Erasmus Policy Statement (Overall Strategy)

D. Erasmus Policy Statement (Overall Strategy)

The Institution agrees to publish this overall strategy (all three parts) on its website within one month after the signature of the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education by the European Commission. ☑

Please describe your institution's international (EU and non-EU) strategy. In your description please explain a) how you choose your partners, b) in which geographical area(s) and c) the most important objectives and target groups of your mobility activities (with regard to staff and students in first, second and third cycles, including study and training, and short cycles). If applicable, also explain how your institution participates in the development of double/multiple/joint degrees. (max. 5000 characters)

Original language [EN]

The UOC is an innovative university based in Catalonia and open to the world. Its educational and management model, directed by qualified professionals and centred around personalisation and all-inclusive support for students via networking and the extensive use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), is designed to overcome the barriers of time and space and to facilitate the universal sharing of the knowledge it generates to enhance personal development and to improve society.

The values of the UOC are:

- Openness: Open to people, ideas, cultures, and the world in general. In favour of open content, accessibility, mobility, and flexible programmes;

- Flexibility: Capable of adapting to its environment and the needs of society and flexible in its management of staff and faculty, in its support of students, in its approach to talent mobility, and the transfer of knowledge;

- Networking: Defining itself as a networking university within a network. It harnesses its expertise potential in e-learning, the use of ICTs, and the latest developments in the information and knowledge society to maintain a strong presence in physical and virtual international networks and promote, within society, through its community of over 100,000 people, collaborative work and cooperation between universities, institutions, companies, the media, and civic associations;

- Quality: The cornerstone of the institution's culture, with a constant quest for excellence in educational services, teaching, research, and organisational processes to guarantee the academic rigor of the programmes;

Student guidance: The students embody UOC's commitment to public service by incorporating the voice of students, graduates, and society as a whole, and to offer personalised services that guarantee universal access to knowledge;

- Innovation: This implies the areas of education, technology, and operations and all the UOC community (students, faculty, and staff);

- Social responsibility: embodied in the UOC's commitment to work towards a sustainable university that is transparent and accountable to society by recognising cultural pluralism, promoting multilingualism, and fostering diversity in gender policies and promotion.

The nature of UOC has brought about innovative and creative approaches to the internationalization strategy, which at present is primarily linguistic, rather than geographic. In order to execute this strategy, the UOC has designed, and operates from, 4 different (linguistic) virtual campuses: in Catalan, in Spanish, in English and in French.

Alliances brokered by the university nourish these campuses with formative offers. Because of one of the two official languages in Catalonia is Spanish, a "natural" area for alliances has traditionally been Latin America.

The choice of institutional partners is, as in most other processes at the institution, a transversal process involving various university areas, but always within the framework of the institution's Strategic Plan. The university identifies partners who can contribute the most added values to programmes (for content and for language) or research enrichment, and proposes a collaboration where partners can also leverage on our institution's online delivery mode expertise. Double degrees at the university are being provided in a variety of formulas that might go from reciprocal credit recognition to the design of a programme where either institution provides the core courses or the other contributes with courses to give "local" relevance to the programme.

In terms of the institutional objectives for mobility at all instructional levels, they are primarily benchmarking, but also skill acquisition to cement our internationalisation process.

If applicable, please describe your institution's strategy for the organisation and implementation of international (EU and non-EU) cooperation projects in teaching and training in relation to projects implemented under the Programme. (max. 2000 characters)

Original language [EN]

Due to the unique online teaching and learning expertise of the UOC, our international cooperation projects in teacher training is primarily one way, since our institution is sought out to provide competency in e-learning. For this reason, projects are developed with partners that can adapt or complement their educational model taking into account the constant innovation in the field of ICTs. Moreover, the UOC expects to increase the mobility and exchange of students and of the academic and non-academic staff at Bachelor, Master and Doctoral levels. The selection of the countries will be in accordance with the programmes of the institution (either participating or non-participating countries) and fulfil other areas for studies as well as internships. The UOC is also ready to perform and foster virtual mobility to allow all people to have access to the UOC teaching and learning model by offering a flexible and personalised attention to the participants.

One of the main interests of the UOC is to maintain in keeping and improve international quality research through joint actions. There is already a promotion of participation in international groups of excellence and continue with the alliances already established.

The UOC promotes R&D activities via more than 30 and its two centres: the eLearn Center, which studies e-learning, and the Internet Interdisciplinary Institute (IN3), specializing in the study of the networked society and the knowledge economy, network technologies and specific software areas.

The UOC forms part of more than 30 international networks, including the European University Association (EUA), the International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE) and the IMS Global Learning Consortium.

The UOC Research and Transfer Support Office (OSRT) is the main structural support to successfully develop and run projects.The OSRT aims to meet the needs of the teaching, research, management staff and students at the UOC in an effective way.

Please explain the expected impact of your participation in the Programme on the modernisation of your institution (for each of the 5 priorities of the Modernisation Agenda*) in terms of the policy objectives you intend to achieve. (max. 3000 characters)

Original language [EN]

From the combination of the mission and vision of the UOC, 5 strategic priorities are stated that can contribute to the ones(*) at the Programme Modernisation Agenda:

- Training priority: The training programmes are developed and evolve by programme design, learning methodologies, and internal quality systems. The model is student centred and fully adapted to the EHEA and that harnesses the full potential of ICTs;

- RDI&T priority: It is related to research and knowledge transfer relating knowledge society, and, specifically, e-learning for personal, social, cultural, and economic development;

- International presence priority: UOC offers universal access to learning and shares resources with other universities by cooperating and forging lasting alliances, taking into account the multicultural component and by increasing presence of counsellors, tutors, students, alumni, and management staff from around the world;

- Personal development priority: UOC advocates a policy of active, quality training, which includes the promotion of mobility; this policy yields excellent results in terms of attracting new talent, fostering professional development, and retaining staff. Networking is a driving force for development;

- Organisational culture priority: Management is flexible, modular, and interdisciplinary. This system combined with the emphasis placed on networking at the UOC ensures sustainability and a high level of efficiency and coherence in terms of the high-quality services delivered. Moreover, UOC has designed information systems that facilitate good internal communication, a high level of transparency, and good knowledge management.

The enhancement of the UOC research programmes through international partnerships as well as our staff mobility for benchmarking purposes pursues a primary objective: the improvement of globally relevant competency acquisition of our student population, which, to the extent possible, the UOC attempts to test through international internship/training programs.

Social commitment and responsibility being part of the UOC institutional mission, programmes are carried out jointly with the public and private sector to address and help mitigate social needs and labour market mutations by training the unemployed, and by providing entrepreneurial skills development for small business start-ups as alternative to employability in an ever more restrictive and exclusive labour environment, among others. Participation in the Programme allows the university to benefit from exposure to best practices, and to share the peculiarities of the practice of an Internet-based institution in this domain.

(*) 1.Increasing attainment levels to provide the graduates and researchers Europe needs 2.Improving the quality and relevance of higher education 3.Strengthening quality through mobility and cross-border cooperation 4.Linking higher education, research and business for excellence and regional development 5.Improving governance and funding

* COM (2011) 567 (http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2011:0567:FIN:EN:PDF)