internal processes to map new possibilities for strategically funded projects, particularly within KA3, will be initiated.

HVL has established an information- and training plan focused on the Erasmus+ programme targeting both staff and leadership. This includes increased technical support and a training scheme for project coordinators and leaders in the organisation.

HVL expects staff to use the Erasmus+ programme to focus on building strong partnerships with selected partners and establish a long-term portfolio of projects from the Erasmus programme. Some research groups have traditionally been particularly active, working strategically to secure external funding from both Erasmus+ and alternative sources and utilising them in a holistic manner.

HVL has seen an increase in submitted applications for KA2 from 6 applications in 2017 to 14 applications in 2020 with a gradual yearly increase. The participation in granted projects has increased from 3 to 12 over the same period.

In 2020, HVL applied for one of the flagship initiatives of the EU's ambitions to build a European Education Area, European Universities within sustainable mobility. Participating in this EU action is an ambition for HVL. For HVL, Erasmus Mundus Joint Master initiatives serves as a natural part of preparations for participation in the European Universities initiative and is something HVL will look closer at in this programme period. Activities like joint programmes and courses, mobility of staff and students are fields that suit HVL's strategy well. If the 2020 application prove unsuccessful, we will look at new opportunities and apply again.

HVL sent its first applications for KA3 – Support for Policy Reform in 2020. Experience with KA3 calls enables HVL to work strategically in building knowledge and identify partners for future KA3 applications within fields that are strategically important, and where we see a need to change or enhance policies or structural frameworks.

[KA2 and KA3 contribution to achieving objectives of institutional Strategy](#)

Increased participation in KA2 and KA3, strategically funded projects of high quality, supports HVL's existing strategies and development plans. Creating synergies between the projects is key to increase education quality in terms of research-based education, digitalisation and innovative, transdisciplinary teaching approaches.

For HVL, participation in KA2 is a means to improve education- and training systems at home and in cooperation with partner institutions. To meet that end, the Key Action 2 offer possibilities to co-create courses and curricula, establish joint degrees, develop internship opportunities and share good practices within the networks.

Cooperating with European and international partners through the Erasmus+ programme is an asset for HVL. HVL's ambition is to attain an international position and work to achieve education and research and development activities of high international quality. Erasmus+ increases the scope for possible spill- over actions and provides access to expertise and capacities beyond Norway. Participation in KA 2 actions also add value for the individual participant through cultural exposure and first-hand experience in methods for

interdisciplinary collaboration. Following the lines of the AP, international experience is emphasized when recruiting academic staff.

The KA3 programme offers opportunities for HVL to work with system change together with regional and international partners to the best for our students, end users and society as a whole. HVL plays an important part in shaping policies and structures for education and training as an institution with a clear professional and working life-oriented profile. HVL operate in close collaboration with other important societal actors, municipalities, county councils, schools, hospitals, regional clusters, to mention but a few.

As part of strengthening the international profile at HVL, we are looking at participating in relevant international rankings which fits HVL's strategic objectives. Utilising Erasmus+ to build capacity for participation is an opportunity we will explore.

Envisaged impact of participation in the Erasmus+ Programme

Participation in the Erasmus+ Programme will have a positive impact on multiple dimensions of HVL as an institution. Examples include increased quality and digitalisation of education, high quality partnerships, increased institutional capacity and individual competence, common values and civic engagement, stronger synergies between education, innovation and research and more.

Mobility

The national target is that 3000 Norwegian students participate in Erasmus+ by 2020. Despite improved figures over the past years, HVL is currently below the national average of student participation in activities in Erasmus KA1. In line with national policy on prioritizing the Erasmus+ programme and the feedback from the Ministry of Education that HVL has yet to reach its peak on student mobility, HVL has high ambitions for improving its participation in Erasmus+. The AP builds on this and Erasmus is promoted as the preferred programme for student mobility in all channels. A dedicated project looking at promotion and further mobilising initiatives are to be planned and carried out by the individual faculties.

HVL aims for 20 % of its students to complete a period of study or training abroad by 2021. National authorities have signalled that the sector might see a target of 50 % in the future. HVL welcomes this ambition. Most of the increase HVL will see in student mobility should be in Erasmus All study programmes have mobility opportunities within the curricula and exchange agreements with international partners with relevant study programmes for their students. All study programmes are expected to offer mobility opportunities in Europe.

To increase internationalisation at home and to achieve a greater balance in incoming and outgoing students more incoming students is a goal. All study programmes should offer at least 30 ECTS English taught courses by 2021 to increase the number of international students in our study programmes.

Participation in Erasmus+ fosters personal growth leading to inter alia increased employability and the acquisition or enhancement of social and intercultural competences. Erasmus student and staff mobility, with its core focus on transnational academic cooperation and skills

development, is thus a key element in the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and jobs.

Participation in KA2 and KA3

HVL targets 12 grants from EU-projects per academic FTE by 2025. This places HVL at the top end of comparable institutions in Norway. To reach this target increased international publication and -cooperation are focus points in addition to increasing employees' competence writing EU applications.

By participating in KA2 and KA3 projects, HVL hopes to harness the administrative capacities for coordination of large-scale project at all levels of the organization as well as sharpening the strategical planning mechanisms necessary to utilize the Erasmus+ programme and other externally funded education- and research programmes. This includes increased cooperation and competition between participating institutions, and improvements in the quality of education and research. Other benefits include new degrees and courses, development of digital tools, establishing new courses in English, improved mobility windows and best practice routines. Participation in projects.

HVL aims to position itself as a clear voice in promotion and in policy dialogues with public authorities on matters within HVL's key academic portfolio. Participating in KA3 project stimulates the process of creating good mechanisms for advocacy and civic engagement. HVL is therefore looking at formulating a plan for how to ensure sustainable impact of those project we choose to participate in, by the end of 2027.

Attractiveness to prospective students and staff

HVL expects participation in the Erasmus programme to increase its attractiveness to prospective staff and students in terms of indicators such as attractiveness and recruitment of staff and students, integration of international staff and employability for graduates.

Participating in Erasmus+ programmes provide a comprehensive toolkit for HVL to be an attractive institution for prospective students and uphold 70 % attainment for admitted students to our programmes. Participation in the Erasmus programme will have an overall impact on several aspects of attractiveness in terms of good learning environment and an active student democracy.

Quality and relevance in education is a constant priority for HVL. HVL believes that offering exchange opportunities through Erasmus will contribute to recruiting and attaining students since social and intercultural competences are regarded as increasingly relevant attributes of competitive labour market.

Organisational culture and human resources

HVL regards individual soft skills as paramount for the substantive development of a modern higher education institution. Our human resources are the catalyst to achieve more quantitative goals for the organisation. Cross-cultural exposure through participation in the Erasmus programme develop soft skills open-mindedness, flexibility, cross-cultural adaptability, appreciation of diversity and language skills. These competences are important to strengthen the entrepreneurial spirit and civic engagement of staff and students.

HVL is confident that increased participation in the Erasmus programme will pave way for a more bilingual environment at HVL, both in and outside the classroom. HVL expects to see improved language skills, and international networking among staff and students through international project participation, and by working in an increasingly international environment at home.