

Webster Erasmus Policy Statement

Overall strategy

Webster Vienna Private University (WVPU's) mission is to be a research-driven university that develops knowledge for the public good and prepares students for success in an increasingly complex and changing world through a unique, global-oriented and personalized education that enables our graduates to become tomorrow's leaders.

Fostering internationalization is a key strategic orientation for furthering WVPU's mission of offering global-oriented education, as well as evident in our history, operations, and values. Webster Vienna Private University (WVPU) is part of a unique Webster University network; present in 8 countries with over 100 campuses spread over four continents. The longest operating private university in Austria. It became the first university in the country to offer degree programs entirely in English, the first to offer an accredited MBA degree, and one of the first to receive full accreditation as a private university in 2001. All of its degree programs are dually accredited in Austria and the United States, recognized across the European Higher Education Area, and thus serve as a basis for our graduates to seek careers in the world's two largest economies.

A global perspective is a central tenet of WVPU practice. It can be found in our classrooms where our multinational faculty from over 40 countries teach an internationally diverse student body representing 70 nationalities creating a tangible global community in every course. It is present in our business operations through our interaction with Webster University in the United States and its extended sites around the world. We actively encourage our researchers to focus on subjects with global impact and work in teams and with colleagues from institutions that span the globe. Our courses are imbued with rigorous examination of international practices and norms as well as the effects of local actions on global markets, politics, and the environment.

By an active participation in the Erasmus+ Programme and respecting the principles of the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education, we aim to advance a proactive and shared approach to internationalization and modernization of our institution that complements and enhances our core values:

1. A Student-centered approach to education
2. The integration of theory and practice
3. Individual accountability and social responsibility
4. Commitment to diversity and inclusion
5. Global perspective

Building European Education Area

Webster Vienna Private University supports and seeks ways to contribute to the development of the European Education Area. Reframing the values listed above and in line with our strategic goals, WVPU particularly seeks to:

1. Promote cross-border mobility and cooperation in education and training through:
 - Partnerships and networks: WVPU has an extensive network of businesses and international organizations, established through the Director's Advisory Board, Alumni Association, and our faculty. WVPU harnesses this network in order to provide internships to students, to bring in expert practitioners teaching hands-on skills into the classroom and to provide seminars and trainings to employees and students. With help of the Erasmus+ Programme we want to deepen existing collaborations and look to develop new significant and sustainable partnerships with academic, research, and entrepreneurial institutions abroad. Increasing participation in international research networks has been identified as one of WVPU's key strategic goals. WVPU is especially interested in cooperation with and learning from the networks of European universities. Apart from Europe, WVPU seeks to build exchange partnerships with universities in Asia and the Middle East. These partnerships are essential to opening new opportunities to our students, faculty and staff and enhancing our global outreach, visibility and reputation.
 - Student mobility and international engagement opportunities: by further developing the portfolio of mobility opportunities for students we aim to increase participation in study and training abroad. Offering a student-centred approach to education is one of our core values, and thus we want to ensure high quality, tailored services and assistance to all incoming and outgoing students and to promote the integration of incoming students into all academic and social activities.
 - Faculty and staff exchange: continuous encouragement of international involvement of staff in teaching, research and administrative capacities is an important goal of WVPU. Staff mobility is strongly desired to support our internationalization objectives through the establishment of sustainable working relationships (e.g. teaching or research) with faculty or departments in other countries which may lead to joint research, sharing of experience. At the same time WVPU shall serve as an international meeting point and exchange platform for visiting faculty and staff. WVPU is fully committed to the indivisibility of teaching and research in the classroom and the advancement of scholarly inquiry in the subject areas of our faculty. Therefore, WVPU is committed to strengthening research cooperation with other universities outside of Austria. Supporting staff mobility in professional development and training has also been identified as an important means of increasing job satisfaction and WVPU's attractiveness as an

employer. In this context, we want to enhance our international networks and promote more opportunities for the international knowledge exchange and transfer. We want our entire academic community to become an essential stakeholder in learning, applying, and sharing this experience.

2. Overcoming barriers and supporting inclusive and innovation-driven approach to education and training:

- A commitment to diversity and inclusion is one of our core values, and we will continue to seek avenues to widening participation and inclusivity, through our outreach programmes and projects, our admissions policies and practice, and in our policy to provide targeted financial assistance to minimize barriers to entry, progression and mobility.
- Keeping in mind socio-economic, political and health-related barriers, we will use information and communication technologies to find innovative ways to contribute to a stronger international involvement of students, staff and faculties. In this context, WVPU will investigate possibilities of creating new flexible formats for international assignments by e.g. short-term programs or blended mobility, including online teaching modules that can be easily shared across borders.

3. Support automatic mutual recognition of diplomas and learning periods abroad:

- Maintaining a high quality of teaching goes hand in hand with modernization and continuous improvement of the quality of academic services. WVPU conforms to the national qualification framework and standards established in the Bologna process, and strives to continually improve processes and tools to provide transparency, consistency and to reduce burdens of mutual recognition. As WVPU offers dual-accreditation and two credit systems, transparent processes are of even more importance.

4. Transition toward digital European society:

- WVPU is committed to developing the data science expertise and digital competencies of our students preparing them for the demands of the growing digital internal market. Students are not only acquiring new skills in terms of digital literacy. They also learn about the wider societal implications, challenges, and dangers of digitization. Thus, across our programs WVPU supports innovative distance learning methods and deals with the effects of digitalization be that in marketing, diplomacy, entrepreneurship or communication, to name a few. Students are encouraged to participate in internships and in-house traineeships where they can employ and refine their digital skills.

Participation in Erasmus actions

Since 2017, WVPU has been an active member of the Erasmus+ network. With the help of the Erasmus+ programme, we've been able to build up valuable partnerships with European and non-European Higher Education Institutions for students and staff exchange. Most of those partnerships have been built out of the relationships of our academic staff. Due to the modest size of our institution and a moderate number of departments, all agreements are governed centrally via the Erasmus Office.

Since joining the Erasmus+ network, WVPU has taken a number of important steps, established partnerships with non-academic institutions for the students to benefit from work experience abroad. Our students took advantage of incoming scholars and experts who shared their knowledge through hands-on exercises and mentored workshops. Our faculty explored new teaching methods, as well as ventured to apply their expertise in completely new fields as a result of participating in faculty mobility. Our administrative staff was able to participate in trainings, enabling personal and professional skill development and exchange of good practice. We developed a range of services, procedures and methods to support and facilitate student and staff mobility. Building on the experience gathered so far, we're looking forward to exploring further possibilities and professionalizing our services. In the future, WVPU will particularly focus on the promotion and support of student mobility. For this purpose, we aim to improve our existing services and create new ones in order to:

- better communicate the mobility opportunities,
- better prepare the students for participation in student mobility,
- maximize their learning by self-assessment before, during and after the mobility
- create a platform for feedback, knowledge sharing and exchange of best practice

WVPU plans to expand its participation primarily within the Erasmus+ Key Action (KA1). We are open to cooperation with HEIs in frame of Erasmus multilateral projects and networks. However due to our limited capacity, the added value of these projects needs to be evaluated case by case. Therefore, the priority will be given exclusively to the KA1 activities. In fact, the expected outcomes of this action will be an essential contribution to achievement to the university's strategic goals by:

- creating new internationalization and educational opportunities to students and staff,
- improving the quality of education and administrative services,
- strengthening cross-border partnerships with HEIs and non-academic institutions for the purpose of stimulating research, innovation and professional responsibility.

Impact of the participation in the Erasmus+ Programme

Partnerships and networks: WVPU will systematically pursue new agreements with HEIs across Europe and beyond. The list of partner institutions should be well-balanced and provide a variety of opportunities for future activities and projects. Due to the modest size of our University, our focus will rather be on compatibility of partner institutions, than on the quantity of partnerships. WVPU mainly seeks cooperation with institutions with a compatible educational philosophy, namely those which place a high value on joining theory and research with practice, provide an international perspective, which preferably value small class sizes and individual attention. Nevertheless, we aim to increase the number of partner institutions to at least 25 HEIs by 2022 and further increase the number to at least 35 HEIs by 2025. The quality of these partnerships will be regularly assessed via feedback mechanisms.

Student mobility and international engagement opportunities: Student mobility will be the primary focus of WVPU within Erasmus+ in the upcoming years. In order to motivate more students to go abroad, we first need to create a critical mass of attractive opportunities reflecting the needs and ambitions of our students. Initially, our goal is that in each semester at least two students will go abroad for studying and traineeships. We will gradually work toward increasing these numbers to up to five students per semester by 2025 and up to 10 students by 2027.

Faculty and staff exchange: in the last several years staff mobility for teaching and training has been important instrument for building networks of international peers, enhancing global experiences, promoting professional developments, but also for improving employee motivation and satisfaction. The experiences our staff gained abroad fostered internationalization in teaching, research, and service. Furthermore, faculty and staff exchange is an important instrument in enhancing the outreach and visibility of our institution. In addition, we believe that staff mobility will have a positive effect on student mobility in the future by fostering a global perspective in the classroom and sharing of experiences. Therefore, we aim to yearly increase the numbers of faculty and staff exchange by up to 20%.

WVPU's services to support mobility are centralized and individualized, benefitting our small, service-oriented institution. This model will allow us to best maximize the benefit our participation in the Erasmus+ programme via a centralized monitoring and measurement of outcomes, as well as an effort to create synergies between the areas described above. Therefore, we will create monitoring and feedback instruments (like surveys, feedback reports or dialogues) for all activities and participants. Suggested improvements will be reviewed, and new or existing services will be developed respectively.