Position Paper and Policy Recommendations

on the Place of Teaching

in Academic Careers

The ERUA partners have joined forces to answer to the ambitious call of establishing an alliance of European reform universities as part of the European strategy and the creation of a European Education Area. As such, the ERUA universities constitute a test bed for fostering mutual learning and exchange through collaboration, both at the policy level and between higher education institutions, actors, and stakeholders.

As a new alliance of like-minded institutions with a shared reform identity and an ambition of engaging in the continuous questioning and transformation of our institutions, proposing alternative and experimental models for teaching, learning and research forms a key part of the Alliance's vision and mission. ERUA strives to be a creative space for experimental approaches in pursuit of enhancing the quality and relevance of higher education and research that engage the societies we are a part of.

The Alliance has committed to enabling innovative academic cooperation in support of all missions of the university. The ERUA Observatory on teaching and learning innovation, the Think Tank on the Impact of Social Sciences and Humanities, the Sandbox for experimentation, the Promotion Service, and the Project Development Unit have been designed to foster experimentation and innovation within the partner institutions and across the Alliance.

An examination of the place of teaching in the career development of scholars across the partner institutions and beyond constitutes a first step towards improving institutional recognition of quality in teaching, learning and research within and beyond the Alliance. A mapping of policies and practices at the five Alliance institutions, i.e. national and institutional frameworks that govern teaching and learning in academic careers, offers an insight into on-the-ground institutional realities. A comparison of national regulations, institutional hiring requirements, job responsibilities and job expectations at the five alliance members provides an important foundation to gain a better understanding of the constraints and opportunities that hinder or facilitate experimentation and innovation. The position of the Alliance is that quality in teaching, learning and research requires adequate resources and appropriate structures to support and empower faculty and researchers.

The mapping shows a great heterogeneity regarding the place of teaching and learning in academic careers across the alliance. The degree of formal training, weight of teaching in promotions and role of teaching in the everyday life of academics across the alliance varies considerably, and these differences are structured by properties of national regulations and traditions, disciplinary differences, and institutional practices.

In the context of the European University Initiative, recognition of international teaching experience and support structures for collaboration in teaching, learning and research form an essential part of the endeavour. ERUA will continue its examination of existing structures - barriers and incentives - in order to identify feasible pathways to foster wide institutional engagement in joint teaching, learning and research initiatives within these structures as well as ways of improving existing conditions through exchange of good practice and peer learning.

The aim of fostering synergies between teaching, learning and research constitutes a defining element of an academic environment as well as a key driver of progress. The Alliance is committed to the principle that research must inform and enhance teaching and learning in higher education, in relation to content as well as in terms of developing and sharing good practices, methods and resources within and beyond the Alliance - all the while ensuring an appropriate balance between these different demands.

Recommendations:

Quality

Support and promote quality in teaching, learning and research across the Alliance, drawing on examples of good practice in institutional recognition (e.g. established criteria or procedures that have proven successful).

Increased collaboration

Support and promote increased collaboration in professional development for academic staff across the Alliance, based on a mapping of current practices at partner institutions and identification of successful models that could be implemented at Alliance level.

Mobility

Support and promote increased academic and administrative staff mobility to facilitate collaboration, exchange of experience and good practice in teaching, learning and research.

Student involvement

Foster student involvement in the development and evaluation of teaching and learning and a student-centered approach at all levels.

Nexus between research and teaching

Increase institutional recognition for teaching and learning and ensure balance and synergies between teaching, learning and research, exploring practices of research-based teaching and teaching-based research, while still recognizing the alliance commitment to excellent research as the foundation of high-quality teaching.

Teaching loads and career trajectories

Engage in exchange of good practices in how to ensure stable teaching loads in academic careers and progressive professional development throughout career trajectories.

Empowering researchers

Provide opportunities for researchers to explore and discuss challenges and solutions to the organization of teaching and learning in academic careers, including opportunities for training and professional development.