

# Procedure for establishing and managing student exchange partnerships

The following guidelines relate to the approval, monitoring and management of student exchange opportunities whereby a registered student at the University of Reading is able to study abroad at an overseas Partner institution as part of their degree programme, with credit and grades transferring from the host institution to Reading which will then be recognised as a formal part of the University of Reading degree programme.

This guide applies to all outward mobility taking place through the auspice of a formal student exchange arrangement, regardless of duration, and applies to subject or university-wide agreements.

## Introduction

1. The University of Reading wants to encourage and support Schools / Departments to offer opportunities for Reading students to undertake a formal period of study at an overseas partner institution as part of their degree programme.
2. All outward Study Abroad mobility should be cogent with *University of Reading Code of Practice on Placement Learning*.<sup>1</sup>
3. This guide applies to all outward mobility taking place through the auspice of a formal student exchange arrangement, regardless of duration, and applies to subject or university-wide agreements.
4. This guide is not applicable for :
  - Study at another higher education institution within the United Kingdom.
  - Learning outside the University which is not part of a planned programme of study, such as part-time or vacation placements that students have arranged for themselves and are not recognised by the University of Reading as being part of the student's degree programme.
  - Work placements, regardless of location.<sup>2</sup>
5. In this document, Study Abroad Coordinator describes the member of staff in each School / Department who is responsible for students undertaking a study placement abroad as part of their degree.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.reading.ac.uk/web/FILES/qualitysupport/copplacementlearning.pdf](http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/FILES/qualitysupport/copplacementlearning.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [www.reading.ac.uk/closed/managing-placements/mp-about-this-guide.aspx](http://www.reading.ac.uk/closed/managing-placements/mp-about-this-guide.aspx)

## **Academic standards and quality requirements**

6. The University has a responsibility to satisfy itself that any collaboration with an external Partner meets the requirements stipulated in QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education: Chapter B10: *Managing higher education provision with others*.<sup>3</sup>
7. The University must satisfy itself regarding the good standing of any prospective Partner, and any third-party Partners should delivery of tuition not be on campus, and their capacity to fulfil their designated role in the arrangement before allowing any inter-institutional agreement involving student mobility to be initiated and outward student mobility to take place.
8. The University remains responsible for the academic standards of its programmes and awards therefore must assure itself of the academic standards of the Partner institution in order to recognise any credit transferred back to degree programmes at the University. The University therefore needs to undertake curriculum mapping exercises to ensure the standards of the Partner are equivalent to those at Reading and remain equivalent for the duration of the partnership.
9. The University will only permit students to spend a period studying at a Partner institution if appropriate provision to accommodate the arrangement has been made in and is explicitly articulated in the programme specification for the relevant degree programme.
10. Reading students are only allowed to study abroad as part of a degree programme at an institution with which the University has a current and legally binding agreement outlining the terms and conditions of the arrangement with the Partner institution.
11. Each Department / School must nominate a Study Abroad Coordinator responsible for the oversight of all student mobility activities and arrangements within the Department / School, including academic standards and quality.

## **Approval for new student mobility partnerships**

*Reciprocal arrangements – Reading will send and receive students onto a programme of study.*

12. Formal approval must be sought for any arrangement whereby a University of Reading student could spend a part of their degree programme undertaking a period of study at a Partner institution in another country regardless of any other existing collaboration with that institution.
13. Approval to enter into any reciprocal student exchange agreement is dependent on the Partner institution offering suitable academic provision at an appropriate academic level for the period that a Reading student is abroad, offer comparable support and pastoral facilities for all students, as well as the School / Department demonstrating an ability to find sufficient outgoing students to meet the terms of the agreement.
14. The University must be satisfied of the Partners legal capacity to fulfil their designated role in any arrangement.
15. A student mobility arrangement can only be entered into when full scrutiny, including risk assessment and due diligence checks have been undertaken, and formal approval for

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<sup>3</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Documents/Quality-Code-Chapter-B10.pdf](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Documents/Quality-Code-Chapter-B10.pdf)

the arrangement has been provided. Full details of the application process can be found at: [www.reading.ac.uk/studyabroad/staff/mobilityagreements/mobilityagreements.aspx](http://www.reading.ac.uk/studyabroad/staff/mobilityagreements/mobilityagreements.aspx).

16. Arrangements external to the Erasmus+ programme will require the formal approval of:
  - a. Global Engagement Strategy Board (GESB) for the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the proposed partner institution<sup>4</sup>.
  - b. Head of Department / School, School Director of Teaching and Learning, and Teaching and Learning Dean, confirming that the agreement will meet the strategic and academic requirements of the University of Reading.
  - c. The Study Abroad Partnerships Committee (which reports into International Operations Board) to assess the proposal, including scrutiny of the academic and financial implications of any partnership. The composition of the committee is established by UBTL.
17. Student mobility arrangements that are part of Erasmus+ programme will not normally require the creation of a MoU given that the status of the institution would have been verified by the EU Commission through the award of an Erasmus+ University Charter. All other formal approval and sign-off processes must be followed.
18. It is a requirement that all reciprocal study exchange bilateral or multilateral agreements can only be signed by the appropriate legal authorities at the University of Reading, or their nominated delegate.
19. Student mobility agreements must receive the approval of Legal Services before being signed, and should include as standard a section related to the consequences of termination and specifying each partner's responsibilities to participants and the Partner institution.
20. Copies of any student mobility agreements should be retained by the Erasmus & Study Abroad Office.
21. All University publications and materials, electronic and paper, must be maintained to ensure that accurate and up-to-date description of study abroad opportunities are advertised.

#### *Non-Reciprocal arrangements*

22. Any Arrangements that envisage offering tuition fee –waivers or discounts to incoming students joining the Study Abroad Programme will require the formal approval of Pro-Vice Chancellor for Global Engagement. Details can be found at: <http://www.reading.ac.uk/nmsruntime/saveasdialog.aspx?IID=100583&SID=87193>.
23. Partnerships that send fee-paying students to join the Study Abroad Programme must follow the guidelines at: [www.reading.ac.uk/studyabroad/staff/mobilityagreements/mobilityagreements.aspx](http://www.reading.ac.uk/studyabroad/staff/mobilityagreements/mobilityagreements.aspx).

### **Management of student mobility partnerships**

24. All student exchange arrangements must be managed and administered by the University through the appropriate authorities, including nominated Department / School Study Abroad coordinators, the Erasmus & Study Abroad Office and other relevant authorities at the University.

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<sup>4</sup> [www.reading.ac.uk/cqsd/QualityAssurance/PoliciesandProcedures/cqsd-PoliciesandProcedures.aspx](http://www.reading.ac.uk/cqsd/QualityAssurance/PoliciesandProcedures/cqsd-PoliciesandProcedures.aspx); Section 11b; [Request for a Memorandum of Understanding](#)

25. It is the responsibility of the Department / School Study Abroad Coordinator to:

- i. Act as the primary contact on behalf of the Department / School to oversee and take responsibility for student mobility activities within the department / school.
- ii. Ensure that all study abroad opportunities available within the Department / School will enable the participant to achieve the learning outcomes required of their degree programme.
- iii. Check that learning opportunities provided by partner institutions are as rigorous, secure and open to scrutiny as the quality and academic standards for programmes directly provided by the University
- iv. Have oversight of monitoring and periodic review of student mobility partnerships within the Department / School.
- v. Implement a clear and consistent selection policy for students selected to participate on any partnerships owned by the Department / School to ensure
- vi. Ensure that there is full disclosure of information regarding study abroad opportunities available.
- vii. Promote all outbound opportunities within the subject area.

A description of Study Abroad Coordinator's responsibilities is provided to Coordinators when assuming the role. The Erasmus & Study Abroad Office can provide details, on request.

26. Any student mobility activity that takes place as part of a degree programme must be formally recognised by the University on its record system, and appear on certification related to student achievement including Academic Transcripts, the Diploma Supplement or any other comparable documentation.

27. Students being admitted into the University through student exchange agreements will be registered by the Erasmus & Study Abroad Office, following due process.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation of student mobility partnerships**

28. The University needs to ensure that all partnerships that deliver learning opportunities contributing towards a Reading degree are assessed, reviewed and evaluated on a periodic basis to ensure their continued effectiveness and suitability for the duration of the arrangement.

29. Schools / Departments responsible for student exchange agreements will required to:

- i. Review on an annual basis the quality of the partnership and the student experience, with special reference to the continued relevance and quality of the academic provision made available to students at the Partner institution as facilities and support provided.
- ii. Review that the structure of the degree programme and the relevant programme specification continues to support the outward mobility, as agreed at the establishment of the agreement.

This can include (but is not limited to):

- a. Report to the relevant Boards of Studies as part of the Annual Programme Report process
- b. Report any issues arising to the Erasmus & Study Abroad Office for investigation.
- c. Maintain regular contact with the partner institution to ensure good relations and to be informed of any partnership developments.

Documentation related to these activities should be retained on file within the School / Department. Non Erasmus+ agreements will be further monitored through the annual MoU review, with the pro-forma to be completed by the relevant University unit in conjunction with Departments / Schools for institutions for arrangements where there is an MoU *in situ*. Erasmus+ agreements will be further monitored through annual reports to the Global Engagement Strategy Board.

30. The Erasmus & Study Abroad Office will report to Global Engagement Strategy Board and / or International Operations Group on an annual basis regarding the number of agreements and the level of institutional participation on Study Abroad Programmes.
31. Student exchange agreements must be formally reviewed by the Study Abroad Partnerships Committee either every three years or no later than one calendar year before the end of the contract period. Schools / Departments responsible for student exchange partnerships will be required to apply to renew existing arrangements and provide evidence of the continued effectiveness and suitability of the arrangement. Full details of the process can be found at:  
[www.reading.ac.uk/studyabroad/staff/mobilityagreements/mobilityagreements.aspx](http://www.reading.ac.uk/studyabroad/staff/mobilityagreements/mobilityagreements.aspx).
32. Schools / Department's responsible for student exchange agreements should ensure that wherever possible, the Partner institution is visited at least once during the duration of the agreement in order to make an assessment of the continued quality and standard of the Partner. It is the responsibility of the School / Department to resource any visits and consideration of this should be included in the three year planning process. Within Europe use of the Erasmus+ staff mobility programmes (teaching and training) should be taken into account.

**For further information on Erasmus+ and Study Abroad Activities please contact the Erasmus & Study Abroad Office.**