



Mary Immaculate College

Erasmus+ Policy Statement 2021-2027

Objectives of Participation in Erasmus+ Programme

Mary Immaculate College's strategic approach for the period to 2023 is firmly aligned to EU policy on the modernisation of education, the Bologna process and the Irish government's own National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 and International Education Strategy for Ireland, 'Irish Educated, Globally Connected' (current national strategy covers 2016-2020. The new national strategy is under review). Accordingly, its Strategic Plan is structured against the backdrop of key internationalisation, modernisation, participation and mission-centric imperatives that are common to these foundational documents. The Mary Immaculate College Strategic Plan 2023 – A Flourishing Learning Community – will be enabled by the following cross-cutting strategies:

- Focus on the Learner;
- Provide Resources Effectively and Sustainably;
- Sustain a Culture of Quality Assurance;
- Work in Partnership;
- Foster Subsidiarity of Decision-Making.

These cross-cutting enabling strategies can be superimposed over any of the seven Strategic Pillars which give the plan its structure. This ensures cohesiveness and consistency of implementation. The MIC Strategic Plan begins with a set of seven 'Strategic Pillars', reflective of these imperatives and related performance indicators. These pillars are:

- Pillar 1: Catholic Heritage and Values
- Pillar 2: High Quality, Whole-Student Experience
- Pillar 3: Research Culture
- Pillar 4: Community Belonging
- Pillar 5: Global Outlook
- Pillar 6: Professional Infrastructure
- Pillar 7: Ethical Governance and Connected Leadership

Each Pillar contains High-Level Goals, each with a set of Priority Objectives, which will be achieved by implementation of all 207 Key Enabling Actions that set corresponding targets.

The existence of a specific Global Outlook element to the MIC strategy as a central 'pillar' demonstrates its significance to the institution and the weight that is attached to it. High-Level Goals and Priority Objectives under the Global Outlook Pillar include the following:

High-Level Goal 1: To encourage a global outlook in all that the College does. This will be achieved by strengthening our network of strategic partnerships around the world and by internationalising the campus community through inbound and outbound mobility of students, Faculty and Professional Services staff.

Priority 1: To double the number of international students (undergraduate, postgraduate and short-term) attending learning programmes at MIC by 2021. This will be achieved through a number of key enabling actions, many of which are supported by Erasmus. For example:

- Cultivate and enhance existing international links and create new strategic partnerships conducive to the implementation of MIC's internationalisation strategy;
- Continue to deliver and promote outstanding international student satisfaction at MIC.

Priority 2: To double the number of MIC students availing of international learning experiences by 2021. Once again, Erasmus supports the achievement of this objective through the following key enabling actions:

- Devise strategy to encourage and support all MIC students to complement their programmes of study with an international learning experience;
- Identify new opportunities for overseas student exchange and internships for our students.

Priority 3: To increase international mobility for MIC staff for peer networking, teaching and learning and research opportunities. The key enabling actions listed in the Strategic Plan for this objective are:

- Continue to be one of the most active Irish HEIs participating in Erasmus activities;
- Develop mobility strategy for MIC staff to include seed funding for research and for peer networking.

Priority 4: To create new programmes aimed at providing international learning experiences. Among the key enabling actions listed under this objective and facilitated by Erasmus are:

- Develop joint programmes with international partner institutions;
- Continue to evolve the College's academic offerings specifically tailored to international students;
- Design and deliver bespoke CPD opportunities for primary and post-primary teachers and university faculty from selected countries.

Clearly the Erasmus programme will play a central role in the achievement of the Global Outlook pillar of MIC's Strategic Plan 2023. The College will continue to focus on its engagement in KA103 activities to facilitate learning mobility of individuals within the EU and in KA107 international credit mobility to create opportunities outside the EU. The College's networks of strategic partnerships worldwide will enable it to both lead and participate in a range of strategic partnerships and research initiatives under the Erasmus programme.

Erasmus+ Actions at MIC

As outlined above, the Erasmus programme will be crucial to the implementation of the Global Outlook pillar of MIC's Strategic Plan 2023. MIC is committed to encouraging and facilitating the participation of its students, teachers and staff in the range of available mobility opportunities, within the EU (KA103) and outside the EU (KA107) and has utilised the ECHE Self-Assessment Tool to inform institutional awareness, at all levels, of the Programme's aims and objectives as well as ensuring it informs the ongoing internationalisation of the institution. In line with the institution's Strategic Plan 2023 and priority objectives, MIC continually seeks to strengthen and develop its network of partners within and outside

Europe in order to provide a comprehensive and high-quality choice of Erasmus destinations for mobility. This is more important than heretofore as a result of the introduction of windows for the majority of undergraduate students to engage in mobility opportunities as well as increased engagement of both faculty and staff with international mobility opportunities. The most tangible benefit of participation is enhancement of professional and career-related activities via learning from good practices abroad, extensions of professional networks and relationships and success in international collaborative research bids – all of which are of significant benefit to MIC's standing as an internationally-engaged institution. MIC's ongoing participation in the Erasmus programme will continue to be of significant importance, both for participants and the institution as a whole. The programme strongly supports the College's commitment to increased internationalisation, its international and institutional strategies and the achievement of targets set out in the institution's performance compact with the Higher Education Authority (HEA).

The College has developed many valuable networks of strategic partnerships worldwide. Drawing on these connections has enabled MIC to engage in collaborative teaching and learning projects, partnerships for capacity building and research initiatives under the Erasmus programme. MIC embraces these wider perspectives and recognises their contribution to the attainment of the highest levels of academic research, teaching and learning in the College's core fields of Education and Humanities. International collaborations facilitated by Erasmus KA1, KA2 and KA3 initiatives have provided staff and postgraduate researchers at MIC with greater understanding of the applications of knowledge creation, the research process and research methods in global, educational, economic and social contexts.

MIC assists staff and students to conduct original research, to engage in scholarship and creative innovation, and to publicise the results of their work in publications and through academic conference presentations worldwide. This research is both of intrinsic academic value in itself, and also of service to the relevant academic fields, disciplines and communities of professional practice, as well as society at large. Both professional and student researchers are incentivised to promote and disseminate impactful research and to collaborate and reciprocate with others. In doing so, they contribute to local-global knowledge and further build the College's academic profile and reputation.

Participation in KA2 and KA3 actions will contribute to achieving each of the objectives of the seven strategic pillars of MIC's Strategic Plan, *A Flourishing Learning Community*:

- Mary Immaculate College will be known as a high-quality university-level institution, in line with its distinctive mission as a Catholic College of Education and the Liberal Arts, and will make sure that its programmes are available to all learners, whatever their backgrounds may be.
- MIC will review its suite of academic programmes, and develop new ones, and will ensure that they are fully geared towards the educational and career needs of its students.
- MIC will make sure that everything it does is informed by high-quality research. This is in line with the best standards of learning and teaching at higher level educational institutions.
- MIC will continue to make sure that the physical resources of the College, both in Limerick and Thurles, as well as its expertise, are made available to our neighbours and wider community.
- MIC will have a strong international profile, with students and staff having opportunities to travel to visit institutions in other countries, and the campus will be enriched by the presence of a growing number of international students.
- MIC's excellent staff will reflect the diversity of our society. They will have the best levels of support the institution can provide, helping them to achieve the highest quality work and fostering their well-being.
- MIC will lead the College responsibly, ethically and in accordance with the highest standards of excellence and accountability.

This Plan aims to serve MIC's learning community, ensuring that each individual has the potential and means for professional excellence and, in the case of students, the wherewithal for career entry and success in the 21st Century workplace. Beyond this, the institution's ultimate aspiration is to enable our graduates to enjoy a life of continuous thriving and, indeed, to uphold the dignity of others.

Envisaged impact of participation in the Erasmus+ Programme

The Erasmus programme will play a central role in the achievement of the Global Outlook pillar of MIC's Strategic Plan 2023. The College will continue to grow its partnerships and academic mobility opportunities through KA103 activities within the EU and KA107 initiatives outside the EU. In MIC's Performance Compact with the Higher Education Authority (HEA), one of the institution's high-level strategic priorities is to build on the College's success and reputation in the Erasmus programme and as a recognised provider of a high value international student experience by raising incoming student participation levels to 6% by 2021 and targeting high value strategic academic partnerships – including shared delivery of programmes - with prestigious overseas institutions, particularly those engaged in teacher education.

Development of a new strategy and accompanying business plan is required to capitalise on this potential and this will take priority in identifying next steps. The College wishes to focus on scalable opportunities outside the European area to ensure that all of its 'home-registered' students benefit from at least a single instance of international academic experience, and to further diversify the learning community by attracting staff and students from other countries.

The sub-level strategic initiative is for the institution's internationalisation strategy to yield significant increases in staff and student mobility (inwards and outwards) as well as producing impactful and innovative inter-institutional partnerships towards shared mission objectives. A key imperative is the quality of the international student experience, as produced by consistently excellent and well-co-ordinated service delivery framework which is evidenced against recognised quality benchmarks. The College has also positively progressed towards Bologna target of at least 20% of those who graduate in 2020 to undertake a study or training period abroad; participation in Erasmus in Higher Education and other Study and Work Placements Abroad is to reach 4,400 by 2022 in accordance with international strategy.

A sub-level strategic initiative is to develop staff and student mobility exchanges with prestigious and high-ranking partner universities and optimise student recruitment in new and established subject areas by attracting prestigious fellowships and scholarships from sources such as the Irish Research Council (IRC) and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, through Government of Ireland International Education Scholarships and Erasmus International Credit Mobility exchanges.

Participation in KA2 actions will further the strategic goal of internationalisation by supporting the development, transfer and implementation of innovative practices, the implementation of joint initiatives promoting co-operation, peer learning and exchanges of experience. It will allow MIC to develop networks, increase its capacity to operate at trans-national level and to share practices and methods, all of which will significantly enhance the institution's knowledge base.