



Erasmus+ Policy Statement 2021 - 2027

LCC International University's (LCC) vision is to be the leading Christian Liberal Arts University in Europe, renowned for its flourishing academic community, spiritual vitality and global impact. An integral part of LCC's uniqueness is providing a North American style of education, but in the region of Eastern Europe. From its inception LCC has sought to undo the cultural remnants of Soviet society by teaching and modeling trust and cooperation. In this aspect LCC continues to offer an educational experience that is unique to the region.

LCC supports the EU Modernisation and Internationalisation Agenda for Higher Education, and the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education is integral to the realisation of institutional plans, strategies and aspirations.

LCC confirms its identity as an international university, with student and faculty/staff diversity. The international distinctiveness is mirrored in university's program content, teaching approach and student life programming. Within the student body 73% are international students from over 50+ countries and the percentage of international students and countries is growing steadily every year. Almost 65% of the faculty comes from the USA, Canada and Western Europe, and the remaining 35% from Lithuania. Through the building of an intentionally diverse international community LCC aspires to be an example of successfully functioning multiculturalism.

As an international community LCC continues to engage its own community members in meaningful cross-cultural dialogue and embrace diversity to enhance the learning experience of all community members with the help of Erasmus+. LCC also seeks to extend its diverse cultural skills and capital to the region to positively impact the development of better understanding of various cultures and promote cross-cultural cooperation. The university seeks to continue building on the unique strengths in order to maximize regional impact as well as provide opportunities to engage with the local and international stakeholders, increase global cooperation for innovation and development, and to continue to ensure the high quality of educational experience. LCC places an emphasis on the development of intercultural competencies, both individual and collective, which enable people to manage cultural diversity well.

Additionally, LCC seeks to enhance the research culture by: providing a common vision for how research activity can feed the overall learning culture at LCC, giving maximum support to student learning, developing faculty professionally through the production and dissemination of new scientific knowledge and scholarly writing, and studying how the LCC research culture may be optimally sustained. Faculty participates in academic conferences worldwide and publishes their research in international journals yearly. The impressive international publications, conference presentations, workshops and seminars, and distinguished public lectures demonstrate institutional commitment to high quality, international-level research and peer-reviewed scholarship.

Through participating in the Erasmus+ programme LCC will ensure sustainable diversity within the student body, increased opportunities for cooperation for staff and faculty members strengthening the international dimension of the diverse community.

LCC intends to implement Erasmus Key Action 1 (KA1) learning mobility activities of students and staff during the entire duration of the new charter period.

LCC is an Erasmus+ charter holder from 2002 which allowed the university to participate in the Erasmus+ program and provide students and staff with opportunities to study, train and gain work experience abroad. The overall goal of the project is to continue increasing the percentage of students and staff participating in the Erasmus+ mobilities as well as to strengthen LCC presence in the partner universities. Staff and faculty see the Erasmus+ program to be very relevant in improving relationships with colleagues from abroad, stimulating more in depth cooperation between institutions and developing professional skills, while students claim that the Erasmus+ studies mobility program is one of the greatest culture and character building programs that one can get in life. In addition, an Erasmus+ experience is an ideal chance to develop social awareness and extra-curricular abilities. Erasmus+ students of course do gain specific skills in their field, but most importantly they gain skills that are valuable across many fields, so the ability to adapt to openings in new fields is enhanced. All international activities have a strong institutional support and objectives of the program builds bridges between various departments which contributes to the effective Erasmus+ project management.

Center for International Education at LCC oversees and manages the Erasmus+ program and provides administrative and logistic support to the participants, organizes activities, oversees the budget and reporting and participates in studies recognition process. Throughout the project phases all issues related to transnational partners and participants are addressed by the Center for International Education Director and Erasmus+ Program Coordinator.

Center for International Education monitors current partnerships and is in charge of new partnerships for academic cooperation. New partners are carefully considered and benefits for both institutions are outlined and discussed before the Erasmus+ inter-institutional agreements are signed. Existing partnerships are assessed based on the mobility flows, student feedback and availability of courses. All existing participating partners in the project use the ECTS credit system and recognize earned credits according to the internal procedures and record them in the diploma supplement. In the upcoming new charter period LCC will continue to cooperate with its current and new partners by deepening partnerships through visits, job shadowing, exchange, etc. that would result in larger inbound student and faculty/staff flows in Europe, Asia and the United States. Each institution undertakes the responsibility to issue transcripts within five weeks after the end of the semester.

During the previous charter period (last six years), LCC especially focused on developing and improving internal procedures, means of communication and as a result of that witnessed a growth of interest in the program.

One of main tasks in the upcoming charter period is to continuously work to improve the quality of mobility for both students and staff. There are multiple processes in place at LCC that contribute to the quality of the mobility activities. To start with, LCC has a transparent internal selection process for the outgoing students. Center for International Education informs students on exchange possibilities and helps with practical arrangements e.g. scholarships, documentation, etc. Information on the studies/traineeship mobility programs, criteria and regulations, is provided to students via email, on LCC official website, social media platforms, through info sessions and presentations. Participants are selected by the LCC

Erasmus+ committee that consists of representatives from the academics department, student life department and student council. Also, Center for International Education advertises and coordinates the selection of staff wishing to participate in the teaching/training mobility programs. Staff and faculty members are selected and nominated for mobility for teaching or training based on the transparent and clear guidelines that are set by the Erasmus+ regulations, LCC's internal rules and partner institution policies.

All selected Erasmus+ mobility participants are requested to attend a mandatory pre-departure orientation. The Erasmus+ student charter is covered in detail whilst explaining the responsibilities before, during and after the mobility periods and whom to contact in case of challenges. Topics of culture shock, adjustment and homesickness are discussed in the pre-departure meeting. Additionally, information on OLS and its benefits is explained in detail to mobility participants. All the later mentioned activities are organized by the Center for International Education staff members. To add, at all times students are encouraged to take host countries' language classes to prevent a language barrier and ease the settling process. At LCC all incoming students are offered a language course worth 6 ECTS credits. Outgoing students submit pre-selected courses at a host institution before their departure to ensure the recognition of credits towards their degree. Once approved as per procedure, Erasmus+ learning agreement is signed by the student, home and receiving universities.

Support to outgoing staff for teaching and training mobilities is given through providing detailed next steps emails and individual meetings prior to the mobility. Incoming staff for teaching and training mobilities are supported by the Center for International Education and relevant departments.

Outbound students are regularly approached by email to check on their progress and remind of their responsibilities. Upon their return students have debriefing sessions where they are asked to share their experiences whilst studying abroad as such feedback is vital for the institution and further improvement. Their feedback is compiled, reviewed and used to improve student advising on mobility programs at partner institutions.

Inbound students have a 3 day orientation that helps them settle in and familiarize with the campus and culture. On the first day students have an orientation on campus and are shown how to navigate the campus and the city, attend sessions that cover topics on multicultural living, Lithuanian language, academics, living in the dorm, etc. On the second and third days cultural trips around the region are organized for the Erasmus+ students. Also, Center for International Education takes part in a student leadership program overseen by Student Life Division at LCC. Student leaders are assigned to help incoming Erasmus+ students integrate and familiarize with the institution throughout the semester. Erasmus+ program coordinator has group and one-on-one meetings with the students when needed. Incoming students upon mobility completion have to fill out written anonymous surveys and are given a chance to express feedback at the end of the program. Students' feedback is taken into consideration in order to distinguish drawbacks early on and improve experiences for future participants. Outgoing staff during the mobility are contacted via email, if clarification is needed. Incoming staff is supported on site via individual meetings.

LCC, renowned for its flourishing academic community and global impact will continue to engage its community members in meaningful cross-cultural dialogue, embrace diversity to enhance the learning experience of all community, develop faculty professionally by developing institutional research culture and give maximum support to student learning all with the help of Erasmus+ project.

The Center for International Education at LCC administers Erasmus+ program, International

Exchange and Study Abroad Lithuania program with North American partners. Every fall and spring semester LCC International University on average hosts 40-50 incoming students and supports approximately 20-30 outgoing students. Additionally, during the summer months LCC hosts on average 75 students from North America for various short term academic and volunteering programs. Every year approximately 13 faculty and staff members participate in teaching and training exchange within Erasmus+ framework.

Erasmus+ program impact on the student mobility for studies and traineeship results in professional and personal growth and development. Studying abroad offers a huge opportunity to enhance academic records by gaining fresh and international insights into one's degree. In addition to the studies, an Erasmus+ experience is an ideal chance to develop social awareness and extra-curricular abilities. A semester abroad leads to a greater maturity and improvement of skills such as tolerance of ambiguity, proactiveness, awareness of own strengths and weaknesses, decisiveness, to name a few. Erasmus+ program not only urges students and staff to share and represent different cultures and nations, but it also helps to find one's own identity. Most importantly the Erasmus+ program contributes to educating and raising a new generation of cultivated young individuals. Additionally, through the Erasmus+ program staff mobility builds competence and exchange experiences in work ethics. Since 2/3 of LCC faculty comes from North America, being part of the Erasmus+ framework is a prodigious opportunity to expand and enrich knowledge on the European Higher Education system. In addition, staff mobility for teaching has a significant influence on institutional academic development and internationalisation.

One of the strategic goals is to intensify the student exchange and increase the number of students who participate in mobilities for studies and traineeships by 20%, aiming to finance approximately 35-50 outgoing students during the academic year by 2027. This will contribute to updated curricula enabling graduates to find quality employment in line with their studies. LCC will be aiming to match the incoming student numbers to those of outgoing students to balance the student diversity on campus. Additionally, the biggest growth within the last Erasmus Charter period was witnessed in the number of staff participating in mobilities for teaching and training (70%). LCC aims to continue growing staff for teaching and training mobilities at a stable 30% per year rate (aiming to send on average 20 staff members per year by year 2027) through providing more opportunities for mutually beneficial collaboration within partner institutions in program and partner countries. These opportunities offered for professional development will increase the ability to retain high quality staff.

Part of the institutional strategy is to maintain sustainable growth of international students and staff and to expand international partnerships in Europe, Asia and North America. Currently LCC partners with 45 higher education institutions in North America, 25 in Europe and 6 in Asia for student and staff exchange. LCC's strategy is, firstly, to expand the scope of current partnerships to provide a wider range of opportunities for student and staff exchange, as well as for collaborative research opportunities. Secondly, LCC aims to keep sustainable partner growth and foresees to increase quality partnership network by 20% yearly prioritizing the regions where current partnerships are located (Europe, Asia and North America) as well as looking into partnering with institutions that share similar vision and mission in South America and the Middle East.