

1. Strategy

Profile

The University of Humanistic Studies is a small denominational university. The university pursues high-quality scientific research and education inspired by core humanist values and traditions, thereby contributing to the enhancement of a caring and just society in which all people can live meaningful lives. The University of Humanistic Studies is recognised and funded by the State. Since its establishment in 1989, it has become a leading academic knowledge centre that progressively shapes and steers the interdisciplinary fields of humanistic studies and care ethics, which focus on how human beings give meaning and how contemporary society can be humanized.

Humanism is an open worldview, characterised by critical (self-)reflection and a continuous dialogue with others. It stands for values such as freedom, responsibility, justice, solidarity and pluralism/inclusiveness. The political/ethical values that ground and inspire our research and education, and the concomitant concepts we study, are values such as care, respect, human rights, citizenship, democracy and emancipation. It follows that both research and education at the University of Humanistic Studies are socially engaged in constructive and critical ways.

The university offers three accredited degree programmes: a bachelor's and master's in Humanistic Studies (the master is a three-year programme for humanist chaplains) and a one-year Master's programme in Care Ethics & Policy. All three programmes are taught in Dutch, with the exception of two English taught Minor programmes of 30 ECTS for which exchange students can register. A new Master's programme on democratic citizenship is currently being prepared. Additionally, the university has its own graduate school for PhD students. In spite of its relatively small size – the university only comprises some 100 staff members and 550 students and 100 PhD-students – the University has managed to carve out its own distinctive niche, both nationally and internationally.

University of Humanistic Studies and internationalisation

The world faces immense challenges which often can no longer solely be addressed at a national level. Nowadays, the local and the global are increasingly intertwined. The university's values are more important than ever in the choices that societies make. As an institution with a unique profile, the University of Humanistic Studies sees internationalisation and international cooperation as key factors, not only with regard to enhancing both the quality and innovativeness of the university's research and educational programmes, but also in terms of sharing its knowledge and its good collaborative practices in social projects and networks. Furthermore, the university considers it important to prepare students for a rapidly changing society and offer them an international and pluricultural orientation as part of their professional and academic development. The university wants its students to acquire relevant skills and knowledge and develop the ability to critically reflect on salient values, in order to study, work and live successfully in globalizing and rapidly changing environments.

Internationalisation strategy

As a small organization, the main objective of the University of Humanistic Studies in the coming years is to focus on further developing internationalisation into a self-evident and well-integrated focal point, particularly within its education and research programmes. Summarized, the university's strategy to achieve this is to:

- establish its international profile in terms of overarching research themes and thus strengthen its academic reputation and visibility;
- consolidate and strengthen its international network and take part in European and international collaborative projects;
- invest in the diversity of its staff and students;
- stimulate international teaching experience of staff;
- encourage students to gain international study experience;
- offer its students a high-quality international learning environment and strengthen the international dimensions in the programmes (in terms of content and skills) and incorporate more e-learning;
- increase inbound (diploma and) study credits mobility;
- improve the organisational embedding of internationalisation and, where necessary, introduce new policy measures to strengthen the inclusiveness and quality of internationalisation activities and procedures.

Participation in the Erasmus+ programme is highly relevant to achieve these goals. It provides a high-quality framework for international cooperation, facilitates staff and student mobility, and it enhances an internationally relevant curriculum and so benefits the institution as a whole. It also offers the university a platform to contribute to the EU's objectives and priorities.

2. Erasmus actions

In the coming years the University of Humanistic Studies chooses to focus on KA1 'The mobility of higher education students and staff' and KA2 'Partnerships for cooperation and exchanges of practices' and KA2 'Partnerships for innovation'. As a small organisation it is necessary to be selective in order to guarantee that the quality of our activities are and remain of high standard.

KA1

KA1 mobility lies at the heart of internationalisation and offers staff and students the opportunity to gain international experience. As such, this activity is of great importance for the university's strategy. As the University of Humanistic Studies does not currently offer programmes that are entirely taught in English, the inbound credit mobility of students and staff is a key factor for the creation of an international learning environment. Students who do not have the opportunity to go on exchange can still develop international and intercultural skills and gain international experience this way.

By strengthening a high quality international learning environment, the University of Humanistic Studies aims to better integrate KA1 (and KA2) exchange in its programmes and optimize the didactical possibilities the international classroom offers. We will also explore the possibilities to further enhance e-learning and blended learning, in which our experiences with online education as a result of Covid-19 measures can serve us well.

The aim is to increase inbound and outbound mobility. To this end, the University of Humanistic Studies will invest in strengthening the quality of mobility and its preconditions, including enhancing organisational support and organizing activities to promote mobility. Particular attention will be paid to (1) the dissemination and recognition of outcomes, (2) the inclusion of students and staff with fewer opportunities, and (3) further development of clear selection procedures and non-discrimination policies.

KA2

KA2 partnerships for cooperation and exchange of practices are very much in line with the aim of consolidating and strengthening our international networks and participating in international projects. This form of cooperation contributes to the improvement of education and research and offers excellent opportunities to learn from each other's strengths and good practices. The aim is also to extend cooperation, where possible, and initiate joint development of courses or blended intensive programmes. International cooperation will enable the University of Humanistic Studies to raise its profile on a number of overarching themes and increase its academic visibility and reputation. If successful, this may ultimately lead to establishing an alliance of partners focusing on innovation, for example around themes such as citizenship, education and democracy.

Cooperation

In order to mainstream participation in international collaborative projects, each of the 5 chair groups must have participated in at least 2 collaborative projects (KA2) between 2021 and 2027. In addition, the University of Humanistic Studies strives to be part of an alliance for innovation in the later stages of this period. Participation in collaborative projects will thus become the norm for chair groups and discussing and sharing results of international activities will become a fixed item on the agenda at meetings of the academic (and support) staff. The content of collaborative projects should be in line with university's strategic priorities for education and research. This will ensure coherence and efficiency in tasks and activities, while at the same time guaranteeing the long-term impact of the project outcomes. All results will be published on the university's website, communicated internally and where possible implemented in our teaching- and research programmes.

Mobility

The aim is to increase staff and student mobility between 2021 and 2027. Inter-institutional agreements form the basis for carrying out successful Erasmus+ mobility activities. Because of its small scale and unique humanistic profile, the University of Humanistic Studies will seek compatible Erasmus+ partners whose mission and academic profile matches ours. Our goal is to have at least 3 active Inter-institutional agreements for each chair group by 2023, focusing on staff and student mobility. By 2027, the university aims to have 25-30 active Inter-institutional agreements.

University of Humanistic Studies Erasmus Policy Statement 2021-2027

It is our objective that by 2027, 15-20% of the local student population will have an international study or traineeship experience. For the university, this percentage represents a significant increase compared to the current situation. This percentage may increase even further when blended mobility becomes a real option, as it is more compatible with master programmes and more master students may thus opt for mobility. There also appears to be interest in mobility among PhD students. The employee-PhD students will be actively encouraged and facilitated to incorporate an international experience while undertaking their PhD research if it enhances the quality of their research. The external PhD students vary greatly in terms of their wishes and availability. This makes it difficult for this particular group of PhD students to formulate specific targets, but the university will investigate possibilities to promote and facilitate their mobility as well.

The aim is to match the increase in outbound mobility with the increase in inbound mobility. In order to achieve this the International Office will maintain good contact with the partners and communicate frequently about application procedures and other relevant topics. The partners will also be provided with promotional materials to bring exchange to our university to the attention of their students. However, the most important recruiting factor will be successful mobility experiences, making alumni ambassadors for our university.

As far as staff mobility is concerned, the goal for each chair group is to organize at least one staff mobility (teaching assignment) every two years up to and including 2024. From 2025 onwards, the frequency will be increased to at least once a year. Staff mobility that takes place within the framework of collaborative KA2 projects can be used for this purpose, provided it concerns a teaching assignment. The outcomes of staff mobility will be discussed within chair groups and in broader academic staff meetings. To facilitate the increase, the chair groups will make a long term planning for staff mobility, and be flexible when it comes to temporarily replacing teaching staff.

Support and implementation

The expansion of internationalisation activities requires suitable support. In the course of 2021, a plan will be available in which tasks and responsibilities in the area of internationalisation will be clearly described and allocated. The administrative organisation will be adjusted accordingly. Special attention in the plan will be given to the implementation of Erasmus Without Paper, the supervision of mobility and the internal and external recruitment for and communication about internationalisation.

Internal monitoring and improvement become more important as internationalization activities expand. Existing evaluation methods will be merged and extended into a comprehensive quality assurance system for internationalisation activities by 2022 at the latest.

A plan to enhance the implementation of internationalisation in the programmes is already available. The plan includes language support and international and intercultural skills development. By 2022 (or earlier) this plan will be extended to include e-learning and the development of blended mobility courses.