



**International
Challenge-Based
Semester**

A STARS EU international
learning experience at
IPB, Bragança-Portugal

A STARS EU international learning experience at IPB, Portugal

The International Challenge-Based Semester is an international semester offered by the Instituto Politécnico de Bragança (IPB), Portugal, in articulation with the STARS EU Alliance and partner institutions.



It is designed for students interested in an international, multidisciplinary and project-oriented academic experience in Europe.

The programme is planned as a 30 ECTS, 16-week, English-taught semester, open to students from undergraduate and master's programmes.

It combines academic learning, applied research, field experience, communication, and applied technology through real challenges connected to local and regional contexts.

The first edition is planned for the **2nd semester of the 2026/2027 academic year.**

Why participate?

This semester goes beyond a traditional mobility experience based only on attending separate classes.

Students will work in **international and multidisciplinary teams** on real cases, developing solutions with academic supervision and interaction with stakeholders.

The programme is especially relevant for students who want to:

- study in Portugal in an international academic environment;
- work in English with students from different countries and disciplines;
- develop innovation, research and problem-solving skills;
- gain experience with real projects and external stakeholders;
- strengthen their academic and professional profile;
- participate in a pilot educational format connected to the STARS EU Alliance.



Programme structure

The semester has a total workload of 30 ECTS, organised into **5 curricular units**.

Core curricular units

(All students will complete three common units)

1. Challenge-Based Innovation — 6 ECTS

Students work in teams to frame a real challenge, analyse the problem, interact with stakeholders, and develop an innovative response.

2. Scientific Initiation Internship — 6 ECTS

Students develop applied research activities related to the project, including evidence gathering, literature review, data analysis and research-informed decision-making.

3. Extracurricular Internship — 6 ECTS

Students engage with real organisational, social, institutional or community contexts, gaining practical understanding of the challenge and its implementation conditions.

Project-oriented curricular units

Two additional units will be adapted to the specific case or project, in two specific areas, Communication and Dissemination and Applied Technology, eg.:

4. Animated Documentary — 6 ECTS

Focused on pitch development, visual storytelling, project communication, public presentation and dissemination of results.

5. Digital Manufacturing — 6 ECTS

Focused on prototyping, digital fabrication, modelling, testing, applied digital tools, laboratory or workshop-based experimentation, and digital factory-type approaches.



Learning journey

During the semester, students will move through a structured learning pathway ↓

Understand and frame the challenge

Investigate the problem using evidence and applied research

Engage with real contexts and stakeholders

Develop, test and refine possible solutions

Communicate the final proposal through presentations, visual storytelling and project dissemination.

The programme is designed as an integrated experience.

The curricular units are not isolated components; they all contribute to the same project or challenge.

Who can apply?

- Undergraduate students
- Master's students
- Students from different academic backgrounds
- Students interested in multidisciplinary and international project work.

The first edition will have an open multidisciplinary profile.

Areas such as health, wellbeing, technologies, tourism, sport, social sciences, management, communication and related fields may be relevant, depending on the specific challenges selected for the pilot edition.

A minimum level of English equivalent to B1 is recommended, as the semester will be taught and developed in English.

Pilot edition and places

The first edition is expected to run as a pilot programme in the **2nd semester of 2026/2027**.

The programme is expected to open with a **minimum of 5 students**.

The final number of available places is still to be confirmed, with a possible pilot group of around **5 to 10 students**, depending on institutional conditions, partner involvement and the final organisation of the selected projects.

Participation may be possible through partner institutions and/or through an open call, subject to confirmation.



Certification and academic

The semester is designed as a **30 ECTS academic experience**. Students are expected to receive academic documentation from IPB, such as a **Transcript of Records and/or certificate**, subject to final institutional confirmation.

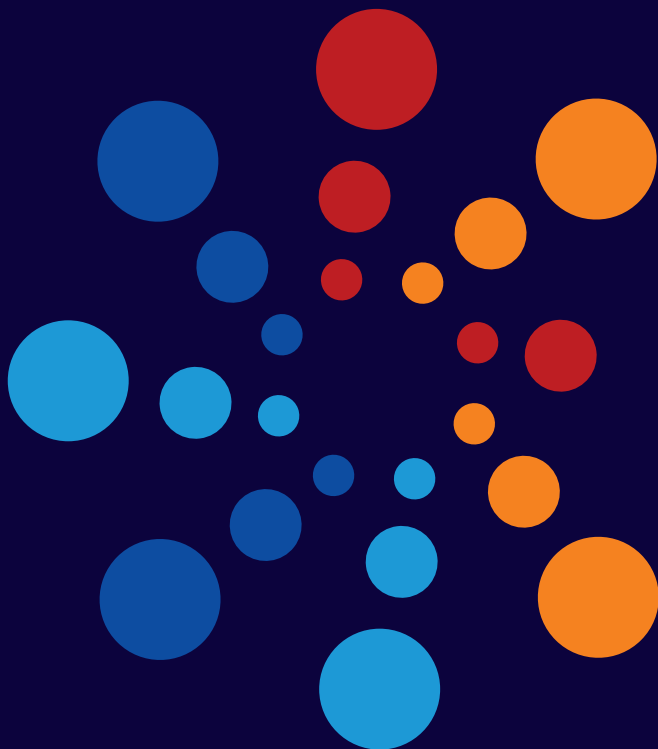
Students should confirm with their home institution in how the semester may be recognised in their study plan, for example as mobility, elective courses, internship, complementary academic activities or other curricular components.

Expected benefits

- develop international teamwork experience;
- work on real and complex challenges;
- improve applied research and project development skills;
- strengthen communication, pitch and visual storytelling competences;
- gain contact with European academic and regional ecosystems;
- build experience relevant for employability, postgraduate studies and future international collaboration.

Costs and funding

Students are advised to consult their home institution and international office regarding possible mobility funding, institutional support or bilateral cooperation opportunities.



Contacts

Pedro Rodrigues
pedror@ipb.pt

Juliana Almeida
julianaalmeida@ipb.pt