

Inclusive Internationalization and Mobility Plan for UVic-UCC Official Degrees

Strategic Context

Erasmus+ program 2021-2027

Through the new Erasmus+ program, the European Commission is promoting new types of mobility that favor the integration of internationalization within the curriculum (Embedded Mobility) and its inclusivity, so that as many students as possible can enjoy opportunities for international experiences despite possible economic or personal conditions (job, health...).

Within the framework of the Erasmus+ European Universities Initiative, the UVic-UCC is working, together with 10 universities from different countries, on the application to become European University Consortium (UP University). In this context, the objective set by the European Commission in the framework of student mobility is to reach 50% of students from the universities of the consortium who enjoy a mobility experience throughout their studies, including long and short-term actions in all their forms (Physical, Hybrid and Virtual). The program pursues the definition of sustainable, inclusive and barrier-free mobility, with automatic recognition of credits for students who participate.

UVic-UCC strategy

The UVic-UCC 21-25 Strategic Plan includes an action to tackle the following need: "Incorporation of internationalization as a defining and distinctive element in the student training profile".

The actions associated with the present plan aim to advance the fulfillment of these university strategic objectives. This will be achieved by defining specific actions to be adjusted to the situation and possibilities of each UVic-UCC faculty, but with the vision of achieving a significant and measurable impact on all degrees, with special emphasis on official bachelor's degrees but also master's degrees (defining specific actions adjusted to the shorter duration of these degrees).

Approach

This plan aims to make decisive progress in the implementation of this specific action of the UVic-UCC Strategic Plan 21-25 thus guaranteeing access to internationalization and mobility for all UVic-UCC students, doing everything possible to eliminate academic or organizational barriers and reduce economic barriers.

The current document defines the general lines that will be translated into specific actions that each center and degree can adjust to their situation, defining the starting points and milestones to be reached. This Action Plan will aim to improve the opportunities offered to students of each degree and show their real options in a clear and attractive way.

The actions will be time-framed for different areas of action over the next four years, promoting a reflection on the objectives by each degree that will allow a substantial improvement of their current situation.

Areas of Action

1. Design of new degrees and modification of existing ones.

The moment of designing new degree proposals is key to facilitating subsequent mobility and internationalization processes and, therefore, it is important to ensure it from the first moments of preparation. Internationalization and mobility opportunities must also be included in degrees with professional profiles, guaranteeing offers in an appropriate and attractive format for the expected student profile.

The UVic-UCC procedure for New Degree Proposal includes the points "5. Teaching structure" and "6. Level of Internationalization of the Proposal" (which should be renamed to "6. Internationalization of the Degree"). To prevent disconnection between these two points, they should not be addressed in a sequential manner. Instead, it would be advisable to consider them as a single unit and developed by the same planning team. This will ensure that different mobility options for the student are foreseen and guaranteed within the study plan. The Heads of International Relations of the Center and of International Practices (SCP) must participate from the beginning to analyze and advise the team in specifying a structure that facilitates mobility and the establishment of stable collaborations with universities foreign, while exploring possibilities with existing partners/companies or looking for new ones.

In the implementation of this plan, internationalization guidelines and recommendations will be included in the procedures for new degree proposals.

Regarding existing degrees, they will be reviewed considering the above-mentioned criteria. Any action that can rationally be taken to improve the internationalization and mobility opportunities for the students will be added to the degree modification plan and timely implemented.

2. Physical mobility

This point, as well as the following, applies both to the design of new degrees and to existing degrees.

Being aware that long-term mobility presents challenges that are hard to overcome for students who combine studies and work, they are the type of experiences that both the European Commission and the National Agency (SEPIE) ask to prioritize due to their training and professionalizing impact.

The UVic-UCC considers crucial to ensure that the structure of the degrees does not add any additional difficulties to students who wish to undertake a stay of this type throughout their studies. Although it is true that, depending on the type of studies, it may be easier to carry out mobility in the Internship mode than in the Studies mode (or vice versa), it is advisable to do everything possible to ensure both options for students without this it means extending the duration of their studies.

2.1. Long-term Mobility for Studies

In order to promote the internationalization and mobility of students of official degrees, it is necessary to properly define mobility windows within each degree. A mobility window is a period (1 semester or 1 year) fully compatible with student mobility and fully integrated into the study plan of a degree. The correct implementation of the mobility windows, plus the flexible recognition criteria

of elective and compulsory subjects defined in the Uvic-UCC mobility regulation, should ensure that students who wish to opt for this type of mobility will not have to extend their studies.

Without excluding other possibilities, each degree must define at least one preferred semester of long-term mobility (Studies mobility window). It is recommended that such windows include optional or mandatory credits that are easily recognized in accordance with the UVic-UCC mobility regulations.

In the case of professionally regulated degrees and/or with a high content of compulsory practical subjects, the definition of mobility windows can represent a more important challenge. In these cases, it will be necessary to analyze national and international referents, which allow maintaining the regulatory requirements while proposing actions that end up allowing and facilitating the mobility of students.

Actions to promote exchange mobility must be promoted from the point of view of bilateralism, so that overall outgoing mobility (Outgoing) is in close balance with the number of international students entering (Incoming).

For this reason, it is necessary to consider this double Incoming/Outgoing strategy as two sides of the same coin. For example, concentrating mobility in both directions (In-Out) in the same mobility windows, prioritizing electives in English during this period, will facilitate balance and impact on class group sizes. Additionally, it is necessary to ensure the prevision of the number of incoming students in the International Campus subjects to guarantee of a sufficient and stable offer for every field of knowledge or faculty and the compatibility of internal offer calendars and international.

Outgoing Exchange Mobility:

Measures to eliminate or minimize barriers to mobility and facilitate the recognition of credits need to be taken. Those actions that require modification of the study plan will be added to the Degree Improvement Plan to be timely implemented.

Regarding recognition, the flexibility criteria provided for in the Regulation on the mobility of studies and international exchanges for university degree and master's students of the UVic-UCC will be duly applied (article 15, point 5.a). This section allows for the recognition as "Elective Mobility Credits" if the content is consistent with the field of knowledge of the home degree, even if there is no correspondence with the subjects of its study plan. The maximum number of recognized credits equals the total elective credits of the degree. In general, the number of credits recognized for each optional subject in mobility must be adjusted to the equivalent in ECTS credits of each subject taken at destination. Recognition of compulsory subjects is performed by correspondence between subjects (Article 15, point 5.b) established on the basis of the overall training value of the formative activities, even if there is no direct correspondence between subjects and programs. The number of ECTS for the recognition of a compulsory subject can vary by 20%.

For Outgoing students, it is proposed to create an information pill in the UVic-UCC learning platform 'Ubiqua' (Moodle) that includes a video presentation of the Student Support Service. This resource will include recommendations for international stays, information on psychological support mechanisms or resources for students with special needs offered by the UVic-UCC. The contents of the pills should take into account that the majority of students treated at the Student Support Service are for Dyslexia or ADD/ADHD (70%) and, to a lesser extent, for anxiety (8%), physical disability (7%) and for other conditions. It will also be necessary to contemplate issues of equality

and non-discrimination, as well as an Interculturality perspective. It is necessary to assess this proposal at the federative level, incorporating the particularities of each federated center.

According to the Student Support Service, the main challenges we face in terms of **inclusion and diversity** within the Erasmus+ program are: a) sensitivity to different cultural perspectives on inclusion and diversity; b) accessibility and accommodation for students with functional diversity; c) financial barriers; d) data collection and improvement plans.

Regarding **participants with fewer opportunities**, the following challenges are identified: a) financial barriers; b) cultural adjustment to a new cultural and social environment that can lead to isolation and homesickness; c) legal and administrative barriers related to visas and residence permits, especially for students with complex immigration status.

The possibility that Outgoing students are requested to complete the information pill as a pre-requisite must also be discussed. The contents of this resource can be customized for each faculty, also incorporating information and actions specific to each center's regulations.

Incoming Exchange Mobility:

In order to facilitate the reception of international students, each degree must include a minimum 12-30 ECTS taught entirely in the English language during the study mobility window or windows that have been defined. The offer of these subjects, included in the International Campus, must tend to be as stable as possible and attractive to both local and exchange students. The coherence of the International Campus offer must be jointly ensured by Degree Coordination and the Center's Head of International Relations.

The set of these subjects should tend to form, at least at school level, a coherent offer (both in timetables and in content) that allow incoming students to complete a minimum of 30 ECTS. This minimum is key to attracting exchange students, ensuring bilateral mobility and allowing local and foreign students to share learning experiences.

The presence of international students in degree subjects must be an important element of inclusive internationalization, allowing all students to work in an intercultural context, giving meaning to the center's internationalization policy.

It is important that when proposing actions that affect the structure or the language of teaching subjects, the forecast for the incorporation of new Teaching and Research Staff in the next four years is also considered to ensure that they become synergistic.

The English version of the UVic website does not yet include a Services section, so international students cannot easily see what the university has to offer. This page will be added in English, especially incorporating those services most relevant to exchange students. Among them, there must be information about the Student Support Service. It must also be analyzed at the federal level.

It is proposed to prepare an information pill in English for incoming students. The contents should be equivalent to those proposed by the Outgoing but adapted to the needs of the Incoming.

2.2 Physical Traineeship Mobility

The possibility of doing an international internship within the planned duration of the study plan provides, besides the training experience itself, the chance for a more individualized follow-up, which tends to be very positive at a personal and professional level.

Ideally, the study plan should allow for the possibility of an international stay of at least 2 months (either within the academic calendar or partly extending through the summer break), which meets the requirements of the Erasmus+ and/or national funding programs and allows you to enjoy these grants. In addition to the minimum duration, it is necessary to consider the completion dates based on the internship destinations, analyzing beforehand the compatibilities to ensure that the final offers are really feasible.

3. Virtual Mobility: COIL Projects (Collaborative Online International Learning)

COIL projects are a form of virtual exchange. They represent an effective and attractive way to move towards embedded inclusive internationalization. Broadly speaking, international collaborative online learning is about getting groups of students from different institutions to work online on a common collaborative task. They aim for collaborating institutions to co-design projects that involve students discussing course materials or content, solving a problem, or creating a product. Benefits include the development of cross-cultural skills and the incorporation of language and cross-cultural competences, skills of real value in the workplace where global virtual teamwork has become commonplace.

[UVic-UCC guidelines for COIL](#) are already available and several projects are already active.

These projects are integrated within the framework of a subject of the official degree qualification and must be included as an evaluable activity within it. The aim is to include a COIL program in every official degree.

To give more relevance to the program and promote interaction and cohesion between participating international students, some COIL projects may include short-term physical mobility for some of the participants.

In all cases, training, recognition and support measures for the teaching staff participating in these initiatives must also be assessed and specified.

4. Blended Intensive Programs (BIP)

The Blended Intensive Programs (BIP) are training programs through which the participants will carry out short-term physical mobility abroad in combination with a mandatory virtual component. These programs, financed by Erasmus+, should have with the following characteristics:

- provide added value compared to existing programs or courses.
- include specialized or innovative content or teaching methods.
- promote transdisciplinary and multinational training and benefit from special learning and teaching conditions not available at a single institution.
- guarantee transnational participation: participants from at least three countries.
- include, if possible, challenge-based learning in which transnational and transdisciplinary teams work together.

- provide new learning opportunities, skill development, access to the most advanced research information and results and other knowledge for participating teachers and students.
- help to develop transversal skills beyond those of their field of knowledge.

All UVic-UCC Faculties should encourage the design and participation in BIP programs as well as promote student participation, especially in a transdisciplinary approach.

There are two ways to participate in a BIP program. The first is to adhere to a program coordinated by another European university. In this case, UVic-UCC students perform physical mobility at the end of the program. The other option is to coordinate a BIP project. In this modality, UVic-UCC students do not carry out physical mobility, but all students (and teaching staff) from foreign universities carry out physical mobility at UVic-UCC.

In both modes, students enroll in the number of 'elective mobility credits' equivalent to the number of ECTS provided for in the BIP (between 3 and 6 ECTS), so that recognition is automatic as required by the Erasmus+ program.

Bearing in mind that these BIPS will be carried out during the academic year, the degree coordination and head of studies will ensure the compatibility of these programs with the timetables and academic calendars of the degrees.

5. Dissemination of the current Plan

This document and the ensuing action plans will be made available to relevant academic figures and the university community in general.

Depending on the mobility windows and opportunities for internationalization of each degree, Degree Coordination together with the person in charge of International Relations of the center will customize the 'mobility' tab of the Degree on the website, adding when appropriate elements of specific information and encouraging mobility.

The accreditation of the English language level will also be promoted on this page and its incorporation into the European Degree Supplement (SET) will be reported.

The [COIL projects page](#) can also be referenced, mentioning those projects that have been carried out as part of the degree in the recent years.

6. Assessment of impact on student training

It is important to capture, in a specific manner for each area of knowledge, the expectations and assessment of students in relation to the role of internationalization and mobility in their studies.

To achieve this, a survey will be done within a specific subject at the beginning and at the end of the studies. The double objective is to carry out a diagnosis of the current situation and opinion as well as the monitoring of the impact of the actions on the same cohort.

In addition, the focus group methodology can be used to improve student feedback and suggestions.

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