



ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT

Pontifical University, St. Patricks College Maynooth

Introduction

The Pontifical University at St Patrick's College Maynooth is nationally and internationally recognised for the quality and value of its contribution learning, scholarship and research in Theology and related areas. From its foundation in 1795 St Patrick's College, Maynooth, has had an international profile. In this new era of the European Integration, the University's profile in terms of international student and staff exchanges has continued to grow and expand. The Pontifical University first became involved in 1993 with the then Erasmus programme under the auspices of the European Union.

Strategic Importance

In the era of globalization and the easy movement of people and information, it is more important than ever that the University will explore new links with the global network of Pontifical and Catholic Universities and Colleges. It is an articulated priority of the Strategic Plan, entitled *Desire to Flourish*, which states:

We will build partnerships at various levels, nationally and internationally, with other higher education institutions and appropriate statutory bodies, ecclesial and other relevant organisations, and individuals who share our common mission and heritage.
(Strategic Goal 5: Build Relationships with Partners)

This goal is further differentiated into five action points that will invite, dialogue, effect, value and promote initiatives that help up build our relationships with current and new partners. (See <http://maynoothcollege.ie/strategic-planning>)

During the duration of the Strategic Plan, the Pontifical University is committed to specific projects to enhance academic mobility and interaction, for both students and academics. These include:

- International conferences and seminars
- National partnerships towards research
- European partnerships in support of research, teaching and learning
- Inter-institutional delivery of Post-Graduate Degrees in Canon Law with St Paul's University, Ottawa, Canada.
- Hosting the 26th General Assembly of the International Federation of Catholic Universities
- The advancement of the Erasmus+ programme.

Erasmus+

Of unique value to the Pontifical University is the EU Erasmus Programme, first established in 1987. Among the many purposes of the current scheme, entitled Erasmus+ (2014-2020), the programme guide states the following:

The Erasmus+ Programme is designed to support Programme Countries' efforts to efficiently use the potential of Europe's talent and social assets in a lifelong learning perspective, linking support to formal, non-formal and informal learning throughout the education, training and youth fields. The Programme also enhances the opportunities for cooperation and mobility with Partner Countries, notably in the fields of higher education and youth. (See http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/programme-guide_en)

Erasmus + and The Pontifical University

The Pontifical University encourages staff mobility. It considers it to be of fundamental importance to academic life because it

- supports ongoing student and staff personal, administrative and academic development
- heightens international reputation for research and teaching and learning
- fosters and strengthens cultural collaboration
- maintains institutional standards by way of peer interaction.

Erasmus+ is invaluable in this regard.

Of particular note is the transformative effect for students. Students' access to resources and facilities in linked universities greatly contributes to their learning experience and final qualification. Whether students are incoming or outgoing, they experience diverse programmes, teaching and learning methods and subject combinations and concentrations. Along with skill and academic development, the overall experience provides an irreplaceable opportunity for cultural interaction. Finally, it enhances the student skills and personal development to equip them better in taking up opportunities across Europe.

Strategic Goals of This Policy

Dedicated to the provision of opportunities to our students and staff, the Pontifical University is committed to the flourishing of Erasmus+. Therefore, under the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education 2014-2020, the University will

- continue to build on and explore the possibility of developing further bi-lateral agreements especially with other Pontifical Universities and Faculties outside Ireland with the same or similar ethos, discipline and mission.
- will seek to develop links and exchanges with Pontifical Universities and other Higher Education Institutions that share our mission, in South America, Africa, and China in addition to our current arrangements with other international third level institutions in Europe and North America.

- continue to encourage student, teaching and staff mobilities and, where possible, to broaden the range of participation in mobility programmes and their geographical coverage of its participation.
- continue to provide equal opportunities, treatment, support and access in higher education for both students and staff with specific learning requirements and special needs. The university will not discriminate on the grounds of gender or race.
- work to deepen existing collaborations and open new links with other third level institutions in order to widen the availability of theology or specific theological disciplines to meet increasingly diverse academic, professional and vocational requirements. Also, greater flexibility in delivery of programmes will be necessary in response to new student profiles.
- continue to recognise and acknowledge the fundamental importance of staff mobility in its contribution to academic life, to ongoing staff development and in its support of the Faculty's mission to heighten its international reputation for teaching and research.