

ERASMUS policy statement

The South Westphalia University of Applied Sciences has regional roots and a cross-regional appeal. Its four sites are internationally oriented to varying degrees. This has historical reasons, is linked to the courses on offer, and is related to the focuses of the tutors. At present, the South Westphalia University of Applied Sciences has two English-language study paths with a high proportion of international students. Activities with partner universities abroad are diverse, even including study schemes leading to a dual degree. Trips abroad, workshops which take place at alternating locations with a high participation rate among teams from different partner universities, and the possibility of spending supervised internships abroad also contribute to the university's multifaceted offering of courses and study programs. Activities are oriented towards the university's principles and its agreed internationalization concept, which is intended to be a creative, transparent, and flexible process that the steering committee regularly discusses with the international relations officers and the directors of the various faculties. The university takes part in sponsorship programs for students and tutors and strives to secure further funding.

- a) The nurturing of university partnerships is an important part of promoting periods of residence abroad. When selecting partner institutions, an extremely important criterion is whether the prospective partner universities have an English-language course offering. This is because of the students' educational background and existing knowledge of foreign languages. To enable the best possible bundling and most efficient usage of resources, the university also strives to find partner institutions whose own range of subjects matches that of the South Westphalia University of Applied Sciences as closely as possible. In addition, the academic reputation of the partner university and appeal of its location play a role.
- b) Collaboration with universities in Asia, Africa, and Arabia is supplemented in Europe by institutions in Britain, Ireland, Scandinavia, Spain, Switzerland, France, and Austria. When choosing geographical locations, the priorities expressed by students in questionnaires are also taken into account.
- c) For university personnel, mobility over the course of years to come should be incorporated into the personnel development concept of the South Westphalia University of Applied Sciences. A clear educational aim of the university is to prepare students for the labour market, which increasingly demands inter-cultural communication skills, too. Temporary stints abroad as part of one's course of studies are a suitable way of developing these skills, since they enable both preparation and subsequent reflection on the newly acquired knowledge. Due to the prevailing offering of courses at the university, students in their first study cycle constitute the primary target group for activities requiring mobility. However, such activities are often available to masters students, too. For undergraduates, there are various instruments in the form of obligatory and optional units, so time abroad might take the form of a semester spent at a partner university or an internship/practical experience. The latter have traditionally been afforded a high importance at the university, which is characterized by its practice-oriented education system. However, dual degrees also increase the appeal of a period of study abroad. Here, it is important to maintain existing partnerships with universities in Britain, Indonesia, Mexico, and Egypt. However, further partnerships with universities in other European countries should be founded in order to increase the number of courses on offer which lead to a dual degree. A guide on setting up dual degree schemes is being created in order to ensure the quality of such programs.

The university supports the representatives of the faculties with regard to the initiation of collaborative projects in Europe and globally in accordance with the university's internationalization concept. The work group for international relations supervises and monitors ongoing activities. Individual types of collaboration that have proven successful are adopted by other faculties where possible and after consultation with the work group for international relations.

1 - Increase in education level to cover Europe's requirement for academics and researchers

In addition to fully campus-based courses of study, the South Westphalia University of Applied Sciences also offers combined courses and franchised courses that allow workers, trainees, and other people to obtain an academic education. People who are qualified through vocational training are also allowed onto courses of study. Since the mobility program is - in principle - open to all of these students, this means that people from groups that are often under-represented in academia have the opportunity of obtaining a university-level qualification including a period of experience abroad, thus contributing to ensuring that Europe's need for academics and researchers is met.

2 - Improvement of quality and relevance of university education

The Institute for Quality Development and Management based at the university defines university-wide standards for quality management. The aim is to form an attractive offering of partner universities that is tailored to the students's special needs on the basis of a questionnaire supported by this institute. Participation in the mobility program ensures transparent conditions and facilitates access to the activities offered abroad as well as strengthening the involvement of academics in European mobility measures. This gives university education an increased relevance in Europe.

3 - Increase in quality through mobility and cross-border collaboration

During the course of mobility measures, students are confronted with other manners of learning, ways of working, and cultural conditions. The knowledge and experience gained from their course thus far can be reflected and re-evaluated in the light of the new learning environment.

4 - Bringing the knowledge triangle into effect: Interlinking university education, research, and the economy in the interests of excellence and regional development

Research and development at the South Westphalia University of Applied Sciences are extremely application-oriented and take place in close collaboration with industry and other partners. In addition to international aspects, the university takes the needs of the economic region of South Westphalia into account here. The aim of projects and ventures with local companies is to increase their competitiveness and consolidate their position on the global market. Participation in the mobility program integrates international contacts from the university and from companies into the process and stabilizes networking.

5 - Improvement of governance and financing

The use of the instruments envisaged for the mobility program - such as inter-institutional agreements and study contracts - structures processes for individual measures, thus creating a clear governance and control system. Furthermore, the available finances offer less well-off students the chance to spend some time abroad.