

Principles for the Management of Student Exchange Partnerships

*Contact:**UCL Study Abroad Team* ***(studyabroad@ucl.ac.uk)***

*This guidance document sets out the principles for the establishment and management of Student Exchange partnerships for overseas study opportunities[[1]](#footnote-1) that form a compulsory or optional part of student’s degree at UCL and for which the students are awarded UCL credit. The process for establishing a Student Exchange agreement is managed by the UCL Study Abroad Team in liaison with the Departments and under the strategic guidance of the Global Engagement team.*

*This guidance is meant to complement the other provisions in the Academic Manual relating to Study Abroad and should be read in conjunction with those provisions.*

*This document outlines the minimum requirements for managing Student Exchanges at UCL – Departments may operate their own additional procedures and processes that complement this policy.*

*This policy does not cover incoming-only study abroad partnerships (‘affiliate agreements’).*

1. **DEFINITIONS**

***Study Abroad*** – An overarching term referring to a student studying abroad for a part of their degree programme.

***Student Exchange*** – A form of Study Abroad whereby two universities agree a reciprocal number of students who can take part on the student exchange at each university in an academic year and/or term (i.e. the universities ‘exchange’ students) and the students do normally not pay fees to the host university for the student exchange period. Outgoing UCL students will most often be exchange students.

***Erasmus+*** *(and the Swiss-European Mobility Programme SEMP*) – The Erasmus+ programme is funded by the European Commission and enables, among other things, university students to study abroad as part of their degree on a Student Exchange basis. Erasmus+ student exchange partnerships are governed by the [Erasmus Charter for Higher Education](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/studyabroad/erasmus-ucl/ucl-eche).

***The Turing Scheme*** – a UK government funded outbound mobility bursary scheme launched in 2021 and providing £110 million for 35,000 students in universities, colleges and schools in the UK to study in the EU and other international destinations each year. The Turing Scheme does not have a partnership framework, it only provides grants for students studying abroad.

1. **SETTING UP A STUDENT EXCHANGE AGREEMENT**
   1. The process of setting up a new exchange agreement is complex and typically requires a minimum of two years or longer, especially for institutions outside of Europe. Amendments to existing agreements and agreements with European partners are more straightforward and can usually be completed in a minimum of six months. Any new agreements need to be finalised – and signed by all parties - by 1 October to be operational for exchanges taking place the following academic year, e.g. 1 October 2023 for exchanges taking place from the academic year 2024-25. Please note that, due to the impact of Brexit, Covid, the war in Ukraine and updates to the UCL exchange agreement template, as well as current partnership priorities and a backlog of renewals, UCL Study Abroad are only setting up new partnership agreements where there is a critical academic need.
   2. The Study Abroad team is the first point of contact for Departments when planning to set up a new Student Exchange agreement, and should be consulted via [exchange-partnerships@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:exchange-partnerships@ucl.ac.uk) as a first step on the whether a new partnership is necessary, and in order to check whether a link already exists with the proposed partner. The proposer should then complete an Exchange Proposal Form, obtained from the Study Abroad team. This form must also be signed by the Department’s Study Abroad Tutor, the Head of Department and Faculty contact. The Study Abroad team will then, in liaison with the Global Engagement team, help the Department to assess the feasibility of the proposed arrangement based on the information provided on the form.

2.3 If it is decided between the Department, the Study Abroad team and the Global Engagement team that the partnership should go ahead to the next stage, the Department must review the content of the relevant modules that the prospective partner will offer UCL students to ensure the modules are of equivalent academic level to UCL. If the module content cannot be accessed online, the Department should ask the prospective partner university to provide the necessary information for each module (brief description of content, learning hours, assessment methods).

2.4 Parallel to the module content review by the Department, the Study Abroad team will send a Prospective Exchange Partner Form to the prospective partner university asking if the university would be interested in an exchange partnership and asking for information on the facilities and student support the university provides to Exchange students. The Prospective Exchange Partner Form will also ask the prospective partner university to provide details on their study credit system and full-time workload per semester on their study programmes.

2.5 Once the Department has reviewed the module content and the prospective partner university has agreed to consider an exchange with UCL and returned the Prospective Exchange Partner Form satisfactorily, the Study Abroad team, in liaison with the Department, will start drafting the agreement on a standard UCL template approved by Legal Services. They will then lead on negotiations with the partner based on this template.

2.6 Once negotiations are concluded the finalised agreement will be reviewed by the joint Study Abroad/Global Engagement monthly agreement review panel, which will determine if it can proceed to signature stage. All Student Exchange agreements are signed by the Vice-Provost (Research, Innovation and Global Engagement) on behalf of UCL. A Faculty representative (as determined by the Faculty and notified to the UCL Study Abroad team) may also be required to sign the agreement alongside the Vice-Provost (Research, Innovation and Global Engagement). The Global Engagement team will coordinate the signing of the agreements by UCL and the partner university, in liaison with the UCL Study Abroad team.

1. **INDIVIDUAL STUDY PLAN**

3.1 Once the Student Exchange agreement has been signed with the partner university and students can apply to take part in the scheme at that university, an individual Study Plan may be completed by the Department, if required by the Department, and agreed with each student before their student exchange period begins.

3.2 The Study Plan must set out the modules the student will be undertaking at the host university and the host university credit weighting for each module where possible (within Europe this will be in ECTS – the European Credit Transfer System). The Study Plan must also stipulate how the credit obtained will be transferred to UCL, i.e. how many UCL credits will be awarded for the Study Abroad/ period.

**3.3 IMPORTANT NOTE: Each full-time student has to undertake a full-time study workload as set out in the UCL regulations during their student exchange period at the host university. A full-time workload in an academic year consists of 4 UCL course units = 120 UCL credits = 60 ECTS. Each Study Plan has to include a study plan for the student agreed by the host university that accounts for the full-time study workload as stipulated by the host university in the Prospective Exchange Partner Form (see section 2.3 above).**

3.4 As a general rule, the grades obtained by students during their student exchange year are transferred to UCL on a pass/fail scale only and therefore also do not count towards the students’ degree classification at UCL. If a programme has a Study Abroad period that requires the grades from the host university to be translated to the UCL grading scale, the Department must ensure that the grade conversion table for each host university is made available to the students.

1. **STUDENT VISA MONITORING**

4.1 The Departments must maintain evidence of engagement records for students on a Student Visa (i.e. spreadsheets, databases, registers etc.) to demonstrate that engagement is recorded and that non-engagement is acted upon even when students are participating in student exchange. These records must be kept up-to-date and be accessible and available; especially for UKVI audit purposes. The Departments must ensure that the receiving partner universities retain evidence of engagement for UCL students on a Student Visa. This information may be requested by UCL in order to comply with Student Visa regulations and therefore must be kept up-to-date and made available to UCL upon request. The Departments should inform the receiving institution of this requirement when a Student Visa holder participates in student exchange.

1. This guidance document does not apply to overseas *work* *placements* even if they form a part of the student’s degree. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)