

AURORA

Implementing Aurora Borderless Learning

Reference document for Aurora
universities and task teams



Co-funded by the
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What is the purpose of this document?

1. **Describe a vision for the future and define key concepts and terminology** of Aurora Borderless Learning (ABL) and the Virtual Campus and Aurora Course Catalogue.
2. Propose a way forward **to embed the SDG Education Dashboard** in the Aurora Course Catalogue and demonstrate how ABL can **support and valorise “Aurorisation” efforts of new and existing courses.**
3. Establish a **shared reference document to guide the development** of IT processes and administrative processes both at the central level and at the level of each university to implement ABL and “Aurorisation”.
4. **Establish a strategy to simplify the approach** for deliverables due at the end of the three-year Erasmus+ project with **a clear vision already for further developments and scaling up** that can be included in the application for follow up funding post 2023.

Aurora Borderless Learning long term vision

Students today must **choose themselves** to have an experience abroad for a short or longer period. The most common form of a student experience abroad is a one or two semester exchange at a partner university. When students make this decision, they can face **significant barriers depending on their study programme** e.g. limited flexibility in the curriculum, recognition issues, few partner universities, limited suitable course offer in the subject area or worst case scenario – no mobility opportunities are available in/for their programme at all.

Aurora Borderless Learning will transform this reality by developing and implementing networked structured mobility and curricula

The idea is that a faculty/study programme can form a network with several Aurora partners where they strategically work together to create mobility and international learning options. Every student is then given a structural opportunity to follow a complementary course or course packages in one or more Aurora partner universities. The student has the option to choose either semester(s) mobility (e.g. 30 ECTS mobility window “package” at an Aurora university) or participate in various virtual and blended mobility opportunities during their studies. Student mobility is thus an embedded part of the curriculum and recognition is not an issue for students anymore. The ABL opportunities are visible and promoted to students in the descriptions of study programmes. The Virtual Campus and Aurora Course Catalogue are the central and shared repository of international learning opportunities within Aurora each academic year/semester. This approach builds trust to allow for guaranteed and automatic recognition of ECTS earned at other Aurora universities, ultimately helping to pave the way for joint “European Degrees” as part of the emerging [European Education Area](#).

What could this long-term vision look like in practice?

Traditional study programmes are often structured and presented online like this:

Archaeology is the study of the physical evidence of humans and society over time. An objective **reconstruction of past realities** is based on the investigation and analysis of archaeological records in the form of soil records and artifacts. The students at the Department of Archaeology learn about and research **all periods of international human history**, unique across Austrian Universities.



Info

Bachelor of Arts (BA)

Duration/ECTS-Credits
6 semesters/180 ECTS-Credits

Mode of Study
Full-time

Language
German

Requirements
Secondary school completion certificate or equivalent, language certificates

Supplemental Examination
Latin

Curriculum
Information on the curriculum

[Detailed Information](#)

[Apply Online](#)

Please note: the **language of instruction** for this programme is **German**.



A study programme that has fully embedded the ABL vision could look like this:

Part of Aurora Pilot Domain

Culture: Diversity & Identity

Archaeology is the study of the physical evidence of humans and society over time. An objective **reconstruction of past realities** is based on the investigation and analysis of archaeological records in the form of soil records and artifacts. The students at the Department of Archaeology learn about and research **all periods of international human history**, unique across Austrian Universities.



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Please note: the **language of instruction** for this programme is **German, English, Italian**






Study abroad whilst at home




Study abroad

Aurora mobility packages

- 

4 weeks Field trip and Field work in Pompei with UniNA (10 EC)
- 

Italian Language Online Course (5EC) (intermediate)
- 

VU - Course package (10 EC):

 - Dealing with Sources and Resources for the Past
 - Archaeology of Prehistoric and Roman Europe
 - Dealing with the Material Record of the Past
 - Archaeology and Society
- 

Uice & Uinn - Archaeology of Gender (format: online team teaching /COIL) 5 EC

A step-by-step and collaborative approach towards the long-term vision

This ambitious long-term vision will not be achieved overnight. However, by establishing a **clear vision for the future** it is possible to conduct **effective retro planning** and **efficient organisation of the ongoing work** of task teams and within universities, in particular regarding the development of the Virtual Campus, Aurora Course Catalogue and administrative processes with clearly defined short-, mid- and long-term objectives and milestones. This also helps to further conceptualise **the different levels and paths of internationalisation and “Aurorisation” for academics and university leadership** and how faculties can build towards higher levels of ambition in their different higher education programmes. Furthermore, it can support Aurora in demonstrating more clearly the links between the ongoing work and how it contributes to **European Education Area policies and objectives of the EU**.

Finally, it allows for an **analysis of what already exists or is already happening in Aurora universities that can be built upon**. For example, in the context of the new Erasmus+ programme and the new trends in student mobility, **most Aurora universities already have or are already developing administrative processes** for short-term, blended and virtual mobility and **have adopted or are in the process of adopting the European student identification and authentication standards**. Aurora can capitalise on this to support the development of Aurora Borderless Learning, the Virtual Campus and Aurora Course Catalogue. At the same time, **Aurora is supporting the universities in these developments** by conducting joint planning, piloting, testing and sharing of experiences and good practices.

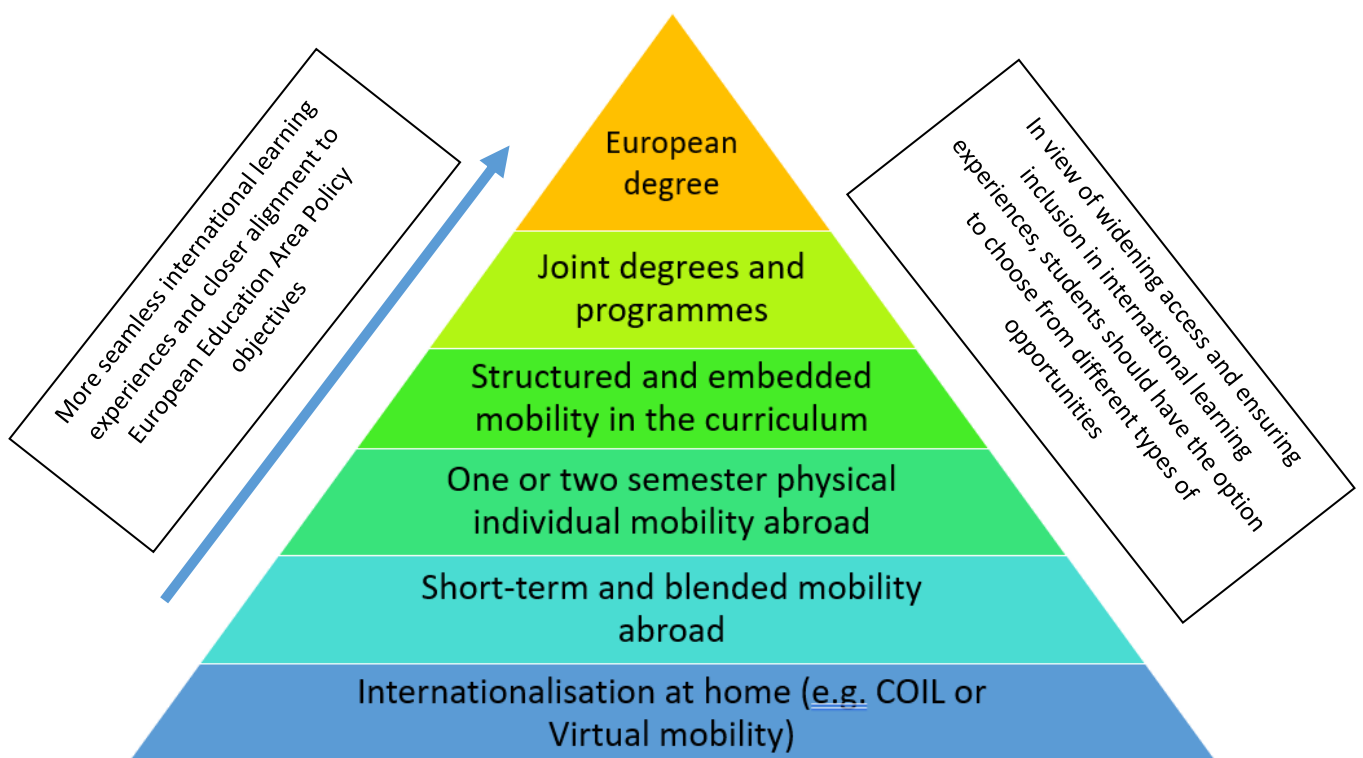


Figure 1 – Capability pyramid for widening student mobility and achieving step-by-step more embedded cooperation in different study programmes depending on respective contexts. The lower levels of the pyramid represent actions that are easier to implement for academics and are more accessible to students.

What is the proposed way forward to achieve this vision?

Aurora Virtual Campus

The **central database for all shared learning and training opportunities** offered to students (and staff) in Aurora Universities. This includes but does not need to be limited to:

- ✓ Courses available to students across Aurora Universities i.e. Aurora Course Catalogue
- ✓ Online language courses, MOOCs¹, Online Lecture Series, conferences etc. (e.g. on European Identity or plurilingualism)
- ✓ Short-term mobility opportunities e.g. trainings, workshops, short courses
- ✓ Summer Schools/Courses
- ✓ Internships
- ✓ Events

Rationale: The Virtual Campus is a **one-stop-shop** of all opportunities that Aurora universities currently offer and will offer to the wider Aurora community. It is a good way to pool together offers and showcase externally what we do and how we approach the policy themes that are emphasised in the European Universities Initiative. General offers in the Virtual Campus are separated from the Aurora Course Catalogue that contains courses that a student in one Aurora university can select from other Aurora universities.

Aurora course catalogue

Within the Virtual Campus students can find the Aurora Course Catalogue. This is **the central database of courses on offer to students from other Aurora universities**. The Aurora Course catalogue clearly distinguishes between non-specific international learning and Aurora-focused international learning i.e. “Aurorised courses”. The courses can be open to international students in general or only Aurora students, but this is up to each course organiser and is not specified in the course catalogue.

All courses that are categorised as “true” Aurora courses fulfil minimum “Aurorisation” criteria and are linked to one or more SDGs. To valorise “Aurorisation” efforts and encourage teachers to go further, colour coding, labels or other visualisation will demonstrate the level of development in each course corresponding to the concept of an olympic bronze, silver and gold “Aurorisation” standard² where:

- ✓ **“Bronze”**: The course is linked to a Pilot Domain and at least one SDG
- ✓ **“Silver”**: The course is linked to a Pilot Domain, at least one SDG and develops at least one key competence included in the Aurora Competence Framework
- ✓ **“Gold”**: The course is linked to a Pilot Domain, at least one SDG, develops at least two key competences included in the Aurora Competence Framework and uses at least one teaching method described in the Aurora education principles³.

The Aurora course catalogue will only contain **the most important information** about each course to allow a student to efficiently browse the catalogue and make selections based on

¹ Existing Open Educational Resources should preferably be used.

² The terms Gold, Silver and Bronze will not be used at the implementation stage.

³ Further information in the Aurora Education Guidelines.

the Aurora education vision. When a student finds a course that sparks their interest, they can click a link to read further information about the course. The envisaged basic information about each course is:

- ✓ Title, short description, mode of delivery, study level, ECTS, and language of instruction.

In terms of **more advanced information** about “Aurorised” courses that is **required to bring the Aurora education vision and SDG Dashboard to life**, the following will support students in finding optimal opportunities:

- ✓ The student can search for courses per University, Pilot Domain, SDG or language of instruction along with a key word search. If a course is open to students from other Aurora universities **but otherwise not “Aurorised”** they will not appear when courses are filtered via a Pilot Domain or a SDG.
- ✓ In addition, the student can see clearly which courses are “Aurorised” and read information about the Aurora teaching methods, assessment methods and key competencies developed from the Aurora Competence Framework.

The links to SDGs will be expressed in numbers and the information about each course will be displayed in the language of instruction, contributing also to the goals of plurilingualism.

Rationale: The **student experience** is the main priority here. By embedding the Aurora SDG Dashboard in the Aurora Course Catalogue, the student has **a true one-stop-shop to get to know Aurora** and see what different courses can offer them in terms of gaining different skills and knowledge to become a social entrepreneur and innovator willing and able to contribute to solving societal challenges and achieving the SDGs.

The clear distinction between general course offer for international students and those courses that have been specifically updated or created in the context of Aurora and fulfil “Aurorisation” criteria offers numerous advantages in the paths towards more ambitious joint education endeavours and reaching out to a wider group of academics:

- The linking to Pilot Domains helps to **bring academics together within the Aurora themes to foster more ambitious cooperation (e.g. joint degrees and courses)**.
- The “Aurorisation” criteria contributes to **building critical trust to allow for guaranteed and automatic recognition of credits** earned when students complete an Aurora course abroad which count towards the degree at the home university. This **greatly benefits the students** since over time the Aurora Course Catalogue will contain “safe courses” that, in the future, can also be explicitly linked to structured mobility packages embedded in their study programme.⁴
- “Aurorisation” efforts are also made **highly visible and steered towards a pragmatic approach**. This can help establish clear incentives for teachers/faculties to go further, by making their courses more attractive and centrally promoted to Aurora students.
- The Aurora Course Catalogue can also be used as an entry point to receiving concrete recognition and/or awards (e.g. Aurora fellowship, Aurora teaching award, grants).

⁴ The task team involved in addressing recognition issues is in the process of analysing the results of a survey carried out among all Aurora universities to map the current credit recognition situation and obstacles at national and institutional level. Based on the results, the task team will produce more extensive definitions and recommendations for making recognition and borderless learning a reality for our students.

Equally important, this design proposal also clearly describes what **does not belong** in the Virtual Campus and Aurora Course Catalogue. Courses that implement good practices promoted by Aurora, such as addressing the SDGs, using the Aurora Competence Framework etc, but are only offered to local students are not included in the Aurora Course Catalogue. In terms of spreading the teaching and learning practices promoted by Aurora across the entire university, each Aurora university **can go at their own pace and with their own approach** while at the same time ensuring adequate contributions to the shared “Aurorised” course offers promoted in the central Aurora Course Catalogue.

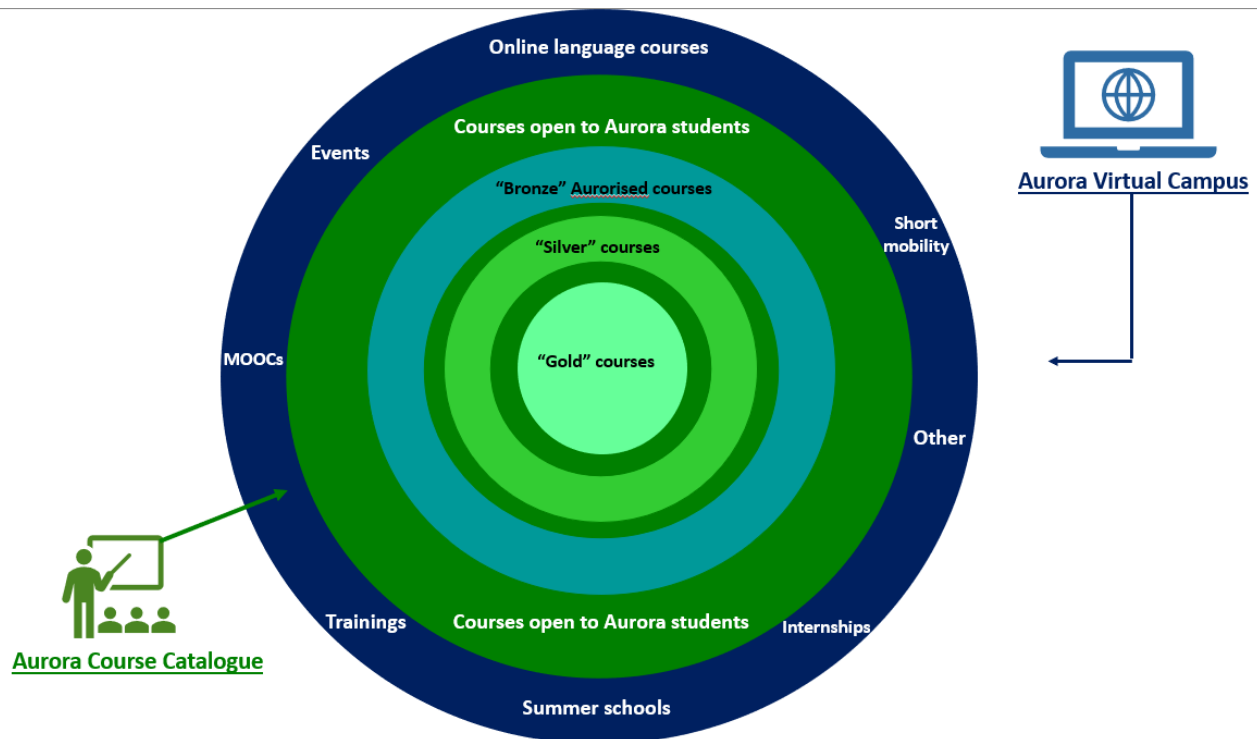


Figure 2 Courses "open to Aurora students" can also be open to international students in general. The same goes for courses that fulfil one or more of the „Aurorisation“ criteria.

Aurora course catalogue technical implementation

The guiding principle in the design of the Aurora Course Catalogue is **data minimisation and step by step development**, starting with simple implementation that can be further developed in a more ambitious manner. The number of data fields that are, at first manually filled in, and in the future **automatically updated** should be reduced to the extent possible. This reduces both **manual workload in the short term** and **reduces the complexity of any future API specification to automate processes in the long term**, required for updating and maintaining the course catalogue.

The **first version** of the Aurora Course Catalogue will be created by teachers/faculties/administrators by filling in a **simple webform** which generates checklists depending on the type of course being offered to collect the relevant data. This webform is under development and will integrate the work of WPs/TTs 3.1 (Aurora Competence Framework), 3.5 (Aurora Education Guidelines) and 5.2. (Aurora SDG Education Dashboard).

The webform is a **necessary stepping stone towards a more user-friendly and automated process** where key information can be extracted from institutional course catalogues. The

webform will provide a **first central information architecture** that can be used for adapting local systems and can also help to demonstrate the parameters of “Aurorisation” to a wider range of staff. Furthermore, the webform could include links, nudges and pop-up information to support academics that are participating in this first pilot.

Mobility management and administration

In principle, Aurora mobility should be managed and administered following **existing student mobility processes in Aurora universities**. Where gaps may exist to facilitate new types of mobility, e.g. students enrolling to one (online) course at an Aurora university, the new process should be created in a way where they can also be used for students from universities outside Aurora – **avoiding the creation of parallel systems and double work** within universities.

The students should be able to complete all administrative steps before, during and after their online and, gradually, fully in line with the once-only-principle meaning that data can be provided once and easily shared between the student and Aurora universities. Attention should be paid to ensuring that it is legally and technically possible for students to remain enrolled at their home university and at the same time be able to book and complete a single (online) course at a partner university. Admission requirements (e.g. letter of motivation, entrance test, etc.) should be communicated transparently and apply equally to all participants per course.

While **manual verification of the Aurora student status and student identity** will be necessary at the beginning when applying for mobility or single courses online, in the future the European Student Identifier will automate this process for administrative staff. This will mean that when the student either logs-in to browse the catalogue or proceeds to sign up for a course or apply for a more traditional mobility to an Aurora university, the student status and identity can be verified automatically in the process.

Defining Mobility

Aurora strives to provide **every student with a meaningful international experience as part of their studies**. In general, the EU definitions of student mobility are applied where a student mobility is defined as a period of at least 5 days of studying or training abroad (physically, virtually (i.e. internationalisation at home) or blended) and, where applicable, awarding at least 3 ECTS that is fully recognised as part of the students’ study programme. In the context of Aurora, students are also provided with additional opportunities outside the scope of EU definitions e.g. the Aurora student Design Thinking Jam(s).

In all cases a meaningful international experience needs to fulfil the following conditions:

- ✓ The experience entails intercultural exchanges between the participating students and other students and/or staff at the host university or enterprise.
- ✓ A mobility, especially virtual (online courses or COIL) or blended mobility, must bring students together to work collectively and simultaneously on specific assignments.
- ✓ The experience must include a concluding process of conscious reflection upon the intercultural aspect of the experience, in the form of a questionnaire or discussion.

- ✓ Mobility is implemented in full respect of the principles of the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE)⁵ and Automatic Mutual Recognition⁶.
- ✓ Aurora mobile students benefit from paper free administrative processes (where these have been provided at the EU level) and have access to the Digital European Student Card and connected identification and authentication services⁷.

Rationale: Definitions and quality criteria strategically aligned with those used at EU level while also leaving flexibility to go beyond in the specific context of the Aurora project where different modalities of meaningful international experiences are being piloted and reported on. The focus on intercultural exchanges and collaboration during the mobility ensures the experience is meaningful in terms of widening perspectives and developing intercultural competencies.

Measuring Mobility

In order to measure and assess progress towards increasing mobility (in line with the **reporting requirements in the [EC final report](#)** and **spelt out in Annex 2 Operational Implementation**)

and the 50% mobility target put forth by the EU in the context of the European Education Area, each Aurora University needs to be able to collect data on all incoming and outgoing mobility and be able to break the figures down in the following manner:

- ✓ Mobilities to and from Aurora partners vs. all other mobilities
- ✓ Mobilities funded by the alliance funding vs. other sources of funding
- ✓ Mobility types: physical (short-/long-term), blended and virtual
- ✓ Mobility types: staff vs. students
- ✓ Total number of mobilities/the total number of enrolled students

Rationale: Mobility data captured in line with the European Commission reporting requirements. As a second step, Aurora Universities will reflect on and develop a methodology for measuring the proportion of graduates that have had a meaningful international experience as part of their studies.

Implications for each Aurora University

Each Aurora University needs to:

- Review **existing mobility management processes** to ensure they can already cater to all Aurora mobility types foreseen in ABL.
 - If any new or adapted application and administrative processes are needed (especially in terms of non-traditional semester exchanges i.e. students enrolling in single courses or short programmes) the university needs to address this in collaboration with the Aurora IT groups to ensure complementarity within Aurora and avoid reinventing the wheel.
 - The purpose is to avoid parallel systems – **the rule of thumb is always to embed Aurora into existing processes**, not create new ones.
- Review **existing mobility data collection processes** to ensure they can capture all mobility types foreseen in ABL.

⁵ <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/resources-and-tools/erasmus-charter-for-higher-education>

⁶ [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1568891859235&uri=CELEX:32018H1210\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1568891859235&uri=CELEX:32018H1210(01))

⁷ <https://edssi.eu/building-blocks/>

- If any gaps exist, the university must set up processes to bridge the gap so it is able to collect and break down student mobility data as soon as possible.
- Make sure they have **already implemented the European Student Identifier** to allow for seamless authentication and identification of Aurora students across our systems.
 - If the identifier is not yet implemented, prepare the timeline and communicate it to the IT working group (most Aurora universities have already done this or are in the process of doing this). The plan is to implement the identifier:
 - First, in our own information systems
 - Second, to generate virtual European Student Cards
 - Third, to allow for integration of shared authentication mechanisms in the Virtual Campus, applications and student services.
 - Once the Webform for uploading courses to the Aurora Course Catalogue has been finalised and circulated, **promote it in all faculties within the university to raise awareness** and in parallel, **start internal reflections** about how internal course catalogues could be updated to allow an automated process to upload courses to the central Aurora Course Catalogue.
 - This will help to lay the foundation for the next steps in IT development post 2023 where an API could be developed and implemented.