Erasmus Policy Statement

Internationalisation is a core strategy of the University of Stirling and seeks to establish the university as a distinguished institution, addressing the needs of society through innovative, interdisciplinary research and education (University of Stirling Strategic Plan 2011-2016). It is designed to maximise our established reputation for providing top quality research and teaching in a range of globally important fields by enabling us to pursue a wide range of transnational research and education activities. The Strategy draws from and promotes our core values of respect for diversity in cultures and beliefs, and the pursuit of knowledge that sustains beneficial change in the local, national and international society.

The University’s mission is to pursue research and scholarship at an international level of excellence and to provide flexible and innovative programmes of learning and teaching in an attractive and vibrant environment. As such, it aims to integrate the European dimension as an important element in its teaching and research. The University strongly supports developments which bring European academics, students, institutions and communities closer together in a mutually beneficial spirit of co-operation.

In pursuance of these objectives, the University has established a wide network of European and non-European student and teacher mobility programmes. One of the main objectives of these programmes is to enhance the overall student experience whilst establishing a diverse academic community. Student exchanges are a major component of our internationalisation work. We are committed to offering as many University of Stirling students as possible the opportunity to spend part of their degree programme abroad and offer access to a variety of opportunities including ERASMUS.

ERASMUS programmes have been identified by the University as the exchange option with the greatest potential for growth and additional staffing resource has been secured to prioritise this. In addition to the ERASMUS exchange programmes, the University participates in a number of transnational education activities including articulation arrangements, distance delivery and double degree programmes. The University is actively seeking to increase its global presence and further TNE partnerships continue to be explored.

The University aims to identify, establish and develop partnerships with a number of EU and non EU institutions. These partnerships generally happen at three levels: individual/subject specific, School and University. All three of these types of partnerships are of equal importance and it is essential to ensure that these are developed to enable both staff and student mobility. In terms of geographical priority, partnerships are currently established in over 30 countries and the University is actively seeking a range of new partnership opportunities. This allows the University to extend both the range of participation possible for students and staff and widen the geographic coverage of its participation. Some of the
markets that the University is keen to further develop under the Programme include Sweden, Turkey and Italy although this is by no means limited.

Whilst all staff and students are encouraged to take part in the mobility options offered by the University, the key priority is to increase the number of undergraduate students participating in some form of outward mobility programme. It is strongly believed that this significantly enhances the overall student experience whilst providing students with the requisite skills to increase their employability and become active global citizens in line with the University’s Strategic Plan.

The University operates on the basis of non-discrimination, whether of gender, race or other factor, and in order to ensure that exchange opportunities are accessible to all, a number of new initiatives are currently being explored. As an alternative to the traditional semester or year abroad, progress is being made to identify shorter term study opportunities. This will offer students who may not have previously had the option to study abroad the opportunity to do so and supports the University’s Widening Participation strategy.

If applicable, please describe your institution’s strategy for the organisation and implementation of international (EU and non-EU) cooperation projects in teaching and training in relation to projects implemented under the Programme.

The University of Stirling is committed to internationalisation and has undergone a recent restructure to establish an International Affairs Team. One of the tasks for this team is to create a central management area for the organisation of international co-operation projects. Clarifying and streamlining the procedures for evaluating international co-operation projects is of the highest priority.

Non-EU cooperation projects are managed by the International Partnerships Manager in consultation with the relevant Academic School. The International Exchanges Manager, along with the newly-created International Exchanges Officer post, will assume responsibility for the overall management of EU funded projects. Working closely with our Research and Enterprise Office, the aim is to build on our existing portfolio of partnership activity.

Under the LLP, the focus to date has very much been on student mobility and staff teaching mobility. As these streams have been developed at the University, an increasing number of internal stakeholders are realising the advantages to be gained from collaborative projects under the ERASMUS Programme. Subsequently, approaches from Academic Schools enquiring about participating in further Programme streams have increased. The University has committed staff resource to bring together existing knowledge bases with the aim of securing greater participation in collaborative projects.

Ultimately, the University recognises that increased engagement in projects such as TEMPUS will filter down through the Academic Schools to raise awareness of international opportunities for students. There is a responsibility to promote within the academic community not only the opportunities, but the outcomes of successful participation. This
forms a key part of the accepted institutional responsibility to both create and maintain that momentum.

*Please explain the expected impact of your participation in the Programme on the modernisation of your institution (for each of the 5 priorities of the Modernisation Agenda*) in terms of the policy objectives you intend to achieve.*

The University of Stirling has long understood the importance of producing graduates whose awareness of the world extends beyond their immediate geographic confines. The benefits of global citizenship are well-documented, but the challenge persists of motivating students to recognise opportunities outside of the immediate teaching space. As the University has sought to increase both the number and quality of enrolled students, so has thought been given to using the availability of international opportunities as a means of attracting those students.

The study abroad opportunities for our students have often been cited as a reason for choosing our university over others, and the University strives to create awareness of these opportunities at the earliest possible stage. With the publication of each year’s prospectus, consideration is given to whether or not each degree programme can afford its students a semester abroad should they want it. The University’s recruitment team uses former study abroad students as ambassadors for our exchanges as part of all on campus events and several off campus events. The aim is to plant a seed of awareness at an early stage that studying abroad has far-reaching benefits for students, and should be considered.

However, it will always be the case that students will not be able to undertake a semester abroad for a variety of reasons. The University recognises its responsibility to ensure that these students are not disadvantaged. Providing financial support for, and institutional recognition of, shorter mobility periods is part of the University’s internationalisation strategy. Further, the ongoing work on internationalising the curriculum seeks to ensure that students can still see the benefits of global education and teaching should a period of studying abroad be unattainable. The External Affairs Directorate (with responsibility for EU and non-EU partnerships) works closely with the Career Development Centre to ensure that the benefits of study or training abroad are seen as directly relevant to employability. In 2013 the University was successful in securing a grant from the Scottish Government to create an online module for students undertaking study abroad periods. The module, currently in development, will have a section on employability. The CDC will also present during the newly-established ‘Returnees Conference’ for all returning study abroad students. The emphasis will be on linking international aspects of education with future success in business. Finally, in recognition of the benefits that a study abroad period can provide, the University has created a significant scholarship fund for outward mobility. This is not limited to undergraduate study abroad periods and will also be accessible to postgraduates and faculty for cross-border research. The University is committed to eliminating, where feasible, the hurdles preventing so many from expanding the scope of their teaching and learning.