

Policy for the Management of Student International Mobility

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Purpose

As the University of Worcester (UW) grows in reputation regionally, nationally, and internationally so students applying to UW will expect to receive an education that will equip them to work in an internationalised world. Creating graduates with attributes that will ensure success in this environment will need a threefold approach:

- ensuring a high achieving student population from diverse countries
- offering high quality international opportunities to all our students either at home or abroad
- encouraging home and international students to engage and learn from each other.

Research from the UUKI makes a convincing case for the value of international mobility with students showing significant benefits in graduate outcomes, employment prospects and earning potential. Also, graduates from disadvantaged backgrounds who were mobile during their degree earned 6.1% more than their non-mobile peers, and those in work were more likely to be in a graduate-level job (80.2% compared with 74.7%).

This policy document sets out key principles and processes for managing and supporting international mobility at the University in relation to:

- developing new partnerships for student international mobility
- outgoing student mobility
- incoming student mobility
- virtual mobility.

Overview

The University supports a range of international mobility opportunities for students, as follows:

- **Exchange or study abroad programmes** where students study at an international partner institution for a semester or other defined period. Tuition fees are paid to the home institution (exchange) or direct to the host institution (study abroad), and students (or a funding body as appropriate) are responsible for the cost of their accommodation and subsistence
- **Third Year Abroad programmes** where students spend a Year Abroad, normally between the second and third years of their undergraduate degree programme studying at an international partner institution, undertaking an approved work-based learning placement, or a combination of study and work-based learning
- **Short-term student traineeships or placements** are an assessed part of the course within the context of individual modules or programmes of study. Traineeships are supported during undergraduate degrees and postgraduate degrees and are established through exchange partnerships between the University and international organisations. The duration of a traineeship can be from 2 to 12 months. Student traineeships and all other placement opportunities must be selected and managed with reference to the policy on the **Management of Work-based and Placement Learning**
- **Other forms of international mobility**, e.g., Short-term mobility under the Turing Scheme, tutor-led study tours, field trips, research visits
- **Virtual mobility**, sometimes called 'Online International Learning' (OIL) or 'Collaborative Online International Learning' (COIL), refers to collaborative study between two or more international partners where the students are engaged in joint projects synchronously using virtual classroom and other social technology. It does not refer to students studying courses online with partner universities although there may be occasions where this form of study is appropriate or unavoidable e.g., during the COVID 19 Pandemic.

The University will apply for **Turing Scheme** funds to support worldwide student international mobility. This UK based programme funds outward mobility only (November 2021) and has an emphasis on Widening Participation. The University also has access to funds awarded under the 2020 – 2022 Erasmus + project which remain valid until May 2023 for mobility within Europe.

The University also supports **international staff mobility** to enable the enrichment of the learning and teaching experience for students and staff and to develop research or professional skills (please refer to separate **Policy for the Management of Staff International Mobility**).

Each University School has an **International Co-ordinator** (or Co-ordinators) to manage the processes by which incoming and outgoing Undergraduate (UG) and Postgraduate Taught (PGT) students apply for and go on exchange or study abroad programmes, and who works closely with the **International Mobility Co-ordinator**. Postgraduate Research (PGR) students will be advised by their **Director of Studies** and the **Research School**.

Definitions

‘International mobility’ refers to a range of opportunities for students and staff of the University to spend a period studying and/or working in an international context for the purpose of learning, research and/or professional development. **‘Exchange’** refers to an arrangement involving both outgoing and incoming students from a partner institution where students spend a period studying at the partner university but continue to pay their tuition fees to the home institution. **‘Study Abroad’** refers to an arrangement where students pay tuition fees to the host institution either directly or through their home institution where a Study Abroad programme has been formally agreed between the partners. Both **‘Exchange’** and **‘Study Abroad’** students may be referred to as **‘non-degree seeking’** students as they enrol for a part of a degree course only with their host university and are not awarded with a final qualification. Such **‘non-degree seeking’** students are issued with a transcript describing the content of their period of study and the credit they have gained. A **‘Student Traineeship’** refers to a work placement abroad in an enterprise or any other relevant workplace. **‘Virtual mobility’**, sometimes called ‘Online International Learning’ (OIL) or ‘Collaborative Online International Learning’ (COIL), refers to collaborative study between two or more international partners where the students are engaged in joint projects synchronously using virtual classroom and other social technology.

Scope

This policy applies to all students planning a period of international exchange, study abroad, international visit for the purposes of learning, research and/or professional development, and those staff who provide advice on such opportunities or who are developing new partnerships to support international mobility.

The Policy and Procedure

1 Developing international exchange and study abroad partnerships

1.1 The University will develop quality partnerships with organisations outside the UK to expand international mobility opportunities for students and staff.

1.2 The University has already established a wide range of partnerships with higher education institutions throughout the world for the purposes of exchange and study abroad. Here is a list of current [Exchange and Study Abroad partners list](#). Where possible and appropriate the University wishes to strengthen and deepen links with existing partners, e.g., by extending departmental and subject links. It is recognised that international mobility sometimes takes place on an ad hoc basis outside the context of an existing formal partnership. Such mobility falls within the scope of this and the Policy for the Management of Staff International Mobility, and is actively encouraged, not least because it can lead to the development of formal partnerships.

1.3 New partnerships are instigated by Schools and/or Worcester International within the context of University Internationalisation Strategy. Proposals for new partnerships should have the endorsement of one or more Heads of School and should only be taken forward after a visit to the proposed partner has taken place.

1.4 Once the visit has taken place (see para 1.3) Schools propose the terms of an agreement and the Head of International Experience negotiates with the counterpart at the proposed partner organisation before drawing up a bilateral exchange agreement.

1.5 In order to achieve a balance of numbers for exchange, potential new international partners should offer sufficient appropriate modules taught in English to make up academic credit equivalent to the period of the exchange.

1.6 Exchange partnerships are normally institution-wide rather than subject specific. Once exchange partners have been selected, a bilateral exchange agreement needs to be negotiated by the Head of International Experience and approved and signed by the Vice Chancellor or substitute as appointed by the VC. This may be accompanied or preceded by a Memorandum of Understanding which sets out a willingness to work in partnership. The bilateral exchange agreement provides the specific details of the exchange programme.

2 Outgoing Student Mobility

Student Eligibility

2.1 For UG students, the University will normally offer only one semester long exchange, Year Abroad or international student traineeship within a three-year degree, which will usually be in Year 2 (level 5) of a three or four-year degree programme, or between Years 2 and 3 for a Third Year Abroad. Students will be encouraged to select the semester in their year 2 (Level 5) course which least disrupts their programme of study. PGT students who wish to go on exchange or Study Abroad should consult their course leader about the feasibility of their proposed period abroad in the first instance. PGR (including Masters by Research) students could be eligible for exchange or Study Abroad or other international mobility opportunities subject to negotiation with their Director of Studies and, where relevant, funder restrictions. Please note that a student receiving US loans can take up to 25% of their program of study at an ineligible for US loans foreign institution or at an eligible American one, such as University of Minnesota, Duluth.

2.2 Normally students will undertake an international study period through an established University of Worcester exchange partnership. Students who wish to study at an institution that is not in partnership with the University of Worcester will normally be subject to fees at both the University of Worcester and the host institution for that period.

2.3 Students on a three-year undergraduate degree who wish to spend a full year abroad will be offered the Third Year Abroad programme. Successful applicants will be transferred to a four-year programme on the University of Worcester Student Record system.

2.4 Home students remain registered with the University of Worcester during all years of the programme, including the period spent abroad. International students on a course with an integrated study abroad period (year or semester) also remain registered with the University for all the years of the programme. A replacement semester abroad counts as an integrated period as the student receives UW credit for the modules taken at the partner university. If an international student is not on a

course with an integrated period abroad, they will need to intercalate, and the University will withdraw sponsorship for the period spent abroad. International students **MUST** take advice from an International Student Adviser as this will impact on their immigration status and may impact on their eligibility for the Graduate Route.

2.5 Students will be eligible for an international mobility programme provided they are in 'good standing' e.g., they have no re-takes pending or any outstanding financial debt. UG and PGT Students should normally be performing at average Grade C or above (see Bilateral Exchange Agreements for exceptions). Students will also be interviewed by the University of Worcester International Mobility Co-ordinator and a member of the academic staff to evaluate their aspirations for exchange study, their level of cultural competence and perceptions of risk associated with the proposed activity. PGR students should seek advice from their Director of Studies about their suitability for a period of international mobility.

Monitoring and Recording Progress and Achievement

2.6 Student progress and successful completion of study abroad and exchange programmes for outgoing students will be monitored and confirmed by the Board of Examiners (or Research Degrees Board in the case of PGR students).

2.7 For semester exchange programmes, the University records the credit achieved against the student's record but does not normally record grades achieved. Students who study abroad under a partnership arrangement are issued with a transcript of achievement by the partner institution.

2.8 For students who successfully complete a third year abroad programme the UW transcript will record: Worc 3000 THIRD YEAR ABROAD and state 'Pass'. Students will be given a separate transcript recording the study programme, additional credit, and outcomes from the third year abroad programme at the partner institution. Degree classification will be calculated in the normal way based on the three years studied at UW.

Process

2.9 The University of Worcester International Mobility Co-ordinator is responsible for co-ordinating and managing the processes for outgoing UG and PGT student international mobility. The Research School will work with the University of Worcester International Mobility Co-ordinator to manage the process for outgoing research student international mobility.

2.10 Information about international mobility opportunities is promoted at the beginning of the academic year and at the start of the spring semester through interactive sessions hosted by the Schools, with posters and leaflets in [Firstpoint](#) and at City Campus, via the website [Study Abroad pages](#) and the Research School.

2.11 UG and PGT students who express an interest in exchange or study abroad opportunities for a semester or for their third year should be advised to research the possibilities and discuss opportunities with their personal academic tutor and course leader in the first instance. PGR students should, in the first instance, discuss exchange and Study Abroad options with their Director of Studies. UG students can also discuss about their study abroad options with the International Mobility Co-ordinator.

2.12 The Worcester International Mobility Co-ordinator runs regular drop-in sessions to offer guidance about Turing Scheme Funding or Erasmus + funding (until May 2023), information about partners and the application process. Students can book a session through Firstpoint and can choose whether to meet the International Mobility Co-ordinator fact to face or online. Students in receipt of support from the Disability and Dyslexia Service (DDS) can seek advice from the International Mobility Co-ordinator (who can also liaise with the DDS) regarding the support available at exchange universities and the possibility of additional funding from the Turing Scheme to cover incurred costs. Student interested in international mobility can find the application form via the website [Study Abroad pages](#).

2.13 Students complete and submit the **application form** and are then guided through a process which involves an interview with the School International Co-ordinator or the Research Supervisor, the issuing of a statement stipulating suitable modules or activities to be undertaken abroad, confirmation of approval for exchange and application to the host university. When a student receives an acceptance letter from the host university, their modules are adjusted on the University of Worcester's Student Record system.

2.14 Where a student would normally be required to take one or more 30 credit modules over the whole academic year as part of their University of Worcester studies, Schools will approve and make available 15 credit (7.5 ECTS (European Credit Transfer System)) versions of 30 credit (15 ECTS) modules to be taken in semester 1 by outgoing semester 2 students, and semester 2 for outgoing semester 1 students. The process for approval of such modules, if they are not already approved, is via School Quality Committees (and may in some circumstances be undertaken by Chair's action and reported to the School Quality Committee).

2.15 Students should not be asked to complete a 30-credit mandatory module from their level 5 University of Worcester course by distance learning whilst on an overseas semester exchange. This is inappropriate for students required to take a full programme of study at the host institution for visa purposes. Every effort, therefore, should be made wherever possible, to ensure a broad equivalence in relation to the planned exchange study programme for mandatory modules. Where this is not possible careful consideration will be needed to advise the student on the viable options and implications.

2.16 The International Mobility Co-ordinator will provide guidance on funding possibilities (e.g., Student Finance, Erasmus + (until May 2023), the Turing Scheme) and support in preparing for their departure (e.g., accommodation while studying at the University of Worcester and the exchange university, insurance, risk assessment). PGR students may also consult the Research Funding Office about funding opportunities relevant to their level of study.

2.17 The International Mobility Co-ordinator will also provide guidance on alternative ways for internationally mobile students to reduce their carbon footprint through considering alternative modes of transport where available and making choices based on sustainability and sensitivity to the environment.

2.18 The University expects students undertaking international mobility to abide by the terms and conditions of their exchange agreement and to respect the rules and

culture of the host institution and country. Students must also adhere to the rules and regulations of the exchange university which might be different to those at the University of Worcester

2.19 Students' transcripts of records from host institutions are sent to the University of Worcester International Mobility Co-ordinator. The transcripts will be kept in Registry Records and issued to the students along with their degree certificate on graduation.

3 Incoming Student Mobility

Student Eligibility

3.1 Incoming 'non-degree seeking' students may wish to study at the University of Worcester for one semester or for one year as exchange students from partner institutions, or alternatively as fee paying students. They may also come on Erasmus Traineeships/Placements for a minimum of 8 weeks to a maximum of one year. PGR students may also wish to come to Worcester for varying periods (normally between 3 and 12 months) which may be self-funded or funded by an external body.

3.2 Incoming students (UG, PGT and PGR) may only register as exchange students where there is an existing bilateral exchange agreement between the University of Worcester and their home university and sufficient exchange places at the University of Worcester are available. If there are not sufficient places or no exchange agreement exists, UG and PGT students will be classed as Study Abroad students and invoiced for the appropriate Study Abroad tuition fee which is set annually by the Scholarships and Bursary Group in line with the current Home/EU fee or Overseas fee. Incoming PGR students will be classified as Visiting Research Students and charged the appropriate Visiting Research Student fee. This fee will be determined by the period of the visit and the nature of the proposed programme of study.

3.3 Incoming students will have a minimum of one year's experience of university study in another country.

3.4 Students intending to study at the University for a period of up to 6 months will come in on a 'Visitor Route Visa'. Such students are not normally expected to take an English Language test, but their home university selects them on the basis that they have sufficient English to succeed.

3.5 One-year students will come in on a Student Visa. Non-native English Speakers will either have taken a Secure English Test (SELT) or the University of Worcester will have assessed their English as meeting the UKVI requirements (at least at 6.0 IELTS for undergraduate study or 6.5 IELTS for postgraduate study, with no less than 5.5 in each element, unless exempt from being proficient in a component because of a disability). These students will be subject to the same immigration restrictions as other Student visa holders.

Process

Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Students

3.6 Incoming exchange and fee-paying Study Abroad students will all be considered 'non-degree seeking students' and common procedures will apply for module selection, recording of credit and issue of transcripts for both sets of students.

3.7 Exchange and Study Abroad partner institutions send a list of nominated students to the University of Worcester International Mobility Co-ordinator. These students and individual applicants for Study Abroad programmes are invited to apply on a paper-based application form to be submitted electronically to Registry Admissions. Acceptance is based on the production of evidence that they are currently attending a recognised university, are performing at or above GPA (Grade Point Average) 2.8/Grade C average, have sufficient English language skills to cope with the requested level of study, meet any additional requirements for their proposed subject/s of study, and have been nominated by their home institution.

3.8 Student Records will identify modules potentially available for students planning an exchange or study abroad programme each year and institutes will adjust and approve the list. This list should include all 15 credit modules (and 30 credit modules for year-long Study Abroad students where 'pathways' have been previously agreed between partners) except those modules which have pre-requisites, or which are restricted to University of Worcester students for other unavoidable reasons; the list will include 15 credit exchange versions of 30 credit modules. The list should normally be available for students by the beginning of March.

3.9 Students from overseas partner institutions can apply to take an 'student traineeship' with University of Worcester itself or with a placement partner of the University. The student must apply to the British Council for a Tier 5 Confirmation of Sponsorship. Members of staff who manage placements and internships will normally mediate between the work-based learning partner, the incoming student, and the University in accordance with the **Policy on the Management of Work Based and Placement Learning**. Incoming students offered a 'student traineeship' will be recorded as International Placement Students and provided with a student card and access to University of Worcester services. The Learning Agreement signed by the host organisation should be scanned by the Admissions Office and lodged along with the application form on the individual student record. Student Records will need a copy of each agreement which requests placement exchanges to allocate a code which can be used for HESA statistics recording. In some cases, the incoming student will enrol on an existing University of Worcester work-based learning module and undertake the assessment requirements associated with the module.

3.10 Accepted applicants for incoming student exchange, Study Abroad or student traineeship are issued with an acceptance letter confirming their place at the University of Worcester and their proposed programme of study. The letter also contains information on airport pick-ups, international induction, and accommodation options.

3.11 As incoming exchange students are not necessarily familiar with the academic conventions and cultures of UK higher education, for example in relation to approaches to learning and teaching or assessment, Institutes should provide an

appropriate academic induction in addition to the generic International Induction provided by Worcester international.

3.12 When module results are confirmed at a Board of Examiners, two transcripts are printed (one for the student, one for the home university) and dispatched by the Worcester International Mobility Co-ordinator to the International Exchange Co-ordinator (or equivalent) at the student's home university.

Research Students

3.13 Where there is an exchange agreement in place, incoming PGR students will be treated as exchange students and will be subject to the processes set out above, although acceptance will be based on their progression within their research degree rather than based on GPA. Further, while such students may undertake modules, more commonly they will engage in a non-accredited programme of study agreed between the partner institution, the incoming student, and an identified contact at Worcester. All other incoming PGR students will be classified as Visiting Research Students.

3.14 Potential Visiting Research Students will complete the application form and submit to the Research School. The application form will require the student to identify the following:

- details of PhD study
- name and contact details of lead supervisor in home institution
- period of visit (normally 3-12 months)
- proposed academic institute or research centre in which student will be based
- proposed contact for the period of visit if already known
- proposed programme of study
- details of funding for the visit.

3.15 The Research School will forward the application to the relevant School Research Degree Co-ordinator who will make an assessment about whether the School is willing and able to accept the student. In addition, the Research School will also forward the application to the International Student Advisor for the purpose of identifying any prohibitive visa issues.

3.16 If it is decided to accept the student, the Research School will first contact the identified lead supervisor in the home institution to ascertain that they and the institution support the visit. If this is confirmed then an offer letter will be sent by the Research School confirming the period of the visit, the supervisor, the School, the fee, and any other details (such as induction programme and accommodation options) or requirements (such as additional evidence of funding for the visit). The offer letter will be copied to the Head of International Experience, the School Research Degree Co-ordinator, and the relevant Head of School.

Related Policies, Documents or Webpages

UUKi report on International Student Mobility: [UUKi Report](#) [accessed 16th March 2022]

[Policy for the Management of Staff International Mobility](#)

[Policy on the Management of Work-based and Placement Learning](#) [accessed 5th May 2022]

Exchange and Study Abroad partners list: [Exchange and Study Abroad partners list](#) [accessed 16th March 2022]

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Recent changes

Committee	Date	Change
LTSEC	2 nd March 2022	In the context of Brexit, this policy was reviewed and substantially rewritten.