

ERASMUS HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY STATEMENT 2021-2027

1. Strategy

Active networking on both an international and national scale is essential in order to meet growing global and local demands. In an effort to competitively attract students and academics, raising the JKU's international visibility as well as supporting an international focus on the education and research process is critical. When it comes to a more international aspect in degree programmes and in education, the focus is on so-called "*internationalization at home*", meaning an effort to increase student and employee mobility. In this regard, the JKU considers active participation in **Key Action 1** to be a crucial and pivotal element. Taking part in **Key Actions 2 and 3** is aimed primarily at increasing international collaboration efforts and enhancing the JKU's attractiveness and visibility. Another important aspect includes (further) developing contemporary curricula as well as innovative educational and learning methods.

In this regard, actively taking part the Erasmus programme not only contributes significantly to the JKU's strategy of modernization and internationalization in an institutional sense, but also in an effort to fulfill its outlined responsibilities and objectives.

While the JKU is strongly rooted in the region, at the same time, the university has an internationally-oriented direction aimed consistently toward becoming a top European university. Today, the JKU is a broadly positioned university with core skills and expertise in the fields of STEM subject areas, social and economic sciences, education, law and, more recently, medicine. Based on the university's core values, visionary outlook, and interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary direction, the JKU is predestined to take on the academic and scientific challenges of our time as well as transform processes in a profound way. Additional areas include digitization, transforming sustainability, diversity, and inclusion.

The JKU's strategy includes priorities as outlined in the European Renewal Agenda for Higher Education as well as goals as part of the European Education Area. Examples to implement political guidelines is illustrated as follows:

- The JKU plays a pivotal role in local and regional development. As an institution of education and research, the JKU not only enjoys a high level of trust in the region, the university is considered a key and essential driver of innovation in support of economic advancement and progress for both the city and the state.
- The JKU is committed to **educating highly qualified students** who are then knowledgeable and skilled, able to make significant contributions to efforts designed to meet the challenges of our time. In regard to doctorate degree programmes, in the near future, the option of a **structured doctorate degree programme** will provide a majority of doctoral candidates with an opportunity to complete a more structured programme. The idea is to increase the overall quality of educational programmes, thereby ensuring a high level of quality in academia and science and supporting prospective scientific career planning right from the start.
- The JKU **works closely together** with countless **institutions, research facilities, and companies** at a local, state, national, and international level. The university is committed to the European area of education and **supports international student mobility and well as**

university employee and researcher mobility by providing financial aid and organizational support.

- The JKU **supports public dialogue in regard to social issues**. Examples include the Kepler Salon, the "Kepler Tribune - *Wissen in Gesellschaft*" (a periodical published by the JKU), a special Kepler Tribune issue for children called the "*Kepler Tribünchen*", the lecture series "Scientists for Future", and the "Monday Lectures Series".
- The JKU supports cultural change in the interest of **social inclusion, gender equality and diversity**. In an effort to uphold socio-political responsibility, the JKU stresses the importance to social objectives. The JKU strives to support the advancement of women, offer gender-specific research topics and, based on the latter, gender-specific education and courses, programmes, and policies to support work-life balance for both students and employees, provide special support for those with disabilities, maintain contact with alumni, and, as part of supporting *Responsible Science*, take an ongoing stand on issues and problems of public interest.
- Alongside education and research, a third pillar at the JKU is the university's "Third Mission" and a commitment to uphold open dialogue aimed at further expanding a recently created, productive network between the university, society and the region.
- The JKU actively **supports social involvement**, most recently by allowing students to earn ECTS credits for their volunteer and community work.

2. Implementing Planned Erasmus Actions

The JKU will take part in Key Action 1 of the Erasmus programme for the entire duration of the programme and will also strive to actively take part in the Key Actions 2 and 3 projects.

As with previous programmes, the JKU's International Office will be responsible for **implementing university mobility (Key Action 1)**. Uniform, transparent processes and criteria for all forms of mobility as well as the many years of experience and high level of expertise of staff at the International Office ensure professional implementation according to the programme guidelines and objectives. Special attention will be paid to social inclusion, gender equality, and diversity.

In order to actively take part in **Key Actions 2 and 3** projects and depending on the type of partnership, the project team and those responsible will be appointed by the Rectorate.

Taking part in the Erasmus programme will play a key role in supporting internationalization efforts at the JKU as well as the university's efforts to attain the outlined objectives, particularly in the following areas:

- **Increasing Student and Employee Mobility:**
International mobility supports the development of international understanding and intercultural skills as well as social skills, improved language skills, and provides an opportunity to build an international network. Mobility is also a key component in "internationalization at home".
- **International Aspects in the Curricula:**
By increasing the number of English-language degree programmes offered at the university (particularly in the area of graduate degree programmes), we can facilitate mobility as well as

introduce or strengthen joint/double degree programmes. The European education area could play an important role in this area by mutually recognizing academic degrees earned abroad.

■ **Continual Education and Professional Development:**

In addition to continual education in specified subject areas, support in the area of continual education and professional development for academic employees (i.e. in the area of didactics in higher education, etc.), as well as for administrative staff (to, for example, improve proficiency in English) will continue to be provided. In addition, courses designed to provide JKU employees with more cultural awareness and understanding would be another important step toward establishing a more international campus.

■ **Strengthening and Supporting International Positioning and Visibility:**

Academic, scientists and scholars at the JKU are a part of the global scientific community. International mobility and collaboration efforts play a key role in increasing the university's profile and visibility as well as the university's international positioning. The JKU offers students and employees a range of incentives designed to support interaction as well as provide facilities to hold international conferences and symposia.

■ **Strengthening International Cooperation and Increasing the JKU's Appeal:**

International cooperation strengthens and boosts excellence and innovation, thereby contributing to the university's appeal and overall attractiveness, whether it be in the areas of education, research, and administration.

3. Planned Impact through Active Participation in the Erasmus Programme

As previously mentioned, actively taking part in the Erasmus programme will advance the JKU's internationalization efforts as well as help to successfully achieve set targets. The international exchange will significantly boost and contribute to outstanding accomplishments by our academics, scientists and students which, in turn, will benefit economic development for the entire region. The effects of taking part in the programme will be examined on the basis of key qualitative and quantitative figures and analyses.

The JKU strives to offer the highest quality in education, research, and administrative services. We also apply this quality standard to support mobility. Quality implementation is evaluated on an ongoing basis and, if necessary, corresponding adjustments are made.

The timetable to take part in Key Action 1 (University Mobility) includes taking part in both the Portfolio University Mobility and the International University Mobility over the entire duration, aiming to seamlessly follow up on activities as outlined in KA103 and KA107 of the Erasmus+ programme.

We seek to actively participate in Key Actions 2 and 3 projects and emphasize project sustainability in particular. However, the timetable depends on several variables (including the timing for the Call for Proposals, terms and conditions, human resource and financial resources, project approval).

4. Implementing New Guidelines

Against a backdrop in which society today faces major challenges, universities have a destined responsibility to not only contribute in terms of research and knowledge transfer and support activities considered part of "responsible science", but also to be responsible for implementing diversity-oriented

human resources policies as well as showing a high level of commitment as a role model to other organizations and companies.

The JKU's visionary strategy and plans for advancement include supporting high-quality policies in human resource management as a key and core value-adding factor, reflected particularly by a clear commitment to gender and diversity management as part of comprehensive cross-cutting issues. In addition to supporting equal opportunity and gender equality policies, one of the JKU's fundamental goals includes implementing ways to sustainably improve a high level of opportunity under social equality policies. Due to the large number of tasks and target groups, accomplishing these goals requires evaluating and selecting focal points both in regard to individual diversity dimensions as well as with regard to organizational fields of action. The grounds are provided in the annual analysis as outlined in the Gender & Diversity Report and forms the basis to further develop measures.

In order to uphold the university's socio-political responsibility (meaning actively practicing sustainability and responsible science), the JKU aims to, among other things, support the advancement of women, provide gender-based education, facilitate work-life balance for students and employees, and provide special support to those with disabilities. This also pertains to taking part in the Erasmus programme.

The university's central goals include attaining gender equality and diversity at the university and in turn, providing equal opportunities and opportunities for professional development and advancement to all university employees as well as balanced gender relations to all university positions and committees. Outlined plans to accomplish these goals include activities to plan, implement, and put gender mainstreaming and diversity measures or strategies into action.

In order to ensure unrestricted and equal access to activities in the Erasmus programme, uniform criteria and requirements have been defined. Likewise, a uniform online application procedure - available in both German or English - has been introduced to ensure compliance with outlined principles and, at the same time, encourage disadvantaged participants to become more involved.

The Johannes Kepler University is reviewing a plan to revise its student ID card (KeplerCard) by prioritizing aspects in regard to an e-ID and student ID, which would be available on cell phones. In 2020, a working group was established to take all measures into consideration and ensure compliance with national initiatives pertaining to an e-ID and the European Student ID initiative. The roll-out is scheduled for 2023.

The student Erasmus+ mobile app will make it easier for students to organize their Erasmus programme. The JKU intends to encourage use of the app as soon as it is ready for use.

5. Implementing and Supporting Environmentally-Friendly Practices for all Erasmus+ Programme Activities

For decades, the JKU was one of Europe's first universities to conduct research and hold university courses in the field of "*Environmental Protection - Sustainability - Circular Economy - Energy*". The JKU created the cross-faculty focus "*Sustainable Development: Responsible Technologies and Management*" to not only encourage and foster sustainability at the JKU, but to also pool activities and ensure – as well as expand on - sustainability in research and in the classroom. The JKU now offers academic degree programmes across all faculties that include courses in sustainability.

When it comes to the university's infrastructure, the JKU also aims to support policies in energy-efficiency. The JKU only purchases electricity generated by renewable energy sources. New buildings include ecologically sustainable and energy-saving designs and, wherever possible, photovoltaic systems have been mounted on the rooftops.

Digitalizing administrative processes to assist with Erasmus activities is largely complete and includes all required steps, ranging from the application procedure to studying abroad, applying for financial aid and academic credit transfer as well as signing up for courses, submitting a final report, and – in regard to staff mobility – applying for authorized company travel on behalf of the JKU as well as all invoices, etc.

In an effort to help reduce CO₂ emissions, when traveling on behalf of the JKU, employees and students traveling less than 1000 kms are encouraged to avoid air travel and take train.

6. Supporting Volunteer Services and Actively Involving Incoming International Students in Austrian and Actively Preparing Outgoing Students for Study Abroad Programmes

The JKU recognizes student volunteer work by allowing students to earn up to 5 ECTS credits to count toward fulfilling autonomous coursework requirements. At the moment, this is limited to volunteer services as a paramedic, firefighter, or activities in conjunction with COVID-19 in the interest of public safety, health care, or guaranteeing supplies. New forms of volunteer work are being explored.

7. Ensuring Full and Automatic Credit Transfer as Outlined in Performance Agreements during the Study Abroad Period

The majority of curricula contains options to substitute courses and subjects. At the request of the student, courses or subjects of up to 18 ECTS credits can be substituted, provided they are in line with the qualification profile. This is an important asset, particularly when it comes to providing flexibility in order to support mobility. Some curricula contain elective requirements and corresponding subject area courses can count as part of the curricula. In regard to a majority of curricula, when combined with autonomous coursework requirements (anchored in the curricula) there is an option to recognize electives, resulting in a mobility window of 30 ECTS credits. This enables students to complete a semester abroad without getting behind in their studies.

Before students study abroad, the courses these students plan to take are checked by means of submitting an application for credit transfer. Once students successfully pass these courses, they automatically receive academic credit after submitting a *transcript of records*. In regard to credit transfer, students will receive academic credit regardless of whether or not the ECTS credits were earned during the period abroad or were earned through online courses or hybrid courses.

8. Support Services, Financial Aid, and Approval for University Staff Mobility

Mobility via an Erasmus programme is carried out at the JKU as a company business trip and in this regard, subject to remuneration and reimbursement. This policy ensures that the employee has the best financial and insurance coverage possible during his/her stay; comprehensive travel insurance is included.

Administrative processing to support staff mobility as part of an Erasmus programme is centrally conducted at the International Office. Applications can be submitted on an ongoing basis, giving employees a fair amount of flexibility when it comes to planning. By request, the International Office can assist employees in finding a suitable host institution and/or making initial contact. If language preparation is required, continual education courses can be provided by the Dept. of Human Resource Development.

Institutes and departments also provide significant support for Erasmus programmes, particularly in regard to credit transfer.

In the area of incoming staff mobility, the JKU regularly addresses inquiries sent by employees at institutions located outside of Austria. The International Office is responsible for establishing contact with corresponding institutes/departments and, if necessary, provides support to organize the exchange. Incoming staff is primarily supervised and supported on an individual basis by the receiving institutes/departments.

9. Promoting Activities Supported by the Programme

It is very important to the JKU to communicate opportunities to take part in an Erasmus programme in the best way possible. Students can access information that is available on the homepage, on social media, during regularly scheduled information sessions, and by talking one-on-one with a staff member. Information for employees is available in the JKU's intranet (JKU Help) system, included in the employee newsletter and also - in regard to staff mobility - via communication channels by the JKU Department of Human Resource Development.

10. Ensuring the Communication and Application of Charter Principles by University Employees at all Levels.

The Charter principles are communicated using internal JKU communication channels (particularly the employee newsletter, the JKU homepage, JKU intranet). As the Charter principles are consistent with those at the JKU, application by university employees at all levels can be guaranteed.