



## Erasmus Policy Statement (EPS) Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences

Internationalisation is identified as strategic focus area and one of the two binding elements of the university-wide identity by of Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences (RUAS) Strategic Agenda 2016-2025 (see *Annex 1 Strategic Agenda, Annex 2 Our Work Plan*), alongside with the economic development of Rotterdam urban areas of *Haven (Rotterdam harbour)* and *Zuid (Rotterdam South)*. In order to play an active part in the advancement of the European Education Area (EEA) from this regional perspective, RUAS has formalised its approach to internationalisation in a conceptual framework called the *Internationalisation Triangle* (see *Annex 3 Internationalisation Triangle*). The international dimension of our professional study programmes is implemented from the perspectives of the three societal issues high on the development agenda of the Rotterdam Metropolitan Area (RMA), identified as RUAS' overarching policy objectives for internationalisation: **Inclusion, Intercultural Competence** and **Superdiversity**. This vision on internationalisation is thus based upon consultation with internal and external stakeholders in RMA to ensure alignment with RUAS' societal mission and the fulfillment of the social contract. Through its HUB Internationalisation (see *Annex 2 Our Work Plan*), peer learning activities and active policy advice provision RUAS sees to continuous development of its vision in co-creation with its 13 faculties (further in the text referred to as "institutes") and over 100 study programmes.

In alignment with the RMA regional development dynamics, the EEA priorities for 2021-2027 are intrinsically pertinent to RUAS' institutional policy objectives and are catered for through the implementation of RUAS' internationalisation and modernisation strategy.

### Inclusive education

In January 2020, Rotterdam with its over 651K population has the highest percentage of foreigners from non-industrialised nations in The Netherlands. They form a large part of Rotterdam's multiethnic and multicultural diversity. 50,3% of the population are of non-Dutch origin or have at least one parent born outside the country. In addition, dozens of well-known international companies chose to establish their headquarters in Rotterdam, which is one of the main centers of the world shipping industry. This high level of diversity is a socio-economic given of the Rotterdam Metropolitan Area (RMA) and is a key characteristic of RUAS' approach to internationalisation. Our task is to implement this diversity, use it as an asset, and to empower students and staff to thrive and excel within an inclusive environment. RUAS educates its super diverse student population to become reflective professionals capable to make valuable contributions to our increasingly globalised society and the professional field. Whether our graduates chose to pursue national or international careers, they must be prepared to work in a super diverse setting inextricably linked to the rapidly changing global environment. **Inclusiveness** is taken by RUAS to mean the promoting of inclusion: all students and staff members should feel at home and welcome and should know that we have high expectations for them. RUAS will continue to offer everyone the best possible development of their talents; we are dedicated to an inclusive classroom and work experience. All of our staff members are experienced in conducting a dialogue with students and colleagues about the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. Lecturers are being facilitated in developing an appropriate curriculum and creating an inclusive learning environment in their classes.

### Common values

Whilst our world is increasingly inter-connected, we are still culturally distinct. **Superdiversity** at RUAS is defined as a demographic development in which majority populations no longer exist. It refers not only to ethnic diversity but rather to a broader scope of culture including gender, language, potential, age, learning style, etc. Regarding our student population, Superdiversity is an established fact in all our study programmes, but at the same time it is precisely the context in our graduates' professional field. This is why contributing to the creation of the "*Unity in Diversity*" around fundamental European values of freedom, democracy, equality, respect for the rule of law, human rights, dignity on the one hand and the respect for the environment through RUAS-wide environmentally friendly travel policy (see *Annex 4 International Travel Policy*) on the other hand are our daily endeavour. Our vision promotes a pedagogical and didactic form of professional education revolving around inclusiveness, differentiation, interrelationships and active interaction. Our chief principle is equality: we will continue to encourage mutual respect, create even mobility opportunities for all students and staff to experience European identity and active citizenship in their progress towards empowerment.

### Digital Skills

In the context of continued digitisation, automation, artificial intelligence and the need to keep up with technological progress, where, according to the EC, 40% of European employers report that they have difficulties in finding people with the skills they need to grow and innovate, a core ongoing social contract of RUAS is to maintain a high level of employability of its graduates, address the needs of the European working field and to facilitate social mobility through the:

- provision of a creative and productive workforce capable of driving R&D and innovation,
- development of digital skills within its technical and non-technical curricula,
- increasing digital competencies of staff through professionalization,
- increasing the use of digital technologies in the delivery of its education, including virtual and blended learning, in the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond,
- facilitating access to high-speed connectivity and digital equipment to students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds.



## Recognition

In order to succeed in the implementation of its social mission and to secure a high level of employability of its graduates, the needs of the global working field in terms of international, **Intercultural** and subject -specific competencies is the starting point for the formulation of internationalisation vision at study programme level. These target competencies are either defined explicitly or are indirectly implied in the *professional profile* – a document issued by the Dutch government - or identified through consultation with the stakeholders: professional field, alumni, students and staff. The competencies are then translated into learning outcomes (LO) embedded in RUAS's own curricula. The achievement of the LO is supported, amongst other instruments, through the implementation of study mobility that RUAS actively promotes amongst its student population. This makes mobility and cooperation one of the central elements of RUAS' institutional policy. To boost mobility, facilitate cross-border cooperation, remove remaining obstacles and improve the attractiveness of the European higher education RUAS continues to invest efforts into the following recognition related measures:

- **Regarding credit mobility:** The systematic use of Bologna Tools across RUAS is an established fact in all institutes. Study periods abroad are subject of total and unconditional recognition via Learning Agreement, are integrated into domestic curricula and are valorised in the diploma supplement in most study programmes. A margin for improvement still exists for the study programmes in the initial stage of internationalisation.
- **Regarding full degree mobility:** To improve fluidity of the international incoming degree mobility the process of recognition of foreign secondary and higher education qualifications for the incoming degree-seeking students is streamlined at central level admissions.
- **Regarding staff mobility:** The results of staff mobility are made visible internally through an established community of practice and valorised in the individual staff career development.

As part of RUAS' own strategy for modernisation and internationalisation, the Erasmus Programme provides:

- a regulatory framework essential for the strategic alignment between RUAS' institutional internationalisation policy and the European Education Area priorities for the period 2021-2027, and
- an invaluable financial lever mechanism indispensable for the achievement of RUAS' modernisation plans through our participation in the Key Actions 1 and 2, notably regarding the enhancement of the quality of our education programmes and student experience
- a structural means for increasing the employability of our students through the creation of inclusive mobility opportunities aimed at the development of international, intercultural and subject-specific competencies required by the global working field.

For the period 2021-2027 the involvement of RUAS in the Erasmus programme will be focused on the following actions:

- KA1 - The mobility of higher education students and staff
- KA2 - Partnerships for Cooperation and exchanges of practices

The practical implementation of the elected Erasmus actions falls under the responsibility of the *Centre of International Affairs (CoIA)* (see *Annex 5 Center of International Affairs*), which acts as a centre of expertise in the area of internationalisation including mobility administration and cooperation projects. It integrates knowledge, information and expertise by maintaining connections across academic and administrative entities within RUAS. CoIA serves as a gateway for colleagues in need of guidance regarding various aspects of internationalisation and as a contact point where external parties can request referrals to the appropriate persons. CoIA supports and stimulates the involvement of study programmes and Institutes (faculties) in the elected actions of the Erasmus programme at the operational, tactical and strategic levels. This is implemented through stimulation of consultation between stakeholders within RUAS, internal and external experts, sharing successes and good practices, drawing up policy, and making informed strategic decisions. CoIA actively shares information about internationalisation in higher education, provides a partnerships quality screening framework including ECHE principles and promotes options for mobility. To stimulate the involvement of study programmes in the elected Erasmus actions, CoIA collaborates closely with the Internationalisation Professorship and the knowledge centres to facilitate the access of study programmes to the available expertise, knowledge and research regarding internationalisation in higher education. CoIA also stimulates an exchange of knowledge and experience regarding the implementation of the Erasmus programme developed by colleagues in knowledge platforms at the operational, tactical and strategic levels. Their input includes, but is not limited to international initiatives, projects and strategic collaborations.

### 1. Regarding the KA1 - The mobility of higher education students and staff

The study programmes are responsible for the design of curricula, determining the requirements and offering possibilities for student and staff mobility. The underlying process, including financial support and making sure the ECHE principles are respected, is facilitated by CoIA.

The participation in the KA1 will contribute to achieving the objectives of RUAS' international strategy as follows:

- Study periods abroad will support the achievement of field specific international and intercultural learning outcomes and the acquisition of the 21 century skills in line with the needs of the global working field thus increasing our



students' employability. This includes the development of foreign language skills and of intercultural awareness, thus contributing to RUAS' strategic objectives of **Inclusiveness** and **Superdiversity**.

- Incoming student mobility will stimulate the creation of a genuine international classroom and will support our internationalisation at home. Incoming teaching staff mobility will facilitate the use of international didactics in our curricula.
- Both outgoing and incoming mobility will allow students and staff to experience European identity and identify with common European values, thus contributing to the visibility and attractiveness of European HE in general and of RUAS' study programmes in particular.
- Working at RUAS means working in an intercultural and international education environment. From the staff, this demands **International Competence** and intercultural sensitivity and a willingness to engage in continuing education in these areas. The diversity of learning styles and course offerings allows all students to engage in inclusive education, regardless of their background. Staff mobility will contribute to advancement in the area of professionalization through exchange of good practices and peer learning.
- Through diversifying our partnerships to geographic areas with lower cost of living on one hand and using the financial lever of KA1 we will continue to facilitate access to mobility opportunities to students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

## 2. Regarding the KA2 - Partnerships for Cooperation and exchanges of practices

To this day KA2 projects at RUAS cover the areas of virtual and blended mobility, entrepreneurship, civic engagement, healthcare logistics, case-based learning, climate induced innovation, education for gifted students, curriculum development and educational capacity building in developing countries. Institutes ensure that cooperation leads to sustainable and balanced outcomes for all partners involving regular joint evaluation of the cooperation outcomes. The preferred project format is the development of intensive programmes of cooperation through a consortium. Institutes provide support to staff and students participating in European and international cooperation projects, exploit the results of the projects to maximise the impact on individuals and participating institutions and to encourage peer learning.

The participation in the KA2 will contribute to achieving the objectives of RUAS' international strategy through:

- Improving the relevance of higher education at RUAS to the needs of the global working field via creation of opportunities for innovation in curriculum design aiming at the improvement of employability of RUAS' graduates
- Enhancement of the quality of education at RUAS via identification of new ideas, educational methodologies such as blended and virtual mobility, subject-specific and soft skills developments with the objective of their integration into own curricula
- Increasing the visibility and reputation of own expertise via the dissemination of RUAS' positive experience and successful good practices
- Creation of new cross-border synergies between higher education, research and industry in the context of regional development in Rotterdam Metropolitan Area (RMA)

RUAS will implement these internationalisation activities in line with the EEA priorities regarding EU economy's skills needs to harness globalisation and strengthen Europe's resilience in a context of the rapid changes induced by the technological revolution and globalisation, including the development of digital skills, implementation of inclusive education, recognition, promotion of common values and environmentally friendly practices.

Whilst the *Internationalisation Triangle* is the reflection of a clear strategy for internationalisation, RUAS offers to its almost 40-thousand student population over 100 study programmes delivered by its 13 institutes, each with an individual identity and decentralised vision on internationalisation. The operational implementation of internationalisation, the definition of targets and the monitoring of the impact are implemented mainly at Institute (faculty) and study programme levels as based on their own professional field and career prospects and to certain extent at central level. In this way, whilst acting in the scope of the institutionally defined priorities – **Inclusiveness, Intercultural competence and Superdiversity** - study programmes at RUAS give students diversified international and intercultural portfolio, whether they remain in the Netherlands or pursue an international career.