

Liverpool Hope University

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT EXCHANGE

& STUDY ABROAD POLICY

**Version Control**

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| Version History | Received by | Comments |
| Draft v1.0 | Considered by Rectorate Team  | Oct 2014 - Review following revisions to the Quality Code and routine review of extant arrangements, including risk assessment, approval of courses and learning support. |
| 2014 v1.0 | Academic Committee26/11/14 | Recommendation to Senate (December 2014) that the policy be approved, to come into effect immediately |
| Version 1.0 | Senate | Approved by Senate December 2014  |
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| Key Related Policies / Guidance | Academic RegulationsCollaborative Provision HandbookStudent Support and Wellbeing Policies  |
| Document Author | Associate Dean (International) |
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**SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION**

* 1. **Background**

Liverpool Hope University is concerned ‘both with knowledge and competence in academic disciplines, and also with the formation and, indeed, the transformation of its students into graduates prepared for making a difference for good in the world’ (University Corporate Plan 2012-16, p1).

Specific actions and goals within the Corporate Plan and associated strategies (such as the Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Strategy 2013-16 and the Enhancing Student Employability Strategy 2014-16) support our ambitions in this regard. In particular, the University aims to develop its’ ‘collaborations with institutions…across the world [thereby] fostering opportunity for…exchange at faculty and student level (Corporate Plan p2); provide a ‘transformational experience for students’ (Corporate Plan p4) and ‘support student’s personal development and employability prospects’ (Corporate Plan p4). We also aim to ‘provide opportunities so that at least 50% of undergraduate students will have spent time abroad or volunteered or undertaken a work placement’ (p4) and proactively seek to extend the number and take-up of exchange opportunities for students and staff.

Normally, undergraduate students who wish to study abroad via an exchange agreement at one of our partner institutions do so for one or more semesters in their second year (Level I/5). Opportunities for postgraduate taught and research students vary according to their programme of study and partnership agreements. Outside the EU, a bilateral agreement is signed which allows for a set number of students to be exchanged each way from across the whole institution. Within the European Union (EU), following the granting of an Erasmus University Charter, agreements are made under the Erasmus regulations on a subject to subject basis. Tuition fees in both instances are paid to the home institution and students are responsible for the cost of their accommodation and subsistence. For students on the Erasmus exchange programme (within the EU and European Economic Area (EEA)), a maintenance grant is made directly to the student.

**1.2 Definitions**

**Exchanges**: An exchange refers to a period of study or a work placement spent in a partner university where there is an exchange agreement between the two institutions. Exchange programmes are designed to balance the numbers of inbound and outbound exchange students. Normally, a student continues to pay fees at his / her home institute and will get academic credit for the period abroad. Exchanges at Liverpool Hope can be within Europe (part funded by Erasmus Plus) or outside Europe (self-funded).

**Study Abroad student** An incoming student who applies to spend a semester or academic year at Liverpool Hope through the International Study Abroad Programme. A student may apply independently or through one of the University’s partner institutions and providers.

**1.3 Partnerships**

The University currently has exchange agreements with a number of Universities and Colleges across the world, allowing Liverpool Hope students to study at another institution for part of their degree and enabling students from partner Universities to study at Hope. The University has been awarded the Erasmus University Charter (EUC) which allows it to take part in the Erasmus+ Programme and exchange with partner universities in Europe. The University also has exchange agreements with universities and colleges in North America, South Africa, South Korea, Japan, Mexico and Hong Kong.

In order to achieve a balance of numbers, Faculties need to select exchange partners with care ensuring that the partner institution offers appropriate and sufficient modules (normally taught in English) which enable students to:

1. achieve sufficient credit during their time abroad (mapped to the credits they would be expected to achieve were they to remain on their home programme);
2. continue their programme at Hope on their return without any disadvantage as a result of their study abroad.

It is expected that all partnerships will be subject to appropriate due diligence and be formally approved in line with the guidance set out in Appendix 1**.** This process is facilitated in Europe by Erasmus funded ‘Organising Mobility’ (OM) funding and ‘Teaching Mobility’ (TM) funding.

**SECTION 2 OUTGOING STUDENT EXCHANGE**

Liverpool Hope undergraduate students wishing to undertake a period of study abroad will normally be encouraged to select the period in the second year (Level I/5) of their course which least disrupts their programme of study. Given the configuration of Hope’s undergraduate programmes it is expected that this will typically be the Lent Term, although exchange may be requested for other periods dependent upon the design of the home programme and the corresponding programme of study to be followed at the partner institution.

# 2.1 Student Eligibility

To be eligible for the International Exchange programme, undergraduate students must successfully pass their first year at Liverpool Hope and should normally apply to go abroad during their second year. Students are not eligible for the programme in their third year, with the exception of BA Primary Teaching (QTS) students who must go in the second semester of their third year (of the 4 year programme). The specific eligibility criteria which must be met are detailed below:

1. **Academic criteria**

To be considered for international exchange students must:

* Be of good academic standing – they must be on target to pass the first year of study with grades and attendance;
* Demonstrate serious academic and professional goals for their exchange;
* Be prepared to abide by the rules and regulations of Liverpool Hope University and the host University.

If the student fails the first year of study he/she will be withdrawn from the exchange programme. The International Unit is responsible for confirming the student’s marks before the student’s exchange commences.

1. **Personal qualities**

The University expects its international exchange students to act as ambassadors of the University and therefore expects students to be able to demonstrate:

* Maturity;
* An ability to exhibit appropriate behaviour in a variety of situations;
* Sensitivity to different social and cultural issues;
* Flexibility to adjust to different cultures, lifestyles and living conditions;
* An ability to cope with overseas study and to maintain a high academic standard;
* The willingness and capacity to act as an ambassador of Liverpool Hope University.

**(c) Financial requirements**

The ability to meet all financial requirements as required by the programme. These are:

* Travel expenses;
* Accommodation costs;
* Living expenses;
* Any course costs, such as field trips.

Postgraduate taught and postgraduate research students must meet similar criteria, and be achieving a good pass / on progress with their programme.

Students will be expected to make their application before:

* the end of March of their first year for exchanges to the USA in their second year (although applications for exchanges to be undertaken in the second term will be accepted until mid-October).
* the end of April for exchanges within Europe (although applications for term 2 exchanges will be accepted until mid-October).

# 2.2 Student Selection

All applications should be reviewed by the International Unit and the relevant Department/School to ensure that the candidate meets all necessary academic and personal criteria. If there are more student applications than places then places will normally be allocated on academic standing.

Applications are made in consultation with the Study Abroad and Exchange Co-ordinator, the Academic Tutor/s and the Programme Lead. This will involve approval of the intended study programme for the international exchange period, as set out a Learning Agreement (examples of which can be found in Appendix 2) indicating the modules to be taken whilst abroad and their credit value.

It is not appropriate to ask students to complete work by distance learning whilst on an overseas exchange, particularly where students are required to take a full programme of study for visa purposes. Every effort, therefore, should be made wherever possible to ensure a broad equivalence between the planned exchange study programme and the Liverpool Hope approved provision. Where this is not possible careful consideration will be needed to advise the student on the possible options and implications. If the Department/School, or the Study Abroad Coordinator and/or the Associate Dean (International) have concerns as to the suitability of the proposed programme, approval will not be granted.

**2.3 Confirmation of Programme of Study**

Confirmation of the student’s intended programme of study should be provided to the host institution by Liverpool Hope University. This must be signed by all three parties (the student, home and host institutions). Any subsequent variance from this must be agreed.

**2**.**4 Supporting Students with Additional Needs**

Any Liverpool Hope student can apply to undertake a period of study abroad (subject to meeting the eligibility criteria in 2.1). Student Support and Well-being, working closely with the International Unit and our exchange partners, will endeavor to ensure that appropriate support arrangements are in place at the host institution for students with a Learning Support Plan wishing to undertake an exchange. Under the terms of the Exchange Agreement, any Hope student studying at a partner institution is eligible to receive support in line with that available to the partner institution’s own students. It is important however, for both the student and for Liverpool Hope to be confident in the local support arrangements available.

**2.5 Assessment and Reporting of Marks**

Any Liverpool Hope student undertaking a period of study abroad will require a bespoke assessment pattern for the year in which their exchange takes place.

Results / credit achieved during the exchange period are summarised in a transcript after the study period has been completed. The transcript must be sent to the International Unit at Liverpool Hope University so that the results can be recorded in line with the University’s assessment scheme. A process for entering marks from overseas institutions for students who have spent a period abroad has been agreed at the Standing Sub Committee on Assessment and is undertaken at Departmental/School level on the basis of the information received from the host institution.

# 2.6 Risk Assessment

To support student’s well-being, health and safety whilst on an exchange, the International Unit will complete a risk assessment profile based on information provided by the host institution, in line with the University’s [Student Placement Health and Safety Code of Practice](http://www.hope.ac.uk/media/liverpoolhope/contentassets/documents/policiesandprocedures/healthandsafetypolicy/media%2C14203%2Cen.pdf). An action plan will then be drafted to demonstrate that the University has considered how significant hazards/risks related to the exchange shall be managed. The exchange administrator will brief students in line with the Risk Management Action Plan prior to travelling to the host institution, details of which will be held on the student’s file in the International Unit.

# 2.7 Insurance

All students who undertake an international exchange as part of their degree programme are covered by the University’s Insurance policy for the duration of their study period. This coverage is for legitimate academic activity only; for non-academic activity the student is expected to get extra additional insurance. Students are expected to have their own health insurance, which includes a repatriation clause and must confirm details of such insurance to the University prior to travel.

For students studying in Europe Health cover is provided by the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC).

**SECTION 3 INCOMING STUDENT EXCHANGE AND PAID SEMESTER OR YEAR ABROAD (STUDY ABROAD)**

**3.1 Study Abroad Courses**

Each subject area should identify the provision it wishes to make available for incoming exchange/study abroad students no later than the January in advance of the academic year in which the course is to be offered. This will form the Catalogue of Courses for International Exchange and Study Abroad. Given the nature of Hope’s undergraduate programmes whereby Liverpool Hope undergraduate students study two, 60 credit blocks per year, if Departments / Schools wish to offer smaller (15 or 30 credit) learning units derived from already approved undergraduate provision, the curriculum and associated assessment/s will need to be approved in line with the process outlined in Appendix 3**.** Typically, a 15 credit course offered to incoming students would have 1 assessment, a 30 credit course would require two. Liverpool Hope’s current portfolio of Masters (Level 7) provision is already approved as smaller credit-rated modules and does not therefore require separate approval.

**3.2 Applications**

Incoming Study Abroad students apply via email (an application form is available to download). Incoming Exchange students should be nominated by their home University and, following contact by Liverpool Hope, apply in line with the applications process. As incoming students are not registering for Liverpool Hope awards, acceptance will be streamlined and will be based on the production of evidence that they are performing at or above a stated level (GPA (Grade Point Average) of normally 3/Grade B), have the necessary English language skills to cope with the requested level of study (hold an qualification equivalent to CEFR B2), and have a positive supporting reference from their home institution.

### The Deadline for Applications from Incoming students is:

* For study in the Advent Term, normally the end of May of the preceding academic year.
* For study in the Lent Term, normally the 1st of November of the same academic year as the study is to take place.

Applications will be reviewed by the International Unit and an offer made in accordance with the home institutions own processes.

Students follow the agreed programme of study whilst at Liverpool Hope and an official transcript is sent to the student’s home institution showing credit and grades achieved on completion. (Note that students have access to information about their credits/grades via the student records management system, but the formal confirmation is provided by Liverpool Hope to the student’s home institution).

To support students wishing to attend Liverpool Hope as part of their programme, Study Abroad students whose application is successful and who apply in advance of the deadline/s will be guaranteed accommodation in halls at one of Liverpool Hope’s campuses, including Aigburth Park Student Village.

**SECTION 4 REVIEW OF EXCHANGE / STUDY ABROAD**

The International Unit will submit an Annual Review to the Collaborative Provision Sub-Group (normally for the first CPSG meeting of the academic year) which should include:

* numbers of students travelling out to each partner, by Liverpool Hope programme;
* numbers of in-coming students, where applicable, from each partner, by Hope subject area;
* evidence of the student experience at each partner visited;
* the academic success of the students concerned (out-going and in-coming);
* any issues around the experience of in-coming students;
* information about the management of each ‘live’ partnership including the ease with which contact is maintained and the institution’s responsiveness to addressing queries or problems;
* any other issues raised by students or faculty staff;
* recommendations for termination of any agreements where the numbers are insufficient and/or the student experience or operational management are inadequate;
* recommendations for the termination or renewal of any agreements which are coming to an end within the next 12 months.

**Appendix 1**

**Approval Of An Exchange / Study Abroad Partner**

* The University must approve the proposed institution as a fit and proper partner.
* All exchange partnerships must be articulated via a signed agreement.
* Any agreement which establishes a partnership for the purposes of student exchange should be signed by the Chair of Senate.
* An institution will normally be approved if it falls within Categories 1 or 2 or 3 AND provides information as set out in the additional information section below.

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| **Category 1** | The proposed partner has been awarded the **Erasmus Charter for Higher Education** under the Erasmus+ Programme |
| **Category 2** | The proposed partner is covered by the **Bologna agreement**. In such instances;* the country must be a signatory;
* the provider in question is covered by the provisions of the relevant national application of the Bologna agreement (e.g. a private provider might not be covered by quality and standards provision which applies under Bologna to state-funded HEIs);
* the provider uses ECTS and adheres to the Dublin Descriptors or a national equivalent;
* the provider has a current positive report from the national quality and standards review process under ENQA or can evidence alternative current external approval (e.g. governmental / ministry accreditation or licensing).
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| **Category 3**  | The proposed partner is a **recognised provider of higher education and is subject to a national quality / standards framework**. It is expected that any provider within this category can normally evidence:* a statement of academic standards at relevant levels including as a minimum the threshold level for a Bachelors (or equivalent) award;
* an explanation of how learner achievements are described (what we call learning outcomes, assessment criteria and credit value, but not necessarily in those terms);
* a current positive report from the relevant external quality and standards review process (e.g. governmental / ministry accreditation or licensing).
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In addition, any proposed partner should make available

* information about admission criteria, language skills, visa requirements, modules or other units of study available to exchange students (including content, learning outcomes, evidence of academic level);
* information about the assessments / assessment criteria associated with the programme or modules;
* a point of contact (academic or non-academic) for the student while in-country and for the programme leader (or nominee) at Hope to discuss any issues relevant to the student’s progress;
* evidence of insurance cover (the equivalent of our public liability) for the student while on campus.
* information about the support available to students whilst studying at the partner, including the support available for students with disability/declared need.

The International Unit, working closely with the University Secretary’s Office is responsible for managing the signing of a suitable agreement with the host institution. The nature and detail of the agreement may vary depending on whether it is part of a wider exchange network such as Erasmus. It is intended that the quality procedures evidenced will provide sufficient assurance of the suitability of the institution. Should such information not be available approval will not be given. Exceptionally, a site visit may be made to the institution to verify its suitability.

**Review of exchange providers**

Approval will normally be for a maximum of 5 years[[1]](#footnote-1) at the end of which documentation must be gathered to renew the agreement if the participating Faculties wish to continue with the arrangement. The International Unit is responsible for initiating this.

**Timescales**

The following timescales allow for a new host institution to be approved in time for students to undertake exchange in the following academic year.

1. Approval of the institution as a host: normally by **30 September (so 30 September 2015 for a study visit to take place in 2016/17).**
2. International Office to clarify any additional details about new host institution (contact names, accommodation arrangements etc): normally by **30 November (so 30 November 2015 for a study visit to take place in 2016/17).**
3. Learning Agreement to be signed at least 3 months before the proposed start date of the exchange

**Appendix 2**

Learning Agreement Exemplars

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**Appendix 3**

Approval Of Units Of Study For Inclusion In The Study Abroad / Exchange Catalogue

Each Department/School should identify (using the standard template) the provision (‘Courses’) it wishes to make available for incoming exchange/study abroad students no later than the January in advance of the academic year in which the course is to be offered.

Where a new course is offered, it is expected that the External Examiner for the parent major/programme will confirm that the Course is an appropriate extraction from the main major/programme.

However, **in exceptional circumstances**, it may be the case that a course requires approval outside of the standard timeline. In such instances (for example, an international student wishing to change course/modify their learning agreement **after** arrival) an alternative course (up to a maximum of 30 credits) may be developed and, reflective of the urgent nature of situation, approved by Faculty Board upon the recommendation of FQLT. This is in line with Faculty Board authority to approve stand-alone Postgraduate Modules up to 30 credits.



1. It is recognised that some agreements (such as those under the Erasmus + programme) may be subject to more frequent review and associated conditions. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)