



Press release

Number of UK students choosing to study abroad with ERASMUS continues to rise

London 3 November 2008 After several years of declining numbers of outgoing Erasmus students from the UK, the British Council announced today an increase in the number of students choosing to study abroad with Erasmus.

The previous decade has seen a persistent decline in the numbers of UK Erasmus students. With the introduction last year of work placements to the Erasmus programme, the total numbers of students on the Erasmus programme have now risen from 7,235 in 2006/07 to 10,303 for 2007/08, representing about a 40% increase from last year. This is the second year in a row that shows an increase in numbers after many years of declining numbers; 2,749 students carried out work placements and 7,523 completed a study visit as part of their degree.

Martin Davidson, Chief Executive of the British Council, said "Erasmus offers a fantastic opportunity for UK students to enhance their career prospects and broaden their life experience. More importantly, through their experience overseas it helps young people to better understand and work with people other cultures. It is great to see this being understood by an increasing number of students in the UK.

In a direct comparison with students on study placements from the previous year, England shows a rise of 2.2%; Scotland 18.8%; Wales 5%, and Northern Ireland a decrease of 15% (but representing a drop in actual numbers of just 28 students). The increase for Scotland means they now represent 15% of the total study mobility in the UK, its highest level since 2000.

David Lammy, Minister of State for Higher Education, said "Studying abroad helps to develop more active and employable citizens, as well as fostering greater understanding between countries. The increase in UK students participating in the Erasmus programme shows that the desire to understand different cultures and languages is strong. We need to continue to encourage this to ensure more UK students reap the clear benefits that a period of time overseas can bring."

The British Council won the contract in 2007 to manage the Erasmus programme which is the European Commission's flagship mobility programme that enables student and staff in Higher Education to study or work in another European country. Over 1.7 million people from Europe have taken part in the programme since its launch in 1987 (almost 160,000 from the UK).

Olivia Scheller, an International Marketing student from Bournemouth University spent six months working in Spain at an Internet Marketing company under the Erasmus programme. "This was a great experience. My work in the Internet Marketing industry has helped me to get an insight into this fast moving business and I feel it has been a very valuable experience for my future career. I was also able to greatly improve my Spanish language skills and it was a valuable insight into the practical world of marketing, allowing me to apply all I had learnt in theory to real life situations. The experience is unforgettable and will undoubtedly add much value to anyone's life and curriculum."

Mrs Dörte Stevenson, Head of International Exchanges Unit at The University of Sheffield, said "the University of Sheffield supports all activities of the Erasmus scheme and fully endorses the ethos of it. Embracing the opportunities that are offered by the programme strengthens the University's international standing in terms of teaching and research. There has been a considerable growth in student and staff exchanges under the Erasmus scheme in the last few years and we now send out over 334 students, making us one of the UK's leading universities involved in the programme. Incoming and returning Erasmus students add tremendously to the teaching environment. We have a vibrant Erasmus Society Network and one of the most satisfying moments is when you see incoming Erasmus students happily settled at Sheffield and socialising with home students and when returning students return enthused by their brilliant experience abroad.

For more information please contact Paul Melhuish in the British Council Press Office on 0207 389 4871/07733 308 487 or e-mail Paul.Melhuish@britishcouncil.org

Notes to Editors:

The British Council

- The British Council is the UK's international organisation for educational opportunities and cultural relations.
- We work in 110 countries worldwide to build engagement and trust for the UK through the exchange of knowledge and ideas between people.

- We work in the arts, education, science, sport and governance and last year we reached over 128 million people.
- We are a non-political organisation which operates at arm's length from government.
- Our total turnover in 2007/8 was £565 million, of which our grant-in-aid from the British government was £197 million.
- For more information, please visit www.britishcouncil.org