



**STRATEGY FOR THE INTEGRATION OF FLEXIBLE FORMS OF
LEARNING AND TEACHING
INTO THE STUDY PROCESS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PRIMORSKA
FOR THE PERIOD 2023-2027**

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The document was prepared by the members of the working group appointed by the Rector of the University of Primorska through decree no. 1141-8/2022 dated December 28, 2022.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The incorporation of flexible learning and teaching methods into the educational process at the University of Primorska follows the strategic guidelines and goals of education and training systems, as defined by the following fundamental European, national, and institutional documents:

- Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European Cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030),
- European University Strategy,
- New European Innovation Agenda,
- Resolution on the National Higher Education Programme until 2030 (ReNPVŠ30),
- Higher Education Act (ZVis),
- Mid-term Development Strategy of the University of Primorska 2021-2027,
- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG); standard 1.3: Student-Centred Learning, Teaching, and Assessment,
- Recovery and Resilience Plan,
- Rules on examination and assessment of knowledge at the University of Primorska,
- Rules on students with special needs at the University of Primorska,
- Regulation on special statuses of students at the University of Primorska,
- New European Bauhaus Initiative.

The Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European Cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond defines the following strategic priorities:

- Improving the quality, equity, inclusion, and overall success of education and training.
- Implementing the lifelong learning and mobility principle comprehensively.
- Enhancing competences and motivation for professions in the field of education.
- Strengthening European tertiary education.
- Supporting green and digital transition in education and training through education and training.

The European University Strategy emphasizes the importance of adapting higher education to the needs of society and the environment, focusing on new competences for green and digital transition. Higher education institutions, in close collaboration with stakeholders, must play a key role in education, research, technological and social innovations, ensuring equal access to education for all, especially disadvantaged individuals.

The New European Innovation Agenda, dated July 5, 2022, envisions the European Commission establishing a learning community and promoting the adoption of policies and practices that enhance the contribution of higher education institutions to innovations in communities. This includes considering various approaches and methods. Innovation coalitions under Erasmus+ will support the development of entrepreneurial skills, particularly high-tech skills.

The Resolution on the National Higher Education Programme until 2030 sets the key strategic goal: "The key goals are to raise the level and quality of higher education in Slovenia while ensuring quality

education and excellence in research, increase responsiveness, flexibility, and attractiveness of the higher education system to the needs of the economy, non-economy, and society as a whole, strengthen its international integration, improve access to education and opportunities for lifelong learning in higher education throughout Slovenia, increase research and innovation intensity, improve knowledge transfer to the social environment." Student-centred teaching is emphasized, based on professional, research, or artistic work, along with designing study programmes for future professions and challenges. The importance of student well-being, learning and teaching motivation, and the competence of higher education teachers and staff in ensuring teaching quality is also emphasized.

The Mid-term Development Strategy of the University of Primorska 2021-2027 commits the university to provide knowledge for a more responsible and learning society through "strengthening the quality and efficiency of education with pedagogical excellence in connection with the latest research findings and motivating students, as well as increased cooperation among individual stakeholders" and "developing socially and economically relevant study programmes based on the latest scientific and artistic knowledge." Existing study programmes will also be updated in line with the latest scientific knowledge and current social and economic challenges to enhance the quality of student competences. The university will operate according to international quality standards in education and strive for international recognition for teaching and research excellence.

Achieving goals at all levels is associated with ensuring quality and complying with principles and standards aligned with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), Standard 1.3, "Student-centred Learning, Teaching, and Assessment," particularly emphasizes the principle of "respecting and caring for student diversity and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths," "considering and using different delivery methods where appropriate", and "flexible use of various pedagogical methods".

The Recovery and Resilience Plan, in the frame of the "Renovation of the Educational System for Green and Digital Transition," envisions higher education reform for a green and resilient transition to Society 5.0. This aims to enhance flexibility, resilience, and responsiveness of higher education to environmental needs, increasing its relevance for economic recovery, productivity enhancement, cohesion promotion, and balanced social, environmental, and economic development (creating highly skilled jobs for future professions).

The Rules on examination and assessment of knowledge at the University of Primorska governs the assessment and evaluation of knowledge for participants in various education programmes at the University of Primorska. **The Rules on students with special needs at the University of Primorska and the Regulation on special statuses of students at the University of Primorska** define adaptations for students with special needs and students with special statuses. These adaptations aim to provide suitable conditions for inclusion for students whose positions present a risk of exclusion from the study process and/or dropping out.

The objective of the **New European Bauhaus** initiative is to create new ways of life by combining aesthetic quality, sustainability, and inclusion in a holistic approach. The initiative involves designing and transforming the living environment by integrating various stakeholders and disciplines.

II. DEFINITION OF FLEXIBLE FORMS OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

In accordance with the European Commission's definition, the concept of flexible forms of learning and teaching refers to learning and teaching that is responsive to the needs of students and allows them to choose the mode, environment, and timing of learning, with the aim of promoting motivation and persistence.

Flexible forms of learning and teaching, while consistently pursuing the objectives of the study programme and expected learning outcomes or competences, enable the adaptation of the implementation of study programmes, including the use of digital tools, teaching and learning methods, as well as knowledge assessment and evaluation.

The execution of the study programme is adjusted to the diversity of students and includes various dimensions of individuality (multiple intelligences, needs, motivation, prior knowledge, and experiences).

Incorporating flexible forms of learning and teaching into the study process encourages the development of self-regulatory skills in students. The latter are developed through promoting learning planning, differentiation of learning content and strategies, the use of various learning formats (such as investigative and problem-based learning, flipped classroom, group and project work) in different learning environments, and through the evaluation and reflection of one's own learning using metacognitive skills.

III. OBJECTIVES OF INCORPORATING FLEXIBLE FORMS OF LEARNING AND TEACHING INTO THE STUDY PROCESS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PRIMORSKA

By integrating flexible forms of learning and teaching, we will ensure and enhance the quality of the study process in the areas defined below.

1. Differentiation and Individualization of Learning and Teaching:

- Introduction and development of modern, innovative, flexible teaching methods that enable students to engage in more independent, self-regulated, and personalized studies;
- Increased study choice (interfaculty, national, international);
- Recognition of previously acquired formal and informal knowledge and skills (certificates, micro-credentials).

2. Ensuring Equal Opportunities for Academic Success:

- Use of flexible learning and teaching methods, and enabling greater study accessibility for students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, students with special needs, and students with unique statuses¹;
- Providing opportunities for active engagement in the study process and extracurricular activities to promote academic success and academic and social integration.

3. Internationalization of Studies:

- Inclusion of foreign students, faculty, and staff in the study process;
- Strengthening interactions between students and faculty from Slovenia and abroad;
- Integration of intercultural content into study programmes;
- Establishment of a virtual environment for exchanging ideas, experiences, cultural characteristics, and a common space for students, graduates, faculty, staff, and local community members to socialize.

4. Promotion of Research-Based Learning:

- Through contemporary study content, providing opportunities to define research questions and identify problem situations that lead to research-based learning and work;
- Active involvement of students in research and other projects, fostering the development of research competencies during their studies.

5. Career Guidance and Lifelong Learning Assurance:

- Development of a professional (e-)portfolio for students;
- Acquisition of competencies during and after studies (certificates, micro-credentials);
- Provision of support activities for students and graduates (mentoring, tutoring, counselling, and promotion of professional identity development);
- Establishment of a university alumni club to support students until the completion of their studies and throughout their professional careers.

6. Engagement with the Environment:

- Inclusion of industry experts in the study process (as visiting professors, mentors, co-mentors for seminars and final projects, etc.);
- Practical, research, and developmental work of students in other professional environments as part of the study process;
- Involvement of relevant stakeholders from the environment in the preparation, evaluation, and modification of study programmes.

¹ Article 69.a of the Higher Education Act stipulates:

Students with special needs include blind and visually impaired students or students with visual function impairments, deaf and hard of hearing students, students with speech and language disorders, students with learning disabilities in specific areas, students with physical disabilities, long-term ill students, students with autism spectrum disorders, and students with psychosocial issues.

Students with special status under this law encompass categorized student athletes and coaches, recognized student artists and cultural workers, other students participating in (specific) international competitions, and students who are parents until the start of compulsory schooling for their child.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

The University of Primorska will achieve the stated objectives by ensuring structural and procedural conditions.

Structural (material) conditions:

- **Internal regulations and documents** define the formal conditions and rules for providing flexible forms of learning and teaching.
- Adequate **spaces with modern equipment** are tailored to the diverse needs of students and other stakeholders of the study process.
- Appropriate **student-to-teacher ratios** (based on the study programme and type of study) are essential for successful education. Different forms of work, particularly small group work, enable better interaction between students and academic staff, contributing to more individualized learning.
- In modern society, rapid **access to information, professional and scientific literature** (for both students and academic staff) is crucial. The University of Primorska provides this through well-equipped libraries with accessible literature and databases, including remote access.
- For responsible scientific development, implementing the principle of open science, which allows **free access** to published publications, is vital.
- **A career centre** is a prerequisite and support for the **development of students' career orientation**. By involving students in diverse counselling and lifelong learning programmes, students can acquire additional knowledge and skills that enable them to integrate into professional environments and develop entrepreneurial competencies.
- Continuous provision of a supportive environment for the **career development of employees**, achieved through:
 - Regular professional training in higher education didactics and subject-specific didactics;
 - Training for working with international students (inclusion and understanding of foreign students and cultural differences), students with special needs, and students with special status;
 - Observation visits for self-evaluation, ensuring a high-quality teaching process and exchanging best practices.
- In order to systematically monitor and evaluate the inclusion of flexible forms of learning and teaching in the study process at the University of Primorska, as well as to plan the defined

measures for their development, it is necessary to **constantly upgrade the existing quality assurance system.**

Procedural conditions:

- **Focusing the study process on the student** for greater differentiation and individualization through flexible forms of learning and teaching, achieved by:
 - Implementing modern, innovative, flexible methods and teaching approaches (e.g., small group work, e-learning, problem-based learning, distance learning, independent student work);
 - Providing wider possibilities of electiveness (interfaculty, national, international);
 - Internationalizing the curriculum by involving foreign lecturers and students;
 - Conducting consultations (individual and group) as enhanced courses;
 - Strengthening mentoring and tutoring activities;
 - Providing support and guidance to students facing various study-related challenges.
- Tailoring the study process **to students with special needs and students with special status** (individualized plans for students with special needs, reasonable adaptations to the study process, monitoring, support, and guidance).
- Adapting the study process for **international students** (recognizing prior knowledge, organizing training and other activities to facilitate integration into society and the environment, including preparatory courses in Slovenian language and culture). Increased involvement of international students in the study process and extracurricular life, as well as interaction with Slovenian students, will contribute to greater internationalization and cross-cultural engagement for all UP students.
- **Career orientation and lifelong learning:** Career counselling provides students the opportunity to start planning their career path at the beginning of their studies in the career centre, with the support of teacher tutors, and connect with the professional world. Simultaneously, the career centre offers students and graduates the chance to participate, network, and exchange experiences and knowledge.

V. ACTIVITIES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FLEXIBLE FORMS OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN THE STUDY PROCESS AT UP

Article 114.a of the UP Statute specifies that educational programmes can also be conducted through an online learning environment, known as e-learning. The procedure and method for adapting the implementation of educational activities through the online learning environment are determined by the study programme and the regulations adopted by the university senate.

To promote the use of modern communication tools, the University of Primorska continuously ensures that its members are equipped with computer hardware and software, access to databases, and ongoing computer support for both faculty and students. Through projects such as "Equipment Purchase for Study and Administrative UP" and "Green, Digital, and Inclusive UP (GDI UP)", as well as "REACT-EU: Information and Communication Technology for Higher Education Institutions Offering Pedagogical Study Programmes", the University of Primorska will update its information structure by 2025 and enhance its hardware, software, and database access.

Since 2010, the UP Faculty of Education has organized a training cycle for higher education teachers and staff from all pedagogical units, focusing on higher education didactics with an emphasis on student-centred teaching strategies and techniques. These training sessions are conducted in Slovenian and, starting in 2023, in English. In the academic year 2016/2017, as part of the project "Internationalization in Higher Education", a module was developed that includes teaching methods and techniques aimed at successfully integrating and ensuring academic success for both national and foreign students. Participants who actively engage in the module (pedagogical andragogy education for higher education teachers and staff) receive a certificate, which is recognized in the habilitation process according to the Criteria for appointment to teaching, research and associate positions at the UP. Following the example of pedagogical andragogy education (PAI) for higher education teachers and staff at the University of Primorska, a digital PAI for teachers and staff in need of additional training in digital competencies for a successful digital transition is also being introduced.

During the period 2018-2020, the University of Primorska carried out the "InoTez – Innovative Knowledge with Technology" project, aimed at establishing unified technical and pedagogical-didactic support for the use of digital technologies in higher education teaching processes, while also encouraging a student-centred learning approach. In this context, the Open UP platform was developed.

From 2018 to 2022, the "INOVUP – Innovative Learning and Teaching in Higher Education" project took place at the University of Primorska, aiming to improve the quality of higher education by introducing flexible and modern forms of learning and teaching, and enhancing the pedagogical competence of university teachers and staff. This project included numerous training sessions for higher education teachers and staff, as well as the creation of various freely accessible publications – situation analyses, scientific monographs, and manuals on higher education didactics.

During the period 2021-2024, the UP Faculty of Management, in line with the development goals of the University of Primorska, is carrying out the activity "Improving the Quality of the Pedagogical Process by Incorporating Blended Learning into the Study Process", in the context of which the course "Using Data for proper decision-making" was piloted in a hybrid form in the undergraduate professional study programme Management. In this hybrid teaching process, university teachers and staff integrated the use of smart boards, additional cameras, microphones, and video conferencing systems.

The University of Primorska also participates in projects funded by the Public Scholarship, Development, Disability and Maintenance Fund of the Republic of Slovenia, which promote the cooperation and integration of the higher education system with the environment. Students undertake project activities

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under the guidance of mentors from the university and working mentors from the economy or non-governmental organizations. An important goal of these projects is to equip students with knowledge, skills, and abilities to actively engage in various social contexts, with the opportunity for career and professional development.

Career counselling plays a crucial role in the development of career paths and professional orientation for students. The Career Centre offers informational and advisory processes, coordinates the creation of career portfolios, organizes career days, shares career stories, and arranges workplace visits. As part of the Career Centre, the project "Holistic Programme of Personal and Professional Growth (2022-2023)" aims to enhance the existing programme of holistic career management and establish a system for identifying specific groups of students (special needs, special statuses) and creating guidelines for providing appropriate support.

To ensure equal opportunities for achieving academic success for all students, the University of Primorska has developed a tutoring system, which includes both faculty and student tutors.

The University of Primorska pays special attention to students with special needs and students with special statuses who require adaptations in the study process. Following the allocation of special status or status as a student with special needs, adjustments to teaching approaches are provided based on individualized study plans. A protocol for acquiring the status of a student with special needs has also been established.

From 2023 to 2027, the University of Primorska will first conduct a systematic review of existing practices in integrating flexible forms and methods of learning and teaching into the study process. This analysis will be followed by a developmental period during which training for higher education teachers and staff will take place, along with pilot implementations of flexible forms of learning and teaching.

VI. ACTION PLAN FOR THE INTEGRATION OF FLEXIBLE FORMS OF LEARNING AND TEACHING INTO THE STUDY PROCESS

ACTIVITY	DEADLINE	RESPONSIBLE
Preparation of a strategic document with goals and an implementation strategy.	20. 3. 2023	Working group
Capture and analysis of existing practices of integrating flexible forms of learning and teaching across UP faculties, as well as the identification of the needs of higher education teachers and staff in	1. 4. 2023 - 30. 4. 2023	UP members Working group PAI IKT

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terms of acquiring competencies in this field.		
Identification of opportunities and obstacles in implementing flexible forms of learning and teaching in the study process.	1. 4. 2023 - 30. 6. 2023	Vice Dean responsible for Education Vice Dean responsible for QA
Development of flexible forms and methods of learning and teaching.	1. 5. 2023 - 30. 6. 2027	Vice Dean responsible for Education Vice Dean responsible for QA
Training and pilot implementation of flexible forms and methods of learning and teaching.	1. 10. 2023 - 30. 9. 2025	Vice Dean responsible for Education Vice Dean responsible for QA
Evaluation of the pilot implementation of flexible forms and methods of learning and teaching.	1. 1. 2026 - 30. 6. 2026	Vice Dean responsible for Education Vice Dean responsible for QA
Implementation of flexible forms of learning and teaching in the study process across all UP's study programmes.	1. 10. 2026 - 30. 9. 2027	Vice Dean responsible for Education Vice Dean responsible for QA
Reporting.	Until 15. 11. for the previous study year	Vice Dean responsible for Education Vice Dean responsible for QA Department for QA

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