

AAU is a very international university, with an unusually diverse student body (typically more than 60 nationalities represented; only about 30% of students are Czech or Slovak). This is a result of using English as a medium of instruction, which allows us to recruit very widely, but at the same time predisposes our international activities in certain specific directions. Our international strategy emerges from and develops this demographic reality, while also building on our mission statement:

“Graduates of Anglo-American University are prepared to make a positive difference addressing local, national and international challenges through the analysis and application of current and developing knowledge in the context of a globalized world.”

The diverse ethnic and cultural mix of our classrooms already goes some way towards preparing students for the challenges of the modern world, but this cannot substitute for the direct experience of living or studying abroad. AAU therefore strongly encourages students to participate in international activities, whether that means classic student exchanges, or shorter intensive programs, or community outreach (e.g. our recent student-initiated volunteer mission to the favelas of Rio de Janeiro).

Our key objective for the coming years is to strengthen AAU’s position in the international educational sector by obtaining a second (parallel) accreditation from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) in the USA, in addition to our existing Czech accreditation. This synthesis of US and EU standards will not only improve academic quality, but also help attract an increasing number of degree-seeking students while maintaining our international balance. We also aim to strengthen AAU’s delivery of the skills and competencies needed for the global marketplace.

Participation in Erasmus is an integral part of this strategy, since it provides space for active cooperation within the EU, and provides a European dimension to balance the American perspective we hope to acquire from WASC. It also allows AAU staff and students to experience the diversity of life and education across the EU. This is relevant not only for students from the Czech and Slovak Republics, but also for students from third countries (currently about 60% of our total), who thus get a chance to experience two distinct EU countries and hence gain a better understanding of the EU as a whole.

AAU’s long-term goal is to build a stable network of high quality partners in all geographical areas of the EU, and in selected regions outside the EU. In view of our language of instruction, our efforts outside the EU are focused on the USA and other English-speaking countries, so as to increase our students’ (typically non-native speakers) opportunities to experience the English-speaking world first hand. Our secondary focus has been on Asia as an increasingly important economic area, where many AAU graduates may be seeking employment.

Although AAU is a small university, which places limits on the number of exchanges we can realistically run, we continue to refine our strategic alliances and geographical outlook. New partners are selected according to their compatibility with our programs, their geographic location, and their vision for strategic development. Suggestions are canvassed from all AAU stakeholders (faculty, students, administration), but subject to review by the Provost and the President’s collegium so as to maintain balance.

Effective international contacts are an essential part of any dynamic modern university. Our most important objectives are:

1. Allowing staff and students to gain direct hands-on experience with diversity internationally, thereby improving academic quality.
2. Teaching students to observe and analyse the national and international challenges of other countries.
3. Training individuals to employ different perspectives to solve the challenges at hand and thus to become better citizens, always in a global context.

Our international priorities for 2014/20 are to:

- Consolidate the number and quality of our partnerships, so we can offer a balanced portfolio of partners in all relevant geographic regions and for all programs and levels of study;
- Balance the number of incoming and outgoing students;
- Ensure that 20% of students enrolled in AAU degree programs have direct experience of international study before graduation (with priority for students who have not previously studied abroad);
- Ensure regular mobility opportunities for faculty and staff;
- Develop targeted steps to improve the integration of incoming study-abroad students with our degree-seekers;
- Develop strategic academic partnerships leading to the creation of new intensive programs-and double degrees – aiming for at least 3 new programs over the next 7 years.

Implementation strategy:

AAU is committed to the internationalization of its teaching and research activities. Though working with limited resources, we have already established close curricular cooperation with partners in Poland and Austria. Our goal is to establish at least 3 additional international taught programs (double-degrees or regular short-term intensive programs) in the lifetime of the Erasmus for All framework. Our participation in international cooperation projects, by facilitating teacher & staff mobility and curricular integration, will undoubtedly contribute to that. Our initial goals in developing new international taught programs will focus on European partners, but following our WASC accreditation, we will also consider integrating partners from the US.

The internationalization of curricula is an essential part of AAU's modernization strategy. All schools at AAU are actively encouraged to use their international networks to suggest joint teaching projects, as are the Provost's office and the President's collegium as well. Our goal is to use the competitive advantage of our very diverse academic community and our English-speaking language environment to become a regional leader in the private higher education sector. Full engagement in the international cooperation projects offered through the program will be an invaluable tool in helping us to achieve that.

In addition, we intend to use the period of the Erasmus for All framework to increase our engagement with the program of European work placements so as to better prepare our graduates for future employment. Although AAU already has a long-standing policy of requiring students to undertake internships before graduation, our focus this far has been on local companies in Prague, and it will undoubtedly benefit our students to give our internships a European dimension. Contacts to facilitate this are already being developed.

Expected impacts (in relation to the 5 priorities of the EC Modernisation Agenda):

1. Increasing attainment levels to provide the graduates and researchers Europe needs. In common with the EU modernization agenda, one of AAU's general goals is to increase retention and graduation rates by addressing the specific needs of students. AAU's participation in the Program strengthens our integration into European structures, increasing the value and quality of our education. Providing students with an opportunity to study abroad has a positive impact on motivation; providing faculty and staff an opportunity to share their experiences with colleagues abroad fosters innovative approaches and engagement.

2. Improving the quality and relevance of higher education. AAU's key objective is to improve its quality. We are currently pursuing US accreditation by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), in parallel to our existing Czech accreditation; in time all our programs will be double-accredited. WASC places great emphasis on educational quality, including the relevance of degrees and educational effectiveness. For AAU, as an English-speaking university with a very diverse student body, participation in the Program is a key to our success: our international character is a structural element of what we offer.

3. Strengthening quality through mobility and cross-border cooperation. AAU already has a long-term relationship with Chapman University, which was instrumental in our applying for US accreditation. In Europe we have strong partners in Vienna and Katowice, and in the timeline of the Program we plan to build on our existing contacts from LLP to develop integrated teaching and research activities with further partners, including further double degrees. In addition, our unique double-accreditation, when approved, can serve as a bridge for our EU partners to the US.

4. Linking higher education, research and business for excellence and regional development. AAU is increasingly focused on developing good alumni, business and community relations. Representatives of business, public, and non-profit organizations are members of our advisory bodies, and are consulted on various topics related to our operations. Participation in the Program would help us to extend our outreach to the international community, and increase the involvement of partners from abroad, directly helping us to fulfil our mission—preparing graduates for the global world.

5. Improving governance and funding. Quality of governance and strategic and financial planning are among the main topics of our ongoing WASC accreditation. AAU is determined to work continuously on improving in these areas, and has committed itself to strengthening its board structures and internal governance systems, as well as improving strategic planning and budgeting. Participation in the Program gives us an opportunity to learn from partners in the EU, balancing the input from our peer institutions in the US. This synergy of viewpoints will allow us to optimize our efforts.

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