

FHWien der WKW University of Applied Sciences for Management and Communication

Erasmus+ Policy Statement 2021-27

April 2021

FHWien der WKW University of Applied Sciences for Management and Communication is one of Austria's leading universities of applied sciences in the fields of management and communication and sees itself as a cosmopolitan university with an international orientation. This is reflected in the university's strategic plan, which was formulated in 2017 and defines internationalization as a cross-cutting issue of significance to all university departments. The goal is to offer students the best possible preparation for the international labor market and to make FHWien der WKW a competitive player in the international university landscape.

The internationalization strategy is based on three pillars: **mobility, cooperation, and internationalization at home.**

FHWien der WKW strongly encourages its students to gain **experience abroad** within the scope of the curriculum, because it wants to educate students to become internationally competitive professionals with excellent foreign language and intercultural skills. Participation in Erasmus+ projects develops key competencies for personal development and the labor market. Mobility participants often mention competencies such as self-reflection, organizational skills, flexibility, the ability to work in a team, problem solving, and communication.

The **Erasmus+ program** is of central significance for the internationalization agenda. Approximately 70% of student and staff mobility activities take place within the Erasmus+ program. To increase international mobility, 153 bilateral cooperations with universities have been established to date. The partner universities are mostly located in Europe, especially in Erasmus Program countries, and we also have experience with partner countries as part of Erasmus+ KA107.

Erasmus+ has an impact on all international mobility activities at FHWien der WKW. Its quality assurance tools and documents are used as models for all mobility projects, for example the inter-institutional agreements and learning agreements.

FHWien der WKW has implemented the academic structure of the Bologna system and modularized the curricula; it also consistently uses ECTS and Diploma Supplements. In doing so, it contributes towards creating a **common European higher education area**. A mobility window is defined in the curricula of the vast majority of degree programs, and, since the 2018/19 academic year, all full-time Bachelor's programs have included a required semester abroad. This helps optimize the coordination between the experience abroad and the curricula. English-language semester programs for incoming students are increasing and are being recruited from among the regular course offerings more and more.

Mobility windows and required semesters abroad have made stays abroad for learning and study purposes the norm at FHWien der WKW. At the same time, mobility software has been introduced, and the procedures for handling student exchanges have been revised. After our experiences from the first academic year with a compulsory semester abroad and digitalized processes, an evaluation and adaptation phase is to follow in 2020-2021. Student representatives, International Relations staff, and representatives of the academic departments are involved in this further development process. **Process optimization and digitalization** help further equip FHWien der WKW to handle the growing numbers of mobile students.

The **university partnerships** are undergoing a systematic evaluation in preparation for the new 2021–2027 program generation. Based on statistical evaluations of outgoing and incoming mobility, it draws on reports from mobile students and mobile staff; in coordination with the professional assessment by the mobility advisors of the degree programs, this permits a good evaluation of the cooperation. When extending agreements, the highest-priority goal is creating sustainable cooperation. The suitability of partner universities is measured according to the following criteria: curricular compatibility, comparability of the higher education systems, language(s) of instruction, good support structure and infrastructure, and attractiveness of the study location. Both the administration and the teaching and research departments strive to establish the best possible relationships at their respective levels. With the numerous proven partner universities, and the newer cooperation partners that have been reviewed and specifically selected, we can approach mobility projects in the new Erasmus+ program generation with confidence.

For **internationalization at home**, FHWien der WKW consistently takes steps to provide students with skills for the global labor market. The process of curricular internationalization is multifaceted and ranges from use of international case studies to virtual courses held jointly with partner universities. Cross-cultural management is a theme in all degree programs. "The Microeconomics of Competitiveness," a course offered by the Affiliate Network of Harvard Business School, is integrated into all but two of the Master's programs and, in an adapted form, into suitable Bachelor's programs as well.

English is being used more and more as the language of instruction in all degree programs, and two programs are taught entirely in English; this also corresponds to an increase in the number of international faculty employed. The full-time faculty includes a growing number of native English speakers. All programs regularly welcome international experts from partner universities and the business community as guest lecturers. A separate Competence Center for Business English is responsible for high-level business English courses. Diversity among students, faculty, and staff is increasing, which is typical of a university in a major European city and corresponds to the trend towards English as the second language of communication within companies. All publications are bilingual, and English versions of all important instructional and administrative documents are also available.

FHWien der WKW strives to have **staff** distinguished by international experience, cosmopolitanism, above-average foreign language and intercultural skills, and a willingness to exchange professional and pedagogical knowledge across borders. This is to be achieved through diverse internal continuing education course offerings and the opportunities offered by Erasmus staff mobility.

FHWien der WKW not only pursues consistent networking with certified partner universities, but also maintains close **contact with the business community**. This is only natural, given its nature as a private university owned by the Viennese Economic

Chamber (*Wirtschaftskammer Wien*) and Viennese Merchants' Guild (*Fonds der Wiener Kaufmannschaft*). We offer practical education, oriented towards the needs of the economy. Of a total of 1,066 faculty, almost 94% work part-time at FHWien der WKW alongside their main jobs, bringing knowledge from their primary careers in business and industry into the classroom. This has led to numerous student projects in cooperation with companies. Internships in Austria and abroad are an important aspect of our practical approach and enable young people to establish initial contacts with the business community and with potential employers while still at university.

The **practical orientation of our academic offerings** also allows **working people** to obtain a high-quality academic degree and key competencies for the future. Evidence shows that students from all economic strata are able to take advantage of these offerings. 60% of our students study part-time while working and are thus able to combine their studies and job (2,853 students in total, of which 1,713 study part-time while working). A wide range of continuing education programs in various formats allows flexible lifelong learning. This encourages people who are traditionally underrepresented in post-secondary education to study. The university of applied sciences model provides good conditions for balancing work and education, leading to successful graduation: a very good teacher–student ratio, digital support for instruction and learning, project work and teamwork, small interactive groups, and streamlined curricular organization. Cooperation and innovation projects in Erasmus+ should make it even easier for innovative teaching and learning concepts to be integrated, increase the attractiveness of the program, and contribute an international component.

In order to facilitate the transition from the Bachelor's to a Master's program with a different focus, a "Common Body of Competence" of 48 ECTS credits has been defined for all Bachelor's programs. This is intended to ensure learning outcomes in, for example, accounting, business English, economics, and project management for all Bachelor's graduates.

FHWien der WKW recognizes the importance of **digitalization** in business and society. In the (further) development of all degree programs, the current state of technology is accorded corresponding priority. In 2019, the Department of Digital Economy was created to offer programs at the interface between management and information technology. It offers courses that combine business content with IT content.

FHWien der WKW aims to develop **solutions for social, economic, and ecological problems** and strengthen our research excellence. An important step in this regard is the Josef Ressel Center, which began operations in 2020 with funding from the Christian Doppler Research Association and leading Austrian companies. The Josef Ressel Center is dedicated to excellent research with a practical orientation on the topic of "Collective Action and Responsible Partnership" and allows researchers to deepen their research focus on sustainability and corporate social responsibility. Sustainability is becoming more and more important in everyday university life. A working group, which incorporates ideas from staff in various departments, examines the Sustainable Development Goals and how they can be implemented at the university.

In 2017, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy addressed the topic of **inclusion** and formulated the "National Strategy for the Social Dimension of Higher Education." Many of the important demands it contains – permeability, dual education, transparent performance requirements, etc. – are typically met by the university of applied sciences model. FHWien der WKW uses targeted communication measures to improve access to higher education for underrepresented groups. A commitment to diversity and equal treatment is embedded in the university's culture. In all international mobility and cooperation projects we carry out in the new Erasmus+ program, inclusion should be taken into account, in both the conception and the implementation.

Student Mobility:

Mobility is one of the three cornerstones of FHWien der WKW's internationalization strategy. In the 2021–2027 period, as many students as possible should be given the opportunity to spend a **semester abroad for the purpose of study or internships**. The existing **mobility windows** in the curricula are to be evaluated and either integrated into future curriculum changes or redesigned. The **semester abroad requirement** in full-time Bachelor's programs, introduced in 2018, is being evaluated in 2020–2021.

The study abroad experience helps prepare our students for the demands of the modern workplace. As a university in a cosmopolitan capital in the center of Europe, we are aware that quality professional education must transcend borders. It must incorporate international developments and strive for high-level linguistic, cultural, social, and interpersonal skills. By broadening their professional and personal horizons through experience abroad, we educate our students to become cosmopolitan Europeans. Graduates' skills enable them to pursue good careers and contribute to their personal satisfaction; this receives impressive confirmation from evidence such as the results of the Erasmus Impact Studies.

Erasmus+ will remain our most important program for student exchanges. **Erasmus Student Mobility for Studies** for studying abroad will continue to play a central role in the areas of Management and Entrepreneurship, Tourism and Hospitality Management, Financial Management, Journalism and Media Management, Communication Management, Marketing and Sales Management, Human Resource Management, and Real Estate Management. Just as important as Erasmus Student Mobility for Studies is **Erasmus Student Mobility for Training**, in areas including Tourism and Hospitality Management. Students from all fields of study should be able to benefit from Erasmus Student Mobility for Training for curricular and non-curricular internships. A corresponding information campaign should increase the number of graduates taking advantage of Erasmus Student Mobility for Training.

We see the incoming students participating in the exchange as an opportunity and a source of enrichment for our university. An important goal is to offer a sufficient number of relevant **courses in English** for incoming students, since the German-language courses offered are only suitable for a small segment of the visiting students. In this regard, we are pursuing two approaches. First of all, many areas of study are being taught in English more and more; secondly, the Center for International Education and Mobility (CIEM) regularly offers courses in English in coordination with the departments. Regular students also have the option of taking the CIEM courses. As far as possible, we want to avoid "ghettoization"; both students and faculty should benefit from an international, multicultural classroom.

In an important step towards internationalization, compulsory semesters abroad were introduced in all full-time Bachelor's programs in 2018. As the next step, we aim to define formats to provide international experience for all part-time working students,

who, as 60% of the total, represent the majority of our students. For these students, participation in **Blended Intensive Programs** is of particular interest. In these, a short physical mobility phase is combined with virtual preparation and/or follow-up. Together with selected partners, we want to develop and implement Blended Intensive Programs in consortia which take advantage of digital media that have already been proven in practice for joint teaching and learning in the virtual project phases.

University Faculty and Staff Mobility:

An important part of FHWien der WKW's internationalization strategy is promoting **faculty and staff mobility**. Faculty and staff should network with international colleagues, exchange knowledge, and gain new experiences and impressions. This form of continuing education also contributes to internationalization at home: participants act as multipliers and disseminate and apply the knowledge gained in their field of activity. We expect the increasing frequency of outgoing and incoming faculty and staff mobility to deliver important incentives for innovation in teaching, on both a subject-specific and a general pedagogical level. This can serve as an occasion for the development of further joint projects in the Erasmus+ program, as well as in research.

While international networking for faculty is already established in the profession's self-conception, more targeted incentives and examples are needed for administrative staff mobility. A **concept for staff mobility** planned for 2021 will address the following issues at the university administration and departmental administration levels:

- What qualitative goals and, if applicable, quantitative goals are to be achieved through staff mobility?
- What continuing education topics are particular focal points in terms of social policy and higher education policy trends?
- For which departments is staff mobility particularly important?
- What targeted steps can be taken to make participation in staff mobility fair, transparent, non-discriminatory, and inclusive?
- How can we ensure learning success as a host for incoming staff mobility?
- How can we ensure the transfer of learned best practices?

For example, the courses offered by the EAIE Academy and the International DAAD Academy, which address internationalization at the interfaces with other university departments such as Corporate Communications, Curriculum Development, and Study Services, seem particularly relevant. These course offerings can help achieve the goal of getting all stakeholders at the university to act in concert in the internationalization effort.

Cooperation Projects and Innovation Projects:

With an eye to the limited resources of a small university (2,853 students, 1,066 mostly part-time faculty), we want to decide in 2021/22 which **cooperation and innovation projects** are strategically important for us. This process will focus on the issue of which of FHWien der WKW's institutional goals for the 2021–2027 period can be supported by international cooperation. Among the institutional goals, the following have especially high priority: (1) future-oriented education, (2) digitalization of instruction, and (3) sustainability.

Ideas from faculty, researchers, and staff should be incorporated into the design of the project. With regard to the three strategic focal points mentioned above, topics related to innovative teaching will be especially suitable. Project goals could include strengthening collaboration with the professional world, promoting entrepreneurial thinking among students, or implementing interdisciplinarity in the curriculum. The development and integration of new virtual teaching and learning formats could be another important focus.

Excellence Partnerships:

Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's Degrees (EMJMDs) are a promising avenue, since we have had good experience with double degrees on the Master's level, and an EMJMD could significantly advance internationalization in the Master's programs. As an excellence program within a selected field of study, with suitable partner universities, an international orientation in the curriculum, and mobility phases, this could be attractive to academically outstanding students. An EMJMD would also be a good way to involve students from third countries and support them with scholarships.

Student Mobility – Outgoing Students:

Students receive **information about international opportunities** for the first time right at the beginning of their studies through a flyer in their enrollment packet and in their head of study programs introductory presentation. The **Center for International Education and Mobility (CIEM)** uses a platform in Moodle for detailed, up-to-date information. Here, students can read about what cooperation programs are available, how Erasmus works, what administrative steps are required for applying for a semester abroad, and how and when placements are assigned. There is also information on costs and financing, grants, insurance, visas, and travel safety. Overview chapters such as a "Step-by-Step Guide to Studying Abroad" and "Responsibilities at a Glance" provide clear information quickly. Moodle also links to the **Erasmus Student Charter**, which informs students of their rights and responsibilities. The Download section contains reports from previous outgoing students.

Each semester, the **"Go International Days"** are aimed specifically at first year students. In keeping with the importance of the Erasmus+ program, particular space is devoted to Erasmus+, and the benefits of the program are highlighted, such as: a tuition fee waiver, availability for up to 12 months per academic cycle, flat-rate scholarship amounts for study and internships, special grants for certain groups of people, and post-graduate internships. Former outgoing students participate in "Go International Days" and provide first-hand accounts of their experiences. Incoming students give presentations about their home universities and answer specific questions. Shortly before the start of the internal application period for study abroad, CIEM holds information sessions within the individual study programs together with the mobility advisors in order to address in more detail any questions that have arisen for students in preparation for the application. Program-specific cooperations and arrangements are also addressed.

When study abroad placements are assigned, the overwhelming majority of students get their first or second study abroad placement choice. This suggests that we have a sufficiently large and attractive network of partner universities and that the digitalized allocation process works well.

As part of their preparations, all students must acknowledge FHWien der WKW's **travel safety concept**. Students are advised, for example, to use the travel registration app provided by the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. CIEM follows the security situation in all potential host countries on the basis of the travel warnings of the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and monitors changes that could be relevant for the students' entry and stay.

Since 2020, a **preparatory intercultural workshop** has been offered to address the goals of the semester abroad and students' expectations. Students learn about intercultural sensitivity development models. The aim is to make them knowledgeable about the cultural adaptation process and empowered to cope with the challenges of their semester abroad.

After the mobility period, outgoing students **evaluate** their host university in Mobility Online according to the following criteria: (a) relevance of the course offerings, (b) support infrastructure, and (c) general attractiveness of the study location. The evaluation can be analyzed anonymously and is factored into the assessment of the cooperations, which is carried out jointly by CIEM and the mobility advisors in teaching. In addition to the evaluation in Mobility Online, students are asked to write personal experience reports that will benefit future interested students. We invite outgoing students to participate in the "Go International Days" to tell their fellow students about their semester abroad. Many outgoing students get involved in their local **Erasmus Student Network (ESN)**.

When the Transcript of Records is available, study abroad credits are usually recognized without difficulty, thanks to consistent use of the ECTS.

In a "**Welcome Back Workshop**", students learn to reflect on their experiences and what they have learned and to make use of it for their professional career. The workshop also supports reintegration into FHWien der WKW and is intended to prevent "reverse culture shock".

Student Mobility – Incoming Students:

Incoming students receive **information** in advance about the German and English course offerings and about practical and organizational aspects of studying at FHWien der WKW. For this purpose, the website contains the "Incoming Fact Sheet" and the "Welcome Guide for Incoming Students" with details on travel, visas, entry and residence, insurance, accommodation, typical living costs, and the like. The partner universities designate the students, who then register in Mobility Online, select their courses based on the **Course Guide**, and prepare their Learning Agreements. **Buddies** provided by the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) contact the incoming students to provide personal support and help them integrate into the student community.

Incoming students from our partner universities do not pay tuition fees and have access to all the infrastructure of the university.

During the **Orientation Week** before the start of the semester, incoming students are welcomed and given an introduction to university life. Important topics, such as attendance rules, examination rules, and online tools are covered, and students are informed of their rights and obligations. The week's program includes informational lectures, a building tour, a welcome lunch, a visit to the library, a city tour, and an initial meeting with the ESN. An "**Austrian Culture and More**" course also forms part of the program. It is required for all incoming students and counts for one ECTS credit. The course serves as an intercultural induction and at the same time encourages critical reflection on the concept of "culture". The "personal appointments" with the CIEM staff for the purpose of putting the student's individual course schedule together are also an important part of the Orientation Week.

Throughout the semester, the local ESN organizes regular activities that incoming students and regular students can participate in together at reasonable prices. Activities range from sports, cultural events, and parties, to excursions to neighboring countries. The ESN program makes a significant contribution to the integration of the visiting students and allows them to become more familiar with the history and culture of Central Europe.

Within the degree programs course have been defined that are taught in English and are offered to incoming students. More and more **International Course Packages** are given scheduling priority to allow students to take a package in its entirety. Incoming students study together with local students rather than isolated in a "ghetto", since the courses are part of the regular study programs. Academically, incoming students are treated the same as regular students. In addition, CIEM is responsible for approximately fifteen courses per semester on the general topic of "**International Management**"; the topics are coordinated with the degree programs, and they cover a wide range of business content, from business ethics, to international sports marketing. The faculty of the "International Management" courses are without exception experts with international experience and native or excellent English. In addition, incoming students can attend **German courses** at various levels free of charge and earn ECTS credits.

For **feedback** from incoming students, we rely on personal interviews, as well as the Erasmus Participant Report. The latter provides anonymous feedback on incoming students' satisfaction with information (the Course Guide), support, accommodation, social integration, and academic equality; specific steps for improvement can be derived from this. Incoming students are invited to the "Go International Days", where they can tell interested parties about their home universities.