UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING
Erasmus Exchange Programme

What You Need to Know!
Erasmus Student Handbook 2015-16
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Introduction

*A few words of wisdom.*

As I sit at my desk finalising this handbook, which I hope will be a useful guide to you on your Erasmus exchange, I hope you are as excited about the adventure you are about to embark on as I am jealous. My biggest regret as a student is not taking advantage of the opportunities Study Abroad offers students so make sure you go out there and grab the opportunities that come your way both academically and socially! At times it may be frustrating, you may be demented with all the paperwork and yes you may miss home now and then but at the same time you will be delighted, inspired and amazed at what you are experiencing.

As I just hinted to above, and you may already have heard me going on about, Erasmus is a paper heavy programme! These regulations are put in place by the European Commission who are in overall charge of the Erasmus programme and we report directly to the British Council who look after Erasmus in the UK. This handbook walks you through the forms and we are on hand along with your Overseas Advisor to answer any questions you may have along the way. Our advice is keep a copy of everything you send to us as things can go missing. Every form you send to us is important and we genuinely need it to administer your Erasmus Grant.

I suppose what I am trying to let you know is that you have a fantastic opportunity in front of you here, and you should recognise it for what it is. The road ahead will be filled with paperwork, administration and the need to have your “i’s” dotted and “t’s” crossed. But it will also present to you lasting friendships, valuable learning opportunities and rewarding challenges.

I’m jealous!

Fiona Buckland, International Exchanges Officer

May 2015
Application and Course Approval
Information

When and how to apply to your host university, and what courses to take when you’re there.

Congratulations! You’ve been selected to represent the University of Stirling as an Erasmus exchange student.

So what happens next? Even though you have been nominated as an Erasmus student, you still have to apply to your host university. This process differs greatly between our partner universities, but is not a complicated process.

Your exchange period is what we call an ‘integral’ part of your University of Stirling degree. That means that the credits from the modules studied during your semester or year abroad will count towards your final degree. You’re still a University of Stirling student, you’ll still be enrolled here, remember to enrol at Stirling even if you are away on exchange at the start of term, you just happen to be studying somewhere else for all or part of your third year.

To make sure that you continue on course for your degree, all students have to go through a course approval process before they leave. You will need to complete a Learning Agreement between yourself and the University of Stirling so that you are aware of the courses that need to be taken (and passed!) during your time on exchange so that the progress of your degree at Stirling is not adversely affected.
How do I apply to my host university?

In some cases, as part of the application process you will have to indicate the course modules you would like to take while on exchange. However, these are, in most cases, not actually applications for pre-registration. Even though you are only being asked to give an indication of what you are wishing to take, it is advisable to discuss your plans first with the Adviser of Studies in your division. In due course, the Adviser must be involved in the course approval process, as described later. Please follow the following link to the list of Undergraduate Adviser of Studies.

You have a responsibility to consult the website of your host university for course information. This will generally come under a link for Course Catalogue or Academic Catalogue, although you can also find course information under the webpage of the individual academic department for your subject. Some universities may ask you to nominate your preferred housing at the point of application. Check the websites and contact Stirling students who may already be at your host university, or who have returned, for advice and information. We can provide you with this contact information.

When will I hear about my admission?

Most of you will get this confirmed, in writing, by your host university in either April/May for full year of autumn semester exchanges or October/November time for spring semester exchanges. Please remember that you’re all applying to different universities who all process applications differently so please don’t be concerned if your friends hear before you do! Some of the partner institutions will send your acceptances to the Erasmus Coordinator rather than directly to you. We will contact you as soon as these arrive. Please keep copies of any materials you send to your host university both for your own reference and in case things are lost in the mail. If you are asked to apply for housing at that stage, do this immediately. Many institutions will ask for a housing deposit and you will need to pay this either by credit card or by getting an international bank draft in your host currency from your bank (this can cost £10 - £15).

Remember

There is a lot of paperwork associated with the Erasmus exchange. Keep copies of EVERYTHING you send to your host university, to us here at Stirling and of all email correspondence!
How do I get approval of courses before I leave Stirling?

There are a lot of forms associated with the exchange process. Please see appendix 2 for a complete list of all these forms and their individual purpose.

If you are on an elective exchange, as opposed to a compulsory language exchange, you need to be aware of what you would be taking here at Stirling in your degree programme were you not going on exchange. You can find this out by logging into your portal record and looking up the Degree Programme Tables.

Look up your specific degree, and look at the semester 5 and/or 6 modules. Please pay particular attention to any core modules as opposed to option modules because core modules must be covered whilst on exchange. This will give you an idea as to the kind of courses you should be looking for when you look up the course catalogue of your host university. You should match as closely as possible any core modules, and all courses taken at the exchange partner university must be in your main degree subject(s).

IMPORTANT NOTE: Taking the Right Amount of Credit

At Stirling, a full time load is three courses per semester but at the Erasmus partner university you will be required to take 25-30 ECTS credits per semester. This could vary between 2 and 6 courses at the partner university, or it could be more. This is because all courses are weighted differently in terms of their credit value and students on exchange must earn the equivalent of a semester or a year of Stirling credit during their study period. All of your courses count!

Using the course catalogue for the university you are going to, and timetables (they are also known as ‘schedules’) for the next semester once available, discuss your planned courses with the Adviser of Studies for each area involved in your degree (i.e. if you are following a combined honours programme, you will need approval from both advisers). You and they will complete form Learning Agreement which can be downloaded from the Essential Documents section of the Exchange Website:
www.stir.ac.uk/exchange/essential-documents (please make sure you use the Learning Agreement for Erasmus students)

You should return this form to the Erasmus Coordinator when the course approvals are complete. The form will be logged for your file, and will be sent to the Student Programmes Office (SPO) and your academic advisor. It may be the case that a ‘variant programme’ is required and we will work with the Student Programmes Office to arrange this. A ‘variant programme’ simply refers to a change in your formal programme should you have to take modules out of sequence because of your exchange participation. Once approved by the University, you will receive from the Erasmus Coordinator a letter formally confirming your permission to be on the exchange programme.

In all cases, the Learning Agreement must be returned to the Erasmus Coordinator by mid-July (for semester 5) or November (for semester 6 exchanges). Most Erasmus partners will make available online an autumn semester timetable which you will be able to check before the end of semester 4, so you will be able to check if your courses are available and compatible with the timetable. Your Erasmus Overseas Advisor must indicate on the Learning Agreement which courses are compulsory (i.e. regarded as the equivalent of a core course at Stirling) and you must take those whilst on exchange.

Remember

- Learning Agreement forms must be signed by your Erasmus Overseas Advisor(s) and returned to the Erasmus Coordinator with your approved courses.
How do I change courses once I’m at my host university?

The Learning Agreement is completed in advance of you actually going to your exchange partner university and finalising your registration. When you come to actually register for your exchange courses at the host university (this may be either before or after arrival), you may find that you cannot take a particular course that you wanted. This is very common, (more common than not actually), so don’t panic. Schedules change, courses are withdrawn, more appropriate courses may have been added to the schedule which weren’t there originally and it may not be possible for you to register for the courses originally agreed on your Learning Agreement.

Why bother with the Learning Agreement then? There needs to be a documented understanding between you and the University before you leave to go on exchange. This is an important part of your Erasmus exchange - particularly if you are receiving a grant. You need to be aware of your academic responsibilities in terms of how many courses you need to take at your host university, what level these courses should be at and how these courses will transfer back to the University of Stirling. The Learning Agreement is also important because it indicates any core courses you have to take while on exchange – these are courses that must be taken at your host university.

However, if circumstances dictate that you cannot be registered for one of your agreed courses, you can try to persuade the relevant professor that you need to take this course as a requirement for your degree back at Stirling. This can often succeed, you should always, always ask – they can only say no! If that’s not possible, or if the course just isn’t available, you need to select an alternative of equal credit and level. Any changes you make to your Learning Agreement need to be approved and confirmed by your Erasmus Overseas Advisor back at Stirling before you complete your registration.

Remember

Most students have to make changes to their agreed courses once they arrive – don’t panic! You do have to be proactive at securing alternatives, and all changes must be approved by your Adviser of Studies.

If it is impossible to get a place on a core module whilst on exchange then do not panic, it’s not the end of the world! In most cases, we can arrange for you to take an additional module once you return to Stirling.
Whether changes to the Learning Agreement are required or not, you must return a copy of the Learning Agreement with a signature from the “responsible person” at your host university. Where changes have been made these must be agreed with your Adviser of Studies and recorded in the “During the Mobility” section of your Learning Agreement. This must be emailed back to the Erasmus Coordinator at the start of the semester. You will be informed if any change is not approved. If you do not return your Learning Agreement, your new courses will not be approved and will not count towards your degree, so it is important that you return the form in good time.

We will send two reminders for Learning Agreements. If you don’t return it, it’s on your head if you end up taking courses you didn’t get approval for and they are not suitable. There is a limit to how much chasing we can or will do – you’re not children and the expectation is that you should be responsible for the administrative side of your exchange programme. #soapboxmoment
What are the academic procedures for course approvals, changes and credit in detail?

**Course Registration**

Some of the Erasmus partner universities ask students to pre-register for courses. Others only ask for an indication of what you want to study. If there is no pre-registration, you are not automatically entitled to entry to any individual course. Many universities allow you to pre-register for courses using their online registration systems and will send you details about how to do this once you have been accepted.

It is possible that you may experience difficulty in getting the courses you require. This is all part and parcel of being an exchange student *so you have to expect this and be proactive*. Approach professors and Erasmus / International Office staff for help; explain that you are an exchange student, there for the semester, that all your courses count towards your degree back at Stirling and you must study a particular course. The personal approach usually works – but don’t be aggressive or demanding; negotiation is always better. Remember that previous Stirling students almost always have a good academic record and that can be monitored (faculty want good students in their classes!).

The following is designed to help you, as well as keep us up to date with your progress. Please remember that, at the end of the day, everything you study while on exchange counts towards your third year here at Stirling so you have to stay on top of your academic commitments.

**Course Approvals**

1. **Learning Agreement** – completed before you leave Stirling

You must obtain approval for your choice of courses before you leave Stirling. If you are taking a single Honours degree, your Adviser of Studies will sign the Learning Agreement and the form should be returned to the Erasmus Coordinator so that a copy can be saved. If you are following a combined Honours degree, you must obtain approvals from the Adviser of Studies in each of your degree subjects.

It is important to be aware of the credit balance for your degree programme if you are a combined Honours student. Most combined programmes have a 50 – 50 weighting between subjects, but some are 60 – 40. This will affect what courses you have to take whilst on exchange. The Degree Programme Tables on your portal record can provide more information. It gets trickier if you’re on a combined Honours programme...
but only going on exchange for one semester. This is why we have the Learning Agreement – so all of these things are ironed out before you go.

2. **Learning agreement – Changes to the original agreement – returned at the start of each semester you register at the partner university**

It is important that you follow the procedures for course registration and changes as outlined in this booklet for three reasons:

a) Approval for continuation of your programme must be obtained;

b) Corrective action can be taken by your Adviser of Studies if your choice of courses is unacceptable;

c) Changes in planned courses because of changes in courses offered at the Erasmus partner university may affect your degree standing if you do not get permission for the change. This has happened in the past and it’s not fun for us to deal with. This may result in you being required to take additional modules in semester 7.

3. **Academic Transcripts**

At the end of your exchange the Erasmus partner university should send a transcript (official record) to the Erasmus Coordinator. If you want your own original copy, you will have to request that from the partner university and may have to pay a small fee. Some universities require you to sign a form giving them permission to send your transcript to our office, so make sure you do this! Note: if you have any debt (no matter how small!) to the partner university your transcript will not be released so make sure you pay those library fines before heading home after your exchange!

![Handed Donation](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

**Remember**

You are responsible for:

- securing permission for your intended courses of study (Learning Agreement)
- gaining approval for any change to that study plan (Learning Agreement – changes to the original learning agreement)
- advising the Erasmus Coordinator of any change in circumstances
- ensuring that the partner university sends a final transcript to the Erasmus Coordinator
- ensuring you complete your Arrival/Departure Certificate and send the original to the Erasmus Coordinator
- completing the online British Council participant report
What happens if I fail a course when I am on exchange?

Being on exchange does not free you from the requirement to complete all courses satisfactorily. If you fail one or more courses while abroad, you must inform the Erasmus Coordinator immediately so that your Academic School(s) can be informed and make recommendations on what remedial steps can be taken. Failing a course whilst on exchange will be viewed as the equivalent of failing a module here at Stirling. Do not assume that you can simply carry on with the next semester without there being any alteration to your study plans.

Depending on the module, you may be required to take additional courses throughout the exchange period. Another alternative is that you may have to make up the failed course when you return to Stirling. A lot depends on what the course you failed was, whether it was equivalent to a core requirement of your degree or whether it was the equivalent of an option. Never stay quiet about failing a course – consult your academic school or our office immediately. Even if you think you might fail a course, get in touch and give us a heads-up. If you fail more than one course, this can have serious consequences for your degree programme back at Stirling.

It is therefore essential that you keep us informed of any academic problems, especially if you may be failing a course. The sooner you tell the Erasmus Coordinator about this, the sooner we can start working on the issue; do not just hope that the problem will go away. If there are any circumstances to be taken into account, such as illness, inform us at the time of these and keep written evidence of such factors. Failure to do this, just as it would if you were at Stirling, will jeopardise your degree.

It is worth mentioning that the failure rate of students on exchange is very small and most of our students do very well. Just keep in touch!

What are workloads and standards like?

Workloads may be heavier than you would normally expect at Stirling. It’s not necessarily that the work is harder, just that there’s often more of it than you’re used to here. You have to work constantly right from the start, so you need to have self-discipline. If you are used to cramming the night before the exam, or waiting until the last moment to start an essay, you will not have a successful semester unless you adapt to a different system of learning.

The workload may be heavier than you experience at Stirling
If you are not working around 30 hours a week on average, you may not be doing enough to keep up!

For some of our European partners, studying is a serious business and you will find the academic atmosphere at many of our partner universities very competitive. Feedback from past exchange students tells us that this atmosphere makes them work harder, and their fourth year grades at Stirling reflect this upon return.

Academic standards across Europe range from poor to among the best in the world, just as they do in the UK. There is quite a variety among other countries too. All of our exchange universities have good academic reputations and some are world class. Do not make the mistake of thinking that the host country’s system is easier than the UK, or that exchange students are treated with greater leniency – this is not the case.

The systems are different, so there will be a period of adjustment at first wherever you go. All of our exchange partners have an orientation for exchange students at the start of the semester and you should attend this as academic differences will be covered. Talk to your academic advisors, especially at first, until you know the system and are confident that you know what you’re doing and what is expected of you. It is important to hit the ground running, and attending these orientations is the best way to start.

How many courses should I take each semester?

As mentioned above, students are required to take around 30 ECTS credits each semester whilst on exchange. For example, if you are a single honours English student at the University of Basel, you must aim to take 30 ECTS in English each semester of exchange. For example, if you are a joint honours student in Film and Media studies and Business at Universidad Carlos III, you must take a minimum of 30 ECTS credits each semester, equally split between these two subject areas.
Passport and Visa, including guidance for Tier 4 visa students

As a European Union member state, students from an EU member state are free to study in Europe without the need to obtain a visa. If you are studying at the University on a Tier 4 visa you may be required to obtain a visa to study with the Erasmus partner university. You should always check the websites of the embassy or consulate for your particular country of exchange for up to date visa information as this is subject to change without notice. Also, the Erasmus office at your partner university will normally be able to provide visa advice.

**Passport**

Please go and check your passport now and ensure that you have a full, current passport which is not due to expire. The passport must be valid for at least six months after you return from exchange. Passport application forms are available at main Post Office branches for UK Citizens:


If you are not a UK citizen you need to check the relevant information specific to your country.

If you require a passport or if your passport needs to be altered for any reason, please attend to this immediately. Do not wait until the summer to apply for a passport renewal as this is the busiest time. In fact, exchange partner applications will often ask that you include a copy of your passport photo page so it is worth renewing this sooner rather than later.

**Guidance for Tier 4 visa students**

Holding a Tier 4 visa does not exclude students from participating in an exchange. However, any visa implications will need to be
considered before embarking on a period abroad. The University will continue to sponsor students on a Tier 4 visa during a period of exchange or study abroad providing they meet all the immigration requirements of the country in which they will study.

**Passport**

In addition to the academic requirements for the period abroad students should ensure that they hold a valid passport. All EU countries require students to hold a valid 10 year passport in order to study and some require that this passport is valid for between 3 and 6 months after the end of your visit. The Erasmus Coordinator will check that the student has a valid visa before the student is permitted to embark on a period abroad and will consult with the International Student Advisor in the case of queries.

**Data Protection Authorisation**

Prior to embarking on the period abroad students must sign a declaration which authorises their host institution to disclose information to the University of Stirling concerning academic progress, engagement and conduct during the period abroad.

**Visa Implications for Periods Abroad**

Students will not be able to extend their visa if this will result in them having exceeded the maximum time limit (or 'cap') set by UKVI. This usually means that students must not have spent more than five years with immigration permission as a Tier 4 (General) student, or as a pre-Tier 4 student. Before the student is permitted to embark on a period abroad the Study Abroad Office must check with the Enrolment and Records Team (ERT) as to whether the time spent abroad might take them over their 5-year limit.

**Tier 4 Responsibilities**

Tier 4 students on a period of study abroad remain a registered student at the University of Stirling. As a result, under UKVI regulations, the students and the University need to ensure that their responsibilities are met. For students they must attend their classes and keep in regular contact with their host School as well as the University of Stirling. Should they change their contact address during the study abroad period they should notify both the host institution and the Study Abroad Office at Stirling of changes to their contact address.
The ERT will send the students an email which details their responsibilities during the period abroad and what they are required to do in order to comply.

**Responsibilities Whilst Abroad**

**Proof of enrolment**
As the University needs to report to UKVI those students who do not complete enrolment the ERT needs to receive confirmation from the host institution that the student has completed enrolment and has commenced studies. The student will provide the Study Abroad Office with a stamped Arrival/Departure Certificate (but only the arrival section will be completed) from their host institution within two weeks of arrival. This document will then be forwarded to ERT.

If a student does not provide a stamped Arrival/Departure Certificate the Study Abroad Office will contact the host institution to confirm that the student has arrived and has embarked on their studies. If the host institution is unable to confirm the arrival of the student then ERT will contact the School and the student with regards to obtaining information as to whether they are no longer on the study abroad period. If no response is received from the student and the School has received no communication then the University will withdraw its Tier 4 sponsorship and UKVI will be notified accordingly.

**So make sure you get those Arrival/Departure Certificate forms back on time!**

**Points of contact during time abroad**
When you finish your exchange you must return your completed Arrival/Departure Certificate (with both sections completed) to the Study Abroad Office. The host institution will provide the Study Abroad Office with details of academic progress at the end of each semester. Any concerns over progress, non-attendance at exams etc. will then be taken forward by ERT so that the Team can then liaise with the School and the students regarding their Tier 4 responsibilities and the implications for our sponsorship. Where there are issues with Tier 4 compliance during the period abroad then the University will consider whether they can continue sponsoring the student. This may lead, where appropriate, to the student having to return to the University to continue studying, or having their Tier 4 sponsorship withdrawn.

At the end of the exchange period the Study Abroad Office will flag to the ERT any issues over the transcripts.
Notification to UKVI

The Enrolment and Records Team will notify UKVI of those students who have changed study location due to their study abroad period. The Team will notify UKBA of the duration of the period abroad and the institution that the student is attending.
Travel and Accommodation

*Insurance, flights, where to live whilst on exchange...*

Planning to go on exchange requires research and preparation. You can make this easier by thoroughly researching the university that you’re going to, and the surrounding area. Look up their websites, email Stirling students who are either on that campus at the moment or have recently returned – these students are your best resource for this sort of information.

**Do I need insurance coverage?**

*Yes. Yes. And Yes!*

Having suitable health and travel insurance is a condition of participation in the exchange set out by the Erasmus Programme. It is your responsibility to ensure that you have adequate insurance coverage for the duration of your study abroad period.

The European Health Insurance Card, will only provide you with a basic level of cover and you should always take out additional insurance, checking that it includes cover for instances such as repatriation and specific medical intervention.

Whatever insurance you buy check that it does not just cover the length of time you are studying abroad. We always advise students to purchase additional travel insurance to cover them for the journey to their host university, and for any travelling done after their studies.

The cost of buying comprehensive health and travel insurance is **not covered** by the University of Stirling and is not included in our cost of living estimates. For a semester’s cover in Europe, we have heard good things about Endsleigh who charge between £60-100. Check with companies which specialise in student insurance. If you want to take part in certain sports whilst overseas, you are advised to buy the appropriate insurance cover.
Do not go abroad without having comprehensive travel and health insurance!

It is required that you take out travel and personal possessions insurance to cover you going to and from the host country, travelling around outwith semester and to insure your belongings. Always shop around to see who offers the best deals. Remember that you have to have health insurance for your whole period abroad. Please read the information provided by your host university carefully, but also note the following points:

- Take note of exclusions in all policies, e.g. dental costs, dangerous sports or pre-existing conditions. In these cases, it should be possible to buy ad hoc insurance.

- Check that you have vacation cover. If you stay in your host country beyond the formal end of the exchange period, make sure your insurance covers this.

Do not cut corners on this aspect of your exchange year. Medical costs can be very high and even the slightest medical attention can bear a surprisingly high charge. What you are buying is peace of mind. Remember to keep any receipts for any medical attention that you have. You will need this for the insurance claim.

Dental Care

Have a thorough check up and complete required treatment before you leave for your exchange year. Most insurance will not cover dental treatment as standard, so if you have recurring dental problems it is advisable to take out dental insurance before you leave. At the very least – have a check up before you go!

Insurance for Personal Effects, Personal Liability and Money

Please make your own arrangements for this. The University of Stirling strongly recommends that you take out insurance cover and is not liable for any costs associated with this cover, or costs incurred as a result of failure to take out adequate insurance. If you buy travellers cheques, use a company that provides a free replacement if the cheques are lost or stolen.

How do I organise flights and when should I arrive?

You are responsible for making your own travel arrangements and for all travel costs.
Check with a travel agent such as STA, Trailfinders or other specialist travel companies. High street travel agencies are not the best sources of cheap flights for students. Remember that it is advisable to have an open-ended ticket, or at least one where the return date can be changed for not too high a fee. This will give you greater flexibility about your return date. Web-based agencies can provide reasonable prices, but are not geared to providing support of advice and may not be able to provide the best student price for travel.

The earlier you buy your ticket, the cheaper it may be, but if you buy before you know your final semester grades you may lose some of your money if you fail to meet the grades required to go on exchange. **The University of Stirling will not reimburse students in these cases.** Early booking will also guarantee your flights at what will be a busy travel time. It is recommended that the date of the return flight is geared towards the expiration date of your visa (if you need a visa) as long as you can change your return flight details once you are overseas. Check how long you are allowed to remain in the country after the end of your final semester.

You will be required to travel to your Erasmus partner university in time to take part in the Orientation Programme provided. This is a vital experience for you and you should not miss it. You should certainly arrive in time for formal registration procedures. Notification of orientation / registration dates will be sent to you by the partner university. Attending the orientation is important because, not only is it the best opportunity you will have to make friends and ask questions, but also because it will cover important issues like visa and immigration questions, differences in academic style and adjustment to your new surroundings.

**What accommodation can I apply for?**

Each University has different rules for exchange students. **Not all of our partners guarantee university housing for exchange students,** particularly those universities which are based in large cities, so you should be prepared to live off campus, or to find private accommodation, if required

Please note that not all of our partners can guarantee university accommodation for exchange students.

Your host university will advise you of what you will need to bring with you in regards to housing. Many do not provide bed linen, or duvets and you will have to buy these once you get there.
If you have special needs, e.g. medical circumstances or personal requirements, make sure you advise the housing office at the Erasmus partner university at the time of application.

Your best resources for accommodation tips are Stirling students either currently on exchange or who have just returned. We can put you in touch with them and you can ask them for their recommendations!
On Exchange

What you should expect and what we expect from you.

Being selected as an exchange student brings its own responsibilities. This is not a gap year, or a trip, or a period of extended travel – you are a reciprocal exchange student. You will be representing yourself, your country, the exchange programme and the University of Stirling. How you conduct yourself whilst on exchange reflects on us and that’s an important thing to remember. We rely on the students we send on exchange to fly the flag for this university and to show students at the partner university that the University of Stirling is a place they should come and spend a semester or two. Not every student gets this opportunity, so make the most of it, and make us proud.

In terms of what you can expect, different universities provide different services for their exchange students. This level of service varies depending on where you go. At the very least, you can go on exchange secure in the knowledge that our colleagues in your host country are available to help you should you have any questions or concerns about being an exchange student on their campus. You will generally be dealing with the Erasmus Office, or International Office, at the exchange partner university. Our contacts for all of the exchange partner universities are listed below.

For all issues relating to your academic programme at Stirling, the Erasmus Coordinator should be your first port of call.

How do I keep in touch?

There is no excuse for not keeping in touch whilst you are on exchange and we take it very personally if you don’t! This isn’t only important from an academic perspective, but we really want to hear your happy stories and would love to
see any photo of your time abroad! Of course, we also want to hear from you if you’re having any difficulties whilst on exchange.

It is essential that you keep in touch with Stirling. Not just with the Erasmus Coordinator but also with your Adviser of Studies. There are some administrative duties that you need to take care of, as third year students, to prepare for fourth year (dissertation topics, fourth year registration, for example) so make sure that you maintain the necessary contact with your academic school.

**All email correspondence sent from the Erasmus Coordinator will go to your University of Stirling email account so it is your responsibility to check this regularly whilst on exchange.**

**Before you leave**

Please check in with us before you leave to discuss any problems and to leave an address where you can be contacted over the vacation.

**Enrolment at Stirling**

Even though you’re not going to be here, the University of Stirling still requires you to enrol at the start of our own autumn semester, even though you may be at your exchange university when our own enrolment opens. The reason for this is that we record statistical data on student mobility, and you’re still considered a University of Stirling student even though you’re on exchange. It also allows you to receive any awards or bursaries which you usually apply for.

**On arrival**

As soon as you arrive and have settled in, email the Erasmus mailbox to let us know you’ve arrived in one piece. Contact your Erasmus Overseas Advisor to let them know you have arrived and are registering for the required courses. You will still have access to the Stirling Student Portal and Webmail whilst overseas and you should also be able to update your correspondence address. If you are encountering problems at any stage, please let us know. Remember also that each host university has support mechanisms in place for exchange students and those offices are almost always able to solve immediate practical problems.

You also have to advise us, on registration, of the courses you are taking by returning the Learning Agreement (changes to the original learning agreement) as detailed earlier in this booklet. Please remember that you are a representative of the University of Stirling on exchange, so we need to ensure that everything is progressing properly.
All correspondence should be directed to erasmus@stir.ac.uk or to our office address: Student Recruitment, Admissions and International Affairs, C3 Pathfoot Building, University of Stirling, Stirling FK9 4LA, Scotland. Post early, use email as much as possible – we reply as soon as possible; use airmail for sending documents and always keep a copy!

Contact details:

Fiona Buckland, International Exchanges Officer (Erasmus Coordinator)
Student Recruitment, Admissions and International Affairs
University of Stirling
Stirling FK9 4LA
SCOTLAND, UK

erasmus@stir.ac.uk (this email address is checked daily except for University holidays and public holidays)

tel: +44 1786 466018

Phone

Phone companies abroad will often provide deals for students, and calling cards are also a great way to call home for minimum cost. In most cases, student rooms will have telephone and Internet connections. I recommend that you get in touch with current and former exchange students to find out if they used pay as you go mobiles or used their own phones abroad.
Finance

After the academics, the financial side of the exchange is the one that causes the most confusion for students. So let’s clarify a few points.

How much should I budget for going on exchange?

**Erasmus grant funding**

Currently all students who take part in the programme are awarded a grant towards the additional costs of their studies. These grants vary according to the period of study the location of study and are not intended to cover all your living expenses. The monthly rate for 2014/2015 will either be €250 or €300. The minimum exchange period is 3 months. Students taking part in Language Assistantships through the British Council do not qualify for Erasmus funding through the University of Stirling. Similarly, language students studying in Canada, Morocco, Mexico, Chile or Argentina are not eligible for Erasmus grants.

The grants are paid in two instalments, the first instalment is 70% of your total grant and is paid after we receive your completed Learning Agreement and signed Erasmus Grant Contract. The remaining 30% is paid at the end of your exchange when we have received your Learning Agreement – changes to original learning agreement, completed Arrival/Departure Certificate and confirmation from the British Council that you have completed their participation report. If you do not return this paperwork we will withhold your grant. In order to receive your grant you **must** be on exchange for a minimum of 3 months. If you do not meet the minimum require you will be liable to return the full grant. The maximum exchange for an Erasmus exchange is 12 months. **If you return earlier than expected and the dates differ from you Erasmus Grant Contract, your Erasmus Grant will be reduced and the reduction will be**
taken from your second instalment of your grant. If you choose to stay longer, your grant will not be increased.

These grants are in addition to any existing student loans, scholarships or other funds.

Many UK-resident students on compulsory exchanges, such as most language degrees, may be entitled to apply for additional levels of loans and SAAS/SFE/NIEB travel grants.

Tuition fees

You are on a reciprocal exchange programme which means that you do not have to pay tuition fees at the host university. However you do have to pay your tuition fees, if this applies to you, as though you were still at Stirling. As you are not in attendance here, you will be billed for the relevant amount and must pay that, or make arrangements to have it paid, within the payment period, usually three to four weeks after the bill is issued.

Remember to apply for support in the usual way through SAAS or your LEA or relevant government agency for non-UK students. Even if (as a SAAS funded student) you do not pay a tuition fee, SAAS is paying for you so you must make the normal arrangements to apply for support.

Updated information for SAAS funded students can be found online in the SAAS Funding Your Future Guide 2015-2016 (Study Abroad section):

http://www.saas.gov.uk/_forms/sas4.pdf

When applying to your education authority, indicate in the relevant section of your form that you will be on an Erasmus exchange. IMPORTANT: Some education authorities may not fund the full year’s tuition for students who choose to study abroad, (as opposed to a compulsory period abroad for language students) even though you receive full transfer of credit for your year abroad. It is your responsibility to check with whoever pays your tuition fees to Stirling and verify that they will pay the full year’s tuition whilst you are on exchange. If you are on exchange for a year, and your LEA chooses only to fund you for one semester, the University of Stirling will have to charge you for the second semester’s tuition.

Many education authorities (including SAAS) will fund students’ tuition for the whole year because, even though you are electing to study abroad, your
participation is an integral part of your degree programme and you will receive your decision about the length of your exchange.

**Student loans**

The Student Loans Company is the organisation which administers the scheme for UK nationals. The SLC website at [http://www.slc.co.uk](http://www.slc.co.uk) provides up to date information and should be consulted about procedures for new applicants and those for previous applicants.

For UK students who apply for funding from the SLC, contact their office in Glasgow to advise the company that you are going on exchange so that, if possible, arrangements may be made for your payments to go directly to you rather than being sent to the University of Stirling.
Coming home

Even though you are spending the a semester of your third year studying overseas, you are still considered a University of Stirling student. The Erasmus Office provides the Student Programmes Office and Student Records Office with a list of all students who are going on exchange, and your student record will be updated to reflect this. It is important to check your University of Stirling email address frequently whilst on exchange because this is the address that all university departments will use to contact you about university business.

University of Stirling Accommodation for Returning Students

In February, the Residential Services Office opens accommodation applications for those students going into fourth year the following year. Information about how to apply will be given in a notice on the student portal. If you intend to apply for University Accommodation for your final year, please make sure that you keep an eye out for this notice and get your application in on time.

Registering for modules

Semester 5 exchange students

You will be able to register for semester 6 modules before you leave to go on exchange. Make sure you take care of this before you leave Stirling! If there is a problem with the system not allowing you to register, please contact the Student Programmes Office or the Erasmus Office immediately.

Semester 6

Early in semester 6, you need to contact your advisor at Stirling and confirm with them what modules you need to register for in your fourth year. This is of particular importance for students who will be choosing a dissertation topic so you must be proactive about this.

Around mid-semester at Stirling, the online registration system comes online for the next semester. An email will be sent to your University of Stirling email account about this so it is important to check this account regularly!
Because you will not have taken Stirling third year modules, you may have difficulty registering for certain fourth year modules. If this happens, please send an email to the Student Programmes Office (student.programmes@stir.ac.uk), explain that you are currently on exchange, and let them know what modules you are trying to register for. They will be able to override the system and get you registered for your required modules.

**Film & Media Studies Students**

FMS students who wish to register for fourth year production modules should begin a dialogue with your FMS Erasmus Overseas Advisor as early as possible about this. These modules are capped so it is important to keep in touch with the school.

**Transfer of credit from your semester (or year) abroad**

All of the courses you take whilst on exchange will count towards your degree programme at the University of Stirling. This is why it is so important to have courses agreed before you go, and to understand your academic responsibilities (hence often the preachy nature of this guide!). If you do not complete the required number of courses, or if you take courses that were not approved by the university as part of your learning agreement, these instances will likely affect your degree progression back at Stirling.

The University of Stirling applies a credit only award for exchange students and students who pass all of the required modules will receive 60 SCQF credits for one semester abroad. This will show up on your academic record like this (for example, a single honours Business student):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Module Code</th>
<th>Module Name</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>Credit Awarded</th>
<th>SCQF Level</th>
<th>SCQF Credit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015/16</td>
<td>Autumn</td>
<td>CR1BUS</td>
<td>Credit at level 10 in Business Studies</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015/16</td>
<td>Autumn</td>
<td>CR2BUS</td>
<td>Credit at level 10 in Business Studies</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015/16</td>
<td>Autumn</td>
<td>CR3BUS</td>
<td>Credit at level 10 in Business Studies</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Or like this (for example, joint honours Psychology and Sports student):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Module Code</th>
<th>Module Name</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>Credit Awarded</th>
<th>SCQF Level</th>
<th>SCQF Credit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015/16</td>
<td>Autumn</td>
<td>CR1PSY</td>
<td>Credit at level 10 in Psychology</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015/16</td>
<td>Autumn</td>
<td>CR2PSY</td>
<td>Credit at level 10 in Psychology</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015/16</td>
<td>Autumn</td>
<td>CR1SPS</td>
<td>Credit at level 10 in Sports Studies</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Hold on a minute!” I hear you cry, “How come I had to take two Sports modules and I’m only getting credit for one?” This comes down to the credit value of UK courses and the credit value of courses at our exchange partners. All the way back on page 7 (go on, check!) I talked about credit value, and the importance of taking the right amount of credit. If you were here at Stirling and not studying abroad, you would have to take 40 Psychology credits (2 modules) and 20 Sports Studies credits (1 module). This is the full time load for your course. When you’re studying abroad, you need to take the equivalent of a full time load and this ends up being equally split between degree subjects if you are studying somewhere where a full course of study requires four rather than three modules per semester. This is most cases.

“Ok!” I hear you ready to counter argue, “I understand that I need to take a full time load, but could I not take two psychology courses, one sports course and one course in whatever I feel like? I’ve ALWAYS wanted to study macramé.” No, you can’t. Because you would not have achieved the equivalent of a full semester of study in your main degree subjects. So no deal. I am all for macramé, but this will have to be over and above your main academic responsibilities.
Appendix 1 - Checklist

Use airmail and keep copies of everything!

Always sign, date and insert address on correspondence

Communicate early and direct all mail through the Study Abroad Office

Use the study abroad website to download all forms (make sure you use the Erasmus ones!): www.stir.ac.uk/exchange/essential-documents

Keep in touch! We like nice emails now and again!

Finally – always remember that we are here to help, and that it’s easier for us to help you if we know about any problems sooner rather than later.
Appendix 2 – Forms, forms, forms (and acronyms!)

**Learning Agreement Form** - provided by the Erasmus Coordinator for you to complete with your Adviser of Studies. Electronic signatures are acceptable.

**Learning Agreement (changes to original Learning Agreement, part of original Learning Agreement)** available online at [www.stir.ac.uk/exchange/essential-documents](http://www.stir.ac.uk/exchange/essential-documents). To be completed by you and returned to the Erasmus Coordinator at the **start of the semester**

**Grant Agreement** – provided by the Erasmus Coordinator for you to review and complete prior to your exchange. **Original signatures only.**

SAO University of Stirling Study Abroad Office

**Erasmus Coordinator** University of Stirling International Exchanges Officer / Erasmus Coordinator (Fiona Buckland)

SPO Student Programmes Office

AOS Adviser of Study
Appendix 3 – Tips!

Random tips that we have picked up over the years!

Making friends on exchange – join clubs (especially the international society!) and sports teams! We hear this from our returning students over and over again. This is the best way to combat homesickness in the early stages, by going out there and getting involved!

Take advantage of every opportunity – the whole point of going on exchange is that you get the chance to do things you wouldn’t get to do here. We have had students investigate internship opportunities, write for student newspapers, get involved in student productions – never forget that you are making valuable contacts and lifelong connections.

Facebook is your friend! – as soon as you have your host university email address established, join the Facebook network for that university. It’s a great way to see what’s going on at your host campus, and to interact with other exchange students.

Keep in touch with your Erasmus Overseas Advisors here at Stirling – sometimes, it can be a case of ‘out of sight, out of mind’ and you don’t want to miss anything. Some schools are better at this than others, but you have a responsibility to be proactive.

Be proactive! – if you’re encountering problems, don’t just sit around and brood about them! Get in touch with us back at Stirling, or get in touch with the exchange co-ordinator at your host university. This is particularly important with academic issues as we can’t do much for you once the class is over.

Read this booklet and keep it with you! – I didn’t just spend a weekend writing this for the good of my health ☺ There is a lot of important information in here, and it applies to you as an exchange student from the earliest stage through your return to Stirling, so make sure you keep it with you when you travel.
Appendix 4 – Frequently Asked Questions

I think I’ve failed an exam this semester – can I still go on exchange? – The rule is that if you gain admission to Honours, you can go on exchange. If your failed module is in a core course and you don’t get admitted to Honours, you can’t go. This happens rarely. What we can also look at is changing your participation from full year to spring only, or from autumn to spring, as students are given the opportunity to gain admission to Honours at the end of semester 5. So all is not lost!

I’ve just arrived and I hate it here! Can I come home? – Ok, this happens more than you’d think and I always give the same advice. If you arrive at your university and have trouble settling in and feel homesick then you have a responsibility to use those support resources available to you to try and overcome what are completely natural adjustment issues. The International Office on the host campus will be able to advise you in situations like this because it’s a very common occurrence. You’re jetlagged, everything is new – the people, the food, the weather, the classes – and this can be incredibly overwhelming. All I would ask is that you recognise that these feelings are more than likely temporary, and that once you take some time to get settled in, figure out where things are and how things work, you will probably feel a whole lot better. Plus, overcoming these initial difficulties will fill you with confidence about the rest of your time abroad. All that said, I would never ask anyone to stay somewhere they really, really don’t want to be. So if you find yourself in this situation, get in touch.

I’m on a semester long exchange, and I’ve had a brilliant time during my first semester and I don’t want to come home! Can I stay for a second semester? – This depends on where you are. We operate on a reciprocal exchange basis with our partner universities and this means maintaining a balance of semester places. So if there is a space available within the balance, you can stay for a second semester if this fits in with your Stirling degree programme. If there isn’t, then you can’t. Just check with me and I’ll let you know. Bear in mind that there will be additional costs associated with an extension.

I’ve had a brilliant time during this year and I don’t want to come back to Stirling at all! Can I stay at my host university and graduate from there? – No. Participation in the exchange programme is contingent on you returning to the University of Stirling and completing your degree here. If you can afford the tuition fees at your exchange partner university then you can apply for a postgraduate degree there.

I can’t get a place on one or more of my approved modules. What can I do? - this happens all the time, and you need to be proactive. The best thing that you can do is to go and see the professor for that course and see if you can get a
place. Explain that you are an exchange student and that this course is substituting a core requirement for your degree back home. More often than not, you will be able to get a place. DO NOT just send an email and hope for the best. The personal approach is the way to work this – milk the accent! If we’re talking about a core module, then you need to do the best you can to get on it. If we’re talking about an option module, then see if there’s anything else in the same subject at the same level that you can get a place on. This will have to be agreed with the Erasmus Overseas Advisor for your subject area. Worst case scenario is if you really can’t get onto the equivalent of a core Stirling module. It may be possible to take this in your final year. It means your workload in 4th year is greater, but it’s a good trade-off. The important thing is to keep in touch with the Erasmus Coordinator, particularly if you’re going to need a deviant programme set up. Please note that, at the time of writing, there are changes being proposed to the degree structure which would not permit additional courses in final year. So it’s really important that you get the courses that you need whilst on exchange.

What do you mean I’m not guaranteed university housing? – you’re not guaranteed university housing. Most of our students will get university housing, but there are places where it is either very expensive or incredibly limited so you will have to look at alternative options provided by the partner university.

Why do I have to take up to six courses when I’d only take three here? – it’s to do with credit, and how much credit you need to progress to the next semester at Stirling. Each University of Stirling module is worth 10 ECTS credits so you need to complete 30 ECTS credits per semester of exchange. And all of these credits need to be in your main degree subject(s).

NOTE: The information provided in this booklet is as accurate as possible and reflects information available at the time of writing. The University of Stirling disclaims responsibility for errors, inaccuracies or changes to information, policies or procedures and reminds students of their specific individual responsibility in terms of their programmes and all other matters relating to their exchange period.
Final (but extremely important) notes...

◊ Remember

No refunds from this office can be given to students for non-refundable plane tickets, out of pocket visa application fees, housing deposits paid to host partner universities.

Students who fail courses whilst on exchange may be removed from their Honours programme.