



# THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

## CODE OF PRACTICE FOR UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH STUDENTS

### STUDYING ABROAD

#### 1.0: INTRODUCTION

This Code of Practice outlines the University of Edinburgh's recommended practice and expected standards in the management of Student Exchange and Study Abroad Programmes at the University of Edinburgh. Its purpose is to ensure that students who undertake a study abroad period away from the University of Edinburgh have clear and transparent guidelines about the organisation of their Study Abroad Programme. It also clarifies the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the management and organisation of Study Abroad Programmes, including the roles of Study Abroad/Exchange Co-ordinators (Co-ordinator), Personal Tutors, Student Support Teams, Schools, Subject Areas and the International Office. The Code does not cover less formal visits or research arrangements which are commonly pursued at postgraduate level. This type of activity is covered in the General Postgraduate Degree Regulations (section 4)

[http://www.docs.sasg.ed.ac.uk/GaSP/Collaborative/Collaborative\\_provision\\_documents/Guidance\\_for\\_Jointly\\_Awarded\\_PhD\\_Programmes201109.pdf](http://www.docs.sasg.ed.ac.uk/GaSP/Collaborative/Collaborative_provision_documents/Guidance_for_Jointly_Awarded_PhD_Programmes201109.pdf)

The structure of the Code of Practice is as follows:

- General Introduction, Background and Definitions
- Management
- Student Preparation
- Student Support and Progress whilst abroad
- Credit Accumulation and Student progression on return to Edinburgh
- Quality Assurance Issues.
- Risk Assessment Issues

#### 2.0: BACKGROUND AND DEFINITIONS

Student Exchange and/or Study Abroad Programmes involve undertaking a period of time (normally one or two consecutive semesters) at an approved Host Institution in place of the same period of study time at the University of Edinburgh.

Study abroad periods can constitute in the compulsory (mandatory) component of a degree programme, such as the residence abroad requirement as stipulated in the DRPS for Modern Language students, or a non-compulsory (elective) study period.

Students can undertake Study Abroad Programmes at the University of Edinburgh through the EU's Lifelong Learning/ERASMUS programme, through the University's International Exchange programme and through School/Subject Area arrangements. These programmes are subject to a formal agreement approved by the School and College and signed by the Vice Principal (International)

Students on a recognised Study Abroad Programme will undertake study at the Host Institution as a credit-bearing part of their Edinburgh degree. Although the majority of

students who participate in formal Exchanges are at undergraduate level, a small number of postgraduate Exchange opportunities exist.

The University of Edinburgh is defined as the “home” institution and the Exchange or Study Abroad destination is defined as the “Host” University for the purposes of this paper.

### **3.0: KEY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The key roles and their responsibilities in relation to Exchanges and Study Abroad Programmes are as follows:

#### **The Student is responsible for:**

- Making the practical arrangements relating to the Exchange – e.g. travel arrangements, organising insurance cover, undertaking the application process for admission to the Host Institution and seeking accommodation.
- Researching the risks of undertaking their study abroad.
- Maintaining contact with the Co-ordinator during the Exchange process and advising the Co-ordinator of any proposed changes to their study programme.
- Informing the University of Edinburgh of their address and contact details whilst abroad.
- Advising the appropriate Co-ordinator, at application stage, if they have a disability which will impact on their Exchange or Study Abroad Programme.
- Ensuring that the Co-ordinator is informed about any Special Circumstances which might impact on the student’s academic performance.

#### **The Co-ordinator** (a formal post nominated by each Subject Area) is responsible for:

- Ensuring the academic legitimacy of the Study Abroad Programme and liaising appropriately with the student’s Personal Tutor or equivalent role.
- Ensuring that the student is aware of the academic and credit arrangements and the expected learning outcomes relating to the Exchange.
- Advising Study Abroad students of any changes to Programme requirements.
- Maintaining contact with the Study Abroad student, although the student is ultimately responsible for initiating contact.

#### **The School/Subject Area** is responsible for:

- Providing clear guidelines to Co-ordinators of all academic expectations.
- Ensuring information about subsequent study arrangements is transmitted to Exchange students to ensure that they are not disadvantaged because of their distance from the Home University.

Special consideration must be given to Exchange arrangements where standardised credit conversion models such as the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) model cannot be applied. If the Exchange is managed at School level (e.g. the International MBA) then a designated person, covering the work of the Co-ordinator and the International Office, within the School will make arrangements directly with the students.

**The International Office** is responsible for:

- Providing administrative support for most Exchange arrangements including the payment of ERASMUS grants and other Exchange scholarships and the provision of information about each of the Exchange destinations.
- Maintaining a database of all students undertaking Study Abroad Programmes and for the provision of data to the University of Edinburgh on its study abroad activity.
- Managing the financial accounts for the Exchange programmes, e.g. exchanges with a room and board element or exchanges with a scholarship element, are managed by the International Office in accordance with the University of Edinburgh financial regulations.
- Monitoring balance of flow of students. Exchanges and Study Abroad Programmes are expected to achieve a balance of flow of students. Each year the balances are checked by the International Office and the numbers participating each way are negotiated with the Host institutions to ensure reciprocity over a three year period. The International Office maintains databases of all student flows and participating UoE students and prepares an annual statement for each student exchange/study abroad programme. The statement highlights any problems particularly any persistent or continuing issues raised by students in their evaluation forms. Subject Area based exchange information is referred to the relevant Subject Area to consider whether or not any action should be taken to amend the terms of the exchange/study abroad. Information relating to institutional based Exchanges/Study Abroad Programmes is relayed to the Vice Principal International.

## **4.0: STUDENT PREPARATION**

### **Academic**

Students should be aware of the University of Edinburgh academic expectations **before** they commence a Study Abroad Programme. It is the responsibility of the Co-ordinator to provide academic information to students.

1. Students should be expressly advised on:
  - The number of courses or the number of credits to be undertaken at the Host Institution.
  - How many of these courses or credits should be in the student's main area of studies.
  - The level of the courses to be taken - this will normally equate to the level of study the student would have been completing at the University of Edinburgh had s/he continued his/her studies at the home University.
  - How the study will be credited to the University of Edinburgh degree.
  - Each student on a formal programme should receive a Study Abroad Guide and is required to attend a pre-departure briefing meeting.
2. The academic programme of a student from the University of Edinburgh must be approved by the student's Personal Tutor or Co-ordinator.

3. Participating students must complete the on-line release process for an Exchange/Study Abroad Programme on web page <http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/international-office/exchanges/international-exchange/application>. This confirms the student's participation on the programme and the agreement for credit transfer for all work successfully completed at the Host Institution.
4. Students undertaking a period in employment as part of their Language Exchange must ensure that details of the proposed employment and the location of the employment are submitted to the Co-ordinator for approval through the appropriate process.

[http://www.docs.sasg.ed.ac.uk/GaSP/Collaborative/Collaborative\\_provision\\_documents/Exchange\\_and\\_Study\\_Abroad\\_Approval\\_Process\\_201109.pdf](http://www.docs.sasg.ed.ac.uk/GaSP/Collaborative/Collaborative_provision_documents/Exchange_and_Study_Abroad_Approval_Process_201109.pdf)

## Language

If the language of tuition at the Host Institution is not English then it is important that the student should be adequately prepared. It is normally recommended that a student holds a minimum level of Higher or AS level or equivalent in the language if s/he is to study in a non-native language, although other forms of language acquisition may also be appropriate. The Host Institution may insist on Exchange students meeting the same requirements as their own home students.

The Co-ordinator is required to ascertain the language proficiency of students being nominated for Study Abroad (see website for expected competence levels <http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/international-office/exchanges/erasmus/language-requirements>) and provide advice about supplementing language skills. For example, through intensive language courses either prior to the study abroad through courses offered by the University of Edinburgh's Office of Lifelong Learning or during the study abroad period at the Host Institution. The International Office can also provide advice.

## Accommodation

It is the student's responsibility to research housing options and arrange accommodation at the Host Institution. Practical information, including accommodation advice, can be obtained from a variety of sources including:

- The Host Institution's website.
- The Co-ordinator.
- The feedback forms from previous outgoing students.
- Talking to students currently studying abroad or to students returning from a Host Institution.

## Costs

For centrally managed Exchanges, the International Office can provide advice to students on the estimated costs involved in studying abroad and on any possible grants which are available to students.

## Health and Safety

Students should consider the health and safety implications of their Study Abroad Programme and should understand the risks involved.

The International Office provides some guidance on how students should make this assessment <http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/international->

[office/exchanges/erasmus/health-insurance](#). It also suggests strategies to minimise risks including attendance at a pre-departure meeting organised by the International Office, taking out appropriate health insurance, being aware of the Host Institution's guidance on health and safety.

Students should be given contact details for the person who is their first point of contact at the Host Institution and at the University of Edinburgh should any emergency situation arise.

## **Disability Issues**

It is the student's responsibility to indicate at an early stage whether they have a disability which might impact on their study abroad experience. If a disability is identified then the student will normally work with the Student Disability Service, their School and the International Office to ensure that s/he is appropriately advised and supported.

## **Provision of Information**

Programme Handbooks must include a section on study abroad if such study is a compulsory part of the degree programme. The International Office provides guidance on study abroad arrangements on its web pages – see <http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/international-office/exchanges/exchanges>

## **5.0: STUDENT SUPPORT AND PROGRESS WHILST ABROAD**

1. Whilst students are abroad, the expected student support is still determined by the University of Edinburgh's academic and pastoral support standards and guiding principles.  
[http://www.docs.sasg.ed.ac.uk/AcademicServices/Policies/Academic\\_Pastoral\\_Support\\_Standards\\_Guiding\\_Principles.pdf](http://www.docs.sasg.ed.ac.uk/AcademicServices/Policies/Academic_Pastoral_Support_Standards_Guiding_Principles.pdf)
2. It is the responsibility of each School/Subject Area to ensure that the student is advised before the commencement of the Study Abroad Programme of:
  - The name of a Link Person (normally the Study Abroad Co-ordinator, but in some Schools this role might be undertaken by a Personal Tutor) at the University of Edinburgh who is responsible for managing the academic and pastoral aspects of the study abroad period.
  - The nature of the academic and pastoral support that can be expected.
3. The monitoring of student progress during the study abroad period is vital. As a minimum requirement Co-ordinators are expected to contact their students at least once per semester during the study abroad period.
4. Schools/Subject Areas are expected to pass on any information about subsequent study, dissertations or course application procedures and to ensure that Study Abroad students are not disadvantaged because of their distance from the Home University.
5. Students studying abroad should remain on all College/School/Subject Area distribution lists.
6. Students must provide details of their residential address and contact details at the host institution to the International Office or to the Co-ordinator managing their Study Abroad Programme. It is vital that students provide this information in a timely way.
7. Visits to Partner Universities are encouraged where possible and practical to ensure the validity of the Exchange and the welfare of participating students although it is recognised

that the costs of visits make regular visiting unlikely. If a visit is planned then students should be advised in advance of the date and purpose of the visit.

## **6.0: CREDIT ACCUMULATION AND STUDENT PROGRESSION ON RETURN TO THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH**

The organisation of the transfer of credit and grades for non-compulsory (elective) study abroad students is the responsibility of the University of Edinburgh's Study Abroad Progression Committee. All students are to be advised by the School/Subject Area before departure about the way in which credit will be transferred.

The Study Abroad Progression Committee reviews the transcripts for all students who have undertaken a non-compulsory (elective) Exchange. The Committee is chaired by the Assistant Principal Quality Assurance and Academic Standards and has College membership and an External Examiner. It operates as a quasi Board of Examiners which considers any special circumstances cases, consults Personal Tutors/Co-ordinators, allocates appropriate credit and recommends progression to the relevant Boards of Examiners at School level.

The University of Edinburgh operates a policy whereby credit only can be awarded to students who undertake an Exchange programme on an elective basis. The University of Edinburgh does not attempt to convert the marks or grades that students obtain at the Host institution into University of Edinburgh equivalents. Students who meet the requirements of the Learning Agreement will receive the appropriate number of University of Edinburgh credits for their study abroad period.

Where the Study Abroad Programme/period of study abroad is mandatory, then it is the responsibility of Schools to advise students in writing of the assessment arrangements during their period at the host institution before departure and to arrange credit transfer in association with Examination Boards for all such students on their return to the University of Edinburgh.

Students undertaking a period of employment as part of their Exchange or Study Abroad Programme will be required to complete set output during their period abroad as set by the relevant School or Subject Area.

## **7.0: QUALITY ASSURANCE ISSUES**

For each approved Exchange and Study Abroad Programme, the University of Edinburgh must assure itself that students will receive a rewarding academic experience appropriate to the degree studied at the Home University. The following processes will aid this assurance:

- Careful validation of the academic content, standards and learning outcomes at the Host Institution in relation to the student's degree programme at the University of Edinburgh.
- Regular contact between the Co-ordinator and the student.
- A formal mechanism for student evaluation of the study abroad period both during and after the Exchange.
- Periodic review of the Exchanges including visits, where appropriate, and monitoring of student evaluations.

## **Evaluation**

The International Office (or appropriate School/Subject Area) requires all students on an approved Study Abroad Programme to complete an evaluation form which covers issues such as:

- Pre-departure information.
- Contacts during the Exchange period.
- In-country orientation.
- Support at the Host Institution.
- Quality of academic experience.
- Extra Curricular activities.
- Accommodation.
- Other General information (travel, costs etc.).

The International Office scans responses from students and submits a report to the Study Abroad Progression Committee, in September of each year, which highlights any particular issues or problems experienced by students.

## **Pastoral Visits**

The University of Edinburgh arranges pastoral visits, from time to time, for students undertaking exchanges and site visits to exchange destinations. These visits should report on facilities for exchange students (e.g. accommodation, library, computing), any academic issues (e.g. over subscribed departments, course problems etc) and any difficulties being experienced by students personally.

## **Equality of Opportunity**

Study abroad opportunities should be available to all students at the University of Edinburgh who meet the general selection criteria. The International Office can provide advice and guidance and, where required, help can also be sought from the University's Disability Office.

## **Review of Exchanges and Study Abroad Programmes**

The University's portfolio of Exchanges and Study Abroad Programmes are reviewed by the International Office on a periodic basis.

## **8.0: RISK ASSESSMENT ISSUES**

The purpose of this Code of Practice is to minimise possible risks to the student, the University of Edinburgh and the Host Institution participating in Exchange and Study Abroad Programmes. The main liability faced, in respect to student activity abroad, lies in a duty of care. This Code of Practice attempts to ensure that proper care is taken by the relevant people in Exchanges and Study Abroad Programmes, the students, Schools, Study Abroad Co-ordinators, Personal Tutors, Student Support Teams and the International Office in order to minimise risks.

## **USEFUL CONTACTS**

The International Office maintains a web site with information and advice for the UoE students and staff participating on study abroad programmes.

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/international-office/exchanges/exchanges>

## Glossary of Terms

**Home University** is the university/institution at which the student is registered/matriculated for the substantive period of their programme.

**Host Institution** is the university/institution in the exchange/study abroad destination at which an exchange student studies for a designated period of their programme/course.

**Study Abroad/Exchange Coordinator** is an academic member of staff appointed at (usually) Subject Area level to manage exchange arrangements for outgoing students in that Subject Area.

The **Exchange Agreement** is a formal contract drawn up and signed by the University of Edinburgh and the partner university. The agreement covers the roles, expectations and legal requirements governing the exchange.

The **Learning Agreement** contains the academic arrangements agreed by the student and his/her Subject Area for the study abroad programme – the number, level and type of courses the student will undertake at the Host institution. The agreement must be approved by the student and the School and must not be amended without prior approval.

The **Study Abroad Progression Committee** reviews the transcripts for all students who have undertaken a non-compulsory (elective) exchange. The Committee is chaired by the Assistant Principal Quality Assurance and Enhancement with College membership and an external examiner. It operates as a quasi Board of Examiners, considers any special circumstances cases, consults Personal Tutors and/or Coordinators, allocates appropriate credit and recommends progression to the relevant Boards of Examiners at School level.

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