



Erasmus+

EPS, Erasmus Policy Statement

Karlstad University is planning to implement the Erasmus Programme in the following way. Presented below is a description of the university's internationalisation efforts in line with the Erasmus Programme, and how we are working with priority areas within the framework of "Modernisation Strategy" and "European Education Area":

Karlstad University's strategy for internationalisation is described in the university's strategic vision for 2030: "Our students and staff develop knowledge and skills for individual enrichment and to contribute to a sustainable society." "Our creative academic environments are characterised by curiosity, courage and persistence." Karlstad University is characterised by welcoming proximity and trust. "We always promote democratic values, equality and diversity."

Based on the university's strategy and strategic goals, a number of success factors have been identified. These factors further promote quality, safeguard continued success and facilitate dynamic change in keeping with social challenges. Examples of the university's success factors:

- Extended cooperation with selected foreign universities and other organisations to increase student and staff mobility.
- Extended relevant course and programme offerings taught in English.
- Closer international research partnerships.

In order to realise the strategic goals, a number of activities are conducted at the university, both at central as well as faculty/department level, in accordance with "Karlstad University's Action Plan for Internationalisation, 2020-2023". The activities form the basis for the priorities set by the university in relation to regions and priority groups for international exchange.

The activities comprise measures that, for example:

- enhance the quality of mutual cooperation with international universities with the aim of being reflected in the degree programs.
- help students in their plans to study abroad as part of their degree programme.
- contribute to an exchange of experience, and to all university students being given the opportunity to develop their international understanding and intercultural competence.
- enable academic and administrative staff to acquire international experience and competence through professional development initiatives.
- require higher level of proficiency in English for all new recruitments.
- aim to increase the integration between international students and students who will graduate at Karlstad University.
- contribute to closer international research partnerships.

The university's internationalisation efforts aim to make international perspectives the norm in our courses and programmes, to help students learn more foreign languages and to obtain a high level of intercultural competence and to make education and internationalisation accessible to everyone. The university's participation in the various Erasmus programmes contributes to students and staff enhancing the European identity not only through the sharing of experiences, professional development, collaborations and quality-enhancing efforts for the university, but also through the personal development of everyone involved and the creation of affinity between people. With the support of the Erasmus Programme, bridges can be built between universities, organisations and countries, which form important functions for communities both within and outside of Europe. The university plays a great role on this, which is particularly important to communicate to students and staff.

The university's participation in the Erasmus Programme contributes to a high level of quality in terms of education, professional development and increased participation in a number of various international networks and programmes. The university recruits internationally, works in a growing number of international environments and is becoming an increasingly globalised university. Developing the international competence of employees, offering international elements in study programs and promoting an expanded range of courses taught in English are priorities for Karlstad University. Within the framework of the Erasmus Programme, the university develops education and research together with valuable international partners, engages in collaborations for the future on environmentally sustainable initiatives within, for example, "Green Erasmus", virtual mobility and flexible exchanges such as "Blended mobility". An intensification of international cooperation for the future is planned to achieve the objectives of the university's

governance documents, where participation in the Erasmus Programme is of utmost importance.

Karlstad University aims to promote and broaden the recruitment to programmes and courses at both first and second cycle level as well as third cycle level. The university's action plan for broader recruitment outlines which activities the university intends to work on to promote broader recruitment and broader participation. The plan has been developed in a collaboration between the university's communications office, faculties and relevant departments and is an important quality aspect in accordance with the Swedish Higher Education Act (1992:1434) and the Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100). Karlstad University implements systematic measures to recruit students from underrepresented groups in order to increase their representation and also to welcome, introduce and support students during their time at the university. An important part of this work is ensuring that people coming from different geographical places, regardless of gender, transgender identity or expression, ethnic origin, religion or other beliefs, disability, sexual orientation, age or social background, can access and go on to complete higher education.

Education is strategically important for society at large and for Europe, and the university intends to help increase the number of young people who are admitted to higher education following upper-secondary school, as well as increasing the number of students who graduate. As part of these efforts, the university has a Quality Advisory Board that monitors national and international developments regarding quality issues in higher education and advises the Faculty Board for Teacher Education in strategic decisions in relation to quality management. The Quality Advisory Board is appointed by the Vice-Chancellor and coordinates external reviews of education and research.

The courses and study programmes should form the basis of the competence and skills required in today's society and, therefore, collaborations with the surrounding community are very important. Enhancing and improving the interaction between higher education, research and the business sector by basing teaching on the latest knowledge and ensuring graduates' competence in analysis and problem solving is something that the faculties and departments at the university are constantly working on and developing. A large number of contacts and networks in the public and private sector as well as the business sector at regional, national and international level contribute to successful efforts which, with the support of the Erasmus Programme, lead to mobility and professional development for staff and students. The Department of External Relations has a team that works with student and alumni relations with focus on developing initiatives that train students in entrepreneurship and also serve as an important link between students and employers. The team works together with students to organise job fairs that attract a wide range of employers, nationally and internationally. In order to further increase the employability of students, a mentorship programme has been in place for many years, which matches mentors from various companies and organisations with

students. The university's partnership with "Drivhuset", a national non-profit organisation that helps students to develop their business ideas and start companies, contributes to further collaborations with the surrounding community, which benefits all students. The Department of External Relations has innovation advisors who support students and staff so that they can apply their innovative ideas from a social perspective.

The Centre for Teaching and Learning (UPE) supports and stimulates the development of university teachers' teaching competence. The centre provides active and professional support for quality development of education in the first, second and third cycle at Karlstad University. It is also responsible for qualifying university pedagogical education and can offer qualified support for the development of educational design through flexible teaching and examination forms. The design of the centre's training and support is based on research on higher education, local and national governance documents and guidelines, as well as discussions and exchanges of experience both at Karlstad University and within national and international networks. With the help of the Centre for Teaching and Learning, we as a university can ensure that professional development within university pedagogy and didactics is in place and contributes to increased quality and knowledge development in our education and research.

Creating continuing professional development, diversity and a solid foundation of values is an essential part of the university's courses and study programmes. Systematic support is provided to students with special needs, such as support for writing, clear guidelines and special support during exams. This is especially important in teacher education, which places special focus on investing in Europe's young students. A mentorship programme is planned within the teacher education programmes to offer both campus and distance students the opportunity to meet and receive support from students from previous cohorts. In order to advocate social and ethnic diversity within teacher education, the university works within the framework of core education subjects (UVK), which form the basis of all teacher education programmes in Sweden and include, for example, social relations, conflict management and leadership. The core education subjects comprise knowledge that is essential to all teacher students. The teacher education programmes train students to teach in classes with different social, ethnic and language backgrounds in accordance with a multilingual strategy. This is included in "Implementation of the education and research strategy in teacher education at Karlstad University", which is under revision at the time of writing. The teacher education programmes have reviewed to what extent gender, norms and gender equality are included in programme syllabuses, course syllabuses and qualitative targets and how this shows in the teaching. The review is part of a report that forms the basis for the continued development work within the area. The Nursing Programme, the Specialist Nursing Programme, the Master of Science in Psychology and the Bachelor of Science in Social Work are other programmes that have been reviewed in a similar manner.

Gender equality efforts are ongoing and a continuing work in progress for the university.

All departments and units receive information and lectures on gender, gender equality, gender mainstreaming, norms, norm criticism. Heads and HR staff have been trained in gender equality issues in relation to recruitments, working environment, common values and attitudes. Workshops on norm criticism and gender mainstreaming have been conducted with Heads, management groups, departments and units. Knowledge of gender and gender equality has been implemented in the higher education pedagogical courses, the doctoral supervisor course and the leadership development programme. An introductory course in gender equal meetings has been put together and has so far been conducted in some of the departments at the university. The students' union educates their representatives in gender, gender equality and norm criticism, and takes gender balance into account in their various activities. At the start of term, students are informed about the university's values and how the university works to ensure equal opportunities. In order to achieve equal opportunities for research, acquisition of qualifications and career paths, key governance documents as well as planning and budget processes are reviewed from a gender equality perspective. There are ongoing efforts to identify any gender inequalities in relation to staff plans. The aim is to achieve equal opportunities for teachers and researchers to acquire qualifications. The gender balance is taken into account when appointing members of advisory and decision-making bodies. Guidelines for experts and the employment and promotion committees are under review. A doctoral project has been initiated, focusing on how administrative assistance is requested, provided and applied based on gender and function. Data collection via a survey has been carried out, which will form the basis for the continued work on equal opportunities for teachers, researchers and leaders at the university.

Karlstad University will participate in the following activities within the framework of the Erasmus Programme with the described content and objectives:

Karlstad University collaborates with universities all over the world, which shows through, for instance, a number of long-term international networks that form the basis for many ongoing as well as future cooperation initiatives. The majority of partner universities can be found in Europe and within the Erasmus Programme. Thus, we have well-developed contacts all over the world, which in a well-developed way correspond to the university's departments, units and International Office. We have a regular contact and sometimes meet during international conferences, partner visits, exchanges and virtual meetings. International partnerships are of central importance for the university to achieve the goals described in its strategy and action plan. Management is strongly committed to the various Erasmus projects and

participates in professional development initiatives, collaborations with the surrounding community and in the ongoing work on student and staff mobility, all of which are part of the initiatives of the Erasmus Programme. The commitment from management shows through, for example, efforts to conduct follow-ups and evaluations. The fact that universities can receive funding and award scholarships for participation in the Erasmus Programme is vital to achieve a high level of participation.

Erasmus exchanges in Europe and the rest of the world – The most important programme for student and staff exchange at the university is the Erasmus mobility programme. An exchange programme that the university intends to intensify further in the coming years with even more opportunities for flexibility and new types of exchanges. Student and staff exchanges will continue to be an important contribution to the quality of education, intercultural diversity and professional development. In addition, we believe that the programme in the future can contribute to the development of environmental sustainability at the university, provide opportunities for international exchange through environmentally more sustainable activities. We believe that Erasmus mobility can contribute to the university's goal to reach all students through flexible initiatives and international collaborations online. Participation in the mobility programmes provides invaluable opportunities for students and staff through experience exchange, professional development and a deep understanding of other cultures, languages and backgrounds. Something which the university depends on today and in the future.

Student and staff mobility is conducted successfully at the university and the work ahead will be similar to the support we provide today, with a clear shift towards increased electronic support and document management. Today, incoming exchange students receive assistance with accommodation, study guidance, support in the form of peer students, arrival service, introduction, etc. The introductory week before the course starts contributes to increasing the students' ability to understand and interact in Swedish society. International and Swedish students integrate with each other in joint activities. Outgoing students are prepared for exchange studies through joint and individual meetings. The International Office provides support and guidance for students; from an interest in exchange studies, during the application process, to completed mobility. Outgoing students who are going on an international traineeship receive the same support as exchange students and are informed about the exchange programmes that are open for traineeships, in accordance with applicable guidelines. Staff receive support with the application and advice through information days and seminars as well as tips on suitable partner universities to visit.

Strategic higher education partnerships – The university is currently coordinating two strategic partnerships, TRANSPEER and CRE8 Europé. The projects have involved students and staff at all levels for international exchange of experience, education, and workshops with a number of non-academic organisations. The activities have taken place in six different European countries

where students and staff from the different places have visited Karlstad University as well as the other parties involved. In the “CRE8@skills development model”, employers present real and current challenges from working life to groups of students who help solve the problems and report back to the employer. The model was developed by a student in a previous entrepreneurship and innovation project. Through these two projects, Erasmus strategic partnership programmes have offered students and staff enormous opportunities. We know that the programme offers far more opportunities to create synergies at the university to develop and improve the quality of education and increase commitment in the internationalisation efforts. Strategic partnerships offer the university the opportunity to develop curricula, courses, teaching, pedagogical methods and tools, workshops and to work strategically with long-term partnership plans through the development and transfer of innovative methods, products and results. Working together with organisations abroad is something that is in line with the university’s ambition to continue the successful collaboration with the surrounding community at an international level as well.

Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees – Karlstad Business School is a member of a network for double degree, CIDD (Consortium of International Double Degree), which has led to Erasmus partnerships where we can offer international exchange students a double degree together with another university in Europe. This has mainly involved students from German and French partner universities. Outgoing exchange students have in the same way been offered the opportunity to obtain a double degree. Up to now, the university has not participated in any Erasmus Mundus projects or Joint Master Degree projects. There are proposals to introduce Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees. Initiatives for this type of partnership have so far come from subjects such as biology and mathematics. Through consortium collaborations, partnerships like these contribute to close cooperation between departments and subjects on international education, create an understanding of each other’s programmes and courses for teaching staff, and offer students unique opportunities to plan for international experiences as part of their Master’s programme in good time. Being able to develop high-quality Master’s programmes with international elements and obtaining funding for administration and scholarships for students and teachers is something that benefits the university’s overall goals by increasing international contact networks, increasing mobility and creating international elements in the education for everyone.

How the Erasmus Programme influences Karlstad University. In the following, we describe how the programme affects the university in terms of mobility, quality, collaborations and the like:

The internationalisation efforts are a priority for Karlstad University and an area of great importance. The surrounding world requires universities to show an ever

higher level of internationalisation in the form of an increased number of international student and staff exchanges. Karlstad University aims to be an international university that meets the demand for education and research from students and the surrounding community in a well-developed and structured way. The university's overall strategic plan is linked to the policy work that applies at a regional, national and European level and emphasises internationalisation efforts as a priority area. High international mobility among students and staff, an international campus, well-functioning and well-justified international partnership agreements and a wide range of courses taught in English are important parts.

The Erasmus Programme, with more than 180 European partner universities and several non-European partners to date, promotes an increased number of active, mutual and sustainable exchange opportunities that contribute to a positive development of education, learning and administration for both our own university as well as our partners within and outside of Europe. The Erasmus Programme develops and improves international cooperation in Europe and gives us and our partner learning universities the opportunity to develop our work procedures and processes for internationalisation. The candidates who have the opportunity to participate in the Erasmus Programme are offered valuable knowledge and experience within their own field of work and study as well as intercultural competence and language skills. Karlstad University works closely with companies and the business sector, and those who participate in the Erasmus exchange are given, as an integral part of the university's overall work, the privilege of being part of our collaborations with the surrounding community. Student and staff exchanges provide access to the surrounding community through, for example, Erasmus interns. Incoming interns can do their internship with the university or with companies and organisations in the business sector in Karlstad and the surrounding region. We see improved international mobility among students and staff as a very important component of regional and national growth and development. The Erasmus Programme contributes to a necessary flow of social and human capital in education, learning and intercultural communication. The university invests resources to participate in the project and receives improved education and research in return. Candidates who participate in the programme develop working practices and competence to work in global contexts. Through international exchanges and visits, they have the benefit of encountering different cultures and backgrounds both in the workplace but also in daily life. The international experiences create commitment and understanding that would not have been possible otherwise, and help to develop society as a whole in a global direction. In a higher dimension, this also spills over to the regional, national and European development. The arrival of exchange students and staff to the university every year also means that those who do not have the opportunity to participate in the Erasmus exchange still benefit from the internationalisation efforts. With the help of visiting international students, staff and guest lecturers on campus who share their experiences and knowledge, there are opportunities to develop international networks, create openness and a

greater understanding of other cultures. It contributes to diversity on campus and serves as an eye opener for those who have been unaware of the opportunity to participate in the Erasmus Programme. The faculties regularly advertise exchange opportunities to motivate staff to get involved in internationalisation areas that are prioritised by the university. Teaching positions at universities in Europe offer excellent opportunities to develop joint teaching and collaborations on teaching assignments, as well as sharing valuable experiences and thus contributing to an improved quality of educational materials and deeper perspectives for international learning.

Continued active, and gradually increasing, participation in international partnerships is expected over time, with the hope of eventually involving all students and staff at the university in an international context in order to develop the international competence and career opportunities in close collaboration with partners in other countries. The ambition is to involve 70% of the employees and all degree programme students, i.e. 80% of the students at Karlstad University, in the Erasmus Programme by the end of the programme period in 2027.

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