

Introduction

This Guide is intended to provide general information for students who are considering an Erasmus work placement. It must be stressed that the advice is general and cannot be regarded as a substitute for the detailed advice and regulations from your home Higher Education Institution (HEI) and your host employer. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the Guide will encourage you to enquire further and provide an answer to basic questions.

What is Erasmus?

Erasmus is part of the European Union's Lifelong Learning Programme, established to promote inter University co-operation and in particular student mobility. **The Erasmus programme enables higher education students to study or do a work placement for typically three to 12 months in one of 32 other European countries as part of a degree course.**

- Student mobility is available to students in all subjects and at all levels:
 - Bachelors, Masters, Doctoral
- Students enrolled in a short term higher vocational education course, such as an HND or foundation degree, can also participate. Part-time students are eligible to participate providing they study full-time during their mobility period.
- It is available in two forms:
 - study mobility which involves studying for part of your degree in a Higher Education Institution with which your own HEI has a formal agreement
 - work placement mobility in which you spend part of your degree working in an enterprise in another European country
- 33 countries currently participate in the Erasmus programme and over 4,000 Higher Education Institutions hold an Erasmus University Charter
- A list of the countries participating is provided in these notes

Combining Study and Work Placement

It is possible, that, provided your HEI agrees and has appropriate agreements with partner HEIs in other European countries, you could combine a work placement experience with a study mobility experience in another HEI with full credit recognition.

Erasmus Grants

Erasmus grants are available for both study and work placement mobility. During your higher education 'careers' you may now receive an Erasmus grant for up to two mobilities (study or placement) in the same or different years. The total duration of all grants may not exceed 24 months

Start Now

The earlier your preparation for a work placement, the more likely it is that you will find a suitable one and that it will be successful. The whole process of finding and negotiating a work placement will in itself be developmental and provide an invaluable dimension to your studies and your eventual qualification.

What is an Erasmus Work Placement?

Erasmus Work Placements are similar to work placements in the UK except that they must take place in another European country which participates in the Erasmus programme.

- Erasmus work placements are supported by the European Commission
- The work placement must be for a minimum of three months and a maximum of 12 months (students in short cycle Higher Education courses, such as HND or foundation degrees may go for a minimum of two months)
- The work placement must be recognised by your Higher Education Institution and hence will contribute to your qualification
- An eligible organisation is one that is involved in economic activities in the public or private sector. It can be any size, and can operate in any economic sector, including the social economy.
- The following types of organisations are not eligible as host organisations:
 - European institutions (such as the European Commission and the European Parliament)
 - Organisations managing EU programmes (such as National Agencies) in order to avoid possible conflict of interests and/or dual funding
 - National diplomatic representation (embassy/consulate) of the student in the host country.
- Students must be registered for a qualification at an HEI which holds an extended Erasmus University Charter
- The Erasmus University Charter is awarded by the European Commission to Higher Education Institutions who submit a successful application
- The majority of HEIs in the UK hold an Erasmus University Charter and a high percentage of these hold the extended Charter which allows them to participate in Erasmus work placements.

Why?

- Work placements provide an excellent opportunity to gain work experience in an international environment and to apply theory to practice
- They offer opportunities for personal, academic, cultural and linguistic development through living and working in another country
- They enhance your curriculum vitae by providing international employment experience, recognised by your HEI
- They develop transferable skills, including communication across cultural boundaries, self-management, independence, confidence, adaptability and self-reliance
- They enhance your employability potential and may lead directly to future employment
- As an Erasmus student you will normally receive an Erasmus grant and possibly additional payment from an employer

How?

Erasmus students find work placements in a variety of ways:

- Many students find the work placement independently by direct contact with an employer in another country
- Through the European/International and Work Placement Office (it may be a combination of European or International and Work Placement Offices) in your HEI. These offices are likely to have details of employers offering work placements and the conditions under which these are offered and provide general advice as well as indicate the HEI's requirements
- Through consortia of HEIs which provide information and support
- Through responding to calls for work placement applications from employers on a website or other form of advertisement
- Through a recognised work placement agency which will help to find and negotiate a suitable placement but may charge a fee. In some cases your HEI may provide some support for this if it has agreed that this is an appropriate way for you to find a suitable placement
- Through speaking to other students about their experiences and contacts, including contacting the Erasmus students society in your HEI
- Recognise that there may be competition for work placements so you should start the process early, be willing to put effort into it and consider a wide-range of countries.

When?

- The timing and duration of your work placement will depend on your qualification and level of study – Bachelors, Masters, Doctors
- The work placement must be for a minimum of three months and for a maximum period of one year. However you could do a combined period of study and work placement, allowing you to do, for example one month of a work placement and two months of study. The only exception to the minimum duration is for students enrolled on short first cycle higher vocational education programmes, such as HND or Foundation courses, where the minimum period is just two months
- The duration and timing must be agreed and approved by your HEI which will be responsible for giving "recognition" to the learning outcomes achieved during the work placement
- Talk to your academic supervisor and European/Erasmus Officer about the possible timings.

To be eligible for an Erasmus grant students must be registered at a UK Higher Education institution which holds an Erasmus University Charter (EUC).

Erasmus students can go to:

Austria
Belgium
Bulgaria
Croatia
Cyprus
Czech Republic
Denmark
Estonia
Finland
France
Germany
Greece
Hungary
Iceland
Ireland
Italy
Latvia
Liechtenstein
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Malta
Netherlands
Norway
Poland
Portugal
Romania
Slovak Republic
Slovenia
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
Turkey

Where?

- Erasmus work placements take place in 32 countries and in any type of enterprise with limited exceptions
- A wide range of public and private sector activities may be classed as enterprises but not Embassies, the European Commission and organisations managing EU programmes
- Do not be conservative in your choice of country – all of the participating countries can offer effective and worthwhile work placements. Indeed, going to a smaller (perhaps slightly less well-known) country may provide an enhanced cultural experience and will certainly be a distinctive feature of your CV
- A key requirement is that the enterprise can offer you a work placement with job content, facilities, mentoring and support which will enable you to achieve the intended learning outcomes and which will be approved and recognised by your HEI
- In this context if your HEI has a brief statement of what it requires and how it will support you and the employer, it may help for you to send a copy of this with your application so that employers can have confidence not only in you but also your HEI

Responsibilities

- Erasmus students must sign a tripartite agreement: Student/Employer/Higher Education Institution
- This ensures a commitment by all three parties to the success and recognition of placement and entails mutual obligations, rights and responsibilities
- The rights, obligations, responsibilities are reflected in the Learning/Training Agreement which will cover the key components of the work to be undertaken (a job description), the intended learning outcomes and a range of other matters
- It will explain how your HEI will recognise the work placement; what form assessment will take and who will be involved in the assessment

Preparing for a Work Placement

- The following checklist is designed to help your preparation. It is not exhaustive but if you are aware of the points listed below and ensure that you discuss them with your HEI and employer, many of the problems which might arise can be avoided and you are likely to have the positive experience, which the great majority of those participating in Erasmus record.
- At the earliest possible stage speak to your European/International Office and your Work Placement Office. They will have considerable experience and be able to guide and advise you on all aspects. It is likely, if your HEI has a large number of work placements, that they will have either web pages or a handbook on work placements
- Find out the language requirements of your employer in order to ascertain whether you will need special language preparation and how you will be able to access this
- The majority of countries participating in the Erasmus programme offer Erasmus Intensive Language Courses – in many cases twice a year. Information on this will be available from your European Office
- At the earliest stage of negotiation with an enterprise, inform all the key members in your HEI (this includes your Department, the European Office and the Work Placement Office) and ascertain their requirements, especially in the case of your Academic Department (Faculty/School), the requirements for recognition

- Establish named contacts in your institution and the host enterprise and make sure each party knows who these are
- Identify who will be your academic supervisor/tutor and a mentor in the host enterprise if these are different from the named contacts. Again make sure that each knows the name of the other
- Obtain a job description from the employer and ensure that your Academic Department (Faculty/School), Work Placement Office and European Office have a copy and agree it. It will be one of the bases for establishing the intended learning outcomes for the work placement
- Be aware of induction arrangements in the host enterprise and in particular make sure that you understand the company rules and expectations
- Make sure that the arrangements for assessment and the form of assessment are agreed and that you understand what these are and that they are communicated to the host employer
- Ascertain whether your supervisor will visit you during the work placement and the approximate timing of the visit and make sure that your employer knows about this
- Be provided with emergency contacts in your HEI and enterprise and ensure that these are known to both parties
- Provide names of a family contact to your HEI and enterprise in case any problems should arise
- Understand the need for confidentiality and commercial sensitivity
- Have a clear understanding of the respective rules and responsibilities of your HEI and host enterprise
- Make sure that you are conversant with details such as the hours of work, holiday entitlements, social security cover, insurance liability (and who will be responsible), general health and safety arrangements, whether support will be provided in finding accommodation and any civil registration formalities
- Make sure that you ascertain costs involved; the nature and form of any remuneration or support in kind from the enterprise and whether this may entail further responsibilities in terms of social security and taxation payments
- Find out what other financial support will be available to you in terms of loans and grants and how and when these will be paid
- Try to find out if the employer has had any previous Erasmus work placement students and if they would be willing to put you in contact with them. If this is not possible make sure that you do talk to other students who have been on an Erasmus work placement either in your own HEI or another one. Here again, your Erasmus society/the Erasmus student network will be helpful
- Before you leave to begin the work placement you must have a formal Tripartite agreement signed by yourself, the employer and your HEI. This is likely to be called “Learning/Training Agreement and Job Description”

www.britishcouncil.org/erasmus

