

## Erasmus Policy Statement

### International (EU and non-EU) Strategy

The Internationalisation agenda of Avans University of Applied Sciences (Avans) focuses on a variety of objectives:

Our primary aim is to give our students as many opportunities as possible to develop international competences and skills, in order to optimise their career opportunities. This is achieved through internationalisation@home, English-taught integrated semester programmes (minors), international classrooms and other internationally orientated course components in our curricula that are designed to make them both state-of-the-art and best adapted to the requirements of our students and their prospects on the national and international labour market.

Avans is a large multi-stream university of applied sciences, in which responsibility for the organisation and delivery of curricula is assigned decentrally to the various Avans Schools. This means that at each Avans School, the level of internationalisation, partnerships and international mobility is organised separately and adapted to the needs and requirements of the respective curricula.

In a limited number of designated areas, the Executive Board of Avans has set targets for the strategic internationalisation agenda in the form of a Strategic Policy Plan. Within the current Plan (2011-2014), entitled 'With passion and commitment', we have established an Internationalisation Focus Group which conducts innovative experiments with the aim of further internationalising the curricula, the institute and its processes. The Focus Group is also jointly responsible for achieving the internationalisation targets set by the Executive Board. For the current plan period, these targets are:

- Each study programme has an international context
- 20% of our students go abroad as part of their study programme
- Every student has mastered a second language at B2 level (CEFR)
- 1000 foreign students are enrolled
- Avans has established 2 strategic partnerships in each focus country.

At present, Avans is generally, but not exclusively, focusing on Asia (mainly China), Russia and Brazil. We are also observing a trend towards strengthening European academic collaborations within Germany and native English-speaking regions in order to facilitate study exchanges, work placements and other academic collaborations. Avans is supporting the growing interest among students in taking part in exchange programmes all over the world, which offer the opportunity to master second languages such as English, French, German and Spanish. We are supporting the growing interest among our students in developing international competences and skills through work placements and study-abroad periods, both within other regions of Europe as well as, to an increasing extent, the rest of the world. Avans is witnessing a growing interest among students in carrying out work placements and study periods outside of Europe. Avans strictly monitors the academic quality of these study-abroad periods as well as the safety and well-being of our

students during their stay abroad. To achieve all this, we maintain a portfolio of 179 Erasmus partners in 24 countries and approximately 40 academic non-Erasmus collaborations in a number of Erasmus countries and 17 non-Erasmus countries all over the world (2013).

Strategic academic and industrial institutional collaborations are the responsibility of the Executive Board, but are set up in close cooperation with the relevant Avans Schools. The individual Erasmus Agreements are the responsibility of the respective Schools, and are established in close cooperation with the academic staff involved. Each Avans School is free to decide on the composition of its portfolio of international partnerships.

The individual Schools are also free to implement staff mobility as well as other international educational collaborations such as internationally organised study programmes, intensive programmes and curriculum development. In most cases, this takes place on a 1-to-1 basis linked to bilateral agreements for student exchanges, including several international Double Degree programmes.

The Avans research groups and Centres of Expertise are linked to Avans Schools, and have their own internationalisation agenda. They establish their own international partnerships under the responsibility of both the Executive Board and the Avans Schools involved.

Avans' goal for the immediate future is to strengthen strategic partnerships with a limited number of academic institutions. We will be seeking to establish multi-stream partnerships with preferred partners, covering exchanges and other forms of academic collaborations and research. Avans plans to assign a Strategic Policy Adviser for International Cooperation within the Strategic Policies Staff Unit.

At present (2013), Avans is involved in a single joint degree Bachelor programme in cooperation with another Dutch university of applied sciences. We are also involved in 6 international double degree programmes, with academic institutions in Germany, France, the UK, Italy and the USA.

#### **Strategy for the organisation and implementation of international (EU and non-EU) cooperation projects in teaching and training**

Within the decentralised organisation of Avans University of Applied Sciences (see above), it is, under the final responsibility of the Executive Board, down to either the individual Schools, research units or centres of expertise to initiate and implement international teaching and training programmes and research projects. Both national and international grant applications to financially support these projects are coordinated by the Avans grant coordinator, who works within our Finance & Student Administration Service Unit. The International Affairs Policy Adviser is often also involved in the process of international (including EU) grant applications.

Each project initiated will have a direct link to and will support either relevant study programmes, schools or our research domains. Although research is by definition internationally orientated, Avans has expressed a desire to focus on regional industrial and social collaborations. However, we do not limit our projects to regional activities, as some are very much globally orientated and organised.

In this context, Avans has in the past successfully taken part in the Erasmus Programme and its predecessors, and obtained EU grants for activities such as Erasmus Intensive Programmes, LLP/Leonardo, Daphne III and EFRO/Interreg. Our aim for the immediate future is to continue to actively take part in the EU Erasmus4All grant programme and its sub-programmes.

### **Expected impact on modernisation**

By taking part in the Erasmus+ programme, Avans University of Applied Sciences primarily aims to maximise the opportunities for our students to develop international academic and professional competences and internationally orientated career opportunities; to further internationalise our curricula and classrooms; to continuously adapt to the dynamics of the internationally developing labour market, business opportunities for our graduates, public and social developments and demands in the Netherlands, Europe and beyond; and to become more successful and competitive in our applied research domains.

Over the last couple of years, Avans has seen a continuous rise in enrolled student numbers and graduates each year in both the first and second cycle. At present and in line with the developments in higher education in the Netherlands, we have now shifted our focus to a more quantitative increase in our student enrolment as well as an increase in study efficiency of our enrolled students.

Since that time, the strong and strategic positioning of Avans within the knowledge triangle has been a key characteristic of our organisation, as well as all our study programmes, research and outreach activities. Work placements and graduation assignments totalling 30-60 ECTS, or in several cases even more, have been and will continue to be a compulsory component of all our curricula. In addition, the strategic planning and academic development of our study programmes take place in close cooperation with our surrounding public society, industries and research partners. In this respect, Avans focuses mainly, but not exclusively, on regional strategic public as well as industrial partnerships and collaborations.

Although research is relatively new in the Dutch universities of applied sciences environment, Avans has established itself in the applied research domain and has a strong strategic long-term aim to further develop its regional and globally orientated applied research activities.

Furthermore, qualitative and academic staff development in relation to our internationalising curricula and growing research environment are just two of our strategic HRM policies for the years to come.

Avans aims to specifically strengthen multi-stream academic, exchange and research collaborations with a select number of preferred European higher education institutions. However, we equally acknowledge that a broader portfolio of partnerships with other EU and non-EU partners is in the interest of our students, and will also be maintained.

Finally, we firmly believe that Dutch universities of applied sciences in general, and Avans University of Applied Sciences in particular, have in the past already generally operated in accordance with the current 5 priorities of the European Modernisation Agenda, and we will continue to do so.