



ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT 2021-2027

Utena University of Applied Sciences has participated in Erasmus programme since 1999. Utena UAS mission is to prepare specialists with a higher college education, meeting the needs of the regional, national and European labour market, and to provide conditions for continuous education by developing and promoting an individual's abilities to continuously learn and act under digital society conditions. We see our institution as a nationally and internationally recognized higher education institution, whose activities are based on high quality, development and promotion of the academic community, meeting society's expectations, responsibly developing social partnerships, contributing to sustainable regional and national development.

In its activities, the Utena UAS is guided by the following values - quality, internationality, creativity, cooperation, innovation, the value created for the region, unity of studies and science, cohesion with industry and business, dissemination of knowledge and learning values in society.

The Utena UAS has set strategic objectives:

1. to train highly qualified professionals who are motivated to continuously improve their skills and work in an environment of global digitalisation and innovation growth.
2. To develop applied scientific activities, research and non-formal education services relevant to the region and the country.

The strategic objectives are pursued through these objectives:

1. to provide a high-quality education that ensures the development of a competent, critical, responsible and lifelong learner;
2. to develop a modern, new technology-based study and teaching base;
3. to carry out applied research and experimental development;
4. to participate in international, national, and Aukštaitija region economic, social, educational and cultural development programmes;
5. to promote and implement the principles of lifelong learning, to create conditions for continuing education, professional qualification improvement and retraining;
6. ensure the rational use of material and financial resources.

The Utena UAS activities in 2021-2027 will be strengthened in the following strategic areas:

1. Student Attraction and Retention.
2. Enhancing learning.
3. Development of the internationality.
4. Improvement the organisational culture.

5. Improvement of applied scientific consultancy and research.
6. Development of the strategic partnerships.

One of the five priority areas of the institution is the development of internationality. The development of this field is focused on the improvement of studies, Utena UAS' organisational culture, applied research activities, academic staff, strategic partnerships. The internationalisation development aims to develop internationalisation within the modernisation of the institution and achievement of Lithuanian and European higher education goals and in line with the basic principles of the ECHE Charter.

The goal of internationality will be pursued through the following tasks:

1. to modernise study programs, their implementation process by implementing innovations and digital technologies;
2. increase the two-way mobility of students and staff, with a specific focus on people with fewer opportunities, the employability of graduates;
3. strengthening multilingualism and intercultural competencies;
4. to develop lifelong learning by providing opportunities for professional development in foreign higher education institutions or companies;
5. to develop applied science and research;
6. to develop international partnerships, increasing the institutional awareness and reputation in the international environment, diversifying the forms and activities of international cooperation;
7. to promote active citizenship and shared values by strengthening the sense of European identity and culture.

All internationalisation development objectives and planned measures contribute to the Utena UAS strategic objectives. The measures for implementing these objectives are set out in the Utena UAS Internationalisation Development Strategy for 2021-2017 and detail the practical implementation of each objective.

Measures are envisaged for the improvement of study programs, study process and study quality; attracting international students, encouraging Utena UAS students to participate in international mobility activities, organisation of mobility activities; encouraging teachers and other staff to test themselves in the international space in terms of research, professional development, gaining experience, job satisfaction; the development of strategic partnerships; implementation of innovative, personalized and digital study methods and technologies and sharing of experience; development of methodological materials, development of standard virtual courses through e-learning environment; implementation of pedagogical innovations in a student-centered learning environment; the involvement of international students, lecturers and other partners in the life of the Utena UAS academic community, civic, cultural, etc. initiatives; involvement of international partners in the development, improvement and quality assurance of new study programs; increasing the employment of graduates during and after their studies.

As the Utena UAS mission is to train skilled professionals for the regional, national and European labour market, we believe that the training of future professionals is inseparable from European values such as freedom, democracy, equality, respect for the rule of law, the understanding of human rights, the development of citizenship and dignity, and personal development. *The objectives of participation in the Erasmus program are:*

- to increase mobility;
- to increase the employability of graduates;
- to promote language learning and the development of intercultural competences;

- to ensure the quality of studies through the transfer of good practice from foreign higher education institutions;
- to develop lifelong learning - providing opportunities for professional development through learning, gaining experience in foreign higher education institutions or companies;
- to promote active citizenship and the development of common European values;
- to attract foreign higher education teachers / researchers and experienced practitioners to teach study modules / subjects /
- diversify forms of international cooperation.

This will be done following the basic principles of the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education:

- respect, non-discrimination and transparency, involving participants from different social backgrounds, with a specific focus on participants with fewer opportunities to participate;
- ensure automatic recognition of all credits (ECTS or other systems) for satisfactory study results abroad, including mixed mobility;
- in the case of credit mobility, not to charge incoming students for studies, registration, landing, use of laboratories and the library;
- ensure the quality of mobility activities and transnational projects at all stages;
- promoting environmentally friendly practices in program administration and mobility/projects;
- to promote active citizenship for incoming and outgoing students at all stages of mobility and transnational project activities.
- actively disseminate all ECHE principles to academia, social partners and the general public;
- monitor and follow ECHE's principles on an annual basis;
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Physical mobility activities are currently at a critical juncture worldwide. Therefore, the aspect of "**internationality at home**" is very important: modernisation of the study content, adapting it to the study of both local and foreign students, development of intercultural competencies of all those involved in the study process; promotion and implementation of virtual mobility, participation in international research/conferences. In the period 2021-2027, the Utena UAS will strive to increase the visibility and reputation of the institution not only at the national but also at the international level while also contributing to raising the profile of Lithuanian and European higher education.

In the new Erasmus period, the Utena UAS will promote both outbound and incoming virtual mobility. It is planned to develop new e. learning modules/ programs, standard methodological tools used by partner institutions. The Utena UAS will draw on its experience in this field. **International cooperation projects in teaching and training** will be pointed to establish international cooperation with neighbouring countries to build capacity of institutions and modernise higher education institutions from EU and non-EU countries which are part of Bologna zone. The modern curricula with related component of students', staff mobility will be activities of such cooperation as well as modernisation of education. The Utena UAS will ensure that the impact of participation in international projects is sustainable and long-lasting and relevant not only to the participating institutions, but also to the wider academic, regional community.

Virtual mobility and the development of its potential are particularly relevant during this period. Erasmus students and teachers already had the experience of studying and doing internships and studying and doing internships remotely. The basis of virtual mobility in the College is well-developed within e-learning. Since 2013 the distance learning method has been introduced. This method of study is usually offered to students with fewer opportunities, i.e. those who do not have the opportunity to participate in the study process in the usual way - living abroad, raising young

children, working and holding positions that do not allow them to leave the job for a more extended period of time. Currently, there are more than 500 courses in the Lithuanian version of VLE Moodle and more than 120 courses in the English version. Currently, the Utena UAS offers 4 distance study programs - Business Management, Tourism and Hotel Administration, Information Systems Engineering and Social Work. The lecturers have considerable (more than 5 years) experience of working remotely, are able to use the technological means applied for such studies. It is planned to prepare study material for study subjects offered in the ECTS catalogue for VLE Moodle international students. With the introduction of quarantine in Lithuania, Utena UAS has wholly moved to the virtual space; therefore, all the technologies mentioned above have been used for studies, non-formal education training and projects.

The Utena UAS main target group is students, who during their studies are given the opportunity to actively participate in international activities and to gain both study, practical, cultural and intercultural experience, as well as the skills needed in the labour market, while allowing them to adapt to changing circumstances. Throughout the College, we are guided by the principles of freedom and shared values, thus developing active citizens who not only participate in the self-governance of the academic community, but also actively engage in volunteering, local or regional and national NGO activities. In response to today's changes, the College ensures the quality of studies, so that students' qualifications and higher education experience enable them to succeed in employment and continuous development.

With the help of the Erasmus program, the Utena UAS can become more student-centred in the study process, adapting it to individual needs and opportunities. The Utena UAS strives to involve more participants with fewer opportunities in international activities: individualizing study plans, combining traditional and distance learning. Considering the diversity of students and their needs, the Utena UAS creates conditions for flexible choice of learning opportunities and combining studies with work. The Utena UAS will strive to systematically compare the quality of its studies and practice with the experience of higher education institutions in other countries and, in this context, to improve the skills and international competences of learners and teachers. We plan to develop and offer students new electives related to activities in a multicultural work environment and knowledge of different cultures.

All employees of the Utena UAS have equal and equal opportunities to participate in international activities and increase their professional and personal competencies. Teachers play a key role in creating a quality study experience and in facilitating the acquisition of knowledge, competencies and skills. The diversity of students and the greater focus on learning outcomes require student-centred learning and teaching, so the role of the teacher is also changing, so it is especially important to ensure that the majority of teachers are actively involved in international activities and gain experience working with foreign students. and foreign universities. Not only professional but also personal, including intercultural competences, are very important for a quality study process. The Erasmus program provides an excellent opportunity to develop these competencies. 2021-2027 The Utena UAS plans to organize trainings for academic staff, to which foreign interns will be invited to share their experience. The participation of teachers in international activities and projects, work with incoming students is and will be recognized during the professional certification.

The Utena UAS observes the principles of academic freedom and academic honesty and does not tolerate any form of fraud or dishonesty; the Utena UAS makes every effort to protect students and staff from any form of discrimination and intolerance towards them and others. This is reflected in the College's main legal documents, which are publicly available and accessible to all.

The implementation of the Erasmus programme and international projects at the Utena UAS has an impact not only on the Utena UAS community, but also on the region: it helps to develop a network of cooperation between the project's foreign partners and the region's social partners from the sectors of health, business, industry, education, arts and culture, local government, NGOs, etc.,

through the inclusion of the representatives of these sectors in the dissemination of the project's results in the dissemination of the project's results, in the concluding and practical scientific conferences, in the ongoing researches, and in the trainings. The Utena UAS has an extensive network of international partners, not only in the European Union but also in other countries around the world. Thanks to the Erasmus programme, the Utena UAS is able further develop successful partnerships with countries in Western Europe, Scandinavia and elsewhere.

The Utena UAS will seek to find new international partners for the Social Work and Kinesitherapy study programmes, the new Tourism Service Management, Modern Business Management, Event Management and Performing Arts, Occupational Safety and Environmental Engineering study programmes, and the Hospitality Management joint study programme.

The Utena UAS will work with international partners to develop joint scientific applications, research, scientific events, and applied science projects, in line with its scientific activities. These efforts will be aimed at strengthening the content of studies, the scientific competence of academic staff, improving the level of scientific excellence of international conferences organised at the Utena UAS, and raising the profile of the Utena UAS in the European Research Area.

All Erasmus participants will receive academic and social support and guidance. The impact of participation in the Erasmus programme is very pronounced in terms of changes in the content of studies and the quality of the organisation of studies: students will gain experience of studying in another country, improve their communication skills in foreign languages, improve their employability; lecturers will have the opportunity to improve their qualification by participating in international programmes and by improving their qualification, they will be able to compare the content of the subject they teach, their experience with the practice applied in foreign countries, to initiate changes in study programmes; administrative staff will get acquainted with innovations in the process of studying by participating in international exchanges, projects and will be able to integrate their international experience into the improvement of the process of studying, the study programme.

The Erasmus programme will help to raise the profile of the Utena UAS in the European higher education and global higher education area.