



Exchange/Study Abroad  
Programmes:  
Policy and Process

## Documentation Management

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## 1. Introduction

All higher education providers are expected to have procedures in place for the *“management of all learning opportunities leading or contributing to the award of academic credit or a qualification that are delivered, assessed or supported through an arrangement with one or more organizations other than the degree-awarding body”* ([UK Quality Code for Higher Education Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others](#)).

A student’s period abroad under an Exchange/Study Abroad agreement normally contributes to the student’s final award through importation of grades, and it is therefore important that the quality and standard of the student’s academic study are assured through scrutiny of the providing institution.

This document provides specific advice and guidance to staff who wish to develop Exchange/Study Abroad partnerships. Anyone considering developing an exchange partnership proposal should in the first instance contact the College Vice Deans International and the University’s Academic Partnerships Office (APO). The APO will offer guidance regarding the process and requirements to prepare a submission for approval. Further information on establishing and managing partnerships can be found in the [Managing Partnerships Code of Practice](#).

## 2. Approval of Proposed Exchange/Study Abroad Programmes

Approval of a proposed Exchange/Study Abroad programme is a three-stage process:

### Stage 1 – Strategic Approval

The aim of this stage is to ensure that the University has a robust and effective procedure in place to consider whether a potential Exchange/Study Abroad Programme should be developed further. Exchange/Study Abroad partnerships should not be established in order to satisfy the wish of one particular individual, but rather as a longer-term partnership strategy.

For undergraduate exchanges, the University will enter into exchanges of a single term or up to a full academic year in length. For postgraduate taught exchanges, the University will not enter into agreements that involve more than one term (3-4 months).

Any proposal must have the support of the relevant College Management Board and Colleges/Departments/Divisions are therefore asked to identify, in the first instance, both a Partnership Sponsor (i.e. the Vice Dean

International) who will be tasked with championing the proposal, and an Academic Lead, (i.e the 'Academic Exchange Coordinator'), who will be tasked with gathering information and preparing the proposal.

The Academic Exchange Coordinator must complete:

- [Strategic Approval Form](#)
- [Risk Assessment of Proposed Partner Form](#)

The proposal must be approved by the College Management Board, thereby confirming that it has been discussed within the Department and aligns with College priorities and direction. The proposal is then presented to the Strategic Approval Scrutiny Panel (SASP) for consideration. Scrutiny at this stage will establish a preliminary view regarding the proposal before significant time and resources are invested in more detailed development of the proposal. The decision resulting from the scrutiny of the Stage 1 documentation will be communicated to the Partnership Sponsor and Academic Exchange Coordinator with guidance regarding the next steps to be taken.

## **Stage 2 – Due Diligence and Exchange Programme Specification**

The aim of this stage is to ensure that appropriate due diligence on the partner in relation to academic, legal and financial information is undertaken. This enables the University to assure itself that the proposed Exchange/Study Abroad is appropriate for our students and that risks are identified and mitigated. It is important to bear in mind that due diligence is often a mutual exercise and colleagues should expect to receive requests for similar information from the proposed partner as part of their own due diligence processes.

The Academic Exchange Coordinator must complete:

- [Due Diligence Form for Student Exchange;](#)
- [Exchange Programme Specification Form](#)

The completion of these forms will provide an opportunity to explore elements of the proposed Exchange/Study Abroad programme, including:

- definition of permitted schemes of study at the host institution for students on a given Brunel programmes;
- definition of incoming student prior learning and English language requirements;
- definition of module credit equivalence and the grade importation

- mapping for any outgoing student ;
- definition of support services available for incoming and outgoing students; academic management arrangements for the proposed partnership; definition of applicability of university and host institution regulations to students whilst on exchange;
- identification of key coordinators for the Exchange/Study Abroad programme at both Brunel and the host institution;
- definition of legal liabilities.

The completion of these forms may require potential partner institutions to provide detailed evidence regarding their own management and governance structures, resources and quality assurance.

Where relevant, discussions with PSRBs should also take place at this stage in order to gauge whether a student's participation in an Exchange/Study Abroad programme will impact on the professional accreditation of their degree.

#### Visit to proposed partners

The requirement for a visit to the proposed partner institution will be established at Stage 1. The purpose and details of any visits will be agreed at stage 2, when information about particular aspects for follow-up will be available.

#### Scrutiny

The Stage 2 documentation will be considered by a Scrutiny Panel on behalf of the University Education Committee, with recommendations made to the Committee. Following approval at this stage, the agreement is drafted.

### **Stage 3 – Full Approval**

Full approval is granted when the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and International), as the Vice-Chancellor's nominated representative on behalf of Senate, sign the finalised Exchange/Study Abroad agreement (Inter-Institutional Agreement if Erasmus+).

**Partnership agreements cannot be entered into or signed by individuals or Colleges/Departments/Divisions on behalf of a College. Agreements can only be signed by the Vice-Chancellor (or their nominated representative).**

### 3. Managing the delivery of an Exchange/Study Abroad Programme

#### BEFORE MOBILITY

Please note that this document uses the term 'mobility' to define the time spent at a host institution.

#### **Individual outgoing Brunel students:**

Before a student can commence their Exchange/Study Abroad programme, they must gain approval from their College and the host institution for the specific scheme of studies they will follow in the host institution within the constraints of the defined Exchange/Study Abroad programme approved by the University at stage 2 as described above. This approval is formalised in a Learning Agreement for the student (signed by the student, the relevant Brunel Department/Division and the host institution):

- [Erasmus+ Exchange Learning Agreement](#)
- [Non-Erasmus Exchange Learning Agreement](#)

The Learning Agreement shall include a definition of the Brunel credit equivalence of the specific modules to be taken at the host institution. Copies of the signed Learning Agreement shall be provided to the student and kept by the APO, College and host institution.

The APO must provide each student with an international [Risk Awareness Checklist](#) to complete and submit prior to the student's participation in the Exchange/Study Abroad.

Students wishing to commence an Erasmus+ exchange programme must also enter into a Grant Agreement; completion of this agreement is facilitated by the APO.

**Students may not commence their exchange programme until all required documentation has been completed and submitted.**

A pre-departure briefing will be provided by the College and the APO, which will address induction and on-going support for Exchange/Study Abroad students. The College briefing will be provided in line with guidance in the [Handbook for Academic Exchange Coordinators](#) along with the [Erasmus+ Student Handbook](#) and the [Non-Erasmus Student Handbook](#).

#### **Individual incoming students:**

Applications are co-ordinated by the APO in consultation with the relevant Department and Admissions.

### **DURING MOBILITY**

Incoming and outgoing students shall be provided with the support as set out in the partnership agreement. Key coordinators for the Exchange/Study Abroad programme at Brunel and the host institution shall communicate any issues and will, where necessary, follow the University's [Student Placement Emergency Procedure](#).

### **AFTER MOBILITY**

#### **Individual outgoing Brunel students**

After students return to Brunel, the APO will receive an official transcript for each student from the host institution which will be forwarded to the relevant College's administrative staff who will then liaise with the Academic Exchange Coordinator.

Grades are imported according to the agreed [grade translation mechanism](#) for that particular host institution.

The Academic Exchange Coordinator completes the Graded Exemption Form, which is then submitted to the TAG office to record the outcome on SITS, copying in the APO.

The relevant Board of Examiners will consider the student profile, including the imported grades, in the normal manner.

#### **Individual Incoming students**

For incoming Exchange/Study Abroad students, transcripts must be made available within five weeks of their return to their home institution. Panels of Examiners must take place in a timely manner, therefore, and, following the confirmation of grades by the relevant Panel of Examiners, the College will provide the student and their home institution with a transcript within one week of the Panel. The Academic Exchange Coordinator must ensure that copies of all transcripts for departing Exchange/Study Abroad students are provided to both those students and their home institution.

#### **Transcripts (Brunel students)**

The student's extended transcript shall, for the period covered by the Exchange/Study Abroad programme, state the specific modules taken at the host institution, the Brunel equivalent credit rating, ECTS credit rating if

appropriate, and the imported grade.

#### 4. Exchange/Study Abroad Programme Management

The Exchange Programme Specification and the Exchange/Study Abroad Partnership Agreement will give the framework for the delivery and management of the programme. Normal University annual monitoring processes and quality assurance mechanisms should be followed. Modifications to the partnership agreement can be outlined in amendments to the formal agreement, which may be made as a result of annual monitoring or periodic review, for example. When reviewing Exchange/Study Abroad agreements, it is imperative that any modifications are taken into account and that the equivalency of the learning outcomes is maintained. A review of each agreement is compulsory prior to the renewal of any agreement.

##### Renewing Agreements

Renewal arrangements for exchange partnerships are outlined in the Exchange/Study Abroad agreement. In order to renew an agreement, a case must be made regarding the on-going viability of that agreement. The [Renewal of a Student Exchange Partnership](#) form must be completed by the Academic Exchange Coordinator and submitted to the APO by the end of **November** each year in order for agreements to be renewed for the following academic year. That case for renewal will then be subject to scrutiny by the University Education Committee. If the renewal is considered to require strategic approval, then the normal process for Strategic Approval of Exchanges should be followed.

##### Terminating Agreements

Exchange/Study Abroad partnership agreements may terminate through the natural completion of the agreed partnership or by either party initiating the termination of the partnership within the terms of the agreement.