

## Erasmus Policy Statement 2021

Students of Hochschule Geisenheim University have to be prepared to compete in a highly globalized labor market after graduation. At Geisenheim's specialized university, scientists are addressing challenges that can only be tackled on a global scale, such as climate change, sustainable food production and logistics as well as safeguarding biodiversity to name but a few. To that end, internationalization – as part of the Erasmus program in particular – is a cornerstone of the university's strategy because a distinct international profile is crucial to open up opportunities for students and staff members and to create lasting benefits for our society. Because of its special profile and its limited size, a cooperative and international approach is essential to highlight Hochschule Geisenheim University's strong points and to compensate for shortcomings by using complementary solutions, thus creating an additional benefit.

Hochschule Geisenheim University's profile is unique throughout Germany. Its expertise includes special crops (viticulture and horticulture), biotechnological and technological principles of primary and secondary products made of these crops (especially beverages) and related economic aspects. Other key areas include landscape ecology and landscape architecture with a special focus on developing cultivated landscapes and urban regions. Recent fields of research and teaching take up and supplement different stages of the value chain: food safety and food chain management with a focus on innovative transport, storage and packaging technologies as well as an optimized supply chain management. Especially in viticulture – the university's core expertise – Hochschule Geisenheim University is part of a strong international network. International mobility and international partnerships, also beyond the area of viticulture, are central parts of the internationalization strategy. By participating in the Erasmus program, the university commits itself to these values.

Participation in the Erasmus program allows the university to further pursue its internationalization motives, which include:

- Strengthening its international competitiveness and visibility (also in order to recruit young talents),
- Improving the quality of research, teaching and studying (to make graduates fit for the global labor market in particular)
- Generating benefits for our society by sparking innovative ideas and promoting interculturalism, language diversity and solidarity.

Participation in the Erasmus program allows Hochschule Geisenheim University to accomplish major goals of its internationalization strategy:

1. Greater involvement in international / European projects and networks,
2. Improving student mobility (during their studies and internships) in degree programs with low levels of mobility, and promoting staff mobility,
3. Improving the level of internationalization at home by including international, linguistic and intercultural elements in teaching and studying,
4. Fostering a culture of welcome and cultural diversity among all members of our university involving the community.

With its above-mentioned internationalization motives and goals, Hochschule Geisenheim University contributes significantly to the objectives set forth by the European Education Area. By improving student mobility in degree programs with low levels of mobility, it supports the objective to **make it a standard for students and staff members to go**

**abroad.** Based on the Bologna Process and the Lisbon Convention, Hochschule Geisenheim University seeks to automatically recognize credits earned abroad. In this context, the ECTS system proves to be a powerful tool for quality assurance. Promoting **foreign language learning** is another key concern of Hochschule Geisenheim University. The university's Language Center offers a wide range of courses for learning foreign languages at different levels and for different subjects. Additionally, one or several mandatory ECTS modules are an integral part of the curricular of all degree programs. Furthermore, Hochschule Geisenheim University contributes to the goal of the European Education Area to provide access to quality education for everyone, **regardless of social and economic background**. In 2018, the university signed the Charter of Diversity, committing itself to create a work and study environment that is free from prejudice and discrimination and offers equal opportunities in terms of education and personal development. Simultaneously, Hochschule Geisenheim University supports an open university culture and a campus that actively promotes interculturalism, diversity and open-mindedness, raising awareness of a **European identity** and the diversity of our **cultural heritage**.

In view of the priorities outlined in the renewed EU agenda for higher education, one of Hochschule Geisenheim University's central missions is to strengthen the practical relevance of its degree programs and to actively support students in **acquiring skills and competencies** to help them meet the requirements of the labor market. As the first "new type university", Hochschule Geisenheim University creates and use synergies between teaching, practice and research. Students benefit from a high level of interdisciplinarity. The practice-oriented Bachelor's degree programs provide them with the necessary qualifications to start their professional careers after graduation. As part of the Erasmus program, the university encourages students to complete internships - some of which are mandatory - and vocational semesters abroad. In the research-based Master's programs, students address current research questions, benefitting from the university's tight-knit network of international partners and the state-of-the-art research infrastructure. Additionally, thanks to its large alumni association, Hochschule Geisenheim University maintains close contacts with companies and institutions, which offer internships or – in case of cooperative work-study programs – apprenticeships and are consulted for the further development of curricula. Additionally, the university has introduced a part-time degree program to offer professionals in the wine industry the opportunity to extend their qualifications in parallel to their careers. Hochschule Geisenheim University encourages students and staff members (including teaching staff, non-academic staff, researchers, doctoral students) to go abroad, and actively supports international partnerships as part of the Erasmus program – thus supporting all parties involved to further develop their skills and competencies. In addition to subject-specific skills, the university helps students to acquire key competencies with a focus on problem-solving skills as well as language, intercultural and digital competencies and critical thinking.

Furthermore, Hochschule Geisenheim University seeks to create and further develop **inclusive and interconnected university systems**. It supports students with different social backgrounds, and the service units of the Student Information Center provide individual advice on academic and non-academic matters. The university's limited size allows students, teaching and administrative staff to interact closely. Thanks to the close cooperation between different departments and the university's flat hierarchies, problems and challenges can be addressed and solved quickly. Disadvantaged students in particular benefit from these short communication channels. The university's main goal is to create equal opportunities so that everyone has the chance to prosper and gain international experience. Besides Erasmus, Hochschule Geisenheim University offers different scholarship programs, some of which are

sponsored by companies, such as the *Deutschlandstipendium* scholarship. It also takes part in the pilot project "Access of Vocationally Qualified Students to Universities in the State of Hesse", which enables vocationally qualified people to complete a degree program even with an intermediate level of education.

Hochschule Geisenheim University has close ties with the City of Geisenheim and the region. Joint projects, such as "Green Geisenheim", bring together the academic world and the local community, and help to promote social skills. Furthermore, the university maintains partnerships with regional schools and vocational-technical colleges to facilitate the transition from school to university. As a member of the Rheingau Start-up Center and the regional start-up network, the university advises companies on **innovations** and actively promotes entrepreneurship and innovation skills. Encouraging and promoting innovations is a key concern of the university management. With its basic and application-oriented research in particular, the university makes an important contribution to stimulate innovations and spark ideas in its areas of expertise. Research activities are supported by projects financed by Hesse's innovation and structural development fund and the LOEWE program for the development of scientific and economic excellence. Other key factors to promote innovations include international cooperation and mobility – as part of the Erasmus program in particular – as well as the university's Graduate School, Research and Innovation Services and the various services offered by the Department of Continuing Education.

The target strategy agreement with the Federal State of Hesse and the university development plan provide the basis for an **effective and efficient university system**. As important elements of internationalization, these agreements include international student mobility, the further development of international networks for research and knowledge transfer as well as the internationalization of the university administration.

Within the scope of the Erasmus program, Hochschule Geisenheim University focuses on increasing learning mobility (KA1) for students and university staff in program and partner countries. The university's internationalization strategy concentrates on continuing and strengthening long-term collaborations with Erasmus program and partner countries (with a special focus on East Europe) and encourages students to go abroad for internships. Areas with a low level of mobility will receive additional support: student mobility (SMS) in all three stages, especially in areas with a low level of international exchange, as well as the mobility of academic and non-academic staff. Internationalization also plays a vital part when selecting professorial staff in order to provide international stimulus for areas with low levels of mobility.

By participating in KA1, Hochschule Geisenheim University is actively pursuing one of its major goals: improving international mobility for the different target groups. This is meant to strengthen the quality of teaching, studying and research by including international components and exchanging best practices, and is supposed to help all target groups to develop key competencies, improves their chances on the labor market and promotes internationalisation@home.

Thanks to collaboration projects as part of the Erasmus+ Key Action 2 (strategic partnerships, capacity building) and the well-established former Erasmus Mundus Program Vinifera Euromaster, Hochschule Geisenheim University has been able to strengthen and expand its international network. For the new generation of the Erasmus program, the university intends to keep participating in Key Action 2 as part of its internationalization strategy. In particular, the university seeks to take part in the Erasmus activities "Partnerships for Cooperation and Exchange of Best Practices", "Partnerships for Innovations" and "Joint Erasmus Mundus

Master's Degrees". By participating in cooperation projects, the university aims to step up its collaboration with strategic partners and to work together with existing or new partners to further strengthen all other research areas beyond the area of viticulture on an international level. These actions contribute to Hochschule Geisenheim University's key target to step up its involvement in international / European projects and networks and to promote the development of integrated international teaching activities in order to improve the visibility and competitiveness of the university.

Since its foundation, Hochschule Geisenheim University can look back on seven years of successful Erasmus experience and a well-established Erasmus organizational structure in compliance with the program's principles and quality standards. These include:

- respecting the principles of non-discrimination, transparency and inclusion,
- fair and transparent admission, selection and application processes,
- special support for disadvantaged groups
- providing preparatory courses, especially with regard to language and culture
- specialist advice by academic staff
- individual advice on non-academic subjects provided by the student service
- support and integration services
- monitoring activities
- recognition of credits gained abroad as well as the application of ECTS tools
- recognition of staff mobility
- feedback and evaluation formats
- systematic follow-up
- sharing and implementing the results

In order to make it a standard for students and staff members to go abroad, Hochschule Geisenheim University's primary target within the Erasmus program is to increase learning mobility (KA1) for students and staff members (see above). Mobility fosters the ability to interact and cooperate with people with different cultural backgrounds, helps to adapt to different circumstances and improves language and communication skills. It also promotes social and transversal competencies (openness and curiosity to rise to new challenges, problem-solving and decision-making skills, trust, tolerance towards other personal values and behaviors). These skills are required in our globalized world and will ultimately help to improve your chances on the labor market.

Moreover, staff mobility fosters innovation and change management. Mobility among teaching staff has a positive impact on acquiring new teaching methods, improving the international dimension of teaching content, and positively influences joint research opportunities. Non-academic staff members who go abroad (administrative staff in particular in order to promote the internationalization of university administration) are likely to improve their communication, problem-solving and organizational skills.

Driving learning mobility also helps to promote the level of "internationalization at home". Students and staff members who stay in their home institution benefit from peer learning and the interaction with exchange students and staff members and from sharing professional and intercultural skills, expertise and experience. International exchange also helps to recognize, appreciate and integrate diversity and raises a deeper European awareness among participants and their families.

Another target of Hochschule Geisenheim University is to step up its involvement in international collaboration projects as part of Key Action 2 (see above). International cooperations, which combine higher education with science and economic-related subjects,

promote multi-disciplinary approaches, innovations as well as a better integration of information and communication technology with digital competencies, thus playing a vital role in further improving the quality of higher education.

Hochschule Geisenheim University uses different qualitative and quantitative indicators to monitor the effects of its efforts. These include, among others, the number of participants for single Erasmus activities, the evaluation of their Erasmus reports (by paying special attention to participants' ability to improve their competencies and how they rated the quality of support services), feedback management, evaluations, surveys (for instance graduate surveys asking respondents to assess how the acquired skills improved their chances on the labor market). Special attention is paid to ensuring the long-lasting effects of the project results. Finally, the implementation of Erasmus activities is embedded in the quality management cycle in order to continuously improve the processes.