

## ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT

### **Implementation of Erasmus at Pallas after the award of ECHE, achievement goals, consistence with institutional internationalisation and modernisation strategy.**

Pallas University of Applied Sciences (Pallas) is the only institution of higher education in the field of applied arts in Estonia, offering seven curricula in design, conservation/restoration and the arts. Pallas has actively used the possibilities of Erasmus Key Action 1 (KA1) - Learning mobility since 2004.

For a relatively small University (approximately 300 students and 90 staff members) in a small country it is vital to cooperate with other universities, organisations and competence centres abroad. By participating in Erasmus (including credit mobility), Pallas strives towards achieving the internationalization aims stated in the International Relations Strategy and modernization goals posited in the Development Plan.

Pallas has three main directions in its development of international relations and Erasmus is an integral part for pursuing all of these. (1) International cooperation with public, private and voluntary sectors: Pallas cooperates with foreign companies, organisations and competence centres in the frame of Erasmus student traineeships and staff mobilities. (2) Cooperation with higher education institutions abroad: Pallas strengthens substantive cooperation with existing Erasmus partners as well as develops new partnerships with higher education institutions (HEIs) based on mutual interest and common objectives. Regarding curriculum development, best practices learnt during staff mobilities will be adopted at Pallas. (3) Support of student and staff mobility. Erasmus program is the most widely applied internationalization program at Pallas enabling student and staff mobility with adequate grants. Being an applied higher education institution, the possibility of doing practical work abroad in the form of traineeships is of high value to students. Pallas allocates each year also recent graduate grants.

By means of Erasmus, the outward student mobility of Pallas has for years been among the top in Estonia, ranging up to 10% each academic year. Furthermore, the percentage of graduates with Erasmus experience at Pallas the highest in Estonia (62% both in 2017/2018 and 2018/2019). Pallas has set up support systems for outgoing and incoming students and staff. These will be reviewed yearly and based on feedback from participants will be improved to better support and enhance all Erasmus mobilities. Participation in Erasmus has and will enable Pallas to achieve internationalization goals with remarkable results.

Out of the developmental objectives put forth in the Development Plan, the following objectives are linked to international relations and modernization the most: (1) Graduates who increase the creative potential of society: a high number of graduates with mobility experience helps bring international/European dimension to the labor market; (2) promotion of innovative and sustainable thinking through entrepreneurship and lifelong learning: the values that are also the basis of the European Education Arena are enhanced through staff and student mobilities. Students are encouraged to make full use of the maximum amount of 12 months of Erasmus mobilities; (3) organisation that inspires creativity, promotes research and is open to cooperation: best practices and ideas gathered from mobilities will be applied in curriculum development for further modernizing the academic offer and in everyday management of the institution to provide a contemporary learning environment.

The internationalization and modernization aims of Pallas also coincide with the core principles and vision of the European Education Area. For instance, spending time abroad to study and learn is already becoming a norm at Pallas. Making full use of the OLS opportunities enables the students of Pallas to master two more languages in addition to their mother tongue. Access to education and mobility is granted for all, irrespective of their socio-economic background. Through mobility experience, especially in the fields of art, design and restoration/conservation that are taught at Pallas, students will have a stronger sense of Europe's cultural heritage.

The internationalization and modernization strategies of Pallas set forth to enhance the key competences prioritized by the Council. In addition to foreign language learning during mobilities, multilingualism is promoted by compulsory English classes at Pallas and a choice of other foreign languages. Pallas supports with its own funds the foreign language learning of interested staff members to better prepare them for mobilities and teaching incoming Erasmus students. Scientific skills are

acquired by means of international applied research that is one aim of Pallas. More and more students who go abroad, develop also digital and technology-based competences in the frame of their traineeship period. The Erasmus participant report results show that in addition to interpersonal skills, cultural awareness, the ability to adopt new competences and become more entrepreneurial, students also develop the sense of European identity.

By participating in Erasmus, Pallas intends to assure that there is a progeny of creatively thinking and responsible applied artists who are open to the world. Embedding the values and key competences of the European Education Arena into the internationalization and modernization policy of Pallas will lead to high-quality international cooperation and mobilities with long-lasting positive impact.

**Planned Erasmus actions, their implementation at Pallas and how participation in these actions will contribute to achieving the objectives of institutional strategy.**

Pallas intends to make full use of the Erasmus KA1 possibilities, including credit mobility: students for studies and traineeships (also recent graduate traineeships), both academic and non-academic staff mobilities and hosting incoming students and staff, along with experts from companies.

**Outgoing students.** Pallas organises application rounds twice a year for student study mobilities and at least once a year for students and recent graduates interested in traineeships. Information on all the criteria is sent through emailing lists and social media platforms. In addition to Erasmus info days at Pallas, International Relations Manager (IRM) visits each of the seven specialty departments for question-and-answer meetings so that every student would be aware of the Erasmus possibilities. Application procedure is transparent. The committee consisting of Rector, Vice Rector for Academic Affairs, Vice Rector, International Relations Manager and if necessary, Heads of Departments choose the stipendiaries. In the past years each interested student has received the Erasmus grant. IRM provides all-rounded counselling for student candidates on documentation, checks that the students have adequate foreign language skills, promotes the OLS possibilities, introduces the topic of cultural differences and instructs on how to apply for a student place in partner institution or find a suitable traineeship base. Very valuable is also connecting previous Erasmus outgoing and incoming students with new applicants to facilitate peer-to-peer info sharing. The support team of IRM, Academic Affairs Specialist and Head of respective specialty department at Pallas check up on the student during the mobility at reasonable intervals and assist with all the procedures necessary for successful completion of the mobility period.

**Incoming students.** Pallas organizes application rounds twice a year. For each nominated candidate the IRM offers thorough info on the application procedure, up-to-date info in English is available on the website of Pallas. Together with the respective host specialty department, the IRM instructs on how to choose the most suitable courses deriving also on the interests of the student. In addition to courses from the host department, Pallas offers also courses from all the other 6 specialty departments and informs about the academic offer of partner universities in Tartu. Each incoming student will have a tutor student who helps with everyday matters including finding accommodation either in a dormitory or in an apartment. In addition to the events organised by Pallas's Student Union, all Erasmus incoming students are included in the numerous events of Erasmus Student Network Tartu branch. Preparations are made to offer blended mobility for incoming students. Virtual mobility would already be possible as online learning is currently carried out due to the worldwide coronavirus situation. During the mobility, incoming students are offered assistance in all fields of life and after the mobility documents are provided within reasonable time.

**Staff mobilities.** Pallas organizes application rounds twice a year preceded by information hours and personal counselling for all interested staff. The committee consisting of Rector, Vice Rector for Academic Affairs, Vice Rector, IRM and Head of Staff conduct a fair and transparent application process with clear reasoning of decision. The IRM mediates between the preferred host institution or organisation and helps compile all necessary paperwork before and after the mobility. Attention is paid to the linguistic preparation of staff. Pallas allocates its own funds to support foreign language learning of all interested staff.

Incoming staff's applications are welcome throughout the academic year. After matching the proposed academic content with the aims of the potential host department at Pallas, the IRM and the specialty department coordinate the reception of visiting staff – well-rounded info is offered before the mobility from travel and accommodation info to organizing the audience and the necessary materials for carrying out academic work. Pallas welcomes also non-academic staff visits in the course of which the staff who

are not teaching can share best practices and discuss possible challenges in their line of work with colleagues from abroad.

The participation of Pallas in the aforementioned KA1 actions contributes to achieving all the objectives brought out in the strategy documents of Pallas. More than 50 carefully chosen partner universities provide educational possibilities for students so that graduates would be people who increase the creative potential of society. Erasmus student mobilities for studying provide students with best specialty skills and a variety of learning approaches used abroad. Mobilities facilitate open mind towards other cultures thus enhancing common European Education Arena values. As an applied higher education institution, a great proportion of curricula deal with teaching practical skills. Erasmus traineeships are very popular among the students of Pallas and are much encouraged by staff. Traineeship periods abroad provide students with a more thorough insight into their future possible career paths and promote innovative and sustainable thinking through entrepreneurship and life-long learning. Academic and non-academic staff mobilities are vital for establishing Pallas as a university that inspires creativity, promotes research and is open to cooperation. Incoming mobilities are a key factor for internationalization at home so that also those who cannot go abroad would have an international dimension in their studies or work.

### **Envisaged impact of participation in the Erasmus+ Programme on Pallas.**

The envisaged impact of participation in Erasmus KA1 activities is based on the targets brought out in the International Relations Strategy and Development Plan of Pallas.

**Mobility targets for student/staff mobility.** Every academic year Pallas aims at sending abroad 9% of its students. According to the necessities of specialty departments and preferences of students, the final proportions of study and traineeship stipends will be fixed including the number of stipends allocated for recent graduate traineeships. The realistic percentage of incoming students each academic year is 3.

Regarding staff mobility, Pallas strives for the target of 35% of all staff taking work trips abroad each academic year. Out of all outward international mobility, Pallas intends to have 20% carried out in the frame of Erasmus. The target 20% is foreseen also for the number of staff members out of all staff at Pallas going on Erasmus mobilities. The application committee decides the proportion of staff training and teaching mobility grants (including incoming experts) taking into account the preferences of staff and departments but also abiding by the proportions set in the grant agreement. Each academic year every specialty department should invite at least one staff member in the frame of Erasmus to carry our academic work.

In the case of outgoing students and staff, the application committee ensures equal distribution of grants between specialty departments so that the impact of internationalization would cover all departments. The committee may prefer the candidature of those who have not yet been abroad with Erasmus so that Erasmus mobility would be attainable also for new students and staff.

**Indicators for measuring quality of the implementation.** In addition to reviewing the achieved quantitative results against the set targets, the quality of the implementation is also reflected by the responses in participants' reports and feedback. IRM is the main responsible person for managing the program with different working groups, committees and teams set up to guarantee quality at different stages of the program. Participant reports on Mobility Tool, questionnaires compiled by Pallas for incoming students and oral/emailed feedback from participants are reviewed at least annually. The summary is presented to the Rector and Vice Rectors, Heads of Departments and in several cases to all students and staff. Based on the results, the annual strategies of managing the Erasmus program are reviewed and if necessary, courses of action will be modified.

**Support for participants on mobility.** Quality of implementation through comprehensive support during all stages of mobility is also expressed by the high percentages of outward mobility every academic year and feedback by incoming participants. Teams of staff members are set up every semester to support outgoing students and staff (depending on the situation, these include Vice Rectors, Academic Affairs specialists, Head of Staff, IRM and Heads of Departments). For incoming mobility, similar teams are formed including a tutor system to assist incoming students.

The aim is to have each student and staff member of Pallas aware of the possibility and benefits of going on Erasmus mobility and each incoming student and staff's satisfaction with their academic period at Pallas.