



NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND, GALWAY

ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT

NUI Galway's [*Shared Vision, Shaped by Values Strategic Plan 2020-25*](#) affirms our public role as a university in our region and for our world. We are distinctively shaped by our values – Respect, Openness, Sustainability, Excellence – as a powerful and profound root-source of our behaviours. These values underpin our strategic plan and shape the research that drives us, the teaching we share, the support we give and our engagement in the World and for the World.

As we move towards 2025, these values directly inform our internationalisation strategy, and the Erasmus Charter supports us in bringing them to life. Our open door leads to positive change beyond our university, to collaboration and partnerships, and to inclusion and diversity. Our emphasis on academic and research excellence incentivises collaboration with quality partners and the establishment of strong regional and international relationships. Respect for ourselves and others nurtures value in our current and future generations and promotes long-term sustainability and societal well-being.

Our value of **Respect** particularly aligns with the founding values of the European Union: “respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities”. In its strategic plan, NUI Galway undertakes to: embed a culture of empathy, trust and respect; support mental & physical health needed for success & sustainability of our people & community; remove barriers to equality and diversity, and champion respect to set a positive example beyond our community.

The Erasmus programme supports us in pursuing **Openness** in our ways of working and relating to the world. It assists in the development of partnerships which create skills and scholarship to drive growth across our region and internationally. It enables the creation and sharing of knowledge, expertise and technologies. And it facilitates the creation of an environment where everyone has a sense of belonging and can thrive, and that accommodates different approaches to learning, enabling students to fulfil their potential.

Our Erasmus Charter supports us in realising more fully our value of **Sustainability** by developing student and staff experiences that embody mutual respect and contribute to skillsets and projects that promote sustainable futures. Erasmus programmes provide platforms for the development of the next generation of students, researchers and innovators who can tackle society's evolving sustainable development challenges. As a Charter holder, we are facilitated to work more closely with European and global partners to develop solutions for a more sustainable future.

In meeting the challenge of embedding **Excellence** in everything we do, Erasmus supports the ambitions of staff and enables them to share their passion for understanding, educating and improving the world. By empowering staff, students and partners to fulfil their potential, we maximise the potential of our graduates, courses, research, and innovations benefitting societal well-being and economies. This is in resonance with the Government of Ireland's international strategy (2016-20) Irish Educated, Globally Connected, which states "... the success of international education in Ireland will be measured [...] in the quality and international renown of our academic offering and our

research base, since international partnership-building is crucial to developing critical research mass, as well as to addressing global challenges”.

NUI Galway values its Erasmus Charter as a means to support the development of the **European Education Area**, where borders do not hamper learning, studying and conducting research, and where spending time abroad to study, learn or work, as well as engaging internationally on home campuses, is the norm. Accordingly, we pledge to create greater opportunities for our students and staff to broaden their horizons and gain diverse international experience through study abroad programmes, work placements, mentoring, and teaching and research collaborations. The Erasmus Programme will continue to play a foundational role in the achievement of this goal by facilitating increased numbers of students and staff in mobility for academic, linguistic, personal and professional development. We will, in tandem, further contribute to the finalisation of the **Bologna Process** in optimising the opportunities for an international experience for our students.

NUI Galway believes in the value of **European University alliances** as a new pathway to conjoin a new generation of creative Europeans able to cooperate across languages, borders and disciplines to address societal challenges and skills shortages faced in Europe. Since 2019, we have been a committed member of ENLIGHT – a nine-member European University consortium. ENLIGHT’s key objective recognises the need for transformation in higher education to prepare graduates to tackle the large, complex, interdisciplinary problems which society faces. The vehicles for focussing this transformation are the challenges that come with rapid urban growth – sustainability, health, ageing, energy, spatial and social planning. A successful funding proposal was made in 2020 under the European University call (EAC-A02-2019). Erasmus instruments remain an ongoing and key support to NUI Galway and the ENLIGHT consortium in advancing the structural, collaborative and mobility projects which underlie our mission.

The Erasmus+ Programme contributes to the achievement of NUI Galway’s vision as articulated in its strategic plan, [*Shared Vision, Shaped by Values*](#):

- NUI Galway will be a driver of transformational change for our people, our region and our world.
- We will create a distinctively values-based culture, which has excellence, ambition and the wellbeing of our communities at its core.
- We will harness our distinctive strengths and creative energy to deliver significant and sustainable societal impact.

In addition, our participation contributes to the sustainable development of Programme and Partner Countries, and partners therein, in the field of higher education, in line with the objectives of the European 2020 Strategy and the European Education Area.

NUI Galway in particular continues to rely on **Key Action 1** programmes as a core support in promoting the mobility of its, and its partners’, students and staff.

Mobility to and from other programme countries has been a key feature of our international activities since the inception of Erasmus. Within our strategy we will expand the range and quality of interinstitutional agreements with a view to offering transformational mobility opportunities to as many students and staff as possible. These experiences facilitate the acquisition of knowledge and skills that benefit them, the university’s educational mission and society at large, and support our institutional goal of driving cultural, societal and economic change.

Our University places particular emphasis on foreign language skills, and Erasmus is fundamental to the “lived experience” that is at the heart of successful language learning. While the majority of students who take part in Key Action 103 exchanges do so for linguistic reasons, growing numbers are also engaging in Erasmus studies or traineeships through the medium of English as a proven route to personal development, intercultural awareness and employability. Erasmus therefore plays a significant role in enabling our students to develop their potential and in realising the University’s vision for its people and their impact on the World. In promoting these pathways, we continue to develop four-year degree curricula which provide programmed periods – often one year – abroad with formal recognition achieved and facilitated via the Erasmus programme. More flexible or specifically targeted mobility opportunities may be offered by blended mobility or Digital Opportunity Traineeships.

NUI Galway encourages the exchange of teaching staff as a way of reinforcing our international collaborations, sharing our learnings with a wider audience and bringing an international classroom within the reach of non-mobile students. We view Erasmus mobility for staff training as a valuable tool for professional development and for networking and sharing knowledge and experiences with colleagues overseas. It aids our efforts under Key Action 2 and 3 (as below) in the development of good practices, supports modernisation, and can deliver innovations in curriculum design and research collaborations.

The International Credit Mobility programme is instrumental in supporting short-term staff and student mobility to and from countries outside the EU. We use this as an aid to increase our international footprint outside of Europe, along with promoting the internationalisation footprint of the corresponding partners. It is a special vehicle for us to explore new partners in new regions, and is particularly useful in offering opportunities for mobility to administrative staff, as well as academic staff and students.

Key Action 2 is instrumental in providing NUI Galway and its partners with opportunities and resources for collaborating in innovation and the exchange of good practices.

By means of our European University consortium, ENLIGHT, the synergy resulting from the sharing, developing and transferring of innovative practices in education, training and applied research between participating partners, regions and countries will magnify our collective influence.

In the development of Joint Masters Degrees with ENLIGHT and other international partners with complementary expertise and vision, we are facilitated to improve, expand and modernise our provision for our learners.

We look forward to further harnessing the instruments of **Key Action 3** to support and facilitate our strategic activities in policy reform across the EU in education, training and youth – especially in the area of the modernisation of education and training systems as we enter into a revolutionary new era for higher education and its delivery.

The instruments and purpose of the Erasmus programme complement the achievement of the ambitions of NUI Galway as captured in its [Mission-based Performance Compact 2018-2021](#). This Compact is a formal agreement made with the Higher Education Authority (HEA) of Ireland and is the outcome of a process of strategic and performance dialogue between the two bodies. It documents a collective focus on and endeavour towards the attainment of prioritised goals and performance in targeted areas according to NUI Galway’s vision.

The Compact defines “Key System Objectives” and corresponding quantitative and qualitative “High Level Targets” (Section 4, pp 11-39). A number of these speak directly to, are supported by, and in some cases only wholly achievable because of, Erasmus activities. They represent clear strategic intent as to the impact intended from the University’s use of its Charter over the course of its lifetime. They include:

- “All students will have the opportunity to undertake a work placement or work-based project as part of their course by 2025
- Increase the proportion of the higher education cohort studying a foreign language, in any capacity, as part of their course to 20% by 2026.”

In reflecting these targets, we note that the particular objective of Key Action 1 projects at NUI Galway is a successful mobility experience for as many students and staff as possible, enriching their knowledge and skills abroad, complementing their studies and/or professional activities, and ensuring students receive recognition for their mobility period once successfully completed. In addition, we embrace multilingualism as one of the cornerstones of the European project and a powerful symbol of the European Union’s aspiration to be united in diversity. Foreign languages have a prominent role among the skills that will help equip people better for the labour market and make the most of available opportunities.

We value the contribution to our campus of inbound students and staff, who bring with them cultural diversity and new perspectives. With the expansion of our programme offerings and increased focus on off-campus learning experiences, we are dedicated to growth in outbound student numbers. We expect to see intensified cooperation between institutions in the delivery of teaching and the exchange of staff, and anticipate a continuation of the upward trend in staff training mobility.

Our exchange partnerships, both EU and non-EU, emerge from a thorough assessment process which ensures compatibility of curricula and quality of support, and they are based on a shared commitment to academic excellence. Our choice of partners for mobility and other cooperation activities is always based on specific needs, mutual benefit and reciprocity, and focused towards the future. Links are established to meet the requirements of our programmes of study, taking account of the increasingly international dimension of the curriculum and the demand for outward mobility. We review strategic compatibility of research activities as another key factor in the selection of partners as we move towards broad and sustainable cooperative relationships that function at undergraduate, postgraduate and staff levels.

NUI Galway values the quality of participants’ mobility experiences and this is reflected in the high satisfaction ratings awarded by both inbound and outbound students, as well as by participating staff. We pride ourselves on the exceptional support we offer at all stages of the mobility process, both in terms of our responsiveness to individual requests and by means of formal mechanisms like pre-departure sessions, orientation programmes, comprehensive and up-to-date information resources, free English-language classes for incoming exchange students, and regular monitoring visits to HEI and industry partners that host our students. We will continue to routinely review participant feedback to see if there are any areas that need attention, while striving to uphold the principles of the Erasmus Charter to which we are committed.

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