



AERES UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Erasmus Policy statement (EPS): 2021-2027

The Aeres University of Applied Sciences (Aeres UAS) is an internationally oriented HEI, in the general sphere of Agriculture, Food Production, Sustainable Entrepreneurship and pertaining Communication and Teaching. The three pillars on which the institutional mission statement rests are in accordance with this, they are-

- Provide and develop responsible and environmentally sound entrepreneurship
- Achieve professional excellence through experiential learning, teaching and applied research
- Provide and disseminate green knowledge for global citizens

Hence, Aeres UAS strives to offer undergraduate and graduate studies and undertake applied research for the development and dissemination of green knowledge to the global community of those interested in responsible use of our planet's natural resources. This community is of necessity international. Reversely, students and staff from The Netherlands are stimulated to study and work in an international environment in which cultural diversity and interest are a given rather than an incident.

Aeres UAS sees the EU as its natural constituency, and has a 50-year track record to illustrate the shift in policies that this vision has brought about. Aeres UAS promotes and stimulates debate on European issues and achievements, and offers study elements on the EU as an integral part of all programmes, a rarity.

The developmental shift in the university over this period has largely been from regionally oriented to European to truly international. Currently (2020), the university population is 10% international, from many countries inside and outside the EU. This percentage is seen as minimum for

- a. the development of an international environment for the Dutch at the university, including specialized staff and
- b. providing an international community within which international students can flourish culturally and academically. Aeres UAS strives to maintain and further increase this level of international ambiance in the university.

The impact of Corona on the internationalisation strategy of the university is to gear the focus on European partnerships and mobility rather than non-European partnerships.

The university is proactive in fostering respect and tolerance between individuals or groups of different ethnical, cultural or religious backgrounds or persuasions. Discrimination on the basis of religious beliefs, sexual orientation, nationality or political conviction is expressly forbidden to both staff and students. The university teaches and informs its community on this policy. In selecting partnerships both inside and outside the EU the university will seek parties that are:

- dedicated to similar and recognizable principles of learning and research,
- interested in developmental goals since they perceive a phase difference between themselves and Aeres UAS, either academically or institutionally or both
- involved in and recognized by Dutch government policies on international HE and development
- party to good relations with international trade and internationally operating companies, and active in responsibly developing these relationships

These four criteria are applied as a decision matrix to all new contacts that are proposed or sought – If four out of four apply, there is possibly a strategic partnership to be developed (joint courses, projects, joint research, degree programmes in common). If three out of four apply, there is a basis for a good working relationship, not a strategic alliance (projects, exchange, trainings). If two out of four apply, there is a limited possibility of cooperation (exchange operated without heavy promotion or institutional support). With institutions where one of these four common interests applies, no partnership will be sought.

A further guiding principle in selecting areas in the world or indeed Europe is mutual perceived quality of the co-operation after some time of trial. This implies that partnerships can change from active and productive to dormant over time, and some may not start at all. This is not seen as a loss of prestige or efficacy in maintaining international relations, but as a natural phenomenon in institutional development. Aeres UAS will not seek partnerships for the sake of financial support or subsidies only. Reversely, joint research or teaching programmes, dual degrees or multiple degrees are only entered into with strategic partners. Their number is limited, obviously.

Participation in the Erasmus Programme has proven to be a good kick-starter of new partnerships. It allows us to get to know other European universities and explore opportunities to further cooperate. KA1 is very useful in the first phase of cooperation; the mobility of teaching staff and students gives an insight into each other's organisations and helps to identify interesting opportunities for cooperation. In addition it is very supportive to maintain longstanding partnerships, using KA1 to visit each other, feed the dialogue and stimulate new initiatives. It has resulted in joint programmes that we wish to continue with the support of the new Erasmus programme.

Within the Erasmus Programme we wish to continue to build partnerships and programmes. We currently run joint educational programmes with two European partner universities. We aim to further innovate our education by developing an international classroom in which we invite international guest speakers, both online and face to face. We hope to develop a joint online international classroom in which we teach with one or more partners and in which one or more partners have a group of students join in. The course we will develop and offer in this online mode will have to contribute to internationalisation at home at all participating universities.

The challenge will be to develop motivating, interactive, professional oriented and personal education as motivating, interactive, professional oriented and personal our face to face education at Aeres UAS is. Moreover we would like to experiment with the opportunities of internationalisation at home, as COVID has made us aware that mobility is not always an option and still we want student to develop their competencies to globalise.

By developing such an innovative international course with our partners we believe we can further utilise our international opportunities. COVID launched us into online education and we are excited to bring this to the next level. The next level when talking about international education will make us face administrative challenges within the European Education Area as this is built on face to face education. We are looking forward to explore the boundaries and seek for solutions with our partners and policy makers to fully utilise the online opportunities to support international education. We will focus on topics like credit transfer, online testing and regulations linked to the degree that might conflict with joint online international education.