

University of St Mark & St John Erasmus Policy Statement

4th March 2015

The University of St Mark & St John was awarded the Erasmus + Charter by the European Commission on 1st December 2014.

The University of St Mark and St John's Unique Reference Number is: 269595-EPP-1-2015-1-UK-EPPKA3-ECHE

The University of St Mark and St John's Erasmus code is: UKPLYMOUT03

The University of St Mark and St John's Participant Identification Code is: 940217121

1. Introduction

The University of St Mark & St John has agreed to publish this policy statement as part of its acceptance of the Erasmus + Charter.

The policy outlines a set of basic principles formulated and enforced to direct actions in pursuit of the University's long term strategic goals by means commensurate with the Erasmus+ aims. The aims of the Erasmus + programme are

- to modernise education, training and youth work across Europe and across all sectors of lifelong learning
- to support the development of digital education and the use of Information and Communication Technologies.
- to value the recognition of skills, including those learned outside the formal education system.

These aims accord with the aims articulated for the University in the Strategic Plan "Challenging Horizons" which include the:

- Enhancement of external engagement, our profile and reputation
- Improvement of the qualifications and skills base of staff
- Enhancement of the student experience through digital, global and employer engagement
- Development of staff's national and international experience

And three strategic themes

- Digital innovation
- Global Citizenship
- Employer Engagement

The policy will be enforced by the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee of Academic Board.

2. The Scope of the Policy

This policy relates to all staff students of the university, home students and staff or students who are incoming on placement or related experiences from other Higher Education Institutions across Europe which are Erasmus+ Charter holders.

Implementation of the policy will support the implementation of the Equality Scheme and the Diversity Action Plan These are in accordance with The Equality Act 2010 (including the Public Sector Equality Duty).

3. Context and Values

Policy Context:

The University of St Mark & St John ('the University') has a 175 year heritage, an outstanding reputation for teaching in distinctive subject areas and has recently been awarded full University title. The University's mission is the development and dissemination of cutting-edge knowledge in distinctive areas, including

through innovative use of technology and new modes of delivery, to have a positive influence and make a lasting impact on society, economy, culture, environment and wellbeing.

In April 2014 the University adopted a 10 year Strategic Plan and is now focussed on transformational development to deliver a step-change in its culture, identity and impact. In line with the University's new strategic plan, the University fully supports and acknowledges the worth of international study, placements, exchanges and working towards the internationalisation and modernisation agenda.

Global citizenship is a key theme in the University's strategic plan, recognising the need to internationalise the study experience and prepare students for employment and lifelong learning. Achieving the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE) enables staff and students to participate in EU mobility programmes, to gain European perspectives on academic, enterprise and cultural issues. The University is committed to enriching the student experience and recognises the intellectual and social benefits of a more diverse, multi-cultural and multi-national home campus. Through participation in EU mobility programmes the University expects to accept more students from partner organisations onto credit bearing courses at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The University will also benefit from the positive impact that international exchanges and collaborations can have on staff development and academic profiles.

Through participation in the Erasmus+ programme the University aims to contribute to the modernisation agenda by:

- working more proactively to establish European networks and partnerships
- strengthening cross-border academic links and facilitating collaborative research projects
- establishing quality mobility opportunities and widening access to HEI participation
- sharing learning outcomes and good practise including academic and corporate governance
- preparing graduates with the knowledge and skills that are valued by employers and meet the future needs of the European workforce.

In terms of impact, the University is well equipped to participate and lead programmes related to social science education and research related to a number of sectors. It is also able to contribute to partnership initiatives related to the social development of a region through education and health programmes and research and to inform economic development of remote and rural communities in the UK and internationally through sectors such as sport, tourism, event and the creative industries and via the use of new technology and digital media.

Within the framework of the Erasmus+ Programme the University would particularly seek to establish mobility of individuals to enable learning mobility for students and to enable staff to gain professional experience in another country.

The University's expertise in the field of sport and exercise science also lends itself to exploring collaborative partnerships in the fields of Sport, under Key Action 3 in the Erasmus+ Programme. Furthermore, the University's heritage and expertise as a teacher training institution lends itself to exploring strategic partnerships in the area of language teaching and learning under Key Action 2 of the Erasmus+ Programme, as well as programmes related to innovation and sharing of best practise in teaching, learning and pedagogic practice.

When choosing which initiatives to pursue, the university will consider the benefits proposed exchanges will bring to the institution and how they might contribute to the University's strategic plan. The purpose and relevance of each partnership will be assessed to ensure sustainable and balanced outcomes for all involved. The University will actively promote programmes through a range of mediums to increase their visibility and encourage current and prospective students to participate. The University will ensure a streamlined admissions process and a high quality academic environment for overseas students, both undergraduate and postgraduate. The cultural benefits of internationalisation will be recognised and nurtured, both on Campus and through provision of study abroad opportunities

4. Key Aims and Objectives

The University will enter into international initiatives that serve to enhance the University's own strategic priorities; building on the University's strengths, such as its heritage, distinctive areas and a highly rated student experience, whilst enhancing its academic credibility and financial sustainability. International initiatives should also seek to answer the institutions need to diversify and grow its educational characteristic, shifting from undergraduate provision to a mixture of undergraduate and postgraduate provision.

Furthermore, the new strategic plan sets out a range of innovations which aim to transform the institution into a self-sustaining university culture. This includes the development of a more diverse student and staff community arising from wider national and international recruitment and the development of taught postgraduate provision and research, and the remodelling of the academic year to enhance the student experience and to enable research active staff to undertake concentrated periods of programme development, research, consultancy, knowledge exchange, business engagement and international exchange. Potential exchange and mobility partners and countries (EU and non-EU) will be chosen based on an assessment of a range of factors, including: their overall fit with the University's strategic objectives, international strategy and distinct subject areas; their reputation and profile for teaching and research; regional attractiveness and student experience; language requirements (ensuring any language barriers can be managed); financial sustainability, and; manageable risk profile.

The University's overall objectives of internationalisation in the context of EU programmes include:

- supporting the employability, enterprise and student experience agenda
- establishing research links and enhancing academic research profiles
- supporting the University's strategic theme of global citizenship, allowing staff and students to gain global perspective on academic issues and wider cultural experiences
- enhancing the widening participation agenda, which aligns with and supports the Europe 2020 agenda: for the EU to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and increase HE attainment

The University aims to achieve these objectives within the supportive framework of the Erasmus+ programme, utilising work placement grants to enable more students to choose EU countries as their destination.

Actions to ensure enforcement and compliance with the Policy:

- The Executive Dean for Student Experience has overall responsibility for international mobility. Academic support is delegated to programme leaders.
- Administrative support is provided by the Exchanges Coordinator (ExCo).
- Any potential international partnership is evaluated by the Executive Dean for Student Experience for its alignment with the University's specialisms. The purpose and relevance of each partnership must be assessed to ensure sustainable and balanced outcomes for all involved. If a decision is taken to move ahead, the partnership will have an identified academic manager.
- The ExCo coordinates mobility placements and exchanges (supported by the programme leaders) and provides support for participants through all stages of the process.
- Information on procedures is provided on the intranet, through meetings, email exchanges and training workshops.

Fundamental Principles

- The University will respect in full the principles of non-discrimination set out by the Erasmus+ Programme and ensure equal access and opportunities to mobile participants from all backgrounds.
- The University will ensure full recognition for satisfactorily completed activities of study mobility and, where possible, traineeships in terms of credits awarded (ECTS or compatible system.).
- The University will ensure the inclusion of satisfactorily completed study and/or traineeship mobility activities in the final record of student achievements (Diploma Supplement or equivalent).
- The University will not charge fees, in the case of credit mobility, to incoming mobile students for tuition, registration, examinations or access to laboratory and library facilities.
- When incoming and outgoing students participate in exchanges and study abroad programmes, the University undertakes to provide arrangements for the consistent transfer of credit back to the students' home university for the purpose of calculating final degrees. A single module represents 20 credits (notional 200 hours study) across 1 or 2 consecutive semesters. A half-module represents 10 credits (notional 100 hours study) usually across 1 semester. All modules and programmes are subject to internal and external scrutiny as part of the validation process.
- Students are informed in writing of the way in which credits are to be transferred. Registry Services will remove the credits that the student would not be studying from their record and, upon receipt of the transcript from the partner institution, will award the credit if the student had passed. Grading, credit system and awards are detailed in the Student Handbook.

When participating in mobility activities – before mobility:

- The university will publish and regularly update the course catalogue on the website of the Institution well in advance of the mobility periods, so as to be transparent to all parties and allow mobile students to make well-informed choices about the courses they will follow.
- All courses are taught in English and incoming students must show that they have a good level of spoken and written English. The website clearly describes the English Language requirement of the university.
- The university will carry out mobility only within the framework of prior agreements between institutions. These agreements establish the respective roles and responsibilities of the different parties, as well as their commitment to shared quality criteria in the selection, preparation, reception and integration of mobile participants.
- The ExCo and programme leaders discuss with a potential partner institution the respective roles and responsibilities of both parties and their commitment to shared quality criteria in the selection, preparation, reception and integration of mobile participants, mobility numbers and duration. Every agreement must be accompanied by confirmation from the Faculty Dean or relevant department manager of the benefits it will bring and how it contributes to the University's strategy. Agreements are signed off by the Executive Dean for Student Experience.
- Opportunities for student and staff mobility for education or training purposes will be based on a learning agreement for students and a mobility agreement for staff validated in advance between the home and host institutions or enterprises and the mobile participants.
- A Link Tutor (LT) is nominated for each agreement. The LT will liaise with the ExCo and relevant students and staff to ensure continuity of the relationship. The ExCo manages administration and monitors arrangements.
- Each outgoing student would be attached to an identified LT responsible for managing the student's learning agreement by means of self-evaluating statements provided by the student after 2, 6 and 12 weeks of their study programme.
- The University's Language Policy is included on the University's Erasmus Web Pages.
- The University aims to ensure partner institutions offer sufficient levels of language support for outgoing participants. It is anticipated that the majority of students will look to study courses delivered in English in partner institutions. Students with proficiency in a European language who wish to study through that language will have their proficiency assessed and receive guidance as to their preparedness for study, and (if their proficiency is close to B2 level on the CEFR) how to prepare.
- Students will be advised about language learning options offered by partner institutions. The University will also provide support in cultural issues and the logistics of travelling to and living in a foreign country.
- The ExCo will provide assistance related to obtaining visas, when required, for incoming and outgoing mobile participants.
- The ExCo will also provide assistance related to obtaining insurance, when required, for incoming and outgoing mobile participants.

When participating in mobility activities – During Mobility

- The ExCo will integrate incoming mobile participants into the Institution's everyday life and ensure that appropriate mentoring and support arrangements and linguistic support arrangements are for incoming mobile participants are in place.
- The ExCo will also provide guidance to incoming mobile participants in finding accommodation.
- The University provides tailored inductions for all incoming students and they can access a wide range of student support services including accommodation, careers advice, counselling, finance, healthcare, learning support and the Chaplaincy.
- The ExCo and relevant LTs support participants through all stages of their placements, including conducting briefings, resolving queries and collating feedback. Informal peer mentoring is available on request.
- The University is committed to embedding inclusivity in all aspects of work, as set out in its Equality and Diversity Scheme.
- Students are expected to uphold the University's core values and act in accordance with the 'Marjon Charter', which promotes fair and equal treatment for all.

- Incoming students are required to provide evidence of their English language proficiency, equivalent to B2 level of CEFR framework in order to successfully complete their study period.
- The Centre for International Language Teacher Education (CILTE) oversees the language needs of incoming international students and staff and works with local international study providers and language schools to refer students for support when individual learner needs are identified.

When participating in mobility activities – After Mobility

- The University has a clearly defined credit system which would be transparent in agreements with partnership institutions. Each Faculty monitors the academic quality of its placements and makes visits to selected partners each year.
- The university will accept all activities indicated in the learning agreement as counting towards the degree, provided these have been satisfactorily completed by the mobile students.
- The university will provide incoming mobile participants and their home institutions with transcripts containing a full, accurate and timely record of their achievements at the end of their mobility period.
- The University's transcripts refer to the ECTS and the European Diploma Supplement Transcript is provided free and issued upon the successful completion of each programme. Transcripts specifically record a study abroad module to ensure a transparent recognition of study abroad period.
- The university will also support the reintegration of mobile participants and give them the opportunity, upon return, to build on their experiences for the benefit of the Institution and their peers.

Staff Mobility

- The University's new strategic plan fully supports and recognises the worth of staff mobility for professional development and strengthening academic and research links between institutions. The ExCo assists staff in building relationships with partner institutions and provides operational support for mobility arrangements. The ExCo also facilitates talks to staff across the University (teaching and non-teaching) as part of Staff Development agenda to promote staff mobility and ensures information is available on the website. Staff who participate in mobility are required to disseminate information about their mobility period outcomes and experiences to their peers and receive acknowledgement within the annual appraisal process.
- The university will also ensure that staff are given recognition for their teaching and training activities undertaken during a mobility period, based on a mobility agreement.

When Participating in European and International Cooperation Projects

- The university will ensure that cooperation leads to sustainable and balanced outcomes for all partners
- The university will provide relevant support to staff and students participating in these activities
- Achieving Erasmus Charter status would enable staff and students to participate again in EU mobility programmes and gain European perspectives on academic, enterprise and cultural issues. Global citizenship is a key theme in the University's strategic plan, recognising the need to internationalise the study experience and preparing students for employment and lifelong learning. The University will promote programmes and encourage students to take part of their degree programme abroad through credit transfers or to participate in periods of international placement. The University also recognises and actively promotes the positive impact that international exchanges and collaborations can have on staff development and academic profiles.

5. Monitoring:

An annual report on activity will be submitted to the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee of Academic Board

E.C.Smith 11.03.15

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UNDER REVIEW