

POLICY

Policy for the management of student international mobility

Contact Officer

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Purpose

This policy document sets out key principles and processes for managing international mobility at the University in relation to:

- developing new partnerships for student international mobility
- outgoing student mobility
- incoming student mobility.

Overview

'International mobility' refers to a range of opportunities for students or staff of the University of Worcester (UW) to spend a period of time studying and/or working in an international context for the purpose of learning, research and/or professional development. **'Exchange'** refers to an arrangement involving both outgoing and incoming students from a partner institution where students spend a period studying at the partner university, but continue to pay their tuition fees to the home institution. **'Study Abroad'** refers to an arrangement where students pay tuition fees to the host institution either directly or through their home institution where a Study Abroad programme has been formally agreed between the partners. Both **'Exchange'** and **'Study Abroad'** students may be referred to as **'non-degree seeking'** students as they enrol for a part of a degree course only with their host university and are not awarded with a final qualification. Such **'non-degree seeking'** students are issued with a transcript describing the content of their period of study and the credit they have gained. A **'Student Traineeship'** refers to a work placement abroad in an enterprise or any other relevant workplace.

The University supports a range of international mobility opportunities for students, as follows:

- **Exchange or study abroad programmes** where students study at an international partner institution for a semester or other defined period. Tuition fees are paid to the home institution (exchange) or direct to the host institution (study abroad), and students (or a funding body as appropriate) are responsible for the cost of their accommodation and subsistence. For students on Erasmus exchange programmes (normally within the

European Union (EU) and European Economic Area (EEA) unless part of the International Credit Mobility scheme), a maintenance grant is made directly to the student

- **Third year abroad programmes** where students spend a ‘sandwich’ year, normally between the second and third years of their undergraduate degree programme studying at an international partner institution, undertaking an approved work-based learning placement, or a combination of study and work-based learning
- **Short-term student traineeships or placements** are an assessed part of the course within the context of individual modules or programmes of study either supported by Erasmus + Key Action 1 funding or self-funded if outside the EU/EEA. Traineeships are supported during undergraduate degrees, postgraduate degrees and within a maximum of one year after the student’s graduation and are established through exchange partnerships between the University and international organisations. The duration of a traineeship can be from 2 to 12 months. Student traineeships and all other placement opportunities must be selected and managed with reference to the [policy on the Management of Placement and Work-based Learning](#)
- **Other forms of international mobility**, e.g. tutor-led study tours, field trips, mobility organised under Erasmus + Key Action 2, research visits. Separate guidance on [Field Trips & International Travel](#) is available.

The University also supports **international staff mobility** to enable the enrichment of the learning and teaching experience for students and staff and to develop research or professional skills (please refer to separate policy for the [Management of Staff International Mobility](#)).

Each University Institute has an **Academic Exchange Co-ordinator** (or Co-ordinators) to manage the processes by which incoming and outgoing Undergraduate (UG) and Postgraduate Taught (PGT) students apply for and go on exchange or study abroad programmes, and who works closely with the Worcester International **Exchange and Study Abroad Coordinator**. Postgraduate Research (PGR) students will be advised by their **Director of Studies** and the **Research School**.

Scope

This policy applies to all students planning a period of international exchange, study abroad, international visit for the purposes of learning, research and/or professional development, and those staff who provide advice on such opportunities or who are developing new partnerships to support international mobility.

The Policy

1 Developing international exchange and study abroad partnerships

1.1 The University will develop quality partnerships with international organisations in order to expand international mobility opportunities for students and staff.

1.2 A wide range of partnerships with higher education institutions (HEIs) throughout the EU and EEA, and further afield, for the purposes of exchange and study abroad have already been established by the University. A list of current [exchange partner institutions](#) is available. Where possible and appropriate the University wishes to strengthen and deepen links with existing partners, e.g. by extending departmental and subject links. It is recognised that international mobility sometimes takes place on an ad hoc basis outside the context of an existing formal partnership. Such mobility falls within the scope of this policy and the policy for the [Management of Staff International Mobility](#), and is actively encouraged, not least because it can lead to the development of formal partnerships.

1.3 New partnerships are instigated by Institutes and/or Worcester International within the context of the University internationalisation strategy. Proposals for new partnerships should have the endorsement of one or more Heads of Institute, and should only be taken forward after a visit to the proposed partner has taken place.

1.4 Exchange and study abroad partnerships outside the EU/EEA must be approved and signed by the Pro Vice Chancellor International. Within the EU/EEA, exchange partnerships fall under the Erasmus + Key Action 1 (International Mobility of Staff and Students) and will be approved and signed by the Head of International Experience.

1.5 In order to achieve a balance of numbers for exchange, potential new international partners should offer sufficient appropriate modules taught in English to make up academic credit equivalent to a full semester or year. This process may be facilitated by University funding, Erasmus+ Organisational Support (OS) funding or Staff Mobility funding.

1.6 EU/EEA exchange partners are selected on a subject basis (in line with subject codes supplied by Erasmus National Agency), and must be an HEI awarded with a European Charter for Higher Education (ECHE) or (for traineeships or training) any public or private organisation active in the labour market or in the fields of education, training and youth (please refer to the [policy on the Management of Placement and Work-based Learning](#)). Established partners who hold a number of subject specific agreements with UW may be offered an institution-wide agreement, to indicate our commitment to further developing and broadening the partnership.

1.7 Once the visit has taken place (see para 1.3) Institutes propose the terms of an agreement and the Head of International Experience negotiates with the counterpart at the proposed partner organisation before signing an Erasmus bilateral exchange agreement.

1.8 Outside Europe, exchange partnerships are normally institution-wide rather than subject specific. Once exchange partners have been selected, a bilateral exchange agreement needs to be negotiated by the Head of International Experience and approved and signed by the Pro Vice Chancellor International. This may be accompanied or preceded by a Memorandum of Understanding which sets out a willingness to work in partnership. The bilateral exchange agreement provides the specific details of the exchange programme.

2 Outgoing Student Mobility

Student Eligibility

2.1 For UG students, the University will normally offer only one semester long exchange, study abroad or international student traineeship within a three-year degree, which will usually be in year 2 (level 5) of a three or four-year degree programme. Students will be encouraged to select the semester in their year 2 (Level 5) course which least disrupts their programme of study. PGT students who wish to go on exchange or Study Abroad should consult their course leader about the feasibility of their proposed period abroad in the first instance. PGR (including Masters By Research) students could be eligible for exchange or Study Abroad or other international mobility opportunities subject to negotiation with their Director of Studies and, where relevant, funder restrictions.

2.2 Normally students will undertake an international study period through an established University of Worcester exchange partnership. Students who wish to study at an institution that is not in partnership with UW will normally be subject to fees at both UW and the host institution for that period.

2.3 Students on a three year undergraduate degree who wish to spend a full year abroad will be offered the Third Year Abroad programme. Successful applicants will be transferred to a four-year programme on the UW Student Record system.

2.4 Students remain registered with the University of Worcester during all years of the programme, including the period spent abroad.

2.5 Students will be eligible for an international mobility programme provided they are in 'good standing' e.g. they have no re-takes pending or any outstanding financial debt. UG and PGT students should normally be performing at average Grade C or above (see Bilateral Exchange Agreements for exceptions). Students will also be interviewed by the Worcester International Exchange and Study Abroad Co-ordinator and an academic member of staff to evaluate their aspirations for exchange study, their level of cultural competence and perceptions of risk associated with the proposed activity. PGR students should seek advice from their Director of Studies about their suitability for a period of international mobility.

Monitoring and Recording Progress and Achievement

2.6 Student progress and successful completion of study abroad and exchange programmes for outgoing students will be monitored and confirmed by the Board of Examiners (or Research Degrees Board in the case of PGR students).

2.7 For semester exchange and study abroad programmes, the University records the credit achieved against the student's record, but does not normally record grades achieved. Students who study abroad under a partnership arrangement are issued with a transcript of achievement by the partner institution.

2.8 For students who successfully complete a third year abroad programme the transcript will specify the place of study, for example 'International Year: Halmstad University, Sweden'.

It will also refer to the separate transcript recording the study programme and outcomes from the third year abroad programme at the partner institution. Degree classification will be calculated in the normal way.

Process

2.9 The Worcester International Exchange and Study Abroad Co-ordinator is responsible for co-ordinating and managing the processes for outgoing UG, PGT student international mobility. The Research School will work with the Worcester Exchange and Student Abroad Co-ordinator to manage the process for outgoing research student international mobility.

2.10 Information about international mobility opportunities is promoted in the Spring of each academic year in [Firstpoint](#) and at City Campus, via the website <http://www.worcester.ac.uk/community/study-abroad-exchanges-summer-schools.html> and the Research School.

2.11 UG and PGT students who express an interest in exchange or study abroad opportunities for a semester or for their third year should be advised to research the possibilities and discuss opportunities with their personal academic tutor and course leader in the first instance. PGR students should, in the first instance, discuss exchange and Study Abroad options with their Director of Studies.

2.12 Students interested in international mobility should go to Firstpoint to pick up a Study Abroad handbook and an internal approval form. The Worcester International Exchange and Study Abroad Co-ordinator runs regular drop-in sessions to offer guidance and information about partners. Students in receipt of support from DDS (Disability and Dyslexia Service) can seek advice from the Exchange and Study Abroad Co-ordinator (who can also liaise with the DDS) regarding the support available at exchange universities and the possibility of additional funding from Erasmus+ to cover incurred costs.

2.13 Students complete and submit the [internal approval form](#) and are then guided through a process which involves an interview with the Institute Academic Exchange Co-ordinator or the Research Supervisor, the issuing of a statement stipulating suitable modules or activities to be undertaken abroad, confirmation of approval for exchange and application to the host university. When a student receives an acceptance letter from the host university, their modules are adjusted on the University of Worcester's Student Record system.

2.14 Where a student would normally be required to take one or more 30 credit modules over the whole academic year as part of their UW studies, Institutes will approve and make available 15 credit (7.5 ECTS (European Credit Transfer System)) versions of 30 credit (15 ECTS) modules to be taken in semester 1 by outgoing semester 2 students, and semester 2 for outgoing semester 1 students. The process for approval of such modules, if they are not already approved, is via Institute Quality Committees (and may in some circumstances be undertaken by Chair's action and reported to the Institute Quality Committee).

2.15 Students should not be asked to complete a 30 credit mandatory module from their level 5 UW course by distance learning whilst on an overseas semester exchange. This is inappropriate for students required to take a full programme of study at the host institution for

visa purposes. Every effort, therefore, should be made wherever possible, to ensure a broad equivalence in relation to the planned exchange study programme for mandatory modules. Where this is not possible careful consideration will be needed to advise the student on the possible options and implications.

2.16 The Worcester International Exchange and Study Abroad Co-ordinator will provide guidance on funding possibilities (e.g. Student Finance, Erasmus +) and support in preparing for their departure (e.g. accommodation while studying at the University of Worcester and the exchange university, insurance, risk assessment). PGR students may also consult the Research Funding Office about funding opportunities relevant to their level of study.

2.17 The University expects students undertaking international mobility to abide by the terms and conditions of their exchange agreement and to respect the rules and culture of the host institution and country. Students must also adhere to the rules and regulations of the exchange university which might be different to those at the University of Worcester

2.18 Students transcripts of study from host institutions are sent to the University of Worcester Exchange and Study Abroad Co-ordinator. The transcripts will be kept in Registry Records and issued to the students along with their degree certificate on graduation.

3 Incoming Student Mobility

Student Eligibility

3.1 Incoming 'non-degree seeking' students may wish to study at UW for one semester or for one year as exchange students from partner institutions, or alternatively as fee paying students. They may also come on Erasmus Traineeships/Placements for a minimum of 8 weeks to a maximum of one year. PGR students may also wish to come to UW for varying periods (normally between 3 and 12 months) which may be self-funded or funded by an external body.

3.2 Incoming students (UG, PGT and PGR) may only register as exchange students where there is an existing bilateral exchange agreement between UW and their home university and sufficient exchange places at UW are available. If there are not sufficient places or no exchange agreement exists, UG and PGT students will be classed as Study Abroad students and invoiced for the appropriate Study Abroad tuition fee which is set annually by the Scholarships and Bursary Group in line with the current Home/EU fee or Overseas fee. Incoming PGR students will be classified as Visiting Research Students and charged the appropriate Visiting Research Student fee. This fee will be determined by the period of the visit and the nature of the proposed programme of study.

3.3 Incoming students will have a minimum of one year's experience of university study in another country.

3.4 Students intending to study at the University for a period of up to 6 months from outside the EU/EEA will come in on a 'Short Term Student Visa'. Such students are not normally expected to take an English Language test but their home university selects them on the basis that they have sufficient English to succeed.

3.5 One year students from outside the EU/EEA will come in on a Tier 4 visa. Non-native English Speakers will either have taken a Secure English Test (SELT) or the University of Worcester will have assessed their English as meeting the UKVI requirements (at least at 6.0 IELTS for undergraduate study or 6.5 IELTS for postgraduate study, with no less than 5.5 in each element, unless exempt from being proficient in a component because of a disability). These students will be subject to the same immigration restrictions as other Tier 4 international students.

Process

Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Students

3.6 Incoming exchange and fee paying Study Abroad students will all be considered 'non-degree seeking students' and common procedures will apply for module selection, recording of credit and issue of transcripts for both sets of students.

3.7 Exchange and Study Abroad partner institutions send a list of nominated students to the Worcester International Exchange and Study Abroad Co-ordinator. These students and individual applicants for Study Abroad programmes are invited to apply on a paper-based application form to be submitted electronically to Registry Admissions. Acceptance is based on the production of evidence that they are currently attending a recognised university, are performing at or above GPA (Grade Point Average) 2.8/Grade C average, have sufficient English language skills to cope with the requested level of study, meet any additional requirements for their proposed subject(s) of study, and have been nominated by their home institution.

3.8 Student Records will identify modules potentially available for students planning an exchange or study abroad programme each year and Institutes will adjust and approve the list. This list should include all 15 credit modules (and 30 credit modules for year-long Study Abroad students where 'pathways' have been previously agreed between partners) except those modules which have pre-requisites or which are restricted to UW students for other unavoidable reasons; the list will include 15 credit exchange versions of 30 credit modules. The list should normally be available for students by the beginning of March.

3.9 Students from EU partner institutions can apply to take an Erasmus 'student traineeship' with UW itself or with a placement partner of the University. If the student requires a visa then they will need to apply to the British Council for a Tier 5 Confirmation of Sponsorship under the Erasmus Scheme. Trainee partnerships, outside the Erasmus + programme, may also be established with non-EU/EEA partners but the University would need to set up a separate approved Tier 5 government authorised exchange scheme so that students could obtain the necessary Tier 5 visa. Members of staff who manage placements and internships will normally mediate between the work-based learning partner, the incoming student and the University in accordance with the [policy on the Management of Placement and Work-based Learning](#). Incoming students offered a 'student traineeship' will be recorded as International or Erasmus Placement Students and provided with a student card and access to UW services. The Learning Agreement signed by the host organisation should be scanned by Registry Admissions and lodged along with the application form on the individual student record. Student Records will need a copy of each agreement which requests placement exchanges in order to allocate a code which can be used for HESA statistics recording. In some

cases the incoming student will enrol on an existing UW work-based learning module, and undertake the assessment requirements associated with the module.

3.10 Accepted applicants for incoming student exchange, Study Abroad or student traineeship are issued with an acceptance letter confirming their place at UW and their proposed programme of study. The letter also contains information on airport pick-ups, international induction and accommodation options.

3.11 As incoming exchange students are not necessarily familiar with the academic conventions and cultures of UK higher education, for example in relation to approaches to learning and teaching or assessment, Institutes should provide an appropriate academic induction in addition to the generic International Induction provided by Worcester international.

3.12 When module results are confirmed at a Board of Examiners, two transcripts are printed (one for the student, one for the home university) and dispatched by the Worcester International Exchange and Study Abroad Co-ordinator to the International Exchange Co-ordinator at the student's home university.

Research Students

3.13 Where there is an exchange agreement in place, incoming PGR students will be treated as exchange students and will be subject to the processes set out above, although acceptance will be based on their progression within their research degree rather than based on GPA. Further, while such students may undertake modules, more commonly they will engage in a non-accredited programme of study agreed between the partner institution, the incoming student and an identified contact at UW. All other incoming PGR students will be classified as Visiting Research Students.

3.14 Potential Visiting Research Students will complete the application form and submit to the Research School. The application form will require the student to identify the following:

- Details of PhD study
- Name and contact details of lead supervisor in home institution
- Period of visit (normally 3-12 months)
- Proposed academic Institute or research centre in which student will be based
- Proposed contact for the period of visit if already known
- Proposed programme of study
- Details of funding for the visit.

3.15 The Research School will forward the application to the relevant Institute Research Degree Co-ordinator who will make an assessment about whether the Institute is willing and able to accept the student. In addition, where the student is from outside the EU/EEA, the Research School will also forward the application to the International Student Advisor for the purpose of identifying any prohibitive visa issues.

3.16 If it is decided to accept the student, the Research School will first contact the identified lead supervisor in the home institution to ascertain that they and the institution support the

visit. If this is confirmed then an offer letter will be sent by the Research School confirming the period of the visit, the supervisor, the Institute, the fee and any other details (such as induction programme and accommodation options) or requirements (such as additional evidence of funding for the visit). The offer letter will be copied to the Head of International Student Experience, the Institute Research Degree Co-ordinator and the relevant Head of Institute.

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Related Policies, Procedures, Guidance, Forms or Templates	Policy for the Management of Staff International Mobility Policy on the Management of Placement and Work-based Learning Internal approval form HR Health and Safety - Field Trips & International Travel
Policies/Rules Superseded by this Policy	International Student Exchange Policy (July 2013)