



Erasmus+ Policy Statement (2014-2020)

The University of Aberdeen is an institution with global ambitions, and embedding a culture of internationalisation across all activities is the core aim of our international strategy.

The strategy that will deliver this vision has five core objectives:

- To enhance the University's global research reputation through establishing a series of strategically-conceived mutually-beneficial partnerships.
- To recruit and retain strong and diverse cohorts of high quality international staff and students.
- To provide an accessible, welcoming, supportive environment for international staff and students.
- To encourage the development of an international perspective in all our students.
- To promote, support and resource international activity at the University, raising awareness internally and externally of the University's international pedigree.

Our international strategy will be driven by our academic strengths. In developing strategic partnerships, we are looking to institutions that either have a similar approach to teaching and learning who offer comparable subject breadth, or that have similar disciplinary strengths - in our case Energy, Environmental Sustainability and Food Security, Pathways to a Healthy Life and the North - that wish to develop deep and sustainable relationships across student and staff exchange programmes and research interests.

By looking at subject breadth and offering mobility across a range of disciplines with a chosen partner, we can broaden the range of options available to our students enrolled on Joint Honours degrees. These key partners would play an important role in helping the University to achieve targets for increased participation in exchange programmes, by overcoming some of the difficulties that our students have faced in the past - such as finding courses suitable to meet the requirements of two distinct subject areas.

Alternatively, by taking a thematic approach, this also helps the University clarify where it wants to build strategic external alliances to advance its ambitions. Using the Energy theme as an example, the University is exploring partnerships with other major energy centres in countries such as Brazil, Brunei, Ghana, and Kuwait. The North is another thematic area where geographical focus makes sense and – in addition to strong pre-existing partnerships in the Nordic countries, Canada and the USA – the University has recently become a member of the University of the Arctic Consortium, a co-operative network of universities, colleges, and other organisations committed to higher education and research in the North.

Turning to another key objective, the University seeks to encourage the development of an international perspective in all our students. Increased mobility through schemes such as the Erasmus Programme and the International Exchange Programme, which provide the opportunity for prolonged immersion in another country and culture would be the most desirable means of achieving this, and there is considerable effort made across the institution to remove unnecessary barriers to mobility, be this in terms of language preparation through sustained study as part of the University's curriculum reform, or in terms of mobility windows being moved to later in a student's programme to allow greater time for planning a period abroad. Shorter mobilities are also being explored as a means of providing international opportunities to those students groups who have not historically been mobile, for financial reasons or otherwise, with intensive programmes, field trips and industrial training among the range of options.

The new International Partnerships Team, in conjunction with senior staff, colleagues from the EU Grants Team based in the Research & Innovation section and input from academic and support service staff, is developing a university-wide partnerships strategy. This will be informed by the University's internationalisation strategy, with the aim to better organise and streamline the University's approach to international co-operation projects.

As an institution, we are keen to develop strategic partnerships wherever possible, which would include a basket of activities: student and staff exchanges, joint degree programmes and research collaboration. Opportunities available through international co-operation projects will be advertised and taken forward via a network of brand new regional champions responsible for specific geographical priority areas, as well as being disseminated through existing channels. Also the new Vice Principal for Internationalisation, who is due to be appointed in the near future, will spearhead much of the work in this field.

The University of Aberdeen is three years into a five-year process of Curriculum Reform. These reforms are designed to provide graduates equipped for the 21st century, by increasing the relevance of higher education and strengthening the linkage between higher education, research, business and industry. To achieve these goals, the reforms were developed with input from a broad range of stakeholders including researchers, business and industry, professional bodies, students, academic staff, and the wider public. The reforms recognises the need for today's graduates to be academically excellent critical thinkers with effective communication skills, who are more committed to lifelong learning and personal development, and better prepared to be active citizens. Essentially, our aim is to produce graduates who are more rounded, better informed and more intellectually flexible. These core principles are embedded in the University graduate attributes articulated as part of our Curriculum Reform work and our commitment to provide every student with the opportunities to develop these skills.

Increasing the number of students from Aberdeen who have the opportunity for an international experience is a key commitment in both the Strategic Plan and the Curriculum Reform Strategy. Ensuring that those students who come to study at Aberdeen have the opportunity for an international experience and also an opportunity to mix and interact with a wide range of international students visiting Aberdeen is central to the University achieving its internationalisation agenda and providing the opportunities to achieve the attributes expected of a student at Aberdeen.

Participation in the new programme and the opportunities it provides is thus a key element in our Curriculum. Every year we see the overwhelming, and indeed life- changing, nature of an international experience in our students when they return from their host country. We very much look forward to this continuing through participation in the new programme.