



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

University
Secretary's
Office.

University of Sheffield – what no deal Erasmus+ arrangements means for our students

Summary and what is needed to support students

- We welcome the cross-party consensus and verbal commitments given to supporting Erasmus+, and the recognition of its worth to individual students and universities.
- The University is a strong supporter of Erasmus+ and study abroad. Student satisfaction is high on Erasmus+ programmes and students can articulate clear benefits such as: improved ability to see the value of different cultures, ability to adapt to and act in new situations.
- We urgently need clarity on the UK's future participation in Erasmus+ or a replacement programme. We understand the Government will need to reach agreement with the EU for UK organisations to continue participating in Erasmus+ projects and discussions with the EU are expected. A positive, swift outcome from these discussions would be welcome.
- On a practical basis,
 - to ensure we and other institutions meet the requirements of the current underwrite:
 - Approval of UUKi's bilateral agreement by DfE (instead of a wide range of inter-institutional agreements),
 - The Beneficiary Guide is needed now.
 - Clarity on the deadline to submit information to the portal.
 - Clarity on the immigration requirements for UK students abroad, to reside and study.
- In the absence of an approved overall bilateral agreement we have written to all our partners to assure and seek a commitment. Of the 220 partners we have had positive responses from 100 so far, with two saying that they would like to wait for more information from the EU Commission on the UK Government position.

Student/partner numbers

- 309 Sheffield students are currently abroad; 216 studying at one of our European partner universities; 48 carrying out work placements; and 43 working as Language Teaching Assistants.
- 209 students from our European partner institutions are currently registered at the University.
- 220 partners.

UK students currently abroad on an Erasmus+ placement (2018/19 academic year)

1. 309 Sheffield students are currently abroad under the auspices of the Erasmus+ scheme. This is divided into 216 studying at one of our partner universities in Europe, with 48 carrying out work placements and 43 working as Language Teaching Assistants.

Underwrite and its requirements

2. In the event of a no deal, our understanding is that the Government would underwrite funding for contracts that had previously been approved. We have this week been asked to provide details of all Erasmus+ funded projects via a platform to register these with the Department for Education (DfE).
3. At this stage this is a tool solely for registering Erasmus+ grant agreements and institutional details, that is high level project details, including overall funding provided, project type, and start and end dates. We have not been asked to provide details of individual partner institutions we are collaborating with. No deadline has been given as to when these details have to be submitted by.
4. We have been told that the DfE will release further communications on this imminently and are currently waiting for further guidance to be released by the DfE in the form of a Beneficiary Guide in regards to the evidence required to prove projects' ongoing 'viability'.
5. UUKi has worked with the DfE to draw up a proposed template for bilateral agreements, which could be used to replace the current bilateral agreement template which has been provided by the Commission and is required to be used by all participating universities. A draft has been issued to universities by UUKi, however, this has yet to be approved by the DfE. DfE has said it will likely be a letter from the Vice-Chancellor will be required, suggesting that universities won't have to provide proof on a case by case basis of individual & valid inter-institutional agreements – although they haven't said exactly what will need to be in this letter, and what, if any other attachments might be required. This hasn't been formally announced, and the Department could still ask for inter-institutional agreements – which would place a greater bureaucratic burden on the University.
6. In the absence of an approved template, we have taken the initiative to write to all our partners to communicate and provide reassurance, and have asked them if they would agree to sign an agreement outside the Erasmus+ programme but under similar conditions. We have written to 220 partners and had positive responses from 100, with two saying that they would like to wait for more information from the EU Commission on the UK Government position before committing either way.
7. The Government will need to reach agreement with the EU for UK organisations to continue participating in Erasmus+ projects and we understand they are seeking to hold these discussions with the EU. If discussions with the Commission to secure UK organisations' continued ability to participate in the programme are unsuccessful, we are advised that universities may wish to consider bilateral arrangements with partner organisations that would enable their projects to continue.
8. In the absence of approval directly by the European Commission, if we are required to provide a list of partners who have provided written assurances on the continued viability of our programmes outside of Erasmus+, to qualify for the underwriting, then we will be able to do this in less than 50% of the cases.

9. We are keen to ensure students are permitted to continue with their Erasmus+ placements as planned this academic year and also receive funding for the period abroad.
10. What also needs to be addressed is the immigration status of our students abroad, and what they are required to do, to be allowed to continue to reside in the respective European country.

EU students currently on an Erasmus+ placement in the UK (2018/19 academic year)

11. 209 students from our European partner institutions are currently registered at the University for a study period.
12. In terms of the bilateral agreement, the same applies to these students as to ours and we are awaiting confirmation of the replacement bilateral agreement from the DfE.
13. If we were to operate the exchange outside of the Erasmus+ scheme, students would not ordinarily be eligible to receive funding from their respective home institutions. However, we understand that the Commission has proposed measures to avoid disruption to students currently abroad. These contingency measures allow students abroad at the time of exit to complete their studies without disruption and continue to receive their Erasmus+ grants. This applies to both Erasmus+ students abroad and students on Erasmus+ in the UK. This is not dependent on any payment from the UK to the EU. Importantly, these measures only cover those students abroad at the time of exit but no new mobilities. The proposal for a regulation for this contingency measure has not yet passed into law: it is still a proposal. However, at the point of writing it has been passed by the European Parliament, and we understand it is likely to be approved by the European Council.
14. Students' immigration status should not be affected given that they arrived in the UK for the start of the Spring semester, that is in early February. Complications could potentially arise, if students were to leave the UK over the Easter holidays and wanted to return afterwards. We have offered non-UK EU students access to university student accommodation over the Easter holidays if they do not want to take that travel risk over the proposed Exit Day (29 March).

UK students wishing to go abroad on an Erasmus+ placement during 2019/20 academic year

15. While we have continued to promote opportunities to spend periods abroad in Europe, we have not promoted any financial support and have not mentioned the Erasmus+ scheme in any of our literature, talks or web pages.
16. Students accessing our web pages, will see this: **Note on Brexit:** *Erasmus+ grants are currently available to students participating in an Erasmus+ exchange during 2018/19. There is sector-wide uncertainty over the availability of grants in future years as this is subject to the outcome of the negotiations between the UK and the EU. You can read the latest updates on the [Erasmus+ National Agency website](#).*
17. Advice from the National Agency for bids for 2019/20 has been to submit future funding as normal and we have applied by the deadline in early February. However, instead of the normal 16 months, universities have been advised to apply for a 24 months' contract. Outcomes are not normally known until late May/early June, that is potentially after the UK has left the EU and the project would, therefore, not be classed as 'successful'.

18. UUKi said that the Commission has offered the UK the option to pay into the 2019/20 budget. If this was the case, then the UK would be part of Erasmus+ for another year. The possibility to pay into the 2019 EU budget is in the process of obtaining approval from the European Parliament and the European Council, and it is likely that the UK will.
19. It is vital that the Government makes a decision whether they will do this. If not, we will need to know if the Government will implement an alternative programme to the current Erasmus+ scheme and will continue to fund students going to European destinations. In the absence of clear guidance, the University has a number of options:
 - pay grants to students as under the current Erasmus+ scheme.
 - pay WP students only.
 - pay students on degrees with a mandatory period abroad.
20. Concerning our agreements with partner universities in Europe, we would need a sector wide template to replace the current Bilateral Agreement to ensure a smooth transition and to cut down the work that would otherwise be required. That is, we would like to see a simple agreement, similar to the existing one, and would not want to go down the route of each participating UK university drawing up their own, unique, template.
21. The immigration status also needs addressing so that we can advise our students accordingly, especially those wishing to undertake a work placement.

EU students wishing to come to the UK on an Erasmus+ placement during 2019/20

22. We are concerned that without funding from their home universities, demand to study in the UK will drop, resulting in fewer study places for our students being available at our partner universities.
23. Any delay in a decision on what deal the UK will be able to negotiate, will impact the operation of our exchanges for 2019/20 as we will not be able to confirm arrangements with either partner institutions or students (both incoming as well as outbound) as this coincides with the application period for the scheme.