



Brunel
University
London

International Exchange Student Handbook

Documentation Management

Document Record

Maintained by:	Academic Partnerships Office
Owned by:	Academic Partnerships Office
Approval Date:	July 2020
Location of Master Document:	https://intra.brunel.ac.uk/s/QSO/Team/Partnerships/Erasmus and Non Erasmus/Policies, Procedures and Proformas

Version Control

Document Version	Amendments	Amended By	Date	Approved By
1.5	See Policies, Procedures and Proformas	International Mobility Manager	May 2020	Head of Academic Partnerships

Guide for Outgoing Exchange Students

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Introduction

This guide is intended to help you through the preparations for studying abroad under the University's exchange programme and to give you some useful advice for when you arrive. Read through it once to get an overview, and then go through each section in order to make sure that you have covered everything.

This guide has been produced by the **Academic Partnerships Office (APO)**. The APO provides support to the students applying to study abroad at one of the university's International Exchange partners. In addition to supporting outgoing exchange students, the APO works with exchange students from partner universities applying to Brunel University London.

The International Mobility Manager within the APO administers the exchange programme centrally within the University. We are happy to try to answer any non-academic related questions you might have about your forthcoming exchange. If you have any academic questions, please speak to your Academic Exchange Coordinator. The APO maintains a small library of information about some of our partner universities. Please email exchanges@brunel.ac.uk, if you would more information on this.

Our contact details are:

Academic Partnerships Office
Brunel University London
Kingston Lane, Uxbridge
Middlesex UB8 3PH
United Kingdom

Minakshi Sharma: International Mobility Manager.

Email: exchanges@brunel.ac.uk

Web: <https://www.brunel.ac.uk/international/exchanges-and-study-abroad-programmes>

Every effort has been made to provide both accurate and comprehensive information. If you find any information in this guide that is inaccurate or out-of-date, or you come across information which would be useful to future students, please pass it on to us so that we can improve the handbook. Thank you!

Exchange Programme Application

Nomination

You must first be nominated by your Department to take part in the exchange programme. In order to be nominated, you must be in good academic standing (i.e. 2:1) and follow the internal selection procedure as set out by your Department. The nomination process normally takes place in February and the Academic Exchange Coordinator informs the APO of those that have been selected to go on exchange.

Application Forms for the Host Institution

The APO will contact the nominated students as soon as the application procedures for the host institution are known. Some host institutions require students to apply early in the calendar year, others will not expect to receive applications until much later. Application forms for host institutions vary considerably. Some applications are complicated, others are very simple, some are on-line, and others are paper based so make sure you follow all instructions on the form and from the APO carefully.

Supporting Documents

Application forms often have to be sent to the partner university together with supporting documents such as transcripts of your first-year marks, language proficiency certificates, financial sponsor and/or references. These documents should be obtained from your parent or your academic department.

Enrolling for Modules

Some institutions will expect you to select modules (often referred to as classes or courses) during the application process. Other institutions may send you details about module enrolment together with your acceptance package or have a manual enrolment system where you will not be able to register until you are physically at the host institution. However, you can generally check which modules were running the previous year on the host university's website. It is advisable for you to do some research on the modules you wish to follow while overseas and receive academic advice from your Academic Exchange Coordinator.

Learning Agreement

You will be required to complete a Learning Agreement, in order for the academic work you carry out at the Host Institution to be recognised and counted towards your Undergraduate Degree at Brunel.

The Learning Agreement is used to list the modules you are planning on taking at the Host Institution, as well as the modules that you will be exempt from at Brunel.

Please ensure that the modules choose to take at the Host Institution, are in line with your current Programme of Studies at Brunel. Failure to do so, may have an impact on the successful transfer of credits, gained at the Host Institution.

The amount of credits you will be required to achieve whilst on Exchange will vary, depending on the duration of the Exchange:

If on Exchange for 1 Term/Semester, you will be required to take modules that will gain you the equivalent of 60 UK Credits; If on Exchange for the full academic year, you will be required to gain the equivalent of 120 UK Credits. You should work with your Academic Exchange Coordinator (AEC) on this to discuss your module choices, as they will need to approve your choices and sign the document.

Notification of your Acceptance

You should expect to receive a letter of acceptance from the host before or over the summer (if studying abroad for the full year or first semester). Please check your email account regularly (including spam folder) for any updates on the status of your application. If the APO receives your acceptance letter/package you will receive an email asking to collect your acceptance documents from the APO. If you receive notification directly to your email account or to your home/ temporary address please inform the APO of your acceptance so that we can update our records accordingly.

Visa Application

The first step to preparing to go study abroad is to get your visa. As an exchange student, you will be required to apply for a valid student visa to study in the host country. The host institution will send you the relevant document once you have been accepted to study at their institution.

Visa regulations vary depending on where you go for your period of study abroad. Generally, you should apply for your visa (or study permit) after you have received official acceptance from the host institution.

- Please be aware that the Academic Partnerships Office (APO) staff at Brunel are not qualified to offer consultations or in-depth advice regarding visa applications. Immigration laws are complex and subject to frequent changes, therefore if you do have any further questions about the process of applying for your visa you will need to contact the appropriate Embassy directly.
- Any student who is not travelling on a British passport needs to make their own enquiries about the visa regulations and procedures pertaining to citizens of their home country.
- It is your responsibility to ensure you do everything you can to meet all the visa requirements in a timely manner.

- It is advisable to inform the APO as early as possible of anything which may affect your visa application, for example if you have a criminal record (even if for minor offences).

Book your travel to the host country after you receive your visa. We do not recommend that you book your flight until you have received official acceptance from the host institution and secured your visa. However, if you do decide to take the risk (e.g. to secure a cheap deal) you are advised to find out if your airline allow you to cancel or alter departure dates and how much that will cost you. Keep in mind that students in the past have missed original flight bookings due to delays with their visa applications.

If you are buying a ticket valid for twelve months, bear in mind that it must not expire before the end of your studies, and that you may be limited in how long you can travel after you complete your studies. It is often useful to ask for advice from students who have previously studied abroad and to do some research on the web.

Insurance

Medical Insurance

Some institutions require that you have insurance before you can enrol, but even if they don't, make sure you insure yourself. Brunel University London cannot accept any responsibility for any accident, illness, injury, loss or damage to persons or property resulting from or in any way connected with your participation in the exchange programme. Therefore, it is your responsibility to make appropriate insurance arrangements. You may want to shop around online to find the best deal.

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 you for the entire period you are abroad and it is free of charge. Please make sure you complete and submit the insurance application form to the Insurance Office at least 1 month before you depart the U.K. On receipt of the completed form, you will be issued with a travel card and details of the insurer's website both of which provide useful information before travelling and if the need arises for medical or other assistance while overseas. Please note if you are going to be involved in a particularly hazardous activity while overseas (e.g. skiing) then separate insurance to cover the activity taken out in the destination country is advisable.

Students must apply for the travel insurance using the online application form available on the intranet at <https://intra.brunel.ac.uk/s/planning/Pages/TravelInsurance.aspx>

Host University Insurance

Universities outside Europe may require you to buy their own health insurance policies and will not allow you to register as a student if you have not done so. Some universities will accept other insurance policies instead of their own (this is known as an **insurance waiver**). In this case, you need to provide comparable insurance of your own (e.g. the University policy as mentioned above) which should at least match your host university's minimum coverage cover. In the unlikely event

it does not compare, then you will be expected to purchase the host institutions insurance upon your arrival.

Health Advice

The relevant Embassy will have the most up-to-date information on health advice for the country where you are going. In addition to this, the Foreign & Commonwealth website (www.fco.gov.uk) has travel health advice for UK travellers.

Immunisations

It is advisable you check which immunisations are required by your destination country as some countries refuse entry if you do not meet their immunisation standards. It is important to seek medical advice on immunisation as soon as you can as some vaccinations need an initial shot followed by a booster. You may also need to leave several weeks between different immunisations. If you plan to travel during or after your studies abroad you should also obtain any necessary vaccinations for the countries you plan to travel to during the holidays. Speak to your doctor's surgery about the requirements for your destination(s).

General check-ups at the Doctors, Dentists and Opticians

It is recommended you see your GP, Dentist and Optician over the next few months before you travel to check your general health. It is much easier to get necessary health care in the UK when you know the system. If you wear glasses or contact lenses, it is advised that you have a check-up at your opticians for an up-to-date prescription. If you take any prescription medicine (including the contraceptive pill), speak to your doctor about getting sufficient supplies for your time abroad.

Bear in mind that dental care isn't normally covered by health insurance policies and you are going to be away for a significant length of time. Make sure you have a check-up at your dentist before you leave the country and get any work done so you try to eliminate the possibility of having issues overseas.

Health checks required by host institutions

Some host institutions or embassies require exchange students to undertake health examinations, such as a chest x-ray, or obtain additional immunisations such as the MMR vaccine.

Financial Matters

Tuition fees

Brunel students going on exchange pay applicable tuition fees to Brunel University London while they study at the host university. Exchange students are exempt from paying any tuition fees to the host university, but 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.

Student Finance Applications

It is your responsibility to complete the Student Finance applications, maintenance and tuition fee loans for your year abroad. Students will be entitled to full student support (including any supplementary grants). Please note full student support is subject to income-assessment. Additionally, if you receive any Maintenance Loan, please remember that the amount of Maintenance Loan you are entitled to may be reduced.

Brunel Student Centre

You must inform the Student Centre if you are going on exchange. They will discuss the available funding packages with you so that you could continue to receive the funding while you study overseas. The Student Centre will provide you with information on how much funding you would be eligible to receive.

Student Finance

If your tuition fees are usually paid by your awarding agency (SFE, SFW, SFNI, SAAS) or Student Loans Company (SLC), you must advise them that you are going to study abroad on an exchange. You are still entitled to receive any funding which they usually provide but it is important to let them know that you will be away on an exchange. Also, the awarding agency may offer refunds for the travel costs so please contact them for the details.

Making Travel Arrangements

Timing Your Arrival

Before making your travel arrangements, **confirm the dates** of your international student orientation. **The host university will set the date they consider to be the start of your course**, which will dictate when you are permitted to enter the country.

If you are living on campus, you should avoid arriving at your school during the evening, on a weekend or during a national holiday, since university offices are usually closed at those times. Please note that university residence halls do not open until a few days before registration. Students who arrive early with reservations to live in a residence hall may not be able to move into their assigned room if campus housing facilities have not yet officially opened for the semester or academic term.

The campus Housing Office may be able to make other arrangements for temporary dormitory lodging (paid for on a daily or weekly basis), but please check first before you arrive. As you schedule your international travel, you will want to look into **student discount rates**. Websites such as www.studentadvantage.com offer discounts on various modes of transportation.

After you book your flight, make sure you keep all booking confirmations by email as **Student Finance England may reimburse your travel costs** at the end of the year if you apply with sufficient evidence. You should also **provide the International Office at the host university with your arrival information**, such as the airport at which you will arrive (or train station/bus

terminal), your flight number, name of airline and last point of departure. If university housing is not available, correspond with the International Office and ask about other temporary housing opportunities in the area. Do check hostels near the host university in advance as many will need to be booked and reserved prior to arrival.

Transport from the Airport to Campus

Some host universities may provide airport pick-up service. However, if there is no such service or you are unable arrive on the day when the airport pick-up service is available, then you must arrange your own transportation to the campus from the airport.

In some major cities, the airport is well connected to the centre of town via public transport (buses, subway and overland train services). However, for suburban and rural areas, you may need to take a private shuttle service or taxi to campus. **Contact the Student Support Team and look at the airport's website about the best way to get to campus** from the airport, and ask for a cost estimate. It would be wise to have this amount in the correct currency when you arrive.

Your Host University

Research your destination

The more you know about what to expect at your host institution/country before you go, the easier you will find it to settle in and the less likely you will be to suffer from culture shock when you get there.

- Read all information you are given
- Look at websites – not just for the host institution, but for the town/region it is situated in
- Buy or borrow a guidebook e.g. Lonely Planet or Rough Guide
- Contact any other students who are going to the same university or area as you – meet up before you go, arrange to travel together, help each other with paperwork.
- Contact current students on exchange – the Academic Partnerships Office can forward emails to these students on your behalf

Host University Accommodation

University accommodation varies widely across the different exchange partners so we advise you to start researching the issue of finding accommodation at least a couple of months prior to the beginning of your course. Some suggestions of how you can find out if your host university offers university accommodation are:

- Host university's website

- Previous and current exchange students who will be able to offer advice on how they found accommodation and they may also be able to provide contact details of their landlord
- Current exchange students at Brunel from your host institution.

Some students have found it easier to arrive at their host destination a couple of weeks before term starts to find accommodation then. Where possible the Academic Partnerships Office will provide contact details for accommodation offices at your host institution, however **it is your responsibility to find accommodation**, not the responsibility of the host university or Brunel University London.

Personal Safety

When travelling abroad, it is important to take health, safety and security issues into account and research them thoroughly before departing. Most students experience no safety issues in the host country, however it is important you attend any safety and security briefings organised by your host university and pay careful attention to advice given. Discuss safety precautions with local students and always remember that it is better to be over-cautious in the first few weeks as you adapt to a new environment. Ensure that your new accommodation is secure and ask your landlord to fit new locks if existing ones are inadequate. Be aware of emergency numbers (equivalent of the UK's 999) in your host country.

Campus Safety

Most university campuses will have a **university security staff** in addition to services provided by the local police to ensure a safe campus environment. Here are a few tips to keep in mind:

- All students, but particularly female students, should avoid walking around campus at night alone. Ask around on campus as to whether there are any late-night modes of transportation to avoid walking alone.
- Save an “In Case of Emergency Contact” entry into your mobile phone. Many people list it under the name ICE in their phonebook.
- If you run or walk alone, take ID or tape your emergency contact as well as your name and contact information onto the back of your phone or other personal objects, so that you always have this information with you.
- Don't be flash with your money or expensive possessions (iPad, iPhone, etc) as this attracts attention to you!

Local laws

All exchange students are subject to the laws of the host country and should familiarise themselves with these as early as possible. The FCO website will give you an insight into legal matters in the host country.

Knowing Your Local Area

Before you can get to know other cities on your travels around the country, it is important to get to know the surroundings in which you will be living and studying first. While some universities may offer courses on the state/area you are studying in, a majority of international students never fully explore the area in which they are based. **Take some time to read online** about where you will be as this may **unearth some hidden gems** to the town/city.

Walk the streets and get a feel for the place, and take note of some of its architecture, local history and nature. While exploring the area and discovering new places is quite exciting, it is important to **remember to stay safe and alert** and discuss the area with some local friends beforehand to know the area(s) to avoid/be wary of. Not all parts of a city may be as safe and friendly as your campus - be sure to note this and preferably explore with a friend or group of friends rather than alone.

When travelling outside your local area to explore other parts of the country, it is also worthwhile to research these areas on the internet or ask friends/advisors for information on what to see, where to go and where to avoid.

British Consulates/Embassy Contacts

It is important to know how to contact the nearest UK consulate or embassy in case you lose your passport (which you should make photocopies of and keep in a safe place). Please note that **you should not carry your passport with you on a daily basis**. Store it in a safe place you will be able to find it. You should only carry your passport when travelling or even take a photocopy for proof of identity/reasoning for your presence in the host country (i.e. student visa).

You can also subscribe for email updates from the embassy concerning safety issues. For more information and safety tips go to the British Embassy's website (<http://ukinusa.fco.gov.uk/en/>).

Leaving your Host Institution

Transcripts and paperwork

All students spending a period abroad as part of their Brunel degree programme **MUST** obtain transcripts showing the modules followed and marks obtained at the host institution. Students doing research overseas should obtain a short summary from your research supervisor outlining the work you have completed. The APO requires returning exchange students to provide one copy of their transcript as quickly as you can after you have completed your studies abroad.

Transcripts are provided to students in various different forms. Some institutions will sign a document for each individual exam taken although most institutions will provide a final transcript at the end of the year outlining the modules you have followed and the exam marks you obtained for each. Some institutions will automatically send a copy of your transcript to Brunel after your period of study abroad. However, other institutions require you to **request transcripts** and will mail them directly to you rather than to Brunel University London.

Pay any outstanding debts

Please ensure that you have paid all outstanding debts to the host institution. Transcript will not be released if you have library fines; have not paid all your health centre bills; or owe any money for accommodation, and so on.

Furthermore, it can also damage the reputation of Brunel University London if students leave host institutions owing money.

Complaints Procedures

Whilst we hope that the period abroad is fulfilling and rewarding, if you feel you have grounds of complaint about any aspect of your period abroad, you may be able to bring a complaint should you feel it is necessary. Whether the complaint is dealt with by the University or by the host institution, is decided by which institution has responsibility for the matter being complained about. For example, complaints about the academic provision of the programme will be dealt with by the University in accordance with the University's [Complaints Procedure](#), but complaints which do not relate to the academic provision of the programme, for example, accommodation provided by the host institution, will be dealt with by the host institution. If you wish to raise a complaint regarding your experience abroad, but are unsure who has responsibility for dealing with the complaint, please contact your Academic Exchange Coordinator or the Academic Partnerships in the first instance to discuss the matter further.

Complaints about Bullying and Harassment

If you think that you are being bullied, harassed or discriminated against by students or staff of the University, please refer to the [Bullying and Harassment Policy](#). If you think that you are being bullied, harassed or discriminated against by students or staff of the host institution, please refer to the relevant procedures of the host institution.

Advice

[The Advice & Representation Centre \(ARC\)](#) of the Union of Brunel Students, can supply independent information and advice about submitting a complaint. The ARC website address is <http://brunelstudents.com/Advice/> and you may contact them via email: advice@brunel.ac.uk or by telephone on (+44) (0)1895 269269.

Mediation

You can also use the University's Mediation Service at any time to resolve your University complaints. The University's Mediation Service is a free, confidential and impartial service aimed at resolving University concerns in a quick and informal fashion. Information about mediation can be found [HERE](#).

You can refer your University complaint to mediation even if you have started the University Complaints Procedure. In that case, the University will normally suspend the investigation of your complaint while the mediation process continues. This is because the mediation may resolve all or some of the complaint issues. If mediation is unsuccessful, you can ask for the investigation of

your complaint to be continued. In this case, you will be provided with revised time limits in which to continue your complaint.

Further information about mediation can be obtained from the [Student Complaints Officer](#) or by emailing studentmediation@brunel.ac.uk. You can also obtain information on mediation from the Advice & Representation Centre (ARC) of the [Union of Brunel Students](#).

Miscellaneous

International Student Identity Card

You are advised to purchase an International Student Identity Card (ISIC) before you go. This will be sufficient ID to receive any student discounts that are available (both in the U.K. and abroad) on anything from air travel to museum visits.

The ISIC card is available to purchase online at <https://www.isic.org/>. Depending on the postal system in your country, it usually takes 3 – 4 weeks to process your online application and deliver the card to you.

To check if you can purchase the card in your country, please click [here](#).

Register with Brunel University London

You must complete Brunel University London registration (available from September 1st) as you remain a Brunel student throughout your period abroad. Student loans and other funding will not be paid until you have completed online registration.

What to do if You Have any Problems Abroad

If you run into any difficulties registering for classes, finding suitable housing, with security issues or dealing with culture shock etc., you can find help from a variety of sources. It is better to start with the help provided locally on the campus where you are studying (e.g. personal tutor, local International Office, Welfare Office, Accommodation Office, etc.) however, if that fails you should make use of the many services available to you at Brunel.

24-hour contact with Brunel

If you have any issues overseas and need to contact Brunel University London out of normal working hours, you can contact the Security Office on: +44 (0)1895 255786. Please be aware that this is the Security Office and, if out of normal working hours, your call will likely not be put through to someone specific immediately.

Notice of withdrawal

If you are considering withdrawing from the period abroad once you have arrived at your host university then you must contact your Academic Exchange Coordinator to seek advice about your options immediately. We will then inform the host university overseas if appropriate/necessary. You may lose housing deposits and/or visa charges that you have paid for, but aside from that, there should be no problem in withdrawing as long as you have given us sufficient notice.

Monitoring and Reporting (Tier 4 Student Visa holders)

Whilst studying overseas, you must continue to fulfil the conditions and obligations under UK Visas & Immigration Tier 4 Student Visa scheme. Brunel University London will make at least 10 engagement points (in an academic year) to which you must respond in a timely manner. If you do not respond or if you do not have a reasonable explanation, the University may take steps to withdraw sponsorship of your visa and withdraw you from the University and the host university.

Final Note

Don't forget that going on an exchange is not just for academic purposes but is also an opportunity to experience and enjoy a new culture while making friends from all over the world. Be proactive and throw yourself into your new life and be willing to meet new people at any events organised for you by your host university. Most importantly, relax and concentrate on trying to settle and feel at home as quickly as possible. Just like in your home country, a little common sense goes a long way. We hope that you enjoy your exchange period!

Useful Websites

- Student Finance (for travel grant) – www.gov.uk/travel-grants-students-england/overview
- U.S. Embassy in London - <https://uk.usembassy.gov/visas/non-immigrant-visa-faqs/students-and-exchange-visitors>
- Embassy of China in London - <http://www.chinese-embassy.org.uk/eng/visa/>
- Foreign & Commonwealth Office - www.fco.gov.uk/en/
- Hostel World – www.hostelworld.com
- STA Travel – www.statravel.co.uk
- Transportation Security Administration - www.tsa.gov/travel

Arrival Checklist

Once you've arrived at your accommodation be sure to work through the following checklist:

1. Confirm your safe arrival with your family

2. Confirm your safe arrival with your Academic Exchange Coordinator at Brunel, and update your address and contact details on the Student Portal

3. Attend all induction and orientation programmes offered by the host institution (Invaluable advice is often given during induction meetings for International or exchange students. This could be information about your visa, different study methods at your host university, registering with the police or a doctor, changing modules, etc).

4. Check local safety and security advice

5. Register with the host institution

- Ask for advice at the International Office or the designated adviser for international students in the department or faculty
- Ask for help if you don't understand what to do and be patient but persistent!
- Expect differences to the way things work in the UK and at Brunel

6. Enrol for modules (if necessary)

- Find out local procedures (e.g. do you have to enrol for exams separately from module enrolment)
- Find out about add/drop schedules

7. Obtain approval of your final module choices by your Academic Exchange Coordinator at Brunel

- You must confirm module enrolment by email to your Academic Exchange Coordinator.

8. Remember to Complete Brunel University London registration (available from September 1st)

- Student loans and other funding will not be paid until you have completed online registration.

9. Be aware of how to visit the doctors, should you need to (e.g., should you register now, will you need an appointment, and will you have to pay?)

10. Get involved!

- Join societies and clubs
- Go along to events and trips put on for new international students
- Ask the International Office/ Faculty advisers if they need any assistance with promoting Brunel University London to home students

11. Enjoy the experience!