

ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT (EPS)

Erasmus Policy statement: strategy

The Universitat de Girona is a territorial university, connected with the social, economic and cultural agents of the Girona region and its area of influence. Located on the border with France, this region has historically been the gateway to the Iberian Peninsula, therefore a region with a clear European vocation and an extensive track record in cross-border projects. For this reason, the mission of the Universitat de Girona (UdG) includes both the relationship with its closest territory and the openness to the European and international system. UdG has over 15,000 students. Participating in all the Erasmus programme actions will positively impact the whole UdG student body and community.

This link with the European project is set out in the statutes of the UdG, which state that “it is the firm will of the University to promote student mobility in the European higher education area.” The affiliation of the UdG in the EHEA implies, de facto, its commitment to a University open to Europe and the world. The trajectory of the UdG in European politics is implemented by an extensive map of agreements with European higher education institutions (KA103) and throughout the world, with a significant number of projects with non-associated countries (KA107 program), as well as Erasmus + cooperation projects (KA2 and KA3).

The UdG has approved a strategic plan with a 2030 horizon, based on the sum of intelligences (natural + collective + artificial). This orientation of the University is in line with some of the challenges posed by the European Union for the next decade, especially in the field of higher education such as: the transversal vision and the connection between disciplines, the relationship between humanism, social sciences and technology, the incorporation of artificial intelligence as a tool at the service of scientific and humanistic progress, flexibility and adaptability in a changing environment. The UdG2030 project also involves a commitment to innovation in teaching and learning models. Therefore, the strategic plan of the Universitat de Girona with the horizon 2030 coincides with the general approaches on innovation in higher education that has been proposed in the European framework.

Another commitment made by the Universitat de Girona is the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). According to the THE ranking, the UdG ranks 13th in education (SDG4), 24th in water and sanitation management (SDG6) and 49th in sustainable cities and communities (SDG11). Overall, the University is in group 101-200 in terms of Sustainable Development Goals. The UdG wants to promote the Erasmus + (KA2) cooperation projects, because we know that the students who have taken part show a stronger commitment and vision for the future in relation to environment, climate change, energy and resources, and entrepreneurship, all them prominent issues in the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs.

The digital transformation of Erasmus (Erasmus Without Papers) will also be a definite impetus for the implementation of digital administration in general. Digitization is a cultural challenge and although we are also immersed in it at a local and national level, and like the implementation of ECTS, the internationalization processes and demands will impuls and promote its expansion and normalization.

Erasmus Policy statement: actions

On February 7, 2020, the Governing Council of the Universitat de Girona approved the Internationalization Strategy of the Universitat de Girona 2020-2025.

It aims to increase significantly the internationalization of the University in an integral way: student mobility, academic and administrative staff, attraction of international students, internationalization of curricula, short mobilities, international internships, global vision in cooperation strategies, integration of digital tools on a global scale. All this is specified in the following goals:

1. UdG aims to increase student mobility above the minimum threshold set by the European Union. It also seeks a significant increase in the mobility of academic and administrative staff.
2. UdG must increase its capacity to attract international students, not only in master and doctorate programmes, but also at bachelor level.
3. International internships must have a significant weight in the total number of internships offered, both curricular and extracurricular.
4. UdG aims to define strategies for the development of short stays/mobilities (study abroad, summer schools, faculty led) both incoming and outgoing.
5. UdG sets as a priority the development of a wide range of proposals related to 'Internationalization at Home' (IaH), so that all UdG students have the opportunity to participate in an internationalization experience.
6. UdG undertakes the challenge of integrating the global dimension into the contents, procedures and skills in the University's educational offer. In this sense, new forms of curricular internationalization will be explored including digital formats.
7. Social engagement activities should include, whenever possible, an international orientation.

Given the characteristics of the Erasmus Program, it is clear that participating in it generates a key impact on mobility (goals 1 and 3) through KA1 actions and that participation in KA2 and KA3 can clearly contribute to goals 6 and 7.

In addition, the academic novelty represented by blended mobility opens a very interesting door in relation to goals 1 and 4. The UdG has a long experience in projects that are perfectly adapted to the profile of this new modality of mobility (e.g. 'Euroweek in the framework of the PRIME network) and should be able to replicate it in many (if not all) of the faculties.

The objectives expressed in goal 2 can be achieved through the European Universities initiative (UdG has applied twice), and the Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters Degrees (UdG has participated in 3 projects one of which as coordinator. This last one has actually become one of the most successful Erasmus Mundus Projects: Erasmus Mundus in Tourism Management).

The new action: short term physical mobility for doctoral candidates, will have an impact on goals 1, 2 and 4. The KA2 actions will help to reach goals 5, 6 and 7 (in the 2019-2020 academic year the UdG has 13 KA2 projects in progress and has applied for 9 more).

The internationalization strategy was defined and approved before the COVID pandemic. This pandemic has affected mobility during the second half of the 2019-2020 academic year and is likely to affect the 2020-2021 academic year as well. Therefore, the strategic objectives will have to be adapted to the impacts of COVID19 in the short, medium and long term. In this sense, in

the coming years it will be necessary to emphasize the actions related to Internationalization at Home (IaH) and blended mobility initiatives.

Erasmus Policy statement: impact

The strategic goals of the Internationalization Strategy described above are accompanied by the following set of quantitative indicators:

1. Mobility

1.1. Reach 7% of students participating in mobility programmes, both incoming and outgoing (UdG is currently below 3%).

1.2. Each faculty should reach a minimum of 5% student mobility in terms of outgoing.

1.3. At UdG as a whole, at least 30% of graduates should participate in a mobility experience.

2. International students

2.1. Reaching at least 3% of international undergraduate students. (Presently close to non-existent).

2.2. Have at least 33% international master's degree students. (At the moment, it's 11%).

2.3. The percentage of international students in doctoral programs should be over 50%. (Currently 32%).

3. Academic staff mobility

3.1. At least 25% of FTE should have completed a mobility experience.

3.2. Each faculty should have achieved a minimum of 20% mobility of FTE academics in terms of outgoings.

4. Administrative staff mobility

4.1. At least 5% of the UdG's administrative staff should participate in a mobility.

4.2. During the period 2020 - 2025, the UdG should host administrative staff from other international universities equivalent to the number of UdG administrative mobility's in international universities (same outgoing as incoming).

5. International internships

5.1. At least 10% of curricular and extracurricular internships should be international.

6. Community engagement initiatives

6.1. At least 10% of the community engagement activities carried out by students, the administrative and academic staff should take place outside Catalonia.

7. Short mobility

7.1. The number of incoming students who participate in short mobility programmes (i.e. study abroad, summer school, faculty led) should be equivalent to 5% of enrolled students. (Meaning about 2000 participants).

7.2. Each faculty should have at least one short mobility programme for its students.

8. Curricular internationalization

8.1. 5% courses should have a global orientation and are part of UdG's global course offer catalogue.

8.2. At least 3 UdG programmes should receive the additional dimension of internationalization certificate granted by the Catalan University Quality Agency (AQU-Catalunya).

9. RECI Recognition (Student with International Curriculum Recognition - a creation of the UdG)

9.1. At least 33% of UdG students should achieve all the requirements to receive this recognition. (In total numbers, approximately 5000).

9.2. Over 20% of students per faculty will achieve RECI recognition. UdG's internationalization strategy sets benchmarks for 2025. One of the actions foreseen in the plan is the annual monitoring of results and the identification of possible mismatches between forecasts and results, aiming to generate reactions and solutions. However, as mentioned before, the COVID19 pandemic will force UdG to redefine the calendar and postpone the results to a 2025 + 2 horizon.

2. Implementation of the fundamental principles

2.1. Implementation of the new principles

Already from its creation in 1991, the Universitat de Girona, in the preamble of its Statutes (modified, ratified and approved for the last time in 2011) expresses its commitment to denounce all inequalities and injustices. The Statues also proclaims the respect for environmental values, condemns any form of physical or moral aggression against people, cultures or human rights and exposes the University's will to make solidarity and tolerance prevail over anything.

The Social Commitment Unit (or community engagement unit), created in 2017, is the materialization of this commitment. It is a unit at the service of the entire university community, which includes different initiatives generated over the years at UdG such as: gender equality, sustainability, cooperation, inclusion, voluntary work and education for over 50s.

This unit, together with the psychological care service, which is linked to the Office of Occupational Health and the University Ombudsman, are the tools that guarantee that the Universitat de Girona preserves the principles of non-discrimination, transparency and inclusion with which, of course, the International Relations Office, in charge of international relations and mobility, fully aligns.

European Student Card Initiative and Erasmus+ mobile App

The European Student Card is, in a way, part of the Erasmus Without Paper initiative. The nature of this Student card is basically to give a European dimension to the cards that universities and other higher education institutions already give their students. This means adding those aspects related to the student curriculum to the information contained in the card, in order to allow online authentication throughout Europe.

As all other actions included in the Erasmus Without Paper initiative, it aims to help reduce administrative tasks. This adds to the two features that current ID cards already have, which ensure the application of data protection rules (GDPR) and facilitate access to university services, such as libraries. In addition, it also identifies the holder as an European student. As in the case of the other actions and timelines that make up Erasmus Without Paper (2021 Inter-institutional agreements and Online learning agreements; 2022 Nominations; 2023 Transcripts of records), the UdG is firmly committed to implementing this as well. In fact, it expects to be able to have it implemented even before 2025, the deadline by which the initiative must be implemented throughout Europe and which coincides with the end of UdG's Strategic Internationalization Plan 2020-2025, recently approved.

We base this intention on the fact that from the 2020-2021 academic year onwards, UdG student cards will be only digital and will only "reside" in our university's app. This app already exists and in use, what is currently being discussed is whether the European Student information is in addition to what we already have or whether the European Student Card should be presented as a "second card" within the same app, as now happens with Sports service card for students. Since the UdG student card has an external entity that sponsors it, all decision-making procedures are slowed down because the two partners have to agree. In the same line, the option of making a physical version has been considered for the sole purpose of giving more visibility to the Erasmus program, but it is clear that this version could not contain the same information.

Environmentally friendly practices

The Universitat de Girona is a reference university in environmental and social aspects. It is, in absolute terms, the Spanish university with the largest number of volunteer students, and develops a very extensive catalogue of social commitment (also understood as community engagement) and inequality reduction programs, as set out in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), sponsored by the United Nations. Therefore, the UdG is in the range 101-200 of the ranking THE Impact which evaluates the response of universities to the SDGs.

In 1998 the UdG approved the University's Environmentalization Plan, which is currently being revised. The UdG has developed several strategies for greening the campus such as reducing the use of paper (also in promotion events), promoting sustainable transport to access campuses, systems to reduce water and electricity consumption, actions for recycling and waste reduction ... The new greening plan proposes limiting airplane journeys for distances of over 400 kilometers and mobility compensation mechanisms.

In this sense, the internationalization strategy raises the need for a rationalization of travel and the promotion of mobility experiences that do not involve travel such as blended and virtual mobility.

Civic engagement

Universities are institutions that by their very nature transmit values that help the good development of citizenship. The Universitat de Girona is therefore another university that aspires to provide expertise, not only in academic content, but also to form global critical and responsible citizens. As explained previously in this section, this was already stated in the Statutes of the university, an evidence is the fact that the Student Council is represented in all governing bodies, which means students participate in all the debates regarding the future development of the University.

Organizationally, UdG ensures the goal to form global critical and responsible citizens (students and all staff members) with the creation of a specific unit called the Social Commitment Unit (community

engagement). This unit integrates seven key areas for the proper development of citizenship: health, sustainability, gender equality, support for people with disabilities, access to inclusive and quality education, training for over 50s and carries out volunteering and development cooperation actions.

In this line, it also encourages and helps members of the university community who participate in those initiatives that have these same objectives even if the participation of the university as an institution is not there, such as participating in the European Citizens' Initiative or the Global Challenge, organized by students during the 2020 confinement.

When UdG approaches these values from the point of view of mobility, it is clear that the focus must be on the knowledge of the "other" in order to increase understanding and respect. UdG encourages students to think from different perspectives and realities, to be flexible and adapt, to provide them with intercultural skills. This work can be done in the "Before" phases for outgoing students and, above all, in the "During" phase for incoming students.

Regarding how the UdG implements these principles in relation with its guests and looking at the satisfaction statistics that Erasmus students fill in through the Mobility Tool, the UdG achieves does well in this objective as the satisfaction rate obtained in the questions that refer to the aspects of reception, inclusion and equality (7.1, 7.2 and 8.1) is very high.

UdG achieves this goal thanks to the Introductory Course it offers about our language and culture and the activities organized by the Girona delegation of the Erasmus Student Network. This network carries out the SocialErasmus project which aims to enrich the international experience of young people abroad with volunteer activities that allow them to understand the problems of society and work on their solutions. SocialErasmus offers young internationals an opportunity to learn about other realities and learn how they can contribute to improving society as citizens of the world. Specifically, ESN Girona collaborates with the Food Bank and organizes blind dinners to raise awareness of this disability.

Another activity that helps to improve intercultural skills, and that UdG intends to continue expanding and enhancing is the Guest Country initiative. This activity is one of the measures included in the Internationalization Strategy of UdG and its main objective is to bring the geographical, social and political reality of a given country to the UdG university community, in order to enhance global understanding and intercultural skills within the UdG community. Although it is intended as an Internationalization at Home (IaH) activity, it is clearly also useful for incoming students broadening their perspectives. In the coming years the aim is to link this activity more with students planning to participate in a mobility (leaving the next year) and incoming students present at the UdG.

2.2 When participating in Mobility Activities - After mobility

As established in the ECTS User Guide, the Universitat de Girona recognizes all the credits that students take within the framework of a mobility agreement and are not asked to do any additional administration procedures at UdG. This has been so since the 2013 Erasmus Charter call. The number of credits that will be recognized at the end of the mobility is established before the student leaves, with when the student signs the Study Agreement and its modification, if necessary. In fact, UdG applies the system of the study agreement and the recognition of credits also in its mobilities outside the Erasmus program. From the 2019-2020 academic year, the Study Agreement has already been incorporated digitally into the student's transcript.

Of course, when designing new blended mobility projects, the number of credits assigned will also be assessed, both in person and the part undertaken online, and will act in the same way as with the rest of the academic offer.

At present, with the collaboration of the International Relations Office, UdG is considering whether to apply a cancellation policy for those bilateral agreements with institutions that do not give full recognition to UdG mobility students for their stay at the Universitat de Girona.

Students can know at any given time the recognition situation of their credits just by entering the intranet "My UdG" with their personal username and password, and access the Network Secretariat by clicking on "Personal" and choosing "File".

Obviously, UdG will incorporate these procedures in the Erasmus app and UdG will have the whole process digitized according to the calendar proposed by the Commission (i.e. 2023). In addition to the aspects of recognition just mentioned, UdG has specific academic requirements related to ECTS for outgoing students

- The minimum number of ECTS credits that students need to enrol in at the destination institution has to be the equivalent of 15 ECTS credits from the course catalogue at UdG. If the stay exceeds the academic semester, the minimum ECTS credits to be enrolled in has to be 30 ECTS.

- When counting the ECTS minimum requirements, only the credits listed in the study agreement will be considered. UdG awards outgoing mobility students extra credits for representing their institution abroad. These credits, however, are not considered as part of the minimum enrolment requirement credits.

These requirements are part of the Regulations student participation in international mobility programmes during undergraduate and / or master's studies at UdG and approved by the Governing Council in session 4/2013, of 18 July of 2013 (eBOU-517), and modified by the Governing Council in session 5/2015, of 25 June 2015 (eBOU-790), and in session 7/2015, of 4 December 2015 (eBOU- 819).

Measures to support, promote and recognize staff mobility:

Mobility is a great opportunity for staff -academic and administrative- to develop new knowledge, improve their language and intercultural skills, increase their professional networks and, ultimately, broaden their professional and personal horizons.

When it comes to recognizing staff mobility in the framework of Erasmus, it can be done from two different approaches: the recognition of the importance of the activity carried out or/and the recognition of the workload. In relation to the second, the Universitat de Girona is already at a sufficiently optimal point, because it is not necessary to recover the time invested in mobility. Nevertheless, as stated in the Internationalization Strategy goals, UdG aims to increase the percentage of overall staff that participates in mobility experiences, especially among administration and services staff. To this end, promotion of the mobility opportunities and facilitating the procedures are key.

The Internationalization Strategy document mentions two measures that will undoubtedly contribute to this. On the one hand, to agree on differentiated action plans for each center, because, as we have explained in the previous section, the faculties and schools of the UdG have different paths and because their studies are also different and, consequently, also its speed of implementation of actions. Another measure that is made explicit is to reinforce the Mercuri Awards (Premis Mercuri), which are a way of recognizing, symbolically and materially, the effort that the different units of the UdG can make in terms of internationalization.

UdG is fully aware of the need to develop many other measures that are suggested in projects with European recognition such as REALISE (coord. Univ. Paul-Valéry) or SUCTI (coord. Univ. Rovira i Virgili).

These aforementioned measures would be in addition to others that are already being implemented. Some of which are: the correction of teaching and research documents in English, or language courses (mainly English). UdG also offers an Advanced Academic English course, designed to reinforce teaching in English skills. In addition, administrative staff can take language courses during working hours and count towards the maximum hours established for professional development. In this sense, UdG will continue to put effort so that not only learning English is considered a part of the institutional professional development plan but also mobilities (more than 5 days), and in summary, that internationalization becomes a part of the official professional development career at UdG. This should all be approved in the next few years.

2.3 For the Purposes of visibility

The UdG has, in its homepage, a direct link to its international policy and services: www.udg.edu/en – International.

The Erasmus Policy statement will be found, more specifically, under the following link: <https://www.udg.edu/en/internacional/vols-saber-mes-de-lore/lore>

UdG promotes Erasmus activities, and will continue to do so, via several channels:

- Commission for International Policy (CPI): this commission has representatives from each of the international relations units of each faculty/centre of UdG. These units promote the Erasmus programme directly among their staff and students as well as other internationalization opportunities.
- International Relations Office: the Office manages all mobilities (staff, academics and students) and promotes internationalization across the institution regularly informing of opportunities and activities.
- European Office: provides information of the different opportunities, guidance during the project proposal phase and support for KA2 and KA3 selected projects.
- Erasmus Student Network: UdG has an active ESN-UdG unit that engages with students that participate in the Erasmus programme but also those that are not able to do an Erasmus mobility. ESN-UdG regularly organizes events and explains the Erasmus programme.

Communication and application of Charter principles

The Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE), as the access door to the Erasmus programme, is an essential part of UdG's internationalization strategy, both as a mechanism to achieve the goals set out as well as a means to promote internationalization across the institution. Therefore, this Charter, like the previous editions, will be posted on the UdG website as the institution's European Policy Statement. UdG applies the same principles declared by the Erasmus Charter to all exchange and mobility programmes in which the Universitat de Girona participate in.

The different units that participate in promoting the Erasmus activities (Commission for Internationalization Policy, International Relations Office, European Office and ESN-UdG) are also responsible to communicate, share and ensure the application of the principles of this Charter.

Considering digital communication tools UdG has, in addition to the website, a specific twitter account promoting internationalization. This account will also echo all the activities and principles of this Charter.