

ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT

Internationalisation is a core value for the University of Padua (UNIPD). Since its origins, almost eight centuries ago, the University of Padua has embraced any opportunity of creating an international environment as a priceless chance for quality improvement and personal enrichment in teaching, research and social impact. In this context, the Erasmus programme has always served as both engine and test-bed of the University's internationalisation and innovation strategies. It has driven change: in student and staff mobility, support services, teaching innovation and digitalisation, as well as in the development of collaborative projects and partnerships worldwide. At the same time, it has served as an 'incubator' of what have later become large, self-sustaining institutional international projects. Within a wider international context, the University of Padua has strongly committed itself to actively pursuing the UN 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs). In 2018, the university has issued its Sustainability Commitment Charter. Our academic community aims to be accessible by everyone, regardless of vulnerabilities or prejudice through different programmes and activities. Any member of the university community should benefit from the opportunities of personal development that internationalisation can provide.

Over the past few years, the University of Padua has decided to interpret internationalisation as an everyday condition that can enable the University itself to express its full potential as higher education institution. We have regularly invested human and financial resources to promote activities, such as supporting visiting scientists and professors, intensifying exchange programmes, organizing summer and winter schools and developing cooperation initiatives – yet, this was not enough: we felt that a substantial, strategic change was needed. Hence, in October 2019, the University of Padua has created a new autonomous division dedicated to International Relations (IR), focused on promoting international collaborations and international attraction of students and teachers. Internationalisation does not involve only the IR Division, but it is a commitment of the entire University. We have been working with students, staff and professors, involving them in several projects and task forces. For instance, the Erasmus Committee, with representatives of the eight Schools of the University; the working group on Internationalisation (*Tavolo per l'Internazionalizzazione*), which gathers the representatives of all 32 Departments, aiming to develop and implement the internationalisation strategy; the Working Groups within the Coimbra Group, etc.

Concerning the teaching activities, the entire academic community is deeply committed to widening the international perspectives of the University of Padua. First of all, we are constantly increasing our teaching offer in vehicular languages: 36 master's degree, 2 bachelor's, 1 single cycle (Medicine), 24 Doctoral degrees, more than 20 short specialization degrees, and 7 MOOCs are offered entirely in English. In total, more than 900 classes are given in English or in other communitarian languages each academic year – and the number keeps increasing.

Further, in order to create a real international productive environment, we have been developing proper infrastructures to stimulate the creation of an international community, where the intertwining of outgoing and incoming students, teachers and staff and the integration of the international staff members are essential. In this framework, the University of Padua is fostering a multilingual environment, where Italian may coexist with other languages. In November 2019, the Academic Senate approved the language policy of the University, involving not only the communication languages, but also the gender and inclusive languages, in a precious effort to promote dialogue, inclusion and non-discrimination. At the same time, the University of Padua has realized a

multilingual communication strategy, by revising student platforms and the website, which is now available in Italian, English, and Chinese.

The attention towards our international community is implemented through a variety of services developed to support local and international students and staff, such as the China Desk Unit and the Service for Psychological Assistance. The wellbeing of our staff and students is a top priority even in emergencies. The IR Division is developing a contingency plan to provide a constant and efficient service, also from the psychological and medical point of views, addressed specifically to mobile and international students and staff. The University of Padua intends to improve also its welcoming process. Starting from summer 2020, an international housing office will work in collaboration with external providers, in order to grant assistance and facilitate the arrival and accommodation steps to our international community. The University of Padua is ready to welcome more students and staff, and to increase the number of international programmes, such as joint and double degrees. This goal will be achieved by implementing improved procedures for the course management, by better promoting to an international audience the services and courses offered, and by strengthening the support provided to incoming and outgoing participants.

Internationalisation goes hand in hand with the development of partnerships based on reciprocity and mutual trust. In parallel to increasing the number of agreements with HE institutions worldwide, The University of Padua has strengthened some specific collaborations with highly qualified academic partners through a series of bilateral meetings called 'UNIPD meets...'. We have also enhanced our participation in various international networks, such as the Coimbra Group, UNIMED, Venice International University (VIU), etc. Our major commitment is now within the European Universities Alliance Arqus, which aims at developing a model of European University working on several structural aspects of the academic life. Arqus involves 7 universities from 7 countries and has started its activity on October 1st, 2019. Within Arqus, the University of Padua is the leader of the Action Line 2 'Widening access, Inclusion and Diversity', confirming our engagement towards a more inclusive educational area and fostering awareness at local and regional level. In this sense, Universities play an important role in the society and need to reinforce their regional engagement and links to the labour market. UNIPD's Career Service is increasing the opportunities for traineeships abroad for our students and graduates (mainly within Erasmus+ KA1), as well as the number of receiving institutions.

Over the last seven years, the University of Padua has enlarged its partnerships and developed stronger collaborations with non-UE institutions, thanks to the new actions included in the Erasmus+ Programme, which enabled to build the foundation for more strategic and comprehensive cooperation activities. Africa is the most representative example: starting from KA107 cooperation projects, the University of Padua has realised a double degree programme in Cameroon with local universities. Recently, together with 5 other Italian universities we have set-up a 'Foundation for Italian Higher Education with Africa'. The University of Padua strongly believes in the actions promoted by the Erasmus+ programme and has successfully exploited past experiences, as proven by our participation in more than one accredited consortium, such as Venice International University (VIU), the Association of Universities of the Adriatic-Ionian area (UniAdriion) and 'Increasing Learning Opportunities in the Job Market' (ILO). Since 2012, the Consortium ILO, composed of 5 Italian universities, has organised about 200 mobilities for traineeship per year. Our University is always looking for new challenges and innovative approaches. From the very beginning of virtual exchanges and virtual mobility, we have taken part in different programmes: among others, the E-tandem example, which has recently been included in the Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange pilot project.

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The future of internationalisation stands in a more accessible physical mobility along with long-distance learning opportunities, with the aim to enhance intercultural dialogue, and short multi-disciplinary programmes. One example is the ICPU - Industry Community Project, developed in collaboration with the University of Sydney, Australia, with the aim to provide students with the opportunity to work on authentic problems set out by industry, community and government organisations, is certainly a successful example of intensive collaborative programmes, which can be developed further.

The University of Padua will continue to develop these formulas as solutions to better answer our community needs, at local and global levels, as well as to enable also not mobile people to benefit from intercultural interactions. For this reason, a widespread internationalisation at home strategy is the ultimate goal and challenge of the next decade, which we are fruitfully testing during this Covid-19 emergency period.