

**Anglo-American University:
Erasmus Policy Statement 2021-27**



Anglo-American University (AAU) is not typical of Czech HEIs. As a small, private university whose working language is English, we have a very different profile from the big public universities. These differences extend from the simple fact that all our classes and services are conducted in English; to the demographic composition of our student body and our teaching staff (more than 80% of our degree-seeking students come from abroad, with ca. 80 countries represented); to our accreditations, which combine both Czech and American models. Indeed, thanks to the institutional accreditation we received from the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) in 2015, we are the only HEI in the Czech Republic to be fully accredited to both US and European standards. Our student body is recognised by the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports as the most internationalised in the Czech Republic.

Our participation in the Erasmus programme (which began in 2003) has always been focussed on student and staff mobility. Although we believe strongly in the internationalisation of the curriculum, our US accreditation and our working language have led us to concentrate our curricular efforts on partnerships with American universities. We have for many years offered an AACSB-accredited MBA in Prague in partnership with Chapman University, California, and from 2021 we will be offering a number of innovative joint Bachelor degree programmes with Kent State University, Ohio.

For all that, though, we remain a European institution, firmly grounded in the Czech education system and we try to balance the natural inclination of our curricula towards the English-speaking world with a commitment to local engagement and European values. It is here that Erasmus has proved especially valuable, providing our students (many of whom come to Prague from countries far outside Europe) to experience education in more than one EU country, thus deepening their understanding of the European project and European culture.

In our previous Erasmus Policy Statement for 2014-20, we set ourselves the goal of ensuring that 20% of students enrolled in AAU degree programmes have some experience of international study mobility before graduation, and though we have not quite managed to hit this target, we do regularly send 3.5-3.8% of our total degree-seeking students on international study exchanges each year (including both EU and non-EU destinations), which comes close to our 20% target, when cumulated over 5 years of study. (Figures from before the coronavirus pandemic.) In the short term, these figures may now suffer a small decline, thanks to the pandemic, but in the longer term we would like to build on our success to extend the benefits of international study mobility to a wider pool of students, both by encouraging greater participation in Erasmus, and by integrating short-term programmes and blended mobilities for students who are not able to travel abroad for a whole semester. We are therefore setting ourselves a working target of 25% for the proportion of AAU graduates with experience of international study mobility by 2027, and Erasmus will be a significant part of that.

No institution as international as AAU could function without a strong commitment to diversity and inclusivity, and we believe our learning environment to be well integrated with respect to ethnicity, race and gender. As a private institution with no public funding, however, we are very dependant on tuition fees to cover our running costs, which makes the vertical integration of students from low-income countries or disadvantaged backgrounds more problematic. Although the Czech Republic does have a number of scholarship schemes to support students from low-income countries to study

at Czech universities, private institutions are not eligible to participate. We are therefore not able to access Czech funds to support students from low-income countries.

Thanks to our US accreditation, however, we have successfully applied to participate in the US Federal Loans programme and from 2021 we will be able to provide funded access to US students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. We are aware it is a little paradoxical that we will be helping poorer students from the USA, rather than closer to home, but current funding rules do not allow us to fulfil our obligations to give back to the community on a more local level.

In the past, AAU has funded a small number of scholarships for socially disadvantaged students from its own resources – in particular the Roma Scholarship programme, which we were able to offer from 2002-2014, thanks to which we have a number of successful Roma graduates in the Czech Republic and Slovakia – but our ability to provide funding for social programmes from our own budget is limited.

Because of its specific position as an English-speaking university in a non-English-speaking country, AAU's students are more than usually focussed on English as a medium of study and communication. For many of them it is their second or third language. Thus, while we do not offer classes in any other language than English and only a very few of our students takes classes in other languages, when they go abroad through Erasmus or our other exchanges, the nature of our institution encourages students to develop professional and academic language skills at a very high level in a language that is usually not their mother tongue. In addition, by virtue of the fact that 80% of our students are not Czech, a high proportion of our students are already studying abroad simply as a result of being in Prague, even before they travel to a second country through Erasmus or another exchange programme.

We therefore feel that institutions of our kind make a not insignificant contribution to fulfilling the goals of the European Education Area – both in the sense that "spending time abroad to study or learn should become the norm", and in terms of developing language skills – which is something we are glad to share with incoming staff and students of our partner institutions.

It is almost axiomatic today that education cannot simply repeat the tried and trusted verities of the past, but must instead prepare students for the full complexity of the modern world, and we believe that international mobility (through Erasmus and other similar programmes) is an integral part of that. The sense of ease with which our students navigate, both the diversity of the student population in our classrooms, and the fresh challenges they meet when studying abroad, is a testament to the benefits of our belief in integrating international perspectives into the curriculum. We are confident that our students' experience at AAU – both in the internationalised classroom experience at home, and on their Erasmus semester abroad – will serve them as a solid foundation for their future lives and careers.

Erasmus Actions:

For the reasons described above, we are primarily interested in Learning Mobility to programme countries (KA103), which is an area of activity with which we have extensive experience and which we have successfully implemented through the programme periods of Erasmus LLP and Erasmus+ (2014-20). We do not at present anticipate extending our activities to include KA2 or KA3 or extending our mobilities to partner countries (KA107).

Because of the atypical profile of our institution, much of our internationalisation and modernisation agenda of necessity takes place outside Erasmus, but the opportunity to realise students and staff mobilities through Erasmus makes a valued contribution to our overall internationalisation goals. Please see above for a more detailed discussion.

Impacts:

We hope to achieve the following:

1. To offer staff and students increased opportunities for mobility within Erasmus+ to programme countries (KA103).
2. To increase the percentage of students enrolled in AAU degree programmes who have the opportunity to experience a period of international study mobility through Erasmus+ or equivalent exchange programmes from its current level of ca. 17% to 25% by 2027.
3. To integrate the new opportunities for blended mobility being offered by Erasmus+, when these become available, for the benefit of students who are unable to spend a full semester abroad for family or social reasons.
4. To continue in our ongoing effort to develop stronger ties with other English-speaking universities in Europe, through the use of Erasmus+ staff mobilities (where appropriate), since these institutions' specific curricular and administrative solutions can provide valuable insights to our own

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