

Learning and Teaching Support Handbook

Chapter 19 - Study and Work Experience Abroad (Outbound Students)

1. Introduction

1.1 This code of good practice and guidelines describes arrangements for, and quality assurance of, study and work abroad that outbound students take part in as part of their programmes of study. The purpose of this code is to make sure that the student experience abroad is well organised and academically beneficial. Placements abroad include a range of activities such as study abroad for language programmes, industrial placements and teaching experience. Each activity has specific aims, intended learning outcomes and assessment processes. This code is therefore broadly based, listing matters common to all placements, both taught and research. For the purposes of this document, all such placements will be referred to generically as 'study abroad'.

2. Management of student placements abroad

2.1 All Faculties (or delegated Schools) of the University making use of study abroad placements for their students as part of academic programmes need to be sure that they have fully considered a range of quality assurance issues. A checklist is provided at Annex A which poses a number of questions to assist Faculties (or delegated Schools) in this process. There will be an expectation that all new programme proposals including placements will have addressed the checklist. It will also allow Faculties (or delegated Schools) to review current practice and provide Annual Quality Review panels with an additional tool in the process of review.

2.2 *Stage 1 progression to the study abroad programme*

2.2.1 Students must achieve a 60% credit weighted average at the end of Stage 1 in order to be permitted to make an internal application to the Global Opportunities Team in Term 1 of Stage 2 (with the exception of compulsory and Business School study abroad programmes).

2.3 *Stage 2 progression to Stage 3 for Referred and Deferred students due to commence study placements.*

2.3.1 A 60% credit weighted average across a minimum of 90 Exeter credits must be achieved in order for progression to the year abroad study placement to be permitted by the June

Assessment, Progression and Awarding Committees (APAC) for Stage 2 students (with the exception of compulsory and Business School study abroad programmes).

- 2.3.2 A maximum of 30 outstanding Exeter credits are permitted for progression from Stage 2 to a Stage 3 study abroad year to be approved at the June and September APAC. Any exceptions to these rules **must** be approved by the Dean for Taught Students.

3. Establishing a placement

- 3.1 Each Faculty (or delegated School) should publish its procedures for setting up and managing any study abroad placements required as part of its academic programmes.
- 3.2 In developing student placements, the Faculty (or delegated School) should ensure, where appropriate, that the learning content accommodates national subject benchmark statements and the requirements of any accrediting relevant professional and statutory bodies.
- 3.3 The programme specification should indicate clearly the contribution of the study abroad placement to the learning process.
- 3.4 The provision of study abroad placements should promote equality of opportunity for students, as encouraged by the University and required under anti-discrimination legislation relating to race relations, disability discrimination and sex discrimination. Where required, advice should be sought from the University's Equal Opportunities Officer or AccessAbility.
- 3.5 Every study abroad placement should be subject to a formal agreement deposited with the Faculty (or delegated School). The agreement may take various forms depending on the nature of the placement, from an exchange of letters via an external organising central process for a teaching assistantship to a formal contract for an industrial work place and a teacher training position listing in some detail the responsibilities of the various parties. The agreement should also pay appropriate attention to health and safety and to any insurance and professional indemnity issues.
- 3.6 Close and regular contact between key people in placement partners is an essential pre-requisite for successful placements. Each Faculty (or delegated School) should have a nominated link person (or persons) carrying overall responsibility for managing placements within the curriculum. The Faculty (or delegated School) should also have on record the name of the principal active link person where the student placement is located.

- 3.7 Regular placements should be visited by the appropriate Faculty (or delegated School) link person, ideally while a student is present, to underpin the strength of the arrangement and to discuss matters of concern and/or interest. This may not always be an annual exercise but the Faculty (or delegated School) should have a clear policy relating to the regularity of such visits.

4. Student preparation

- 4.1 Students should be fully equipped to capitalise on their placements by being prepared before commencement in the following areas:

Academic:

Students should be aware of a placement's academic content, including aims, intended learning outcomes, option availability, assignment and assessment requirements, and its contribution to a programme's overall assessment. Faculty (or delegated School) and student should always agree in writing an agreed programme of activity before the commencement of a placement: this may take the form of a standard module template. [Where the placement is at an EU academic institution, the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) should allow harmonisation of credits.]

Language:

See section 5 below.

Accommodation:

Students should be given full advice on how and where to apply for suitable accommodation.

Living abroad:

Students should be provided with appropriate advice on the customs and culture of the country in question and on any health requirements.

Costs:

Students should be given advice on costs arising from placements including accommodation and travel.

- 4.2 Students should be made aware by Faculties (or delegated Schools) of their own responsibilities towards the successful outcome of a placement, including the need to communicate regularly with the home Faculty, to meet academic requirements and to observe the expectations of both University and provider relating to the management of the placement.

- 4.3 It is good practice for students to be provided with a Study Abroad handbook.
- 4.4 Faculties (or delegated Schools) should ensure that feedback from students returning from placement is used as part of the preparation of those about to undergo the same experience. This should include reference to academic, financial, social and cultural issues, as well as more practical matters such as accommodation and travel.
- 4.5 Attention should be drawn to the web site of Go Abroad which contains useful advice for students taking up placements abroad.

5. Language Requirements for Study Abroad

- 5.1 Where the language of tuition is not English:
 - 5.1.1 If the language of tuition on a study abroad placement is not English, students should be prepared in the language concerned, following an accredited suite of modules. It is important that the availability of such provision is established before any commitment is entered into. Students failing to meet a declared level of proficiency should not be permitted to study abroad. Non-language Faculties (or delegated Schools) should set tests through the Foreign Language Centre (FLC), agreeing the minimum number of credits advisable to lift students of different experience to the required level.
 - 5.1.2 Recognising the implications for recruitment, it is not attempted here to suggest the application of consistent language requirements between the wide variety of programmes 'with European Study'/'with Study Abroad'.
 - 5.1.3 The Foreign Language Centre guarantees to provide 30 credits of language teaching in each of years 1 and 2 for all students for whom this is a prerequisite for their period of study abroad, subject to viability and operational requirements and subject to the registration with the FLC by 3 p.m. on the Monday of Week One. Students registering after this date will be accepted subject to timetable and availability of spaces and at the discretion of the Director of Languages.
 - 5.1.4 Where the Foreign Language Centre is not able to offer a particular language / level, equivalent modules may be offered by the Department of Modern Languages in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.
 - 5.1.5 To maximise the experience where the principal language of instruction will not be English, it is recommended that students who have a formal qualification at either GCSE or A level in the target language complete at least 30 credits of language study in each

of years 1 and 2 ahead of the period abroad in programmes 'with European Study'/'with Study Abroad'.

The requirements assume recent examination experience in the language. These requirements may be waived in certain circumstances such as in the case of fluent speakers or where students are able to take advantage of alternative recognised intensive language tuition which will enable them to attain an equivalent level of language competence.

- 5.1.6 Students transferring to 'with European Study'/'with Study Abroad' programmes in their second year (and intending to spend the following year abroad) should attain an appropriate proficiency in the relevant language through modules to the value of at least 30 credits. An assessment of whether the completion of 30 credits of study is sufficient to achieve this proficiency should be made before the programme transfer is agreed.
- 5.1.7 Faculties (or delegated Schools) must set out any alternative language tuition strategies in proposals for new programmes of study and must be able to justify systematic variation from these requirements as part of the University's Annual Quality Review process. This includes occasions where the study abroad placement is less than an academic year in length.
- 5.1.8 In light of the above recommendations Faculties (or delegated Schools) should keep under review their language entrance requirements for programmes with European Study/with Study Abroad and other opportunities for studying abroad.

6. Student support and progress

- 6.1 For each study abroad placement, Faculties (or delegated Schools) must provide each student with the following information before commencement of the placement:
- a. The name of the link person in the home Faculty (or delegated School) responsible for managing the placement
 - b. The name of the contact person at the study abroad placement who will provide necessary pastoral/tutorial support
 - c. The nature of the academic and pastoral support available to the student from the home Faculty (or delegated School) including visits
 - d. What to do in the event of a crisis or national emergency.

- 6.2 Named link persons should have clear and explicit roles and responsibilities of which students should be made aware.
- 6.3 The monitoring of student progress during a study abroad placement also represents an important tool in the support of students. The manner of such monitoring will depend in part on the nature of a placement, but examples of good practice include the following:
- a. The preparation by students of a logbook or diary which could become part of the assessment; this is particularly useful for students on work placements and teaching assistantships
 - b. The periodic request, perhaps once a term, to students to produce reports on their placement experience, to be sent to the Faculty's (or delegated School's) link person for the placement
 - c. Regular e-mail contact between the Faculty (or delegated School) link person and students on placement
 - d. The need for Faculties (or delegated Schools) to act swiftly on problems raised by students.
- 6.4 Documentation issued to students should include reference to an appropriate complaints procedure, for use as required by a student about a placement and by the placement provider about the student.

7. Accreditation of study abroad

- 7.1 The University's adoption of enhanced modularity requires the recognition in terms of credits, of all the assessed components of a student's programme. Credits should therefore be applied to study abroad and placement components. Although the University has defined credit in terms of workload (1 credit is equivalent to a notional 10 hours of learning), it is recognised that many placement requirements are not so easily quantified. It is therefore recommended that in the case of study abroad, credit should be applied broadly in terms of the proportions of an academic year spent away. A full undergraduate year, for instance, would attract 120 credits, a term 60 credits.
- 7.2 Accreditation should extend to all such study periods spent away, including those which involve a student working in industry or taking paid employment as a language assistant provided this is a part of a student programme which the student has to pass.

8. Assessment

8.1 Faculties (or delegated Schools) are reminded that under the University's credit and award criteria, a full year spent on study abroad must attract 120 (undergraduate) or 180 (taught postgraduate) credits, all awarded on the basis of assessments carried out during the year and/or a subsequent assessment carried out on a student's return. Assessments must also be carried out in respect of time spent on placements abroad which last less than a year and attract proportionally less than 120 (or 180) credits.

8.2 All study abroad that is integral to a programme must attract a mark or set of marks which will include any or all of the following:

- a. Marks for assessments undertaken during the placement.
- b. Marks for assessments undertaken on return.
- c. Marks for any additional modules taken by the student as part of the syllabus for the time away.

Where a student's placement is not directly assessed by those providing the learning experience, the Faculty (or delegated School) should set in place a clear mechanism for the assessment of that experience.

8.3 The assessment of the study and placement may use a variety of methods appropriate to the programme of study, but all must be subject to specified conditions and there must be agreed learning outcomes known to the students involved.

8.4 Study abroad that is a formal part of the curriculum should in every case contribute to the final award of the programme of study. Its weighting within a Faculty (or delegated School) or programme's assessment criteria for the final award is at the discretion of the Faculty (or delegated School) Assessment, Progression and Awarding Committee but must be clearly stated in the Faculty's (or delegated School's) own assessment conventions and student handbooks approved by the Education Board or Postgraduate Research Board, as appropriate.

8.5 Faculties (or delegated Schools) will prepare pass/fail result sheets for the students who have spent a period abroad. The result sheets will be ordered by programme and issued to each Faculty's (or delegated School's) Examinations Officer or the Chair of a Flexible Combined Honours Degree Board of Studies. The result sheet will then be considered by an APAC.

8.6 The failure of a study abroad placement will be recorded on a student's transcript.

- 8.7 The Dean of Taught Students or Dean of Postgraduate Research is empowered to act concerning student progression in cases of student failure where action is required ahead of the next scheduled Education Board or Postgraduate Research Board meeting, as appropriate.
- 8.8 A profile of marks for an undergraduate placement in respect of all accredited elements will be returned by the Faculty (or delegated School) (or Flexible Combined Honours Board of Studies) as soon as possible after the end of the Summer Term.

9. Conversion of marks/grades

- 9.1 The assessment of placements/years abroad should normally attract mark(s) rather than merely a pass/fail outcome. The mark(s) will be reported on a student's transcript.
- 9.2 Some placements will be subject to direct assessment by the home Faculty (or delegated School). In these instances the marking scheme should follow the Faculty's (or delegated School's) internal conventions. If the external person heading a study abroad placement is involved in assessing the student, appropriate guidance should be provided by the Faculty (or delegated School) to ensure comparability across the various placements within a particular level.
- 9.3 Paragraph 7.1 above refers to other circumstances where years abroad will generate marks relating directly to a Faculty's (or delegated School's) assessment scheme which should require no conversion process.
- 9.4 As a general principle, marks awarded to students by an institution abroad may be converted to the assessment system employed by a Faculty (or delegated School) as long as the conversion criteria are consistent for all students, are approved by the Education Board or Postgraduate Research Board, as appropriate, and are published. Marks or grades arising from overseas university experience are likely to originate from one of two sources:
- a. Institutions within the European Credit Transfer Scheme: Faculties (or delegated Schools) should in this instance adopt within their examination conventions a scheme for converting the ECTS grades of their partners into marks compatible with the marking schemes already employed.
 - b. Other overseas HE Institutions: In each case the Faculty (or delegated School) concerned should ensure that their students are assessed locally and an appropriate conversion

scheme developed to process the assessment results received from the external institution.

Whatever the local practice, Faculties (or delegated Schools) will need to explore the assessment arrangements with care to ensure that the conversion scheme adopted allows comparability of treatment among students attending different institutions.

- 9.5 In all cases details of the assessment and mark/grade conversion processes should be subject to annual monitoring by the external examiners.

10. Assessment, Progression and Awarding Committee procedures

- 10.1 The procedures described under 7 and 8 above will produce a mark for an Exeter student's study abroad that will count towards their end-of-year assessment. It should therefore be submitted to an Assessment, Progression and Awarding Committee in the same way as other marks. It will be for a Faculty (or delegated School), subject to the approval of the Education Board or Postgraduate Research Board, as appropriate, to define the weighting that such a mark will contribute to a final degree classification or award result. In all circumstances this weighting should be included in the assessment information issued by a Faculty (or delegated School) to its students.
- 10.2 The study abroad assignment(s) completed by a student that contribute to the module mark should be available for monitoring by an external examiner, in the process agreed with the examiner. In the case of students studying in an overseas university as opposed to on work placement abroad, there will be no involvement of an Exeter external examiner as it is assumed that the assessment will be conducted according to the arrangements of the partner university.

11. Treatment of failure

- 11.1 All programmes must make provision for the treatment of failure arising from study abroad. Information issued to students by Faculties (or delegated Schools) must clearly spell out the penalties of failure.
- 11.2 Faculty (or delegated School) procedures for the treatment of failure must be approved by the Dean of Taught Students or Dean of Postgraduate Research, as appropriate.

12. Exemption and non-completion

- 12.1 Faculties (or delegated Schools) should have clear procedures, approved by the Dean of the relevant Faculty, for managing exemptions from placements otherwise required for the successful completion of a programme of study.
- 12.2 Faculties (or delegated Schools) must publish clear statements of the academic consequences of non-completion by students of any part of a placement (which may be for reasons beyond their control) or of a failure to secure a study abroad placement.

13. Debriefing of students

- 13.1 The debriefing of students on their return from study abroad is an important element of the learning process. It serves to validate the student's experience by confirming the importance that the University attaches to it. It also helps to advance the process of reflection on personal gains; debriefing in the context of a student's personal development plan could be especially useful.
- 13.2 Faculties (or delegated Schools) should manage the debriefing process in a manner most appropriate to their circumstances but in all cases provision should be made for the following:
 - a. All returning students should be asked to provide feedback to their Faculty (or delegated School) on study abroad, through questionnaires, focus groups, interviews or other convenient means.
 - b. Students should be enabled to reflect on the nature of their experience in the context of their programmes of study, though not necessarily through formative or summative assessment exercises.
 - c. Faculties (or delegated Schools) should make every effort for students to benefit from the study abroad experience in any further learning and assessment.
 - d. The experience of students in specific placements should be made available to those subsequently going to the same placements, with regards to both academic and practical arrangements. The means could include, inter alia, presentations, web-based information and questionnaire results.
- 13.3 It is good practice to recognise that study abroad contributes to students' understanding and to the development of their key skills. This should be recognised in the programme specification and in the design of learning and teaching following study abroad.

14. Quality Assurance

- 14.1 For each study abroad placement, Faculties (or delegated Schools) must assure themselves of its quality to ensure that students will receive a rewarding academic experience appropriate to their programme. The following are examples of processes that will aid this procedure:
- a. Careful validation of the academic content, standards and learning outcomes of the placement and its relation to the remainder of the programme.
 - b. Regular contact between the home link person and a placement contact person, including reports on students.
 - c. Occasional visits to the placement.
 - d. Formal mechanism for student evaluation of the placement, both during and after.
- 14.2 The effectiveness of Faculties (or delegated Schools) in preparing their students for study abroad should be tested through their internal evaluation procedures (including feedback from students after the period away) and will be further evaluated through the Annual Quality Review process. The management of questionnaires and other evaluation devices should be made clear to students, including feedback to those who completed them and the subsequent use of results.
- 14.3 Additionally, Faculties (or delegated Schools) should evaluate the progress and experience on study abroad of students from different racial groups and of those who are disabled. Where required, advice should be sought from the University's Equal Opportunities Officer or AccessAbility.

15. Communication

- 15.1 All parties involved in study abroad placements must be informed of the detailed arrangements concluded under the above headings.