



# *Charte Pédagogique*

Educational Mission Statement of the University of Luxembourg

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## Foreword

The present document constitutes the Educational Charter – or ‘Charte pédagogique’ – of the University of Luxembourg. The Charter lays out the educational values and practices to which the University’s academic community commits itself. It attests to the cultural and scholarly diversity prevalent across the University campuses, and it highlights how students and staff harness this variety for a unique approach to learning and teaching.

The Charter is the result of a collective effort, at the heart of which is a group of dedicated faculty members who convened in 2017 and worked on this document over several months. From the outset, it was clear to this Working Group that the purpose of an Educational Charter is to become a ‘living’ educational mission statement, the starting point of an open-ended, university-wide dialogue involving all who participate in the University’s educational life.

In this spirit, the present document presents a snapshot of an ongoing discussion, the continuation of which it hopes to stimulate and guide onto productive territory. Equally important, the Working Group has written the Charter to become a source of inspiration for pedagogical innovation. The real test for the Charter is whether it can bolster and spur pedagogical practices that make learning and teaching at the University of Luxembourg more efficacious, fruitful and rewarding. The University’s study programmes boast a unique blend of dedicated students and teachers. It is for them, above all else, that the Charter is written.

With the Educational Charter, the University of Luxembourg seeks to live up to its mandate, established as part of the ‘Contrat d’Etablissement Pluriannuel 2014-17’ with the Ministry of Higher Education and Research, to “offer an innovative and open education dedicated to the success of all students” (art. 5). The Charter testifies that, beyond individual efforts, this is an institutional commitment deserving our greatest attention.

## 'Charte Pédagogique' of the University of Luxembourg

The University of Luxembourg is a young, international research university in one of the most dynamic socio-economic environments of Europe. It is home to a diverse community of scholars and students from across the globe, who form an open and genuinely multilingual academic culture. It offers research-based higher education in select study programmes at bachelor, master and doctoral level, alongside professional training and lifelong learning opportunities.

With its 'Charte Pédagogique' the University affirms its commitment to offering an open, dynamic, and respectful learning environment. The Charter outlines the transdisciplinary purposes and practices of good higher education to which the University's academic community, in its diversity of disciplinary and academic cultures, is committed. It serves as a reference for reflection on teaching and learning and a yardstick for development of the University's curricula. It equally informs prospective students and stakeholders about the University of Luxembourg's education.

The Charter should be an essential instrument in order to help the University to reach its objectives in terms of student outcomes. As a research University with a stronger emphasis on post-graduate (master and PhD) programmes, the University aims to train the leaders and responsible citizens that Luxembourg and the world will need in order to face the challenges and seize opportunities inherent in a changing society marked by digitalisation and the third industrial revolution. In its course offering, the University includes several bachelor programmes and curricula catering to the skillsets specific to the Luxembourgish context yet also firmly rooted in research. For all its programmes, the University aims to provide its students with the essential transversal skills that will optimally prepare them for the lifelong learning needed to adapt to an ever-changing work environment.

### Learning at the University of Luxembourg is interactive

Much of what makes learning efficacious, lasting, and productive comes from interaction with peers and teachers. Peer learning can be particularly enriching when it occurs between students of different cultural backgrounds and academic interests. The University curriculum engages its diverse learners as partners in a joint discovery of the significance of specific knowledge and skills – for their personal development, for discovery and scientific enquiry, and for the crafting of solutions to socially relevant problems. To this end, the University is promoting collaborative learning environments that facilitate dialogue, peer learning, and teamwork. It encourages faculty to include interaction and dialogue in their courses, and maximize student participation through student presentations, debate, flipped classroom techniques, project-based learning, and the systematic use of student feedback. It fosters peer-to-peer feedback and collaboration among teaching staff across disciplinary borders. To bring together students with different disciplinary backgrounds, the University is working towards opening its curricula through shared and cross-disciplinary courses. Such an interactive approach to learning also means that study programmes systematically involve students and their representatives in curriculum development.

The design and application of digital learning technology that enhances student interaction and peer learning is an essential part of this pedagogical strategy. Digital technology has the potential to better tailor our educational offer to students' needs and learning styles. By complementing classroom teaching with a virtual campus accessible on- and off-site, it continues peer and student-teacher interaction, facilitates content sharing and cross-disciplinary cooperation, and makes learning more inclusive. It familiarizes students with digital technology for professional collaboration, promotes digital literacy and nurtures a mature and unencumbered, yet responsible and critical use of digital

tools. With its new Learning Centre the University is currently creating a resource and infrastructure that will support a more interactive, participatory, and digitally-enhanced pedagogy.

## Learning at the University of Luxembourg is based on research

The University's academic community brings together dedicated teachers active in research and students who, independent of their professional goals, are ready to share in the learning experiences only a research-based education can afford. The University's curricula systematically expose students to scientific enquiry. They critically acquaint students with the foundational debates of one or several disciplines. They combine solid methodological training with the flexibility to take up new discoveries and expose students to emerging fields. The University's vibrant research community offers students additional opportunities to experience research as a collective endeavour and ongoing scholarly discussion. Through such engagement with, and participation in, research, students develop qualities and competences that, while specific to scientific research, are of immeasurable professional value: open-mindedness, curiosity, and perseverance; readiness to seek out and accept challenges, take risks, and question one's own assumptions; rigor and imagination; autonomy, organisation, and teamwork; critical thinking and argumentative engagement in debates and discussions.

Already at the undergraduate level, the University's curricula expose students to research and, where feasible, give them room to gain a first research experience. Master students acquire research skills first hand, through independent research projects and participation in ongoing faculty research. The University also encourages research supervisors and students to explore cross-disciplinary research opportunities and to promote research by reaching out to local stakeholders. By firmly anchoring teaching and learning in research, scholars of the University of Luxembourg not only build on what they know, and know how to do, best. They also equip students with a specific set of knowledge, skills, and competences that we believe to be essential for professional success, whatever their future career trajectories may be.

## Learning at the University of Luxembourg fosters student autonomy

The University's curricula are explicit about the educational objectives they expect students to attain. However, they also invite students to engage with curricular learning outcomes and to harness them for their personal educational, professional, and civic aspirations. The University of Luxembourg is home to a great diversity of students who have entered higher education for a variety of reasons, at different stages of their lives, and with unique life experiences. Its curricula are designed to reflect this diversity by allowing for individual curricular choices and complementing regular courses with student-centered tutoring and a targeted advising offer that helps students to articulate and direct their educational path.

At the same time, education at the University of Luxembourg builds on diversity to challenge personal educational projects with alternative perspectives and inspiration, to test convictions, and to sow the fertile doubt that nurtures reflection and better judgement in students. The systematic integration of the University's alumni and partners in the educational process plays a highly prized role in this respect, motivating students to think ahead and building awareness for the opportunities, constraints, and contingencies of the professional world. The University's study programmes thus not only offer students the opportunity to develop expertise in a specific field while setting their own priorities. They also provide a context in which students can gauge and discuss the value of the

knowledge and skills they are acquiring for their personal goals, the professional world, and civil society.

### Learning at the University of Luxembourg is enhanced by feedback and dialogue

Higher education can only effectively foster successful student learning to the extent that it evolves – in line with the research and professional expertise on which it is based, in line with the expectations of the learner and his or her environment, in line with new insights into learning, new technology, and new demands on knowledge and skills. To make sure that evolution meets demands and brings real improvement, the University systematically gathers a variety of feedback – from students, teachers, staff, alumni, and other stakeholders, at the level of courses, study programmes, and the University at large. It also empowers and encourages those responsible for delivering education to reflect on their own observations and experience, follow up on feedback, and take appropriate measures for educational enhancement. The academic community learns above all from sharing experiences and practices, internally with students and colleagues, and externally with peers in the respective fields. The University also exposes academic staff to insights from research into student learning and effective teaching and harnesses this expertise for curriculum development. Educational enhancement is a process of learning and enquiry and as such the continuously evolving product of an open-ended dialogue between all members of the University's academic community and its stakeholders. The University stimulates this dialogue and honours original, inspiring contributions from its academic staff.

### Learning at the University of Luxembourg is multilingual and international

Thanks to the internationality of its students and staff, and to its rooting in several major European academic traditions, the University of Luxembourg provides a unique multilingual and intercultural academic environment. This constitutes both a tremendous opportunity and a complex challenge. Bi- and multilingual study programmes demand that students and staff compare and translate not only between concepts and thought paradigms, but between entire communicative styles and academic traditions. This challenge of navigating a variety of worldviews, academic practices, and modes of thinking is in no way inferior in monolingual, English-taught programmes, as the accessibility that comes with the international language of science means that they gather a growing mix of students and scholars from across the globe. Both linguistic settings spur creative and critical thinking, as multiple viewpoints find their way into classroom interactions, enriching debates and argumentations, and inspiring novel research ideas. They also encourage teachers to innovate and find ever-new ways of making knowledge accessible to diverse groups of students, of orchestrating fruitful and respectful discussions across divergent views, and of developing assessments that not only are but also seem fair to all students.

Negotiating between both linguistic competences and cultural and academic traditions is a hallmark of the University's curriculum. It promotes critical transversal qualities including open-mindedness, respect, and intercultural competence, just as it hones students' ability and readiness to genuinely listen to others and adopt different styles of thinking and living. An education of the University of Luxembourg thus not only equips students with the intercultural sensitivity necessary for navigating an increasingly diverse and interconnected world. It also nourishes their motivation and capacity to become positive agents of change who can foster social dialogue, work across cultural differences, or negotiate economic or political relations – students, in short, who are ready to embrace and enquire into the complexities of the contemporary world.