

Building International Bridges Through Education

Final Report of the 3rd Edition of the International School
at AGH University of Krakow

Cursos de Verano en AGH Universidad de Cracovia

Project implemented under the NAWA SPINAKER
– Intensive International Education Programmes initiative.

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– *Cursos de Verano en AGH Universidad de Cracovia*

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Foreword

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Introductory Remarks

Internationalisation has become one of the key priorities of contemporary higher education. Universities are increasingly expected not only to provide high-quality education and conduct world-class research, but also to create an international educational environment that enables students and academic staff to exchange knowledge, develop intercultural competences and jointly address global challenges. In this context, short-term international education programmes have become an effective tool for expanding access to international mobility and strengthening cooperation among higher education institutions worldwide.

The 3rd Edition of the International School at AGH University of Krakow – *Cursos de Verano en AGH Universidad de Cracovia* – was implemented under the SPINAKER – Intensive International Education Programmes (IIEPs) initiative, funded by the Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange (NAWA). The project represents another important step in AGH University of Krakow's long-term commitment to the internationalisation of education and the development of sustainable partnerships with universities in Latin America.

The project builds on more than 24 years of experience gained through the organisation of *Cursos de Verano* Summer Schools, which have hosted students from Mexico, Chile, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Puerto Rico and other Latin American countries. It also continues the two previous editions of the SPINAKER programme implemented at AGH University in 2020 and 2021, which attracted students from Asia, Ukraine and the Western Balkans. These experiences enabled AGH University to develop innovative educational solutions combining academic excellence, international cooperation and modern teaching methods.

The 3rd Edition introduced a comprehensive hybrid education model combining online learning with practical, on-site education at AGH University. Participants completed specialised academic courses and technical English classes, while laboratory sessions, field visits and meetings with academic experts provided valuable opportunities to connect theoretical knowledge with professional practice. This approach enabled students from geographically distant regions to participate in an intensive international educational experience while reducing the financial and logistical barriers associated with mobility.

The project also contributes to the strategic objectives of AGH University in the areas of internationalisation, educational innovation and social responsibility. By expanding the range of programmes delivered in English, strengthening cooperation with partner universities, promoting equal access to education and implementing modern hybrid learning methods, the project directly contributes to the University's long-term development strategy and supports the objectives of the NAWA SPINAKER programme.

This report provides a comprehensive overview of the planning, implementation and outcomes of the 3rd Edition of the International School at AGH University.

The successful implementation of the project would not have been possible without the commitment of academic staff, administrative teams, partner universities and, above all, the students, whose enthusiasm and active participation transformed this initiative into a truly international educational community. Their contribution demonstrates that international education extends beyond academic learning alone – it creates lasting partnerships, promotes mutual understanding and prepares future professionals to work together in an increasingly interconnected world.

We hope that the experiences and achievements presented in this report will serve as a valuable source of inspiration for future international educational initiatives and contribute to further strengthening cooperation between AGH University and its partners worldwide.

We wish you an enjoyable read.

Centre for International Affairs Team
AGH University of Krakow



▲ SPINAKER Programme

– General Information

The SPINAKER – Intensive International Education Programmes (IIEPs) initiative, funded by the Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange (NAWA), supports Polish higher education institutions and research institutions in designing and implementing IIEPs delivered in foreign languages. The programme constitutes an important element of Poland's strategy for the internationalisation of higher education, promoting innovative forms of education that attract international students, doctoral students and academic staff.

The SPINAKER programme enables universities to organise short-term educational initiatives such as summer and winter schools, specialised courses, training programmes and study visits. These initiatives complement traditional forms of student mobility by providing flexible and accessible opportunities for international academic exchange, while at the same time strengthening the global visibility and competitiveness of Polish universities.

The programme is primarily addressed to students, doctoral students and academic staff from foreign universities and research institutions who wish to broaden their knowledge and develop professional competences through participa-

tion in IIEPs delivered in Poland. At the same time, students and staff of the host university may also participate in the activities, creating an international and multicultural learning environment that benefits all participants.

Eligible applicants are Polish higher education institutions and research institutions providing education at first- and second-cycle, postgraduate or doctoral level. Under the programme, institutions may implement a wide range of activities, including:

- developing new IIEPs or adapting existing courses for delivery in an international format,
- developing the competences of academic staff necessary to design and deliver international programmes,
- recruiting participants from Poland and abroad,
- organising and delivering classes using appropriate infrastructure and educational materials,
- assessing and certifying learning outcomes, including through the awarding of micro-credentials.

AGH University of Krakow's Experience in Implementing the SPINAKER Programme

Before the launch of the 3rd Edition of the International School, AGH University of Krakow already had substantial experience in implementing IIEPs under the SPINAKER programme.

The Centre for International Affairs, acting as the project co-ordinator in cooperation with several AGH University faculties, including the Faculty of Energy and Fuels, Faculty of Mechanical Engineering and Robotics, Faculty of Geology, Geophysics and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Drilling, Oil and Gas, and the Faculty of Civil Engineering and Resource Management, successfully implemented two previous SPINAKER projects (PPI/SPI/2020/1/00054 and BPI/SPI/2021/1/00042).

These projects were implemented in virtual and hybrid formats respectively, demonstrating AGH University's ability to adapt educational delivery methods to changing international circumstances while maintaining a high level of academic quality.

Together, the two editions included:

- 76 international student mobilities,
- participation of students from, among others, Japan, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, the Western Balkans and Vietnam,
- implementation of 9 IIEPs in the fields of energy and energy technologies, geoengineering, geology and Earth sciences, environmental engineering and environmental protection, and trenchless technologies,
- a total project budget of PLN 782 178,60.

The experience gained through the implementation of these projects provided AGH University with valuable organisational expertise in online and hybrid learning methods, international recruitment, digital learning environments and intercultural academic cooperation. These achievements created a solid foundation for the successful implementation of the 3rd Edition of the programme.

BUILDING ON 24 YEARS OF INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

The 3rd Edition of the International School continues one of the longest-running international educational initiatives at AGH University.

Since 2000, AGH University has organised commercial *Cursos de Verano* Summer Schools for students from Latin America, hosting participants from, among others, Mexico, Chile, Puerto Rico, Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia.

Over more than two decades, approximately 800 students have participated in these programmes, making a significant contri-

bution to increasing AGH University's international visibility in the region.

The 3rd Edition also draws on AGH's extensive experience gained through Erasmus+ programmes, the SMILE project and previous SPINAKER initiatives implemented in 2021–2022 for students from Asia, Ukraine and the Western Balkans.

As a result, the project combines many years of institutional experience with innovative educational solutions and responds to the growing demand among Latin American students for short-term international education opportunities.

SPINAKER Project

In numbers

Amount of funding

1 106 179,48 PLN



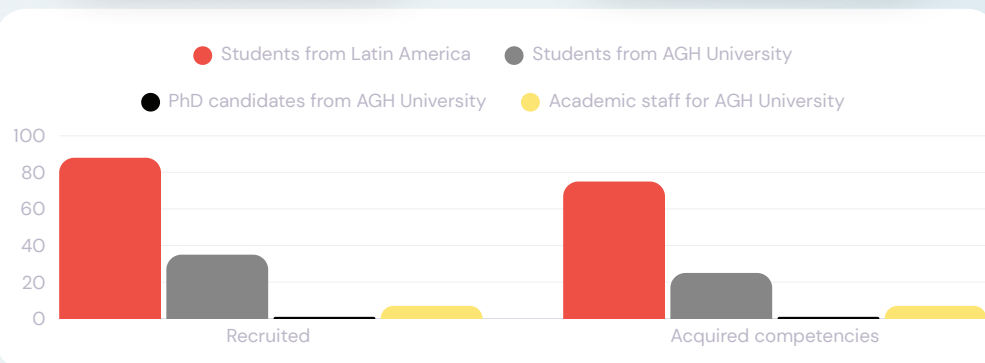
Implementation period

12 mths



Number of participants

127



Over 80% of participants acquired new competencies as a result of their participation in the project.



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Characteristics of the 3rd Edition

The 3rd Edition of the International School was designed as a comprehensive hybrid educational programme combining academic excellence, flexibility and practical learning experiences.

The project was characterised by four key features:

Internationalisation

As part of the project, two editions of the International School were implemented – the Autumn School and the Spring School – offering four IIEPs delivered entirely in English.

According to the original assumptions, 88 students from Latin American countries were recruited, creating a genuinely multicultural academic environment, together with 31 AGH students, 1 doctoral student and 7 AGH academic staff members delivering the intensive courses.

Ultimately, the project was completed by a total of 75 students representing 8 Latin American countries and 17 higher education institutions, creating a genuinely multicultural academic environment, as well as 25 AGH students, 1 AGH doctoral student and 7 AGH academic staff members.

Flexibility

Classes were delivered in a hybrid format combining synchronous online education with intensive on-site classes at AGH University of Krakow.

This solution made it possible to reduce travel costs while enabling participants to complete the full educational programme over a period of three months.

Academic Attractiveness

Each IIEPs comprised 60 hours of specialised academic classes, complemented by 30 hours of technical English designed specifically for students of engineering and science programmes taught in English.

Each of the four IMPs comprised 60 hours of classes and concluded with a final examination. Participants who successfully completed an IMP received a micro-credential certificate specifying the grade, participant workload, 60 hours of instruction and 4 ECTS credits.

During their stay at AGH University, participants took part in laboratory classes, practical workshops and field visits, enabling them to apply theoretical knowledge in real industrial and research environments.

Intensity

A total of 240 hours of specialised academic education were delivered within the project through four IIEPs, making the

project one of the most comprehensive short-term international educational initiatives implemented at AGH University.

The combination of specialised academic content with technical English instruction proved particularly valuable for students from Latin America, many of whom had limited opportunities to participate in English-language engineering education programmes at their home universities.



Project Implementation

The project was implemented according to a carefully planned sequence of educational and organisational activities.

Preparatory activities included developing the project regulations, preparing recruitment procedures and selecting participants from partner universities across Latin America. At the same time, AGH University academic staff prepared comprehensive electronic teaching materials for the four specialised programmes and an online technical English course.

Recognising the importance of innovative teaching methods, the academic staff involved in the project had completed a 16-hour methodological training course in STEM education before the classes began.

The educational component of the project was organised through two complementary editions:

Autumn School

The Autumn School programme included:

- 30 hours of technical English, delivered online by Eng., D. Bogdan Rutkowski from the Faculty of Metals Engineering and Industrial Computer Science,
- Sustainable Mining Technologies – 60 hours, delivered in hybrid format by Prof. Marek Borowski and Eng., D. Klaudia Zwolińska-Gładys from the Faculty of Civil Engineering and Resource Management,
- Advanced Manufacturing Processes and CNC Programming – 60 hours, delivered in hybrid format by Prof. Paweł Paćko and Eng., D. Rafał Kudelski from the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering and Robotics.

Spring School

The Spring School programme included:

- 30 hours of technical English, delivered online by Eng., D. Bogdan Rutkowski from the Faculty of Metals Engineering and Industrial Computer Science,
- Catalysis, Catalysts, Their Characterisation Methods and Applications – 60 hours, delivered in hybrid format by Eng., D. Bogdan Samojeden from the Faculty of Energy and Fuels,
- Environmental Sociology and Social Challenges in Post-Mining Regions – 60 hours, delivered in hybrid format by Prof. Dariusz Wojakowski from the Faculty of Humanities.

After completion of each programme, participants' learning outcomes were assessed using appropriate evaluation methods, enabling those who successfully completed the programme to obtain formal confirmation of the competences acquired.

Each IIEPs concluded with a final examination and the issuance of a micro-credential certificate confirming the learning outcomes achieved and specifying the grade, participant workload, number of IIEPs hours (60) and number of ECTS credits earned (4).



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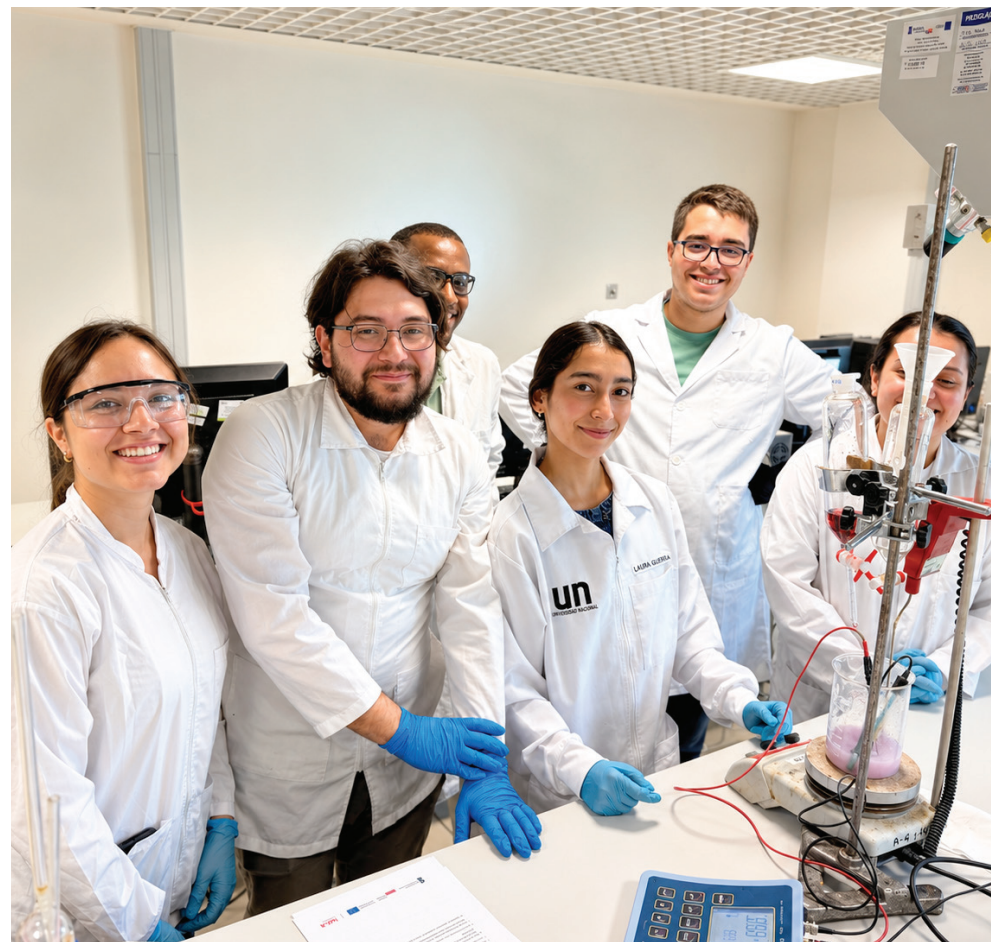


Strategic Significance of the Project

The project directly supported the implementation of the Strategy of AGH University, adopted by Senate Resolution No. 93/2022 of 30 November 2022, which identifies internationalisation and excellence in education as key strategic priorities of the University.

The project contributed to several strategic priorities of AGH University, including:

- improving the quality of education through innovative teaching methods and hybrid learning,
- expanding the range of educational programmes delivered in English,
- increasing the number of international students studying at AGH University,
- strengthening international academic partnerships and knowledge exchange,
- supporting digital transformation in higher education,
- promoting equal opportunities, accessibility and non-discrimination,
- increasing the international visibility and competitiveness of AGH University.



Response to Identified Needs

Before submitting the project proposal, AGH University conducted an online needs assessment among partner universities and their students from across Latin America.

The survey confirmed strong interest in participating in short-term academic mobility at AGH University. Students expressed a clear desire to develop specialised knowledge in engineering, technology and environmental sciences. At the same time, their participation in international educational programmes was often constrained by financial limitations, social circumstances, cultural stereotypes and limited access to scholarship opportunities such as Erasmus+.

The 3rd Edition of the International School was designed to respond directly to these challenges. Thanks to funding provided by NAWA, participants were able to complete part of their education at AGH University without paying tuition fees.

Furthermore, the hybrid education model reduced travel costs by shortening the on-site component to two weeks, while maintaining the full academic value of the programmes through online classes delivered over approximately three months.

The project thus created an accessible, inclusive and financially sustainable model of international education, particularly beneficial to students from underrepresented and disadvantaged groups.



Expected Results and Long-Term Impact of the Project

It was assumed that the initiative would bring significant benefits to participants, AGH University and its international partners.

At the institutional level

The initiative contributes to increasing the number of international students, expanding AGH University's English-language educational offer and strengthening the University's position as a leading international technical university in Central Europe.

For participants

The project supports the development of:

- specialised knowledge,
- English-language communication skills,
- intercultural competences,
- professional qualifications,

which increase participants' future employment and academic development opportunities.

In the long term

The project was expected to contribute to:

- strengthening cooperation between AGH University and partner universities in Latin America,
- encouraging participants to undertake full-degree studies in Poland,
- developing future joint educational and research initiatives,
- further enhancing the international reputation of both AGH University and the NAWA SPINAKER programme.

Through its innovative educational model, strategic partnerships and commitment to inclusive internationalisation, the 3rd Edition of the International School demonstrates how short-term international education programmes can generate lasting educational, institutional and social impact.

The SPINAKER Project in Numbers

A total of 127 participants were recruited for the project, including:

- 88 international students from Latin America,
- 31 AGH students,
- 1 AGH doctoral student,
- 7 AGH academic staff members.

All participants were enrolled in a technical English course, which constituted the preparatory stage for participation in the project activities.

After completing the course, 108 participants successfully achieved the expected competences, including:

- 75 international students from Latin America,
- 25 AGH students,
- 1 AGH doctoral student,
- 7 AGH academic staff members.

Participants who successfully completed the technical English component were eligible to continue their participation in the one of the IIEPs.

Autumn Edition

In the Autumn Edition, the two IIEPs admitted:

- 40 international students from Latin America,
- 9 AGH students.

By the end of the programme, the expected competences had been achieved by:

- 39 international students from Latin America,
- 9 AGH students.

Spring Edition

In the Spring Edition, the two IIEPs admitted:

- 40 international students from Latin America,
- 16 AGH students,
- 1 AGH doctoral student.

Upon completion of the programme, the expected competences had been achieved by:

- 36 international students from Latin America,
- 16 AGH students,
- 1 AGH doctoral student.

Latin American students who successfully completed the IIEPs, by home university

Country	University	Number of students
Argentina	University of Buenos Aires	14
Chile	Universidad Técnica Federico Santa María (UTFSM)	9
Venezuela	Universidad Simón Bolívar	7
Colombia	Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira	6
Brazil	Universidade Federal dos Vales do Jequitinhonha e Mucuri (UFVJM)	5
Colombia	Universidad de los Andes	5
Brazil	Federal University of Espírito Santo	4
Brazil	Federal University of Pará	4
Brazil	Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN)	4
Peru	Universidad Católica San Pablo	4
Costa Rica	Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica (TEC)	3
Brazil	Universidade Federal de Alfenas (UNIFAL-MG)	2
Colombia	Pontificia Universidad Javeriana	2
Colombia	Universidad Nacional de Colombia	2
Panama	Universidad Tecnológica de Panama	2
Argentina	ITBA (Instituto Tecnológico de Buenos Aires)	1
Peru	Institute of Technology (TECSUP)	1
		75

Conclusions

The relatively high level of withdrawal among AGH University students resulted primarily from participants resigning after the courses had already started. Several participants indicated that they were unable to reconcile their professional responsibilities with regular attendance, as a significant proportion of AGH University students work while studying.

In addition, some students declared that they were interested exclusively in participating in the specialised IIEPs subject course and were not interested in taking the preceding technical English course.

Based on these observations, the Beneficiary will consider making the technical English course optional rather than mandatory for AGH University students in future editions of the programme.

In practice, most AGH University students already hold internationally recognised language certificates or have a level of English sufficient to participate effectively in specialised subject courses without additional language preparation. This change could help reduce the withdrawal rate while maintaining the quality and accessibility of the programme.

In contrast to AGH University students, the vast majority of international students successfully completed the courses and obtained the relevant certificates.

The only significant challenge concerning this group was the small number of students who were unable to participate in the programme due to visa-related issues. This problem primarily affected students from the Dominican Republic, who were unable to obtain their visas in time to participate in the programme.

For future editions of the project, it is recommended to consider restoring the “Get to know Poland” component, which was implemented as part of the two previous editions. This component enabled participants, before travelling to Poland and AGH University, to obtain basic information about Poland, cultural differences, local conditions and the specifics of functioning in a new environment.

Feedback received from participants, particularly those from Latin American countries, indicates that such preparation would be a valuable element of the programme.

The absence of this component in the current edition was partially compensated for by providing the necessary information after participants arrived in Poland, which did not negatively affect project implementation. Nevertheless, earlier preparation would facilitate cultural and organisational adaptation and provide better preparation for participants' stay and participation in classes.



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▲ Outcomes of the Mobility Activities in Light of the Evaluation Research

An anonymous questionnaire survey was conducted among project participants after completion of the programme. The survey included a series of questions concerning the implementation of the project.

The first group of questions concerned the assessment of programme organisation before participants' arrival in Poland and the organisation of activities during their stay in Krakow. The highest ratings were given to the organisation of classes, accommodation arrangements and the overall organisation of the stay. Slightly lower ratings were given to communication with the organisers and programme organisation prior to arrival.

The results indicate that all organisational aspects analysed were assessed positively. Communication with the organisers received an average score of 4.0 and was the area with the greatest variation in ratings. At the same time, 70% of respondents rated it positively or very positively, 25% gave an average rating, and only 5% assessed it negatively.

The highest results in the entire survey concerned the quality of the teaching process.

Respondents rated particularly highly:

- the substantive quality of the courses,
- the preparation of the instructors,
- the instructors' engagement,
- the organisation of classes.

The responses collected indicate that the teaching process was rated very highly. The competence and commitment of the instructors, as well as the practical dimension of the classes, were particularly frequently emphasised. It is worth noting that virtually no negative opinions were expressed regarding the competence of the academic teachers.

Respondents highlighted the professionalism of the instructors, their openness to questions and their individual approach to participants. The limited variation in ratings suggests that participants perceived the quality of the classes in a similar way, which increases the reliability of the results obtained.

One of the main objectives of the SPINAKER programme was to develop participants' competences in an international

environment. The respondents' answers indicate that participants recognised the programme's impact on the development of their academic and social competences.

The highest ratings were given to statements concerning:

- expanding academic knowledge,
- developing international cooperation skills,
- gaining a better understanding of cultural differences,
- increasing interest in further international cooperation.

One of the highest-rated elements of the programme was the atmosphere of international cooperation. Respondents emphasised the openness of participants, the opportunity to meet people representing different cultures and the free exchange of academic experiences.

The results suggest that participants perceived the programme's atmosphere as one of its greatest strengths. The responses indicate that the opportunity to cooperate with people from different countries constituted an important added value of the project. From the perspective of evaluating internationalisation projects, this represents one of the programme's most important outcomes.

The final survey questions concerned the overall assessment of the programme. The results indicate a very high level of satisfaction, with 9/10 and 10/10 ratings predominating.

Fifteen respondents gave the programme a rating of 10/10, while five respondents rated it 9/10.

At the same time, the vast majority of respondents declared that they would like to participate again in a similar AGH University programme and expressed interest in further cooperation with the University. This may indicate a high level of trust in AGH University among participants and a positive impact of the programme on the University's international image.

Area	Mean	Median
Programme organisation prior to arrival	4.15	4.00
Communication with organisers	4.00	4.00
Accommodation arrangements	4.40	5.00
Organisation of classes	4.60	5.00
Substantive quality of courses	4.80	5.00
Instructors' engagement	4.75	5.00
Usefulness of course content for further studies	4.55	5.00
Atmosphere of international cooperation	4.80	5.00
Integration programme and additional activities	4.55	5.00
Overall organisation of the stay in Krakow	4.55	5.00
Overall satisfaction with participation in the summer school	4.85	5.00
Participation in the summer school broadened my academic knowledge	4.60	5.00
The programme helped me develop my ability to work in an international environment	4.65	5.00

Area	Mean	Median
Participation in the programme improved my understanding of cultural differences	4.70	5.00
Participation in the programme will be helpful for my further academic or professional development	4.70	5.00
The programme increased my interest in further international cooperation	4.55	5.00
My stay in Krakow was a valuable educational and cultural experience	4.65	5.00

The survey used a five-point Likert scale:

- **1** – very poor / strongly disagree,
- **2** – poor / rather disagree,
- **3** – average / difficult to say,
- **4** – good / rather agree,
- **5** – very good / strongly agree.

Suggestions provided in the open-ended responses primarily concerned organisational improvements that could be incorporated into planning future editions of the programme. They were recommendations for improvement and did not undermine the very high overall assessment of the initiative.

The most frequently mentioned suggestions concerned:

- providing organisational information earlier before arrival,
- greater stability of the class schedule,
- improving email communication,
- transferring scholarships by bank transfer rather than in cash,

- providing more detailed information about the AGH University campus and public transport,
- increasing the number of field and practical classes,
- providing a broader presentation of opportunities for studying and conducting research at AGH University.

It should be emphasised that the comments were constructive and did not affect the very high overall assessment of the programme.

Based on the analysis conducted, it can be concluded that the third edition of the AGH University International Summer School was rated very highly by participants.

The programme successfully fulfilled its core functions: educational, integrative, intercultural, promotional and internationalisation-related.

The high ratings obtained in all areas of the survey, positive opinions expressed by respondents and declarations of willingness to participate again in similar initiatives demonstrate the high quality of the programme and its significant value to participants.

The Summer School can be considered to have contributed to building a positive image of AGH University as a university open to international cooperation and capable of delivering high-quality education in a multicultural environment.



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Project Risks

In the project proposal, the Beneficiary identified the following potential risks:

1. Insufficient knowledge of English among students from Latin American countries.
2. Limited interest among students in participating in the IIEPs programme offered as part of the project.
3. Insufficient financial resources among students from Latin America to participate in the IIEPs programme and travel to AGH University.

During project implementation, only the second identified risk materialised.

A significant number of AGH University students who had initially registered for the project withdrew before its commencement or during implementation. These withdrawals resulted primarily from participants' individual circumstances, including professional commitments and changing priorities, and remained beyond the Beneficiary's control.

The other identified risks did not materialise.

The preparatory technical English course effectively supported international participants in achieving the required level of language proficiency, while project funding successfully eliminated financial barriers, enabling students from Latin America to participate in the programme and undertake mobility at AGH University.



Success Stories – Perspectives of Project Participants and the Partner Universities

One of the most valuable outcomes of the 3rd Edition of the International School at AGH University was its positive impact on the academic and personal development of participants and on the institutional development of partner universities.

Beyond measurable indicators such as the number of mobilities, completed courses and competences acquired, the project created valuable international experiences that strengthened academic cooperation, fostered intercultural dialogue and contributed to establishing long-term relationships between AGH University and partner institutions in Latin America.

For many participants, the programme was their first opportunity to study abroad, work in an international academic environment and experience European higher education.

The combination of online learning, intensive on-site classes, laboratory activities and visits to industrial facilities enabled students to gain practical knowledge while also creating opportunities to build professional and personal relationships with peers from different countries.

Participants' experiences demonstrate that the project successfully achieved its objective of providing high-quality international education while creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

Learning Through Experience – Agustina from Argentina

Agustina, a student at the University of Buenos Aires (Argentina), participated in the *Sustainable Mining Technologies* programme after successfully completing the online component of the course.

For her, the experience went far beyond academic learning and became an opportunity to discover a new culture, make international friendships and gain first-hand knowledge of modern mining technologies.

„My experience with AGH University was amazing from beginning to end. After completing the online courses, we were invited to Krakow with a very generous scholarship and we felt extremely welcome. The teachers

were very kind to us and took us on two amazing visits where we could see how mines actually operate. It was a very interesting experience, although at times somewhat challenging. All the participants from both courses were extremely friendly, we took part in many activities together and created countless memories. My favourite part of the programme was definitely the trip to Zakopane, where we went on a sleigh ride."

Agustina's testimony highlights several important aspects of the project. First, the scholarship funded through the NAWA SPINAKER programme significantly reduced the financial barriers that often prevent Latin American students from participating in international mobility programmes.

Second, the combination of online preparation and practical on-site classes created an engaging learning process that effectively connected theoretical knowledge with professional practice.

Connecting Knowledge Between Europe and Latin America – Benjamín from Chile

Another inspiring example is Benjamín Sánchez Adam, a student at Universidad Técnica Federico Santa María (UTFSM) in Chile, who participated in the *Sustainable Mining Technologies* course.

Benjamín particularly appreciated the strong connection between academic education, industrial practice and sustaina-

ble development principles, emphasising that the programme provided him with practical knowledge that can be directly applied in the Latin American mining sector.

"My experience at AGH University during the SPINAKER Sustainable Mining Technologies course was exceptional. The courses combined the latest sustainability standards with real engineering practice, and the professors created a highly practical and international learning environment. Visits to KGHM Polska Miedź and the Brzeszcze coal mine made the programme an unforgettable experience. They strengthened our understanding of technical issues – from copper mining to methane and ventilation – while also showing how innovation and management shape modern mining. As a student from Latin America, I particularly value the knowledge and practical tools I gained and can take home with me and use to contribute to the development of safer and more sustainable mining in our region."

Benjamín's experience illustrates one of the fundamental objectives of the SPINAKER programme – facilitating international knowledge transfer that extends beyond individual learning outcomes.

The opportunity to learn about European mining technologies, sustainable development practices and modern ma-

nagement methods provided participants with practical solutions that can be adapted and implemented in their own national contexts.

Institutional perspective

Lydia Droegemueller, Director of International Cooperation,
Universidad Técnica Federico Santa María

"Our experience of cooperation with AGH University within the SPINAKER programme has been extremely positive. Students from Universidad Técnica Federico Santa María participated in both editions of the programme this year, and the programme quickly became one of our most popular international mobility opportunities. Its short-term format opened up international mobility to students who, due to their stage of studies, timing or financial circumstances, would not have been able to undertake a traditional semester-long exchange. We particularly appreciated the excellent combination of technical education and cultural experience, especially through laboratory classes and industry-related components. The course topics were also very well aligned with the STEM profile of our university and our students.

The programme also generated new interest in Poland as an international study destination. Our students' enthusiasm after returning was very clear in the stories and photographs they shared with our university community.

We are very grateful to AGH University for preparing such an engaging programme and for providing our students with scholarship opportunities. We also appreciate the coordination provided by AGH University throughout the programme and the University's commitment to building broader institutional relations with USM.

The success of the SPINAKER programme provides us with a strong foundation for further developing student mobility and institutional cooperation."

Lorena Méndez García, Academic Coordinator for Undergraduate Studies, Universidad de los Andes

„Our experience with AGH University within the NAWA SPINAKER programme was very positive and, above all, extremely valuable for our students. After returning to Colombia, they all shared very positive feedback about the programme, the warm welcome at AGH University and the opportunity to discover Krakow and Polish culture. I particularly remember Daniel Suaza Varela, a mechanical engineering student, because his experience very clearly reflects the programme's impact. For him, SPINAKER meant fulfilling a dream of visiting Europe, experiencing winter and snow for the first time, studying in a different academic environment and meeting students from several Latin American countries. He also spoke highly of the support provided by

the AGH University team and his professors, as well as his satisfaction at successfully completing the academic component of the programme.

For us, one of the greatest values of the SPINAKER programme was that it opened opportunities that many students had not previously even imagined. When Colombian students think about an international academic experience, they usually consider destinations that are closer or more familiar to them. Poland is not always among their first choices, often because they know less about it or initially perceive it as geographically and culturally distant. Programmes such as SPINAKER help break down these barriers and show students that less obvious destinations can offer exceptional academic and personal experiences.

Financial support was also crucial. It enabled talented students with very good academic results but limited financial means to participate in an international experience that they might otherwise have found very difficult to access.

This is particularly important to us because it helps ensure that international opportunities are available to a greater number of students and do not depend solely on their financial circumstances.

We are also convinced that these experiences will have a positive impact on other students. Hearing their peers speak with such enthusiasm about AGH University, Krakow and Poland may encourage others to consider this destination in the future, including for semester-long exchanges through cooperation between our universities.

We sincerely thank AGH University and NAWA for making this experience possible. We would be pleased to participate in future editions of the SPINAKER programme and hope to continue developing cooperation opportunities between our universities."

**Nathália Rosário, International Relations Directorate,
Universidade Federal dos Vales do Jequitinhonha e Mucuri**

"The participation of Universidade Federal dos Vales do Jequitinhonha e Mucuri (UFVJM) in the SPINAKER programme, in cooperation with AGH University and with the support of the Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange, contributes to strengthening UFVJM's internationalisation. The combination of technical English education, online learning and an intensive academic period in Poland strengthens students' scientific education, intercultural competences and ability to function in an international academic environment.

The topics explored by UFVJM students at AGH University are particularly relevant to the state of Minas Gerais, one of Brazil's most important mining regions. Mineral extraction has long influenced the state's economy and regional development, while also generating complex challenges, including environmental degradation, water resource management, economic dependence, social inequalities, territorial conflicts and the future of communities affected by the reduction or closure of mining activities.

UFVJM operates in areas encompassing environmentally sensitive regions of the Cerrado biome and the Serra do Espinhaço mountain range, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. These areas combine mineral resources, exceptional biodiversity, important water sources, traditional communities and landscapes of significant ecological and cultural value.

Reconciling mining and industrial activity with environmental protection and social well-being therefore requires both technological solutions and a comprehensive understanding of their social consequences." "The two courses selected by UFVJM students address these challenges from complementary perspectives. Catalysis provides scientific and technological tools for developing cleaner, safer and more efficient processes, while environmental sociology helps understand how economic and technological transfor-

mations affect people, communities and territories. Together, these courses promote an integrated approach to sustainable development, combining innovation, environmental responsibility and social inclusion.

The SPINAKER programme therefore goes beyond individual mobility. It connects students' fields of study with international knowledge, promotes foreign-language proficiency and interdisciplinary education, and increases the visibility of international educational opportunities at UFVJM.

It also provides a foundation for future cooperation between UFVJM and AGH University through joint courses, research projects, and student and staff exchanges.

By combining AGH's expertise with the challenges faced by the state of Minas Gerais, the partnership helps prepare professionals and researchers capable of developing technologies and building a more sustainable and socially responsible future for mining regions."

Laura Vieira, International Academic Mobility, Universidade Federal do Pará

"Every international partnership begins with a first contact. In the case of the Federal University of Pará

(UFPA) and AGH University, this contact took concrete form through the NAWA SPINAKER programme, transforming an academic mobility opportunity into an experience involving education, knowledge exchange and the building of new institutional relationships.

The programme not only expanded access to international courses, but enabled students to experience internationalisation in a real and meaningful way. The support offered through SPINAKER – including assistance with transportation, accommodation and study-related costs – was crucial in enabling participation and increasing the accessibility of academic mobility, including for students from different UFPA campuses.

This is particularly important for a university with a strong presence in the Amazon region, where the internationalisation process should encompass different territories and academic communities.

The experience also brought together areas of knowledge of strategic importance for our students' education.

Topics such as Sustainable Mining Technologies, Advanced Manufacturing Processes and CNC Programming, Catalysis, and Environmental Sociology – together with social issues in post-mining areas – connected academic education, innovation and con-

temporary challenges.

The combination of virtual activities, on-site education in Krakow and cultural integration transformed this mobility programme into an educational experience extending far beyond the classroom.

For UFPA, cooperation with AGH therefore means more than a one-time mobility initiative. It strengthens the network of academic relations between Europe and the Amazon, creating opportunities for a two-way flow of knowledge, experience and perspectives.

By experiencing new academic and cultural environments, our students take back with them experiences, challenges and the potential of a university located in the heart of the Amazon.

The overall assessment of the partnership is very positive. SPINAKER has demonstrated the potential of IIEPs to bring institutions closer together, expand educational opportunities and create foundations for new teaching, research and mobility initiatives.

We hope that this experience will be another step towards increasingly close and lasting cooperation between UFPA and AGH University of Krakow, encompassing new projects and opportunities for our academic

communities.”

Stephanie Silva Begalli, Director of International and Interinstitutional Relations, Universidade Federal de Alfenas

“UNIFAL-MG’s participation in the SPINAKER programme, funded by NAWA and implemented in cooperation with AGH University, was an extremely valuable experience for the Federal University of Alfenas (UNIFAL-MG).

As this was our first participation in the programme, the opportunity meant much more than simply an international mobility experience for two of our master’s students. It was also an important step towards strengthening our internationalisation strategy and building closer institutional relations with AGH University.

From the first contact, we were warmly welcomed by the AGH University team. Our students received considerable care and attention, which was particularly important as this was their first international experience.

We know that hosting international students requires not only good organisation, but also patience, understanding and a willingness to take different circumstances, expectations and needs into account. In this respect, the AGH University team demonstrated exceptional care and openness.

For UNIFAL-MG, participation in the SPINAKER pro-

gramme was an honour. AGH University’s academic and research profile proved to be very well aligned with that of UNIFAL-MG, particularly due to its strong engagement in science, technology, innovation and applied research.

AGH University’s extensive academic and research infrastructure, together with the high quality of its staff, provided our students with an exceptionally enriching academic experience in an environment of excellence.

For us, this cooperation was particularly important not only because it enabled our students to participate in international mobility, but also because it gave them an opportunity to discover Poland, its culture and everyday life.

At the same time, the experience allowed us to learn more about AGH University and recognise the potential for even broader and more sustainable cooperation.

We are very grateful to AGH University and NAWA for this opportunity and for the trust placed in our institution. We hope that this experience will be only the beginning of a path of cooperation between our universities, leading to new opportunities in mobility, research and academic exchange.

For UNIFAL-MG, participation in SPINAKER meant building a bridge bringing Poland and Brazil closer together. We hope that we will be able to explore further opportunities for cooperation together."

Lasting Impact of the Project

The stories presented in this chapter demonstrate that the success of the 3rd Edition of the International School cannot be measured solely through quantitative indicators.

Its greatest achievement lies in the experiences of the participants themselves, who returned to their home universities with new knowledge, enhanced professional competences, greater intercultural awareness and lasting international networks.

By bringing together students and academic staff representing different cultural, linguistic and educational backgrounds, the project achieved one of the key objectives of the NAWA SPINAKER programme: strengthening the internationalisation of higher education through valuable educational experiences that create long-term value for individuals, institutions and society.

The testimonies presented in this report show that the 3rd Edition of the International School was not only an educational initiative, but also a platform for international dialogue, professional cooperation and cultural exchange, contributing to the strengthening of academic partnerships between AGH University and higher education Institutions across Latin America.



Summary

The evaluation of the 3rd AGH International School, *Cursos de Verano en AGH Universidad de Cracovia*, implemented under the SPINAKER programme, demonstrates that the project successfully achieved its intended educational, organisational and internationalisation objectives.

Both quantitative and qualitative results indicate a high level of participant satisfaction, a positive assessment of the teaching process and a significant impact of the programme on the development of academic, intercultural and social competences.

The programme's greatest strengths were identified as:

- high-quality education,
- the practical nature of the courses,
- well-organised field activities,
- the opportunity to study and live in an international academic environment.

Participants consistently emphasised that interaction with students from different countries was as valuable as

the formal educational component of the programme. The programme enabled them to expand their academic knowledge, develop intercultural communication competences and establish valuable academic and personal relationships.

The results confirm that the Summer School effectively supported the internationalisation objectives of both AGH University and the SPINAKER programme.

It contributed to the development of participants' social capital and intercultural competences, as well as their readiness to undertake future international academic mobility. Particularly significant was the strong willingness of participants to recommend the programme to other students and their interest in returning to AGH University through Erasmus+, SMILE, doctoral studies or other forms of academic cooperation.

These results demonstrate the programme's potential as a tool for promoting AGH University internationally.

At the same time, the evaluation identified several areas requiring further improvement. The most frequently mentioned recommendations concerned organisational aspects, in particular:

- providing participants with information earlier before their arrival,
- improving communication,
- ensuring a more stable programme schedule,
- transferring scholarships by bank transfer,
- improving signage around the campus,
- preparing more comprehensive information materials for international students.

These suggestions were primarily practical in nature and provide valuable guidance for improving future editions of the programme.

The results should be interpreted taking several methodological limitations into account. Participation in the evaluation survey was voluntary, the response rate was approximately one third of all programme participants, and the study did not use a pre-test/post-test design that would have made it possible to measure changes in participants' competence levels.

Therefore, the results reflect participants' subjective assessments rather than objectively measured changes in their competences. Nevertheless, the consistency of the quanti-

tative and qualitative results strengthens the reliability of the conclusions drawn.

Final Summary

Overall, the 3rd AGH International School proved to be an effective initiative supporting the internationalisation of higher education.

In addition to providing high-quality academic education, the programme created opportunities to develop intercultural competences, build international networks and develop skills necessary for functioning in a global academic environment.

The evaluation confirms that the Summer School not only achieved the objectives of the SPINAKER programme, but also strengthened the position of AGH University as a university with a strong international profile, committed to academic excellence and international cooperation.

The experience gained and the results of the evaluation provide a solid foundation for the further development and continuous improvement of future editions of the programme.



Discover the 3rd Edition of the International School
at AGH University of Krakow

Enjoy watching!



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