Guidance and responsibilities relating to outgoing Erasmus and Study Abroad Programme Students

Background

The Erasmus programme allows students to study, work or teach for part of their degree in another European country. The Study Abroad Programme offers students the chance to spend part of their degree course in another country outside the EU.

This guidance outlines the roles and responsibilities of the three parties involved; the departmental advisor, the student and the International Exchanges Unit (IEU).

The guidance is intended to showcase good practice and to ensure consistency across all participating departments of the University. In addition, The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) has recently considered a case relating to advice being provided to a student going abroad and made recommendations which have been incorporated in this guidance.

1 Responsibilities of the Departmental Study Abroad Advisor/Erasmus Tutor (DSAA/DET)

Before the departure of the student:
- To offer academic advice to outgoing students interested in taking part in an exchange, including level and range of course units available;
- To play an active role in ensuring that host institutions offer suitably matching courses for students and to lessen the burden of responsibility on participating students when deciding on their courses;
- To brief the student about the assessment, credit transfer and grade conversion process to be applied;
- To discuss what information a student must bring back from their period abroad – such as a portfolio of work, copies of essays, lab reports, exam papers, midterm papers etc.;
- To document, maintain and communicate to students key academic information associated with studying abroad. For example, guidance as to key replacement course unit requirements, alternative assessment arrangements, subject-specific grade conversion practices, integrating the period abroad into the degree programme etc.
- To approve outgoing students’ course choices, ensuring that all students going to Europe complete a Learning Agreement and that all students participating in the Study Abroad Programme make a provisional list of modules;
- To monitor the academic performance of students selected to participate in study abroad (both Erasmus and Study Abroad Programme) and to alert the Study Abroad Administrator in the IEU to students who fail to meet the academic requirements for the period abroad. In addition, for Erasmus students, to liaise with departmental partner institutions and to withdraw students who do not meet the academic requirements for the Erasmus exchange.

General Points about Unit Selection to be taken into account by DSAA/DET

1. Course units taken should:
   - Be at the appropriate level for the student’s year of study;
   - Not have substantial academic overlap with course units undertaken in the student’s prior semesters of study;
   - Not have substantial academic overlap with course units to be undertaken following the period abroad;
   - Meet pre-requisites for course units to be undertaken following the period abroad.
2. Students should be permitted to enrol for course units at a level substantially higher or lower than their own only:
   i) when a particular course component is essential and no other alternative exists; and
   ii) when they have the explicit permission of the University of Sheffield DSAA/DET.
   Only in exceptional cases and with the recommendation of the DSAA/DET, can a higher level of difficulty be taken into account when grades are converted.

3. Where a partner university offers an internship for credit, students may include this in their overall credit load only where approved by the DSAA/DET. Where a DSAA/DET judges that an internship does not provide adequate academic progression, s/he may authorise the student’s selection of the internship as an extra activity, from which credits will not count towards the overall total.

**Whilst the student is abroad:**
- To ensure that students are enrolled for the correct modules and make any changes as soon as possible;
- To formalise the agreed courses by using the Learning Agreement (for students on Erasmus placements) or the Course Approval Form (for students on Study Abroad);
- To provide further advice as necessary to students via email and to be available via email and telephone to students whilst they are abroad;
- To help students resolve academic problems whilst abroad, where necessary by contacting partner universities or the IEU.

**On the return of the student:**
- To arrange for credits gained from approved study abroad to be counted towards the student’s programme of study at Sheffield, using one of the approved methods of conversion (please see point 4). This may be undertaken in conjunction with other relevant academic and administrative staff;
- Act as advisor if a student has concerns about the conversion of his or her grades.

2. **Student Responsibilities**

**Before the departure:**
It is the student’s responsibility
- To have up-to-date knowledge of their degree requirements and how coursework undertaken abroad will relate to their overall degree programme;
- To thoroughly research course availability, course pre-requisites and course syllabus information at the partner university;
- To complete a Learning Agreement (Erasmus placements) or compile a list of provisional, suitable modules to be taken (Study Abroad Programme students) in a timely manner in discussion with the DSAA/DET.

**Whilst abroad:**
- To discuss and seek written approval for all changes to courses from the DSAA/DET;
- To finalise the Learning Agreement (students going to Europe) or the Course Approval Form (Students going on Study Abroad) and return to the DSAA/DET for their approval;
- To send a copy of the finalised Learning Agreement to the IEU (students on Erasmus only);
- To provide the DSAA/DET with an up-to-date email and mailing address while abroad;
- To communicate with the DSAA/DET about significant situations that may impact on academic progress and performance in a specific course during the semester as a whole. These can be both personal problems as well as difficulties in dealing with some part of the curriculum or gaining access to facilities etc.
- To adhere to the requirement of compiling a portfolio comprising of syllabus information, coursework and examination scripts;
- To ensure that a transcript from the host institution is ordered and sent to the relevant department at The University of Sheffield.
On return to Sheffield:

- To make available, as necessary, the portfolio of work for each course unit completed at the partner university;
- To ensure that the transcript from the host institution, if received directly by the student, is passed on to the departmental DSAA/DET.

3. Responsibilities of the IEU

- To regularly update all written materials (for example, the ‘Guidance and responsibilities relating to outgoing Erasmus and Study Abroad Programme Students’);
- To email DSAAs to ensure that students selected for Study Abroad are making sufficient academic progress to remain on the Programme;
- To provide ways for DSAAs/DETs to give feedback and to exchange strategies on conversion of marks with colleagues from other academic departments;
- To put DSAAs/DETs in contact with subject area colleagues from other UK peer institutions, as needed and where possible;
- To assist, in specific cases, with establishing contact between the DSAA/DET and a Subject Area/colleague at the partner university;
- To arrange training for academics new to the role, if desired;
- To provide, wherever possible, support and expertise when difficult cases of credit transfer and grade conversion arise;
- To make students aware, together with the DSAAs/DETs, that they must complete a Learning Agreement/research and write down provisional major course choices;
- To make students aware of the general principles of credit transfer and grade conversion (whilst discipline-specific principles will be covered by the DSAAs/DETs)

Dörte Stevenson
January 2012

List of acronyms:
DSAA - Departmental Study Abroad Advisor
DET - Erasmus Tutor
ECTS – European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
IEU - International Exchanges Unit
OIA – The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education
### 2. ECTS Learning Agreement

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<td>Academic Department:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Home University:</td>
<td>The University of Sheffield, UK (UK SHEFFIE01)</td>
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<td>Host University:</td>
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#### DETAILS OF THE PROPOSED STUDY PLAN ABROAD

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Please note the normal undergraduate/postgraduate workload is 30 ECTS credits per semester.

If necessary, continue the list on a separate sheet of paper.

**Student's Signature:**

**Home University**

We confirm that the proposed programme of study is approved.

- Departmental coordinator’s signature
- Erasmus coordinator’s signature (IEU)

- Date:  
- Date:

**Host University**

We confirm that this proposed programme of study is approved.

- Departmental coordinator’s signature
- Erasmus coordinator’s signature

- Date:  
- Date:
### Changes to Original Proposed Study Plan

(to be filled in **ONLY** if applicable)

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<tr>
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If necessary, continue the list on a separate sheet of paper.

**Student's Signature:**

**Home University**

We confirm that the changes to the proposed study plan are approved.

Departmental coordinator's signature

Erasmus coordinator's signature (IEU)

Date: Date:

**Host University**

We confirm that the changes to the proposed study plan are approved.

Departmental coordinator's signature

Erasmus coordinator's signature

Date: Date:

When completed and fully signed, please send to:

**International Exchanges Unit**

Level 6, University House

Western Bank

SHEFFIELD S10 2TN

Fax: 0044 114 222 1304

(PINK FORM)
The University of Sheffield.

Course Approval Form.

Please Note: This form is extremely important as it verifies your courses at your host institution. Your Study Abroad Adviser(s) will use this form to confirm that your course choices are appropriate for your Sheffield degree. Please send this to your Study Abroad Adviser as soon as you have registered.

Name: ______________________________

Exchange Institution: ______________________________

Email: ______________________________

Term/Semester Dates: From: ___________ To: ___________

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Student:
I certify that I am registered for the above courses and that the information given above is correct.

Signature __________________________ Date ______________

Study Abroad Adviser: The student is registered for the courses detailed above. Please check that the student has registered for the appropriate courses and get in touch with the student to let them know. Also, please contact the student immediately if s/he has not registered for the correct courses. If you are satisfied with the courses described please sign the form, keep a copy for your file and keep any enclosed course descriptions for future reference.

Sheffield Study Abroad Adviser

Name of Departmental Adviser: ______________________________

Signature (confirming courses are appropriate): ______________________________