



Handbook for Academic Exchange Coordinators

Documentation Management

Document Record

Maintained by:	Academic Partnerships Office
Owned by:	Academic Partnerships Office
Approval Date:	-
Last Amended:	July 2017
Last Reviewed:	July 2017
Next Review Date:	August 2018
Current Version:	1,4
Location of Master Document:	https://intra.brunel.ac.uk/s/QSO/Team/Partnerships/Exchange/Programmes/Policies, Procedures and Pro-formas

Version Control

Document Version	Amendments	Amended By	Date	Approved By
1.4	See Document Rollover 2017-18 Checklist Records	Head of Quality Enhancement and Student Partnership	July 2017	Academic Registrar and Director of Student Services

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1. What is a Student Exchange Programme?

A student exchange programme is a programme in which students from one university study at another university in accordance with a formal agreement. It is usually designed for undergraduate students to spend a period of time studying at the host university, earning credits which would count towards their degree programme at the home university. It is also possible to exchange postgraduate or PhD students between partner institutions.

Exchanges are by definition bi-directional and reciprocal. They must be in balance between outbound and inbound participants due to the:

- Educational intent (cooperation between international partners), and
- Fiscal conditions (covering Brunel tuition of inbound international students with revenues from outbound Brunel students)

The purpose of exchange programme is to enhance the educational experiences and the cultural understanding of the involved students. In order to take part in an exchange, an agreement must be signed between universities to enable students to spend a term or a full academic year abroad.

2. Exchange Agreements

2.1 What is an Exchange Agreement?

An exchange agreement is an official binding document, which describes the mobility arrangements agreed upon by two institutions – namely the subject area that the exchange will be in and the number of student and/or staff allowed to take part in the programme for a specific academic year (and total number of student months or teaching hours this represents). Fully signed exchange agreements are a pre-requisite to any exchange programme.

2.2 How are Exchange Agreements set up and renewed?

The International Mobility Manager, within the Academic Partnerships Office (APO), is responsible for renewing and managing agreements (inter-institutional liaison). Academic Exchange Coordinators are responsible for setting up exchange agreements as this activity requires in-depth knowledge of a particular department. The Managing Partnerships Code of Practice details the process of establishing partnerships.

<http://www.brunel.ac.uk/about/administration/quality-assurance/collaborations>

If you would like to propose an exchange partnership, you should contact the University's Academic Partnership Office (APO) in the first instance.

- a. A number of elements should be considered prior to setting a new exchange agreement, amongst which are:
 - 1) Potential interest from Brunel students to study overseas
 - 2) Academic ranking and reputation of the prospective partner institution (including teaching and research ratings, entry requirements, other international exchange links the institution already has etc.)
 - 3) Degrees offered and courses that would be available to exchange students (curriculum, course load, level of study, assessments methods, marking system etc.)
 - 4) Facilities (library, computers, labs, sports etc.)
 - 5) Support available for students (academic, welfare, pastoral care)
 - 6) Accommodation
 - 7) Cost of living
 - 8) Term dates and exam dates (do they match Brunel's?)

- 9) Language of instruction and language requirements (if applicable)
- 10) Health & Safety policy
- 11) Background to the HE system in the given country
- 12) Possibilities for other forms of collaboration

The list above is not intended to be exhaustive or requisite. It is to be used as a guide to ensure the proper consideration of new exchange partnerships.

NB: Exchange agreements should not be set to satisfy the wish of one particular individual, but rather as a longer-term collaboration strategy that can be built on.

2.3 What do you and your partner need to agree on?

It is very important that you and your partner are aware of the courses on offer to exchange students and the marking system that will be used. Brunel students taking part in an exchange should be able to follow a programme of study in their host university that will satisfy the requirements of their Brunel course. An exchange period must be a complete part of a Student's degree, so students will be awarded credits that will count towards their final degree.

It is the Academic Exchange Coordinator's responsibility to check that the modules on offer in a potential host university fit the needs of their students, and that students register for appropriate modules once in their host university. Academic Exchange Coordinators should also have a clear idea of the marking system used in the host university, as the equivalence to the Brunel grades will have to be established prior to approval of the exchange. Following completion of the exchange period, marks gained by the students will be imported to the Brunel system.

Likewise, incoming students will follow the same curriculum as Brunel students, and should therefore have a sufficient academic background.

Some modules may not be appropriate for them to follow, and this should be highlighted to your potential partner.

You will also have to agree on a number of students and student months when signing/renewing an exchange agreement. There is an endemic imbalance between the number of incoming students and the number of outgoing students with the UK, principally because of language skills. European partners tend to insist on higher numbers of student mobility, because they have a great demand in their institution. However, if you agree to accept more incoming students than you can send outgoing students, this represents a net cost to your department/College, since these students will be using resources and staff time without paying any tuition fee.

2.4 When does an Exchange Agreement become valid?

In order to be valid, an exchange agreement must be:

- 1) **Signed:** by both the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and International) at Brunel and the official representative in the host university. A copy must be kept centrally at the APO.
- 2) **Reciprocal:** an exchange agreement must provide for movements of people in both directions
 - a. (e.g. UK to Spain and Spain to UK)
- 3) **Balanced:** the total number of student months must be equivalent for both institutions, at least over a 3-year period.

If the conditions above are not fulfilled, the exchange agreement will not be acceptable, and no mobility should be allowed to take place.

Ideally, all agreements (new or renewal) should be signed at the beginning of the calendar year in order for it to be valid for the following academic year. Please allow at least a full year from the time a new agreement

request is made until the agreement is signed.

3. Managing Outgoing Student Exchanges

3.1 Promoting Exchange Opportunities

3.1.1 Promotional Materials

The APO has produced a flyer aimed at encouraging students to take part in an exchange programme. Additionally, they may receive flyers and posters from the British Council to help promote the Erasmus+ exchange programme. All promotional materials are sent to participating Departments/Divisions before the start of new academic year. If you require further copies, please contact the APO.

Please note that promotional materials are only generic, and do not advertise your Department/Division's individual exchange links, nor the application procedure/deadlines that students must abide by. A full list of exchange links can be found on our web pages at:

<http://www.brunel.ac.uk/international/exchanges-and-study-abroad/exchanges>

3.1.2 Presentations and Talks

The International Mobility Manager would be happy to speak to your students about the available exchange programmes. Thus, do not hesitate to get in touch if you think it would be beneficial for the International Mobility Manager to speak briefly at your departmental/divisional welcome meeting, or to meet up with your students at an alternative time to promote exchange programmes.

3.2 Student Nominations

3.2.1 Nomination procedure

In January, Academic Exchange Coordinators should hold an information session to level 1 students (level 2 if students are on a 4 year degree programme) about the opportunities to go on exchange. Interested candidates must submit an internal application in hard-copy to the Academic Exchange Coordinator no later than 15 February.

3.2.2 Selection Criteria

The selection process at Brunel shall include:

- Consideration of an applicant's C.V. and Level 1 or 2 module performance (a performance equivalent to a 2.1 profile is required).
- A written statement of intention which should be at least 2 sides of A4, double-spaced.
- The selection process should involve an interview.
- The number of places available in each of your partner institution is limited and determined in the signed exchange agreements. If more students express an interest than there are places available, you may carry out a selection process, and allocate the places most in demand to the most suitable students, or you may wish to operate on a first-come, first-served basis.

3.3 Student Preparation

3.3.1 Application to Host University

Once the host universities receive a list of nominated students from the International Mobility Manager, they will send information about their application procedure to the students by post or email. Students are expected to complete and submit all the required documents and meet the host university's application deadline.

3.3.2 Learning Agreement

Prior to applying to the host university, students should discuss course options with their Brunel Academic Exchange Coordinator and agree upon a programme of study. It is the responsibility of the Academic Exchange Coordinator to provide clear guidelines regarding the modules (what modules, what level) and how their grades and credits would transfer in order to comply with student's Brunel degree requirements. Students must complete the Learning Agreement by listing the selected modules which they plan to take at the host university. The Learning Agreement must be signed by both Brunel and the host university's Academic Exchange Coordinators for approval. The signed Learning Agreement must then be returned to the APO at least one month prior to starting the exchange period.

3.3.3 Pre-departure Meeting & Handbook

A departmental/divisional pre-departure briefing should be organised to confirm the academic requirements for student's time abroad. It is the responsibility of the Academic Exchange Coordinator to confirm the details of the Learning Agreement with the student. The Risk Awareness form should also be discussed during the briefing and signed by both the student and the Academic Exchange Coordinator.

The International Mobility Manager organises a general pre-departure meeting which usually takes place in April or May. The pre-departure meeting will address student loans/grants, accommodation, required documents and cultural awareness, etc. Students will be talked through the various pieces of documentation and general administrative requirements for their time abroad.

3.3.4 Travel Insurance

Travel insurance for students who are studying abroad as part of their course is compulsory. Brunel University London will provide travel insurance which will cover students for the entire period they are abroad

and it is free of charge. Students must submit the insurance application form to the Insurance Office at least 1 month before they depart the U.K.

3.3.5 Information about the host universities

It is not possible for the APO to stock and display all partners' literature (prospectuses, briefings, module descriptions, etc.) because of a lack of space. If you wish to keep information from partner universities, please contact the APO so that they can forward any information they receive to the relevant Departments/Divisions. In most cases, students are usually directed to the host university's website for up-to-date information.

3.3.6 Language support

Brunel offers a range of foreign language classes (i.e. French, German, Italian, Mandarin Chinese, etc.) to students. Classes are run by the International Pathways & Language Centre (IPLC) and are taught by qualified native speakers. They are offered as a 20 week course during the academic year and are free to Brunel students.

The Erasmus+ Online Language Support (OLS) is available currently in English, French, German, Spanish, Italian and Dutch only. Students taking part in Erasmus+ mobility have to assess their language competences before and after their stay abroad. In addition, students will have the opportunity to take online language courses for free during their stay in the host country to improve their language skills.

3.3.7 Tuition Fees

Exchange students are exempt from paying any tuition fees to the host university as they pay tuition fees to the home university. However, host universities may charge small fees for costs such as insurance, student unions, use of laboratory products, etc. on the same basis as these are charged to local students.

3.4 During and After the Exchange Period

3.4.1 Student Support

Exchange students are entitled to support and guidance in their host university the same way as a home student from that university would. Outgoing exchange students remain students of Brunel University London during the duration of their study period abroad, and as such have access to the facilities and services of the University. The APO will do its best to assist and support students with general, administrative and financial queries related to the Erasmus+ grant. Academic Exchange Coordinators and personal tutors are expected to assist them with specific academic queries.

3.4.2 Transcripts

Transcripts should be sent by all partner universities to the student who completed a study period and to the Academic Partnerships Office. The International Mobility Manager will forward the transcripts on to the relevant Department/Division's administrative staff who will then liaise with the Academic Exchange Coordinator. The relevant Department/Division should review the student's transcripts and coursework and complete the 'Graded Exemptions Moderation' form to grant exemption from the year of study or modules. An Exchange Moderation Panel (including External Examiner(s), an officer and chaired by the relevant Department's Chair of the Panel of Examiners) shall then be convened, which shall be responsible for confirmation of Brunel grades for the graded exemptions. Once the Exchange Moderation Panel has agreed the imported marks/grades, the External Examiner and the Chair will sign the Graded Exemption Moderation form. Following the Board of Examiners, the college/department/division will send the form

to the TAG (Academic Services) office to record the outcome on SITS, so that returning students can be awarded credits for their completed study period abroad. It is the Academic Exchange Coordinator's responsibility to ensure that the Graded Exemption Moderation form is sent to the TAG office.

3.5 Extension of Study Period

Outgoing Brunel students wishing to extend their study period may do so provided that:

- they want to extend their study period in the same host university where they currently study
- they formally ask both their home and host universities at least a month prior to the end of their scheduled study period
- both universities agree to the extension and arrangements are made and completed before the original end date of the study period
- the extension follows immediately the planned exchange – there can be no gaps (holidays and university closures are not 'gaps')
- their extended study period is completed prior to the beginning of new academic year.

If a student contacts you with such an enquiry, please liaise with the International Mobility Manager. Checks will have to be performed to make sure that the proposed extension of study period is in line with the exchange agreements signed by both universities. The students' records will have to be amended accordingly to take into account the extra credits gained. For Erasmus+ exchange students, an extension of stay will have an impact in the Erasmus+ grant that they may receive.

Please note that if all the student months agreed upon in the exchange agreement has already been allocated, there will be no possibility for the students to extend their mobility period. If students wish to, and provided that both universities agree, they may extend their study period by registering as a visiting student, or equivalent scheme abroad. Students may be required to pay some tuition fees.

3.6 Reduction of Study Period

Please note that the International Mobility Manager will need to know if a student on Erasmus+ exchange programme has come home early as this will affect the Erasmus+ grant amount paid to the student. If students return to the UK without fulfilling the minimum requirements for duration (3 months or 90 days) of their activity, they must forfeit all funding. If they return before the planned end of their Erasmus+ activity but meet minimum duration requirements, they may be allowed to retain funding for the period they were away.

4. Managing Incoming Student Exchanges

4.1 Student Nominations

The current process for incoming exchange applications is that our partners send the details of their nominated students to the APO. The International Mobility Manager then emails the application procedure to the nominated students. Incoming exchange student applications must be submitted with the Learning Agreement and the acceptable English language qualifications, among other things, in order to be considered.

4.2 Application

The International Mobility Manager will be able to access the completed applications via eVision and initially make their status as 'pending'. Once the Learning Agreements are received, they will be forwarded to the relevant Academic Exchange Coordinator for signature/approval. It is important that the Academic Exchange Coordinators review the information and return the signed forms as soon as possible so that the students will have enough time to apply for on-campus accommodation, student visa, etc.

4.3 Learning Agreement

The Learning Agreement is a compulsory part of the exchange documentation required from all students taking part in the programme. Students are asked to enter their module choices on the Learning Agreement and seek approval and signatures from their respective Exchange Coordinators in their home university. This must then be signed by the Academic Exchange Coordinator, and sometimes countersigned by the International Mobility Manager.

4.4 Student Numbers

Please note that the number of incoming students, and the length of time that they are planning to come for, is restricted by the exchange agreement that we have signed with the partner university. It is the International Mobility Manager's responsibility to check that the quota is respected. The APO will not accept admission of students above and beyond the quota agreed to in the first place. If more students want to come than has previously been agreed, or if they want to come for a longer period, they will have to apply for a place under the Study Abroad Programme or as Visiting Students for which they will be charged tuition fees.

4.5 Accommodation

Students are normally guaranteed a place in University accommodation as long as they submit a housing application to the Accommodation Office by 31 August. On-campus accommodation information will be sent to students who have been offered a place as an exchange student. If students have any questions about accommodation, please refer them to the accommodation website:

<http://www.brunel.ac.uk/services/accommodation>

4.6 Pre-arrival Information

The APO will send general pre-arrival information to all incoming exchange students prior to their arrival at Brunel. It contains essential information on arrival and registration procedures. Please send department-specific information to students, giving more details about any module changes, timetables, meeting dates, etc. to help prepare students before arrival.

4.7 Registration and Choice of Modules

4.7.1 Credit Requirements

Full-year exchange students should register for a maximum of 120 Brunel credits (60 ECTS). One term only exchange students should register for a maximum of 60 Brunel credits (30 ECTS). Please note that if a student wishes to register for less than the maximum amount of credits, they may be asked to present a supporting letter from their home university to the International Mobility Manager.

4.7.2 Registration Process

Autumn Arrivals

Autumn arrivals register during the Induction Week like any other Brunel student. However, those that are attending the International Student Orientation will be able to register on the Friday before the Induction Week. Please be advised that during the first couple of weeks of each term, students may amend their originally approved Learning Agreement. The relevant Academic Exchange Coordinator must then approve and sign the amended Learning Agreement and send it to the International Mobility Manager.

Spring Arrivals

The International Mobility Manager will organise a mini-orientation on the first Monday of second term. After the orientation meeting, students are expected to meet with their Academic Exchange Coordinator (or

visit the relevant Academic Programmes Office) and receive their timetable. The aim of meeting with the Academic Exchange Coordinator is so that the students can amend their Learning Agreement if necessary and proceed to registration.

4.7.3 Research Project

Most exchange students register for taught modules and receive credits for their study period. However, you may accept exchange students who plan to spend part or all of their study period carrying out research rather than taking taught modules. You will be responsible for assessing their work and give them a mark at the end of their stay at Brunel. You must also notify your Taught Programmes Office (TPO) if you accept students to carry out a project under your supervision. This will ensure proper registration of students and the TPO could provide necessary support.

4.8 Arrival in London

4.8.1 Airport Welcome Service

Students starting their studies in September are eligible to register for the Airport Welcome Service run by Student Support Team. The scheme does not run in term two, however, and Colleges need to make arrangements to assist students as necessary.

<http://www.brunel.ac.uk/life/welcome-week/international-orientation-programme>

4.8.2 Orientation Programme

The 3-day Orientation Programme is run by the Student Support Team in September. It is open to all incoming exchange students and is free of charge. Exchange students are encouraged to take part in the Orientation Programme, although it is not mandatory. During the Orientation, students will be able to attend information sessions such as on banking and will find out about the various free services offered on campus. Activities during these three days will also include a day trip, a campus and Uxbridge walking tour and lots of social events. The Orientation Programme is free for all non-UK students. The only additional costs are: accommodation, lunch (dinner and breakfast are included) and the optional day trip.

4.9 Extension of Study Period

Incoming exchange students wishing to extend their study period at Brunel must follow the procedure below:

- Obtain permission to extend their study period from the home university
- Complete the Extension Request form
- Have the form signed by the relevant Academic Exchange Coordinator
- Have the form countersigned by the International Mobility Manager
- Students inform the Student Centre so that the student record can be updated with the new end date

4.10 Reduction of Study Period

If incoming exchange students decide to return to their home country before the end of their study period, they may do so but must follow the procedure below:

- Discuss with the Academic Exchange Coordinator how their modules would be assessed.
- Contact the Accommodation Office about the break of contract charges.

5. Indicative Timelines

January

- Hold exchange programme information session (to be held by Academic Exchange Coordinator)

February

- Interested students submit internal application

March

- Academic Exchange Coordinator sends list of nominated students to International Mobility Manager

April

- Incoming exchange student application deadline for September entry
- Outgoing exchange students complete and submit application to host university

May

- Pre-departure meeting for outgoing exchange students

June-July

- Incoming exchange students receive offer letters and pre-arrival information

August

- Brunel on-campus accommodation application deadline

September

- International Student Orientation takes place prior to Induction Week

October

- Incoming exchange student application deadline for January entry

November

- Incoming exchange students receive offer letters and pre-arrival information
- New or renewal exchange agreement request deadline

December

- Outgoing Erasmus+ exchange student grant application deadline (absolute)

6. Contact Details and Useful Links

6.1 Contact Details

Academic Partnerships, Brunel University London
Uxbridge, Middlesex, UB8 3PH
E-mail: exchanges@brunel.ac.uk

6.2 Useful Links

Brunel University London Exchange Information:

<http://www.brunel.ac.uk/international/exchanges-and-study-abroad/exchanges>

Student Centre: <http://www.brunel.ac.uk/life/study>

Brunel Accommodation:

<http://www.brunel.ac.uk/services/accommodation>

Erasmus+ National Agency: <https://www.erasmusplus.org.uk/>

European Commission: http://ec.europa.eu/index_en.htm