

Erasmus+ Student Handbook



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Guide for Outgoing Erasmus+ Students

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I. Introduction

This guide is intended to help you through the preparations for studying abroad under the Erasmus+ Programme and to give you some useful advice for when you arrive. Read through it once to get an overview, and then go through each section in order to make sure that you have covered everything.

At the end of the guide there is a checklist of things you need to do in preparation for your Erasmus+ mobility. PLEASE USE IT. Its main purpose is to make your life easier in the long run.

This guide has been produced by the **Academic Partnerships Office (APO)**. The APO provides support to students applying to study abroad at one of the university's International Exchange and Erasmus+ partners. In addition to supporting outgoing exchange students, the APO works with exchange students from partner universities applying to Brunel University London.

The International Mobility Manager within the APO administers the Erasmus+ Programme centrally within the University. We are happy to try to answer any <u>non-academic</u> related questions you might have about your forthcoming exchange. If you have any academic questions, please speak to your Academic Exchange Coordinator.

Our contact details are:

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Every effort has been made to provide both accurate and comprehensive information. If you find any information in this guide that is inaccurate or out-of-date, or you come across information which would be useful to future students, please pass it on to us so that we can improve the handbook. Thank you

II. Erasmus+ Programme

What is Erasmus?

In 1987 the European Commission initiated a new programme for student mobility in Europe called **ERASMUS** – the **EuR**opean **A**ction **S**cheme for the **M**obility of **U**niversity **S**tudents. The Erasmus Programme gives European students enrolled in a higher education institution the opportunity to study for part of their degree programme in another European country and can receive recognition of this period as an integral part of their overall degree.

Erasmus is part of the Erasmus+ Programme 2014-2020 and operates via a number of inter- institutional agreements between higher education institutions, through which the partners agree on exchanges of staff and students. Brunel University London currently has agreements with over 30 partner institutions in countries across the European Union (EU) including its candidate country and European Economic Area (EEA).

From your second year (FHEQ 5) onwards, you can spend between 3 to 12 months studying at one of our partner institutions. Most students at Brunel go on exchange in their second year of studies.

The credits you gain whilst studying on exchange will be transferred and credited towards your degree on your return to Brunel, but there may be some cases where your grades may not be converted.

What is ECTS?

Most European institutions use the **European Credit Transfer System** (ECTS) in order to provide common procedures to guarantee academic recognition of studies abroad. ECTS credits are a value allocated to course units to describe the student workload required to complete them. They reflect the quantity of work that each course requires in relation to the total quantity of work required to complete a full year of academic study at the home institution.

A typical annual Brunel course load of 120 credits is equivalent to 60 ECTS credits so you should plan to obtain 30 ECTS credits each term. Please talk to your Academic Exchange Coordinator for advice on course requirements.

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III. Initial Application Process (for Brunel)

Nomination

You must first be nominated by your Department to take part in the Erasmus+ exchange. In order to be nominated, you must be in good academic standing (i.e. 2:1) and follow the internal selection procedure as set out by your Department. The nomination process normally takes place in February and the Academic Exchange Coordinators inform the International Mobility Manager of those that have been selected to go on exchange.

Grant Application

Erasmus+ grant is available to those that are eligible. Once you have decided on the host institution, you need to complete an Erasmus+ Grant Application. This should be done as soon as possible and sent to the International Mobility Manager. For more information about the grant, please refer to the appendix.

Learning Agreement

Prior to applying, discuss your course options with your Academic Exchange Coordinator and agree upon a programme of study that will enable you to study approximately 30 ECTS credits per term. Once you have selected the modules you plan to take at the host institution, you must complete the Learning Agreement (for studies) which must be signed by both Brunel and the host institution's Academic Exchange Coordinators for approval. The signed Learning Agreement must then be returned to the International Mobility Manager at least one month before your departure.

If there are any changes to your original Learning Agreement after your arrival at the host institution, you must complete the 'During Mobility' page to indicate the changes. This must be signed by both the host institution and Brunel Academic Exchange Coordinators before you send it to the International Mobility Manager at Brunel. It is important to keep your Brunel Academic Exchange Coordinator informed of your plans to ensure that you will satisfy the academic requirements of the term/year you spend abroad.

Grant Agreement

In order to receive Erasmus+ funding, you must complete the Erasmus+ Grant Agreement and Learning Agreement. The Grant Agreement must be signed by you and the International Mobility Manager <u>before</u> you start your exchange period.

IV. Application to Host University

How to apply

The next step is to apply directly to your host university. Although you may have been nominated by Brunel University London to study at the host institution, your place is not guaranteed until you have completed your host university's application procedure. If you do not submit the application for courses by your host university's deadline, you may not be accepted to the exchange programme.

Once you have been nominated by Brunel University London, you may start on the host university's admissions process. Your host university may send you their application forms and information by post or email. Therefore, it is important that you provide them with accurate postal and email addresses. If your term time address is different from your permanent address, it might be better for you to use the permanent address. Please check your email account regularly before and during your exchange to make sure you do not miss any deadlines.

Some institutions may ask you to complete their online applications, as opposed to a paper application. In which case, please follow the instructions carefully and submit all necessary documents as required. Be sure to give yourself plenty of time to complete and submit the application in case you have difficulty. Sometimes you may not be able to find help at the last minute.

Remember:

- To keep copies of all your documents.
- To meet any deadlines set by Brunel and the host university.
- To take copies of any forms/confirmation of acceptance, etc. with you when you travel to your host country.

Accommodation

If your host university offers accommodation, make sure you apply in a timely manner. Be aware that standards of university accommodation may vary around Europe. If rent is very cheap, bear in mind that you usually get what you pay for. If your host university does not offer accommodation or you prefer not to stay in university accommodation, you may need to arrive early to find a room. For many rooms and flats you need up to one month's rent as a deposit plus one month's rent in advance. Make sure you have access to this money, that you get a receipt for any money you hand over, and that you fully understand any contracts you sign. If necessary, talk to the International Office or Accommodation office at your host university for advice.

A good place to look for rooms is the University. Check out notice boards for adverts, but you will have to be quick as there will be lots of other students looking for the same thing. If you are struggling to find a place to live, you can always seek professional help from an agency. However, be careful and only register with genuine agencies. Do not be pressured into signing a contract or handing any money over.

If possible, it is a good idea to live with local students. This will give you a more complete experience, assisting you with your language skills and knowledge of the local culture.

Orientation

Most institutions will organise an international orientation programme for incoming students to introduce them to the university, the local area, the culture and other new students. It may not be compulsory, but if you have the opportunity, taking part in the orientation programme will help you absorb a bit of "culture shock". In any case, try to arrive a few days to a week before your lectures begin. This will allow you to settle into your new housing and to become acquainted with your new environment.

Language support

The Erasmus+ Online Language Support (OLS) is available currently in English, French, German, Spanish, Italian and Dutch only. Participants in Erasmus+ mobility have to assess their language competences before and after their stay abroad. In addition, participants will have the opportunity to take online language courses for free during their stay in the host country to improve their language skills.

Many host universities provide free or subsidised language course before or at the start of each academic term/year. So, you should try to find out if this is on offer at your host university. Your host may send you information about language courses or you may find this on their website. If your host university does not offer language course, you may wish to attend a language school in the UK or in your host country before beginning your Erasmus+ exchange period.

Brunel Language Centre (BLC) at Brunel offers a range of language classes to students for free. Please visit their website for details: https://www.brunel.ac.uk/international/language-centre.

V. Preparing to Go

This section is designed to help you with your planning but please note that it is by no means definitive. You may want to invest in a guide book to the country you are going to for more in depth information about day-to-day living.

Finance

<u>Important:</u> You must inform the Student Centre to check what your tuition fee liability is. They will discuss the available funding packages with you so that you could continue to receive the funding while you study overseas.

If your tuition fees are usually paid by your awarding agency (SFE, SFW, SFNI, SAAS) or Student Loans Company (SLC), you <u>must</u> advise them that you are going on an Erasmus+ exchange. You are still entitled to receive any funding which they usually provide but it is important to let them know that you will be away on an exchange. Also, the awarding agency may offer refunds for the travel costs. So please contact them for the details.

Insurance

Travel insurance for students who are studying abroad as part of their course is compulsory. Brunel University London will provide travel insurance which will cover you for the entire period you are abroad and it is free of charge. Please make sure you complete and submit your travel insurance application form to the Insurance Office at least 1 month before you depart the U.K. On receipt of the completed form, you will be issued with a travel card and details of the insurer's website both of which provide useful information before travelling and if the need arises for medical or other assistance while overseas. Please note if you are going to be involved in a particularly hazardous activity while overseas (e.g. skiing) then separate insurance to cover the activity taken out in the destination country is advisable.

Students must apply for the travel insurance using the online application form available on the intranet at https://intra.brunel.ac.uk/s/planning/Pages/TravelInsurance.aspx

Neither Brunel University London nor the UK Erasmus Council can accept any responsibility for any accident, illness, injury, loss or damage to persons or property resulting from or in any way connected with your participation in the Erasmus+ Programme. Therefore, it is your responsibility to make appropriate insurance arrangements.

EHIC

You will also need to obtain a European Health Insurance Card. This entitles you to free or reduced cost medical treatment in the countries of the European Economic Area (the 25 EU member states plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) and Switzerland. You can apply for an EHIC online in just a few minutes from the following website:

http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcareabroad/EHIC/Pages/about-the-ehic.aspx

It is unwise to go on an Erasmus+ exchange without this card and you should apply for it in plenty of time. Be prepared for the unexpected to happen – it is always better to be safe than sorry later.

Transportation

It is up to you to arrange how you get to your host country. You can choose to take the plane, train, or drive whichever option you find most reasonable.

You are advised to purchase an International Student Identity Card (ISIC) before you go. This will be sufficient ID to receive any student discounts that are available (both in the U.K. and abroad) on anything from air travel to museum visits.

The ISIC card is available to purchase online at https://www.isic.org/. Depending on the postal system in your country, it usually takes 3 – 4 weeks to process you online application and deliver the card to you. To check if you can purchase the card in your country, please click https://www.isic.org/.

If you are taking a car to continental Europe, remember to drive on the <u>Right-hand</u> side of the road! Make sure that your insurance, MOT, etc. will cover the period that you are abroad. You must respect the local highway code and make sure you reset your headlights. If your vehicle has British license plates, you are required to have a GB sticker on it. If you sell your car while abroad, you will need permission from the Customs Authorities.

Money

Make sure you have enough cash for your first few days abroad. About £150 in local currency should be a reasonable amount to tide you over until you have settled in. For security reasons, do not carry large amounts of cash with you.

In most cases, you would be able to withdraw money out of your UK current account from your host country. But check with your bank for details about ATM charges when abroad and perhaps look into finding a bank or building society which will not charge for cash withdrawals abroad.

You may wish to open a bank account in your host country, although this could prove difficult if you are only there for one term. In which case, you might want to keep your money in your UK bank account and then access it from abroad. However, be aware as some banks can charge up to £20 to transfer money abroad, and it can take up to a week. So, it is best to talk to your bank about different options available.

It may be worthwhile applying for internet banking before you go away. By doing so, you can keep track of your finances and be sure that grants or loans are paid into your account.

Arrival

IMPORTANT: If you have not arranged accommodation before you leave, remember to book a room in a hostel (or hotel) so that you know where to go when you first arrive. It is not a good idea to arrive in a foreign environment with your luggage not knowing where you will sleep for the night. You can easily reserve a bed in hostels using the internet so do book it from home before your departure, and then use it as a base while you look for something more permanent. A good place to find a hostel is: www.hostelworld.com

It is a good idea to check in advance how you are going to get to your destination from the airport. You should be able to find ground transportation information from the arrival airport's website. Also, you may want to buy a local map before you arrive to allow you to get acquainted with the area.

Mobile phones

If you are travelling with your mobile, be sure to contact your service provider who can give you details on international roaming. Your mobile may not operate unless your provider registers your photo for

international access. When using your phone abroad, you will often get charged for the expensive "international" part of the call. Talk to your supplier and be sure to shop around for the best deals.

General

Try to find out as much as you can about your host institution and their academic system. It is best to refer to the web for detailed and up-to-date information.

Get yourself a good guidebook such as Lonely Planet, which will give you a wealth of information on the country you are moving to, the town/city you will be living in, and places to visit, etc. Look out for local entertainment guides as they are good for highlighting the more distinctive cultural elements of a particular country. Keep in mind you are not in Britain anymore so be sure to respect the local culture to avoid offending the locals.

VI. Health and Safety

Much of what we can tell you about health and safety while abroad is common sense, but even if you are an experienced traveler, we advise you to read through this section as a precaution. Check out the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's travel advice site on the internet where you could find further information on health and safety. Also, guidebooks have good hints on health and safety in the host country and are good sources of much useful information during your stay.

If you have a particular health condition, discuss the details of continuing your prescription abroad with your GP. Also, be sure to get translated copies of any important health documentation you may have. Once you have settled in to your new accommodation, it is a sensible idea to find out the location of the nearest hospital and A&E in case of an emergency.

Personal safety

- Look less conspicuous to avoid unwanted attention. So, try not to make it obvious that you are a
 foreigner. For instance, you should consult your map in a shop or café, rather than looking lost in a
 back street.
- Certain behaviour can also leave you vulnerable. For example, getting completely drunk can attract unnecessary attention, as most young Europeans drink comparatively sensibly. If someone in your company is in a bad condition, do make sure that they get home safely.
- Avoid wandering aimlessly or going into areas of town which are known to be dangerous, especially after dark.
- Do not carry large amounts of cash or valuables with you. Try to divide up what you do carry on you. A money belt or wallet that fits inside your clothing is a good way to hide valuables and documents.
- Do not try and retaliate should someone try to mug you. Your personal safety is more important than any amount of money you may have on you.
- If you are finding your own accommodation, talk to other students in the same areas that you
 are looking at and who have been through the same process. For safety, take someone with you
 when you go flat hunting.
- Speak to a local or the host accommodation office about where the dangerous places are in the area.
- Hitchhiking is not advisable as a method of transport and in some countries such as France, it is illegal.

Beware of taking taxis from unlicensed operators.

Domestic safety

- Check the electric/gas/water connections, etc. where you are living. If they look faulty, call someone in to examine them.
- Make sure that there is a smoke alarm in your new accommodation.
- Always keep your entrance door and windows locked especially if you are living on the ground floor.

Health awareness

- Know the local emergency numbers.
- Have a dental/eye check-up before you go and register with a local doctor.

Crisis prevention

- Keep your family, your host university, and Brunel informed of where you are living.
- Always make sure that you have access to some money and if possible, try to have a back-up
 ATM card that you can use in case of emergency.
- Make sure you keep photocopies of all your important documents (i.e. passport).
- Keep a note of emergency numbers for your bank and credit cards so that you can cancel them right away if they are lost or stolen.

The Law

- Drugs Just say no! You really do not need the hassle.
- Do not carry any type of weapons around with you.
- Remember to carry ID as some countries may require you to carry ID at all times.
- In the unlikely event of you being arrested, insist on the British Consulate being informed. That way a consular officer can advise you of the local procedures.

Advice for women

- Try to avoid moving into a ground floor flat or somewhere that is easily accessible from an outside staircase.
- If travelling at night, try and stay in a group of people.
- If you think someone may be following you, make it obvious that you have noticed him/her and stay somewhere with a lot of people around until you judge it to be safer to continue.
- Dress sensibly as the way you dress can influence the way you are treated (possible verbal or physical harassment in some countries).
- Talk to your peers for guidelines to avoid any unpleasant situations.

VII. Complaints Procedures

Whilst we hope that the period abroad is fulfilling and rewarding, if you feel you have grounds of complaint about any aspect of your period abroad, you may be able to bring a complaint should you feel it is necessary. Whether the complaint is dealt with by the University or by the host institution, is decided by which institution has responsibility for the matter being complained about. For example, complaints about the academic provision of the programme will be dealt with by the University in accordance with the University's Complaints Procedure, but complaints which do not relate to the academic provision of the

programme, for example, accommodation provided by the host institution, will be dealt with by the host institution. If you wish to raise a complaint regarding your experience abroad, but are unsure who has responsibility for dealing with the complaint, please contact your Academic Exchange Coordinator or the Academic Partnerships in the first instance to discuss the matter further.

Complaints about Bullying and Harassment

If you think that you are being bullied, harassed or discriminated against by students or staff of the University, please refer to the <u>Bullying and Harassment Policy</u>. If you think that you are being bullied, harassed or discriminated against by students or staff of the host institution, please refer to the relevant procedures of the host institution.

Advice

The <u>Advice & Representation Centre (ARC)</u> of the <u>Union of Brunel Students</u>, can supply independent information and advice about submitting a complaint. The ARC website address is http://brunelstudents.com/Advice/ and you may contact them via email: advice@brunel.ac.uk or by telephone on (+44) (0)1895 269269.

Mediation

You can also use the University's Mediation Service at any time to resolve your University complaints. The University's Mediation Service is a free, confidential and impartial service aimed at resolving University concerns in a quick and informal fashion. Information about mediation can be found HERE.

You can refer your University complaint to mediation even if you have started the University Complaints Procedure. In that case, the University will normally suspend the investigation of your complaint while the mediation process continues. This is because the mediation may resolve all or some of the complaint issues. If mediation is unsuccessful, you can ask for the investigation of your complaint to be continued. In this case, you will be provided with revised time limits in which to continue your complaint.

Further information about mediation can be obtained from the <u>Student Complaints Officer</u> or by emailing <u>studentmediation@brunel.ac.uk</u>. You can also obtain information on mediation from the <u>Advice & Representation Centre (ARC)</u> of the <u>Union of Brunel Students</u>.

VIII. Miscellaneous

Register with Brunel University London

You must complete Brunel University registration (available from September 1st) as you remain a Brunel student throughout your period abroad. Student loans and other funding will not be paid until you have completed online registration.

What to do if you have any problems abroad

If you run into any difficulties registering for classes, finding suitable housing, with security issues or dealing with culture shock etc., you can find help from a variety of sources. It is better to start with the help provided locally on the campus where you are studying (e.g. personal tutor, local International Office, Welfare Office, Accommodation Office, etc.) however, if that fails you should make use of the many services available to you at Brunel.

24-hour contact with Brunel

If you have any issues overseas and need to contact Brunel University London out of normal working hours, you can contact the Security Office by phone on: +44 (0)1895 255786 or email the team at security-operations@brunel.ac.uk. Please be aware that this is the Security Office and, if out of normal working hours, your call may not likely be put through to someone specific immediately.

Notice of withdrawal

If you are considering withdrawing from the period abroad once you have arrived at your host university then you must contact your Academic Exchange Coordinator to seek advice about your options immediately. We will then inform the host university overseas if appropriate/necessary. You may lose housing deposits and/or visa charges that you have paid for, but aside from that, there should be no problem in withdrawing as long as you have given us sufficient notice.

Monitoring and Reporting (Tier 4 Student Visa holders)

Whist studying overseas, you must continue to fulfil the conditions and obligations under UK Visas & Immigration Tier 4 Student Visa scheme. Brunel University London will make at least 10 engagement points (in an academic year) to which you must respond in a timely manner. If you do not respond or if you do not have a reasonable explanation, the University may take steps to withdraw sponsorship of your visa and withdraw you from the University and the host university.

IX. Final Note

By now you should know everything you need to successfully integrate yourself into your chosen country. If you need any more advice please do not hesitate to contact the Academic Partnerships Office. Please utilise the checklist at the end of this guide to help you prepare.

Don't forget that the Erasmus+ exchange is not just for academic purposes but is also an opportunity to experience and enjoy a new culture while making friends from all over the world. Throw yourself into your new life and be willing to meet new people at any events organised for you by your host university. You will not be the only person alone in a new country so do not be scared, just be proactive. This will help make the transition period easier for you.

<u>Most importantly</u>, relax and concentrate on trying to settle and feel at home as quickly as possible. Just like in your home town, a little common sense goes a long way. We hope that you enjoy your exchange period!

X. Appendix

The Student Mobility Grant

Funding, in the form of an Erasmus+ grant, is available for students who are eligible to participate in the Erasmus+ exchange programme. The grant is available to Erasmus+ students in addition to any funding and support in the form of loans or grants that student usually receive from their awarding agency or Student Loans Company (SLC).

Generally, students will receive their initial allocation of grant in September or October and a second allocation upon completion of their exchange period. Student mobility grants will be paid as a flat rate grant and calculated on a monthly rate.

Note: Grants are provided as a contribution towards the additional costs of the planned Erasmus+ mobility period, and are not meant to be a full maintenance grant.

There are a number of basic requirements for eligibility for the grant, and there are conditions of payment which you must consent to before you receive any money. Three important things to note are:

- I. We cannot pay you a grant unless we receive your Erasmus+ Learning Agreement and signed Grant Agreement.
- II. If you do not complete at least 3 months of study or are unable to fulfil the course requirements of your Erasmus+ period abroad, you will have to return the total grant that you received. If you do not return the grant, you will be deemed to be a debtor to the University and may not be able to graduate until you settle that debt.
- III. In order to receive the grant, you must provide a 'Confirmation of Arrival' form, signed by the host university and return any other required documents. Failure to do so may lead to your second instalment being withheld.

XI. Useful Websites

- Brunel Erasmus+ Exchange https://www.brunel.ac.uk/international/exchanges-and-study-abroad-programmes/brunel-students-abroad/erasmus-for-brunel-students
- British Council https://www.britishcouncil.org/study-work-abroad/outside-uk/erasmus
- UK Erasmus+ National Agency https://www.erasmusplus.org.uk/study-abroad
- Student Finance England (for travel grant) https://www.gov.uk/travel-grants-students-england/overview
- Erasmus+ Student Network https://esn.org/erasmus
- European Commission http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus/doc892 en.htm
- European Health Insurance Card https://www.gov.uk/european-health-insurance-card
- Foreign & Commonwealth Office www.fco.gov.uk/en/
- Hostel World <u>www.hostelworld.com</u>
- STA Travel <u>www.statravel.co.uk</u>
- Transportation Security Administration https://www.tsa.gov/travel

XII. Your Personal Checklist (please tick boxes on completion)

Initial s	teps:
	Submit application to Host University
	Complete and submit the following documents to the APO: 1. Erasmus+ Grant Application – APO to provide document 2. Learning Agreement 3. Risk Awareness Checklist 4. Travel Insurance Application
	Submit application for accommodation to Host University (if applicable)
	Inform the Student Centre and SLC of exchange plans, usually by writing a letter
Before	you leave:
	Sign and return the <u>Grant Agreement</u> to the APO
	Ensure you have a valid passport
	Arrange accommodation
	Make bank/financial arrangements
	Make travel arrangements
	Complete and submit Brunel <u>Travel Insurance Application</u> to the APO
	Obtain European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) for emergency medical cover
	Purchase ISIC card (optional)
When	you arrive in host country:
	Register with the local police within 30 days of arrival (if applicable)
	Complete and return Confirmation of Arrival form to the APO
	Submit amended or finalised Learning Agreement to the APO
At the	end of your exchange period:
	Complete and submit Student Report/Survey online
	Complete and submit Confirmation of Mobility to the APO
	Request Academic Transcript of Records to be sent to the APO