

# Widening Participation in Outward Student Mobility

A toolkit to support inclusive approaches



**go international**

All you need to know about study and work abroad



**Universities UK  
International**

# Contents

Executive summary	1
Recommendations	3
Good practice	5
Student voice	40
Conclusion	53
Acknowledgements	55
Annexes	56

**With the support of the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union.**

**With the support of the UK Department for Education.**

**An Erasmus+ KA3-funded project support for the implementation of European Higher Education Area report**

The Widening Participation in UK Outward Student Mobility project, delivered by Universities UK International, supported by the UK National Agency for Erasmus+, and managed by the UK's Department for Education (DfE) is funded through the Key Action 3 strand of the European Union's Erasmus+ Programme, which provides support for the implementation of European Higher Education Area (EHEA) reforms.

**Universities UK International**

UUKi is the international arm of Universities UK. We help UK universities flourish internationally by representing them and acting in their collective interest. We actively promote universities abroad, provide trusted information for and about them, and create new opportunities for the sector. We aim to: enable universities to develop and deliver strong international strategies; influence the policy and regulatory environment through our ability to represent UK universities; and create diverse opportunities through strategic partnerships.



This research report was produced by the Go International programme based at Universities UK International.

Text:  
Katherine Allinson

978-1-84036-383-8

© Universities UK International

Typeset by soapbox.co.uk

# Executive summary

Delivering mobility opportunities that engage disadvantaged and under-represented students will improve student experience, work toward closing the attainment gap, and create a generation of globally-aware and outward-looking graduates.

Students who work, study or volunteer overseas get better degrees and better jobs. Universities UK International's (UUKi) *Gone International* research has shown a correlation year-on-year between students being mobile and receiving better academic and employment outcomes. Outward mobility helps students' personal development and makes them more attractive to prospective employers, equipping them with an enhanced global outlook.

These outcomes are more pronounced for students from disadvantaged backgrounds when compared to their non-mobile peers. However, not all students participate in outward student mobility to an equal degree, and the sector needs to do more to encourage students from all backgrounds to participate in mobility opportunities.

Examples of good practice captured within this toolkit include:

- Taking a whole institution approach to widening participation in mobility.
- Being student-led when designing programmes and delivering support.
- Offering short-term opportunities.
- Providing targeted funding.
- Using diverse marketing channels.
- Providing information to parents and guardians.
- Creating mobile student ambassador schemes.

The project also looked at what students find attractive about mobility, the challenges they encounter and their ideas for solutions to mobility barriers. Students recommended that educational institutions should:

- Start the preparation for mobility early.
- Offer expert support when preparing for mobility and while in-country.
- Provide tailored language learning.
- Create pre-mobility networks.
- Enhance employability skills through post-mobility activities.

To grow the accessibility and take up of student mobility, universities and colleges must commit to delivering outward mobility to students from disadvantaged and under-represented backgrounds via a strategic and targeted commitment to mobility, through offering diverse programmes for study, work and volunteering abroad, and by embedding support across the whole mobility experience.

Short-term mobility can act as a taster to encourage longer duration mobility in the future. Many students who undertake short placements later participate in semester and year-long programmes. Prior experience may also influence the effect of a mobility programme: the potential impact of short periods abroad for students who have limited previous international experience should not be underestimated.

Short-term mobility can be a first step to encouraging students to be outward-looking and ambitious, to forge connections all over the world and be global citizens. Short-term mobility enables more students to be part of an international community.

## The structure of this toolkit

**Section One** features good practice in outward mobility from across the UK higher education and further education sectors. Twenty case studies have been divided into eight activity categories: Access Agreements, Careers, Collaboration, Funding, Marketing, Post-mobility, Short-term, and Student Support. Icons identify the different areas of work across the case studies, including where work crosses over into other activity areas. Each case study provides a summary of activity, with measures of success, quotes from senior champions or mobility participants and tips for institutions who are planning to adopt similar practice.

**Section Two** focusses on student perspectives from the project's target groups. It includes outputs from a series of focus groups held across the UK which looked at the benefits of and barriers to mobility. The focus groups also asked students for suggestions on what support could be put in place to increase participation in mobility by students from more disadvantaged backgrounds. The student voice section also includes profiles showcasing the mobility experience of students across the UK.

## A NOTE ON SHORT-TERM MOBILITY

Short-term mobility (mobility that is less than four weeks in duration) is undertaken by students from disadvantaged groups at a higher rate than their more advantaged peers. Short-term mobility develops valuable skills and positively impacts students:

- The Institute of International Education found that developing teamwork was “an area of strength for shorter term programs” and that development of certain skills is “unaffected by length [of mobility], including curiosity, leadership, and work ethic.”<sup>1</sup>
- Universities Australia cited evidence that “a well-designed short-term programme can have a significant lasting impact upon participants” and that “more is better, but some is better than none” when it comes to students spending time abroad.<sup>2</sup>
- The British Council and UUKi's (2015) *Student Perspectives* research found that students “reported valuable outcomes for very short and short-term mobility programmes.”<sup>3</sup>
- Focus group participants contributing to this toolkit who had been on a short-term mobility programme described the experience as “life-changing.”

<sup>1</sup> Universities Australia outcomes of learning abroad. (Dwyer, 2004b; Shiveley & Misco, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> UUKi and British Council Student Perspectives (2015).

<sup>3</sup> Institute of International Education – Gaining an Employment Edge, Christine Farrugia, October 2017.

## Recommendations

### 1. Take a whole institution approach:

Outward mobility teams should ensure that all academic and student services colleagues know about outward mobility opportunities and are able to signpost students to more information. Good practice in this area includes upskilling colleagues who may be asked about mobility opportunities, and having mobility opportunities available through institutional-widening participation programmes.

### 2. Be student-led:

Development of new programmes and policies must reflect emerging student needs and ambitions. Responding to the requirements of the student community is crucial to effectively expand the mobility offer. Our case studies include examples of institutions centring students in organising the logistics of their support and asking students for feedback on placements to inform programmes in the future. Institutions should consult their student body when developing mobility activities.

### 3. Offer short-term mobility opportunities:

Diversifying the mobility offer by delivering short-term placements for both study and work abroad opportunities can increase participation. The case studies in this toolkit show the variety of short-term mobility currently being delivered by our institutions, including internships, group cultural visits and short courses. Short-term mobility has value, and can also act as a taster for future mobility.

### 4. Foster academic engagement:

It is important to identify academic champions at institutions, and to collaborate with them in the development and promotion of programmes. Where possible, mobility should also be embedded in the curriculum to encourage students to participate and

to enable them to formalise the mobility's contribution to their academic development.

### 5. Provide targeted funding:

Many of the programmes featured in this toolkit have ring-fenced funding to enable students to overcome the financial barrier to mobility. When allocating funding to students it is important to consider the scale of support in place and ensure that targeted funds are allocated to those most in need of financial support. Providing information early on available funding and grants, as well as cost of living for different mobility locations, ensures students do not dismiss the opportunity prematurely.

### 6. Expand marketing activities:

Communicating the value of mobility to students is key to increasing participation. Marketing activities should use multiple channels to reach a diverse audience. Digital marketing can be used to raise awareness of opportunities through videos of students abroad, testimonials from returning students and "student take overs" on social media accounts.

### 7. Involve parents and guardians:

Parents and guardians can be key influencers in students' mobility decisions. Inviting parents and guardians to information sessions focused on the positive academic and employment outcomes of going abroad can support buy-in. Stands at open days are also an opportunity to discuss mobility benefits.

### 8. Include applications and interviews:

Including application and interview processes makes mobility opportunities aspirational for students and ensures that applicants are invested in going abroad. This approach enables skills development for both successful and unsuccessful applicants. Applications

and interviews can focus on student success outside of academic achievement, including extra-curricular and community activities.

### **9. Start preparation early:**

Effectively preparing students for their time overseas is crucial, and this process should start early. This includes signposting students to guidance, managing student expectations, being proactive on reasonable adjustments, providing information packs on host countries and ensuring that in-country support is put in place.

### **10. Establish a mobile student network:**

A mobility network enables students to prepare for their mobility by linking them with other students heading to the same region. It also works to link soon-to-be mobile students with formerly mobile students who have visited the region and can give advice and tips on the local area. This help ease anxiety and supports a smooth transition for the student.

### **11. Deliver expert support:**

Teams should collaborate with expert colleagues across institutions and with trusted external partners to develop impactful mobile experiences and with that appropriate support is in place. Examples in this toolkit include disability advisors working to ensure reasonable adjustments are in place and including outward mobility within widening participation programmes.

### **12. Offer language learning:**

Language teaching can be delivered in advance of mobility to build students' confidence and in-country, providing an additional support network. Teaching should focus on conversational and colloquial language, allowing students to navigate their host country more easily. Classes should be made accessible to all students, and address particular learning difficulties, for example for students who are unable to use phonetic techniques an alternative teaching method should be provided.

### **13. Deliver post-mobility activities:**

Once students have returned from their mobility experience it is important to enable them to reflect on their time abroad. CV workshops encourage students to frame their mobility in a way that is attractive to employers, highlighting the skills they have developed during their programme. Other suggestions included providing public speaking practice and opportunities to write blogs and film vlogs.

### **14. Create an ambassador scheme:**

Ambassador schemes help students further develop their networking skills, as well as developing new skills in public speaking and media writing. An established ambassador scheme can benefit the institution as ambassadors are champions of mobility and can participate in marketing activities, events and outreach in schools.

### **15. Introduce a buddy scheme:**

Linking previously mobile students with incoming students from the same region is beneficial to both students. The incoming student has a local support network and the mobility alumnus is able to expand their international network.

# Good practice: universities

## Foreword by Professor Ella Ritchie, European Higher Education Area Expert

Student mobility is of great value in student development, confidence, employability and life skills and should be accessible to all students. Generally speaking, across the higher education sector in the UK, under-represented groups are much less likely, or are unable, to participate in any opportunities outside the curriculum – this includes mobility opportunities. The first part of the Widening Participation in Outward Student Mobility project was to drill down more deeply into the data about five disadvantaged groups in order to identify trends.

The preliminary headline findings confirm that students from more advantaged backgrounds were 65% more likely to engage in outward mobility than their disadvantaged peers. On all counts the target groups are under-represented in mobility and students with overlapping disadvantages (as expected) have an even lower likelihood of participating in mobility schemes. The reasons for this are complex and multi-layered and after analysing available data the project team selected a number of case studies from across 16 universities to look at how different types of universities had managed to buck the trend and open up mobility for disadvantaged groups in their student populations.

The case studies were a valuable way of teasing out what the barriers are and how they could be tackled as we learnt from academics, professionals and students about barriers, routes to success and perceived benefits. At an institutional level we learnt about the importance of a 'whole university approach' with a positive discourse about mobility. Practical and well-publicised information from institutions about student support, advice about logistics and overcoming practical barriers is obviously important but so too is explaining the academic,

personal and career benefits that a mobility opportunity can bring. This requires a joined-up approach between academic advisors and professional services involved in promoting and organising mobility. The case studies showed that embedding mobility into programmes and student cycles was important and confirmed the finding of other studies that short-term mobility also reaped benefits.

From the student side we saw the importance of student-led support, mentoring and student ambassador schemes as a way of giving students the confidence to take up mobility opportunities. Again demonstrating the advantages of mobility schemes in learning new skills and aptitudes and showing students how to take advantage of this in the job market was important.

We hope that the case studies taken from across different types of universities will provide useful tips and learning points for the sector. Increasing mobility in disadvantaged groups can bring huge benefits to individual students as well as enhancing the quality of the learning opportunities that a university can offer.

## King's College London



Access Agreement



Short-term



Funding



Collaboration

### An institutional approach to widening participation in outward mobility

King's has adopted a whole institution approach to widening participation and outward mobility, providing funding, bespoke programming and dedicated staff.

#### Background and aims

King's first included study abroad in its access agreement with the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) in 2013. The links between mobility and employability outcomes, all the more resonant for students from lower socio-economic category backgrounds, supported the requirement for appropriate resourcing. As part of its collaboration with King's Widening Participation team and the university's commitment to fulfilling its OFFA agreements, the Global Mobility Office has put the following core measures in place to increase the participation of those currently under-represented in international mobility:

- Funding: distribution of streamlined, annual funding to students for whom costs may be a barrier to mobility.
- Programming: a bespoke opportunity for students from disadvantaged backgrounds with little international experience to take part in a one-week, fully-funded programme. This is designed to develop cultural intelligence through a leadership challenge and to be a catalyst for participation in longer-term programmes such as a summer, semester or year abroad.

- Support: a dedicated Global Mobility staff member, working closely with Widening Participation, to offer additional support to under-represented groups.

#### Structure

King's adopted a whole institution approach to widening participation in outward mobility in 2015/16. In January 2016, in conjunction with the Widening Participation team, the Global Mobility Office created a new role within the team – *Global Mobility Officer (Increasing Opportunities Support)*. The role-holder is responsible for supporting the mobility of student groups under-represented within international mobility at the university, including students from lower socio-economic category backgrounds, students with disabilities and registered care leavers, amongst others. Whilst the role-holder sits within the Global Mobility team, they work in close collaboration with the Widening Participation team and other relevant units such as the Student Funding Office and Disability Advisory Service. The role-holder is responsible for organising and administering targeted funding opportunities; supporting a one-week, fully-funded study abroad programme for students from disadvantaged backgrounds; signposting opportunities; contributing to research conducted by the Widening Participation team; and being a dedicated point of support for students from under-represented groups interested in mobility.

#### Funding

The Global Mobility Office administers several funding awards each year, with the Broadening Horizons Award (BHA) specifically aimed at widening participation students.

Broadening Horizons Award – Mobility funding targeted at students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Awards of up to £1,200, dependent on the type, location and duration of the student's mobility and

set additional criteria. Eligibility is restricted to those students receiving the King's Living Bursary, an award provided to c.3,000 undergraduate UK-domiciled students a year who have a means-tested household income of £42,641 or less, or have participated in a university outreach programme such as Realising Opportunities or K+.

## Programming

King's offer a range of structured mobility opportunities for students. There are two programmes that specifically target students who are under-represented in mobility:

### **Kuala Lumpur and Nairobi Study Abroad:**

King's works with Common Purpose charitable trust to deliver an opportunity for 25 students per year from disadvantaged backgrounds with little or no international experience to take part in a one-week short-term fully-funded programme. The first trip, to Kuala Lumpur, ran in 2016 and the 2017 trip was to Nairobi. Both were run in conjunction with other UK institutions and their students as well as universities and students based in the host country. The programme content aims to enhance students' leadership skills, provide opportunities to network with professionals, engage with real-world problems in an unfamiliar culture and visit local organisations.

### **Dialogues on Disability:**

Introduced in 2013 and growing in scale each year, this programme offers disabled students from King's and select partner universities the chance to attend a short-term programme exploring the challenges and opportunities surrounding accessibility and inclusion of disabled people in universities around the world. It began in Delhi, then moved to London, before taking place in Mexico in 2016.

## Support

To ensure that all students are supported appropriately whilst on mobility, the Global Mobility team work closely with other, expert departments across the university.

For example, with regards to students with disabilities, preparation for mobility starts well in advance, in some cases up to a year before the mobility is due to take place. Global Mobility and Disability Advisory Service staff meet together with the student to discuss support and communication is then established with the local disability team in-country to establish how the student's needs can best be met.

The Global Mobility Office supports students while they are in-country but also helps co-ordinate across the university, to ensure that appropriate support is provided by relevant parties should issues arise. The university also offers face-to-face support while students are on mobility, for example through Skype 'office hours' and counselling clinics.

## Measuring success

- In 2016/17, 212 King's students received Broadening Horizons Awards, totalling over £150,000.
- All returning students from the programmes said they would recommend the programme to others.
- Students on short-term programmes have gone on to pursue semester or year abroad opportunities, including at the University of Washington and the National University of Singapore.

'I feel transformed in the sense that I am not only a lot more confident in myself, but I'm also a lot more adventurous. Things that I would not have considered before are becoming very real opportunities.'

**Short-term mobility student**

'I've gained a lot of confidence and learnt more about how to become a leader. This experience has made sure that I will pursue more study abroad options in my time at King's.'

**Short-term mobility student**

'I have had the chance to experience a new culture and community and explore a new country that I would not have seen otherwise. It has opened my eyes to different political, cultural and social perspectives that are often missed when spending time within a single academic department.'

**Short-term mobility student**

### Tips from King's College London

1. Short-term mobility opportunities can be a catalyst for longer-term mobility but planning is crucial to being able to track this appropriately.
2. Targeted funding is an effective way to increase the participation of under-represented groups, but funding administration should be as simple as possible otherwise it's just another bureaucratic process that can deter students.
3. Collaboration with other universities can lower overheads whilst providing an invaluable opportunity to share expertise, expand the student experience, and create new and meaningful links with others.

## University of Bristol



Access Agreement



Careers



Funding

### Bristol Interns in China

Bristol Interns in China (BIC) offers University of Bristol undergraduate students from a widening participation background the opportunity to undertake a fully funded eight-week internship in Shenzhen at the end of their penultimate year.

#### Background and aims

BIC is a landmark programme for the University of Bristol. It represents the University's intention to ensure that students from widening participation backgrounds

have access to the international experience that is known to lead to better careers and higher salaries among graduates. In 2016/17 access funding was secured to develop a pilot programme to send widening participation students on overseas summer internships. Earlier discussions with the British Council led to a partnership with the British Council to deliver eight-week internships in China through the internship provider CRCC Asia.

#### Summary

The students participating in the first year of the programme have been selected via targeted recruitment and a rigorous application and interview process designed specifically for widening participation students. CRCC Asia sources internships in Shenzhen for these students.

In advance of going overseas both the University of Bristol and CRCC Asia works closely with students to prepare them for their time in China. The full year pre-departure programme includes a 15-week Mandarin course, intercultural and Chinese business culture training, and team building activities. The weekly language sessions will help the group of 12 students to get to know each other and bond so that they are able to support each other while overseas for the eight weeks.

All costs for BIC participants are funded by the University of Bristol. This includes flights, housing, accommodation, and a stipend for living expenses. Upon arrival students will receive an extensive briefing from CRCC Asia and can access pastoral care throughout their time in China.

Upon students' return to the UK there is a formal reception, where they present their experiences. A session with Careers is planned to help students capitalise on their overseas experience as they prepare to enter the graduate workplace.

Bristol interns in China is open to students who meet at least one of the following criteria: black and minority ethnic, from a low socio-economic background (determined by receiving a targeted bursary at Bristol), from a low participation neighbourhood (POLAR 3, Quintile 1 or 2), or mature student. Priority is given to students meeting more than one criterion.

## Measuring Success

For this pilot year, the success of Bristol Interns in China will largely be measured via feedback from students, at various stages following their participation in the programme. It is hoped that students would report the following:

- They feel BIC has improved their employment prospects, ie they have developed skills which employers value, they are able to use their experience to help find employment, they have developed connections which have helped them to find a position.

- They feel BIC has benefitted them on an academic level, ie they have acquired skills, knowledge or perspective which they believe have led to higher academic attainment.
- They feel BIC has benefitted them on a personal level, ie they are more confident, have developed intercultural skills.

Going forward, the University intends to compare the outcome of BIC students with the employment outcomes of their non-mobile peers.

'Bristol Interns in China (BIC) is a ground-breaking development for our University. Bringing the benefits of global mobility to widening participation students is extremely important, we are very pleased to be able to include this exciting new opportunity in our international programmes.'

**Director International, University of Bristol**

## Tips from University of Bristol

1. Work with colleagues from across your institution. Bristol Interns in China has been jointly developed by the International Office, Careers Service and Widening Participation Student Support. The variety of expertise has been very beneficial.
2. Focus on student preparation. Widening participation students may have less experience than their peers of spending time overseas, and a well-developed programme of pre-departure activities will help ensure they are ready for their mobility, as well as attracting more applicants.
3. Try to build a team. Peer support while overseas can be very important. BIC participants have been selected in part because they will work well as a group, and pre-departure activities have been designed to help build this group.

## Kingston University

Kingston  
University  
London



Access  
Agreement



Funding

### Kingston University: International Travel Bursary

Kingston University's Study Abroad International Learning (SAIL) office has secured £50,000 annually via the University's access agreement with the Office for Fair Access (OFFA). This money is allocated to the Kingston International Travel Bursary (ITB) fund for students from low socio-economic backgrounds. The application process is not competitive and all eligible students can apply to the fund.

#### Summary

Kingston University has a diverse student community. Of the 18,900 students enrolled at the University 75% are undergraduate, 54% are black and minority ethnic, 43% are from a widening participation background, 14% are part-time and 11% have declared a disability.

The University is committed to internationalisation and promoting opportunities for undergraduates to study abroad as part of their programme. It set a target for 15% of students to undertake an annual international experience during their programme. The target also stipulated that the diversity of the students who engage in international exchange programmes should reflect that of the student body.

The University recognises that for students from low-income backgrounds, the costs involved can be a barrier and in 2008–9 the International Travel Bursary was created. This was a collaboration between Academic Development, Student Funding, Study Abroad Office and the European Office. The bursary is now managed

by Student Funding, the Study Abroad International Learning Office (SAIL) and the faculties. The International Travel Bursary is included in the universities Office for Fair Access (OFFA) Access Agreement.

This means-tested bursary covers the cost of return travel and student visas if applicable. All Kingston University-approved destinations are eligible. The ITB is open to full-time undergraduates with a household income of less than £25,000 and who have taken out the full student loan entitlement. To apply, students submit documents to the SAIL Office to evidence their entitlement. Students are asked to submit these prior to departure but applications can be accepted afterwards as long as the SAIL Office receive the application within the same academic year.

#### Measuring success

274 students have received ITB to participate in study exchange since 2008.

- Over 500 students have received the ITB to participate in summer programmes since 2008.
- There has been an increase in the number of students getting a First or Upper Second degree classification following their mobility period.<sup>4</sup>

'[the] International Mobility Bursary has allowed me a once-in-life-time chance to study abroad in the USA. This experience has been the best four months of my life. I will be very sad to leave the USA and I am extremely grateful that I have been offered the chance to do this via International Mobility Bursary. Please keep it going so that future students get this enriching chance.'

**Student in receipt of  
International Mobility Bursary**

<sup>4</sup> Carbonell, Joan-Anton A path is made by walking: Analysis of UK outward student mobility in 2013–14 and 2014–15 (2017).

## University of Birmingham

UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM



Short-term



Post-mobility

### Careers Network's Gateway Bursary: supporting widening participation students at the University of Birmingham

Careers Network at the University of Birmingham offers a suite of activities to support widening participation students in developing their employability prospects. One of these initiatives is the Gateway Bursary, through which this cohort of undergraduate students can apply for funding to undertake key work experience opportunities, a significant number of which have been overseas.

#### Background and aims

The University of Birmingham has a long history of recruiting a diverse student population. In 2014–15, 22.8% of University of Birmingham students were from low socio-economic groups, 80.3% from state schools and 6.2% were from low participation neighbourhoods. Additionally, the University has the fourth largest undergraduate black and minority ethnic population in the Russell Group.

The University recognises the importance of maximising graduate employability outcomes for all students especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. With the support of donations through the University's Alumni department and sponsors from external employers, Careers Network designed the Gateway Bursary to provide financial support to widening participation students to allow them to undertake key work experiences.

#### Summary

Through the Gateway Bursary undergraduate students in their first, second or penultimate year can apply for up to £2,000 of funding to cover the costs of undertaking unpaid or low-paid work experience. The Bursary is specifically designed to support widening participation students who meet at least one of seven eligibility categories which includes students registered as disabled, students from low socio-economic backgrounds and low participation neighbourhoods, students of an ethnic minority and care leavers.

To secure a bursary, students are required to successfully complete an online application form and attend an interview. This is to provide them with application and interview practice and enables them to develop their confidence levels in common recruitment processes. Students are invited to complete a short questionnaire following their bursary interview providing feedback on their experience of the interview process, which supports the department in tailoring the application process and support available.

Since its launch in 2012 over £500,000 of funding has been allocated, supporting almost 600 students to break the financial barrier of undertaking work experience of this nature. Over 380 of these students undertook work experience overseas, gaining key skills as part of their day-to-day duties as well as developing cultural awareness.

Opportunities have varied across a wide range of sectors and countries. Students have helped provide healthcare and public health services to communities in Nicaragua and Honduras via a student led society, worked on a conservation research project in the Peruvian Amazon, shadowed sports lawyers and solicitors in Australia, taught English to disadvantaged children in Thailand, assisted in operating a large scale thermal plant in Kuwait and volunteered at psychiatric hospitals in Sri Lanka, as well as many other experiences.

Bursary recipients are encouraged to reflect on their experience by completing a report upon completion. This allows them to identify their achievements, challenges, skill development and understand how the experience will support them with sourcing future opportunities.

### Measuring success

- Impact of the bursaries is measured via an annual student questionnaire. In 2016 100% of respondents across all bursaries believed their knowledge, competence and confidence in their own working abilities was 'good' or 'excellent' after completing their work experience, as opposed to 48% beforehand.
- Careers Network monitors the graduate employment outcomes of widening participation students who have been awarded a Gateway Bursary to measure the impact that their bursary and work experience has had.
- Applications have almost doubled from 106 in 2014 to 210 in 2016 -17.

'This summer internship not only helped me lay the groundwork needed for my future career... but also fulfilled many dreams I never imagined could become reality. This summer was a life-changing experience in many ways. It especially helped me develop a well-defined idea of what I would like to do in my future. Without [the support of the Gateway Bursary] I wouldn't have been able to undertake this amazing project.'

**Student participant**

### Tips from University of Birmingham

1. Engage with the University alumni department and external employers to source funding; projects of this nature can successfully meet company Corporate Social Responsibility agendas which can encourage donations.
2. Implement an effective application process to enable students to understand their desires to undertake the experience and to support development of their employability skills.
3. Provide students with the opportunity to reflect upon their experience as a platform to identify how the experience has supported their personal and professional development.

## University of Warwick



Careers



Post-mobility

### Intercultural competency for employability

The University of Warwick's innovative Go Global Intercultural Competence programme is designed to help enrich students' intercultural experience. The programme includes access to interactive experiential workshops and online media, helping students develop their intercultural competency through building an expanded skillset, notably observation, analysis, reflection and accommodation. The final stage of the training focuses on helping students articulate their intercultural competency to potential employers.

By helping students understand the broader employability benefits of pushing themselves beyond cultural comfort zones and embracing multiple perspectives, the programme aims to encourage students to take advantage of opportunities to spend time in another country for work, volunteering or study.

### Background and aims

The programme was devised to enable outbound study abroad students to have a deeper learning experience. The aim was to help students encounter differences with curiosity and a spirit of adventure, to equip them with the concepts and the skills to make more sense of their experiences, and to enable them to talk about them in ways meaningful to employers.

The short-term aim for the programme is to deliver the training to all Warwick students participating in any form of outbound mobility or Warwick-led internationalisation at home initiatives. The University plans to embed the programme across all disciplines as part of the internationalisation strand of the institution's new education strategy.

### Summary

The programme was developed and is delivered by leading Warwick academics in the field of intercultural communication in partnership with the International Student Office. The programme is open to all Warwick students whether they are preparing to study or volunteer abroad, are currently studying abroad or have recently returned from doing so. It is also open to students interested in internationalisation opportunities at home.

The training design follows a research-based intercultural competency growth model, developed by academics in the Centre for Applied Linguistics at Warwick. This identifies three key elements: contexts for growth, routes to growth and desired outcomes of growth.

Recognising the limitations of their previous mobility support work in reaching all groups, the University is developing new opportunities through the Monash Warwick Alliance which offers students the opportunity to experience studying at an overseas institution with strong links to their existing university. The alliance has enabled over 200 mobility opportunities to date. This will provide further insight into what motivates and enables under-represented UK and Australian students to participate in mobility opportunities during their time in higher education.

'The study abroad Stage 3 workshop was incredibly useful in highlighting the skills that I learned from my year abroad. I was able to articulate the intercultural sensitivity that I developed in such a way that it would impress employers on my written applications. I now feel more confident in expressing the ways in which I grew from my year abroad experience.'

**Student participant**

## Measuring success

- The number of students attending the programme have grown significantly over the last few years and in 2016–17 the University has seen an increase in the number of academic departments asking for the programme to become embedded within first year modules.
- Since the pilot of this programme numbers have grown from 44 in 2014 to 350 students in 2017.

'Through the training we are actively equipping our students with the tools to successfully navigate themselves in any new cultural context. This is an encouraging step towards embedding this type of learning throughout the student experience, and a positive move towards achieving our strategy to develop every student's international perspective, preparing them for an increasingly globalised society through intercultural learning and opportunities to study overseas.'

**Stuart Croft, Vice-Chancellor and President,  
University of Warwick**

## Cardiff Metropolitan University



Collaboration



Funding



Short-term

### Short-Term Mobility Scheme

Short-term Mobility Funding utilises the University's own funding to support short, academic-led trips abroad across all academic schools. The funding is a contribution towards student costs, ensuring that activities are affordable. A part of the budget is ring-fenced for students from low participation neighbourhoods who are in receipt of the Cardiff Metropolitan Study First award.

### Background and aims

Prior to the funding, Cardiff Metropolitan University faced challenges with the take up of longer mobilities. The University has a high number of

students who have never travelled before or have travelled very little, and often with family only. The University also has students with care responsibilities and students from economically disadvantaged areas. Due to various barriers, including accommodation contract issues, part-time employment and family commitments, global opportunities were not easily viable for some students. The scheme is academic-led which ensures the opportunities are relevant and focused on the students' learning outcomes.

The Short-term Mobility Funding was introduced to address these issues and create a mobility culture across all disciplines. It provides opportunities for those who wouldn't normally be able to take part and creates a well-supported programme for those who do not have the confidence to travel alone.

The goals for the programme are to increase outgoing student numbers on an annual basis, provide opportunities for mobilities within programmes and schools that have not previously supported mobility, provide additional support to enable students from

disadvantaged backgrounds to take part, strengthen existing partnerships and open up new relationships through the mobility of students.

## Summary

The programme enables students to engage with overseas study or industry placements related to their academic discipline. Academic leads submit a proposal for a short activity that is relevant to their course as well as a proposed budget. Each school is awarded funding for at least one mobility programme.

The funding allocation is decided by a selection committee of colleagues drawn from International and Partnerships, Learning Teaching Development, Student Services, Finance, and Research and Enterprise teams at the University. This ensures a cohesive evaluation of the proposed trips in each key area of the student experience, and at a strategic level for the institution. Dividing the responsibilities between International and Partnerships Office, the academic schools and other support departments ensures buy-in from all stakeholders.

Applicants are encouraged to target activities at partner universities, such as Transnational Education partners or Erasmus+ partners, as this allows for additional layers of support and strengthens institutional relationships. Opportunities that have been funded to date are summer schools, volunteering and field visits to countries including China, Argentina, Denmark, Italy, Zambia, Sweden and the USA.

'I would definitely recommend this experience to anyone. It gave me such a confidence boost and I felt so comfortable. I don't feel I would have ever had this experience if it wasn't for Cardiff Metropolitan University and I am so grateful.'

**BA Textiles student, field trip to Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology, China, March 2017**

## Measuring success

- The Short-term Mobility Funding scheme immediately initiated a 79% increase in students going overseas, from 249 in 2013–14 to 446 in 2014–15.
- Strengthening of institutional relationships through student mobility and beginning new partnerships, eg Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology is now an Erasmus+ international credit mobility partner, after hosting a group of Cardiff Met students for two weeks through a funded trip.
- Increased student satisfaction and increased buy-in to outward mobility culture from academic staff. This has resulted in academic-led bids for Erasmus+ international credit mobility funding.

'Cardiff Met is proud to be able to offer such opportunities for students, through Short-term Mobility Funding, to visit our partners and integrate with students overseas. Such experiences instil an international mindset in our students, preparing them for the global job market.'

**Professor Mohamed Loutfi, Pro-Vice  
Chancellor International**

## Tips from Cardiff Metropolitan University

1. Short activities make experiences abroad accessible to a broad range of students and must be supported by institutional funding to reduce the cost of taking part. They also act as a "taster" to encourage students and give them the confidence to take part in longer exchanges.
2. Buy-in from academics is essential, as is awareness-raising across all stakeholders to ensure continued investment and support.
3. Ring-fence funding as additional support for those from disadvantaged communities/areas.

## University of Hertfordshire



Collaboration



Funding

### Including outward mobility in Widening Participation Programme

The University of Hertfordshire's (UH) Widening Access and Student Success team delivers a suite of initiatives aimed at fostering success for its students from under-represented backgrounds. Since 2014, the Herts Success programme has supported students centrally and aims to increase employability, improve retention and drive success amongst students from families with low incomes. In 2017/18, the Herts Success programme was extended to include incoming students from households under £45,000 and will engage with over 3,500 undergraduate students.

### Background and aims

The Herts Success programme encompasses a broad approach to supporting students from widening participation backgrounds by working with them across three focus areas, retention, employability and student success, to impact transition both into university and out into the graduate job market. Social events build peer networks; academic mentoring and events underpin key skills; employability sessions and opportunities particularly aimed at second and third years give students experience and confidence heading out into the job market; personal development opportunities boost overall confidence and a range of skills that students would not otherwise have access to.

In 2016/17, the Herts Success programme had an activities budget of £225,000 funded through the Student Opportunity Fund and National Scholarship Programme. All provision was free to eligible students.

### Summary

In previous years, outward mobility formed a large part of the Herts Success programme. To date, over 135 students have participated in academic and employability-related experiences overseas. These ranged from learning languages across Europe to participating in the G200 Youth Forum in Germany and Model United Nations in Paris.

In 2016, the programme delivered an international buddy programme in partnership with the University of North Carolina, Wilmington (UNCW) to inspire students interested in studying abroad who experienced barriers in doing so. The programme ran over six months with students in the group at both institutions networking online prior to departure. The students then participated in a one-week exchange in North Carolina where they participated in cultural visits and social activities. Students from UNCW later visited UH and undertook a volunteering project.

In the summer of 2017, the University launched a pilot initiative working with the British Council and Intern China to offer students the opportunity to undertake eight-week placements in Qingdao and Chengdu. The outward mobility initiatives within the Herts Success programme complement the workshop and skills-based training aimed at building confidence and resilience amongst students as they progress through their studies at UH.

'The cultural experience of being in Chengdu was eye-opening and life-changing, as it provided a completely new perspective on all aspects of life. Overall it was an incredible opportunity and I am truly grateful.'

**Male BME Student Participant**

## Looking forward

In recent months, UH has published a new 2017–20 institutional strategy for widening access and student success. This brings together the most successful elements of the Herts Success programme with an institutional outlook. In doing so, the University will deliver a mainstream and inclusive approach to student success across the University which more closely aligns to the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) guidance. The change signals increased levels of institutional support for this agenda and under a broader definition of widening participation students. Programmes have evolved in order to reach and positively impact greater numbers of students; for example, mindfulness retreat weekends have spawned the development of an online mindfulness tool, additional support in English and Maths has been made available based on student need and

an academic coaching programme delivered in 2016/17 will focus on key vulnerable groups including care leavers and estranged students this coming year.

## Measuring success

- Statistical analysis and qualitative data collected during the 2016–17 end-of-year survey shows that Herts Success helped students to transition on to their next academic year. 79% of Year 1 respondents found Herts Success helpful in their transition to university.
- The Herts Success programme has aided retention at the University: the withdrawal rate of Year 1 students from 2016–17 heading into 2017–18 is 9% compared to 13% for these demographics pre-programme.

## City University of London



Funding



Short-term

### Short-term study abroad to India

City University London partnered with a UK charity, Common Purpose, to take 22 students to Bangalore for a fully funded one-week cultural and leadership development programme, focused on the themes of sustainability and inclusivity.

### Background and aims

City recognise that the traditional semester or full-year study abroad option is not feasible for all students and sought to provide a suitable alternative to extend international experiences to more students. Care leavers and students from a low-socioeconomic or lower

income backgrounds were prioritised for this experience. Although this project was led by the International Partnerships and Development Team, the Widening Participation team provided significant support and advice throughout the process. The Care Leaver Support Officer was instrumental in providing additional support to the students, encouraging them to apply for the programme and guiding them through the application process and pre-departure nerves.

### Summary

City University sent 22 students to Bangalore to work alongside students from SOAS and Christ University (India). Students participated in a four-day cultural and leadership development programme with the challenge: “How do smart cities ensure they are inclusive?”. The programme was highly experiential in nature, with students participating in interactive activities to better understand their own cultural intelligence, prejudices,

stereotypes, beliefs and values. Students visited local employers working in the fields of either 'inclusivity' or 'smart cities' and local employers acted as mentors, providing constructive feedback on students' solutions to the challenge. Students concluded the programme by presenting their solutions to a panel of local experts in the fields of inclusivity and smart cities.

Students were able to enjoy free time in the evening, learning how to navigate around Bangalore, how to negotiate at local markets, try new foods, and open their eyes to different ways of living.

Students were required to complete an online application form and were chosen by a panel of 'judges'. The International Partnerships and Development (IPaD) team delivered several essential pre-departure meetings, to enable students to meet each other and to provide more information and answer questions. The IPaD team was responsible for the logistics of flights, visas, and preparing students.

This initiative was exclusively promoted to students with low socio-economic background and care leavers. The reason for initiating this programme was to provide students from under-represented backgrounds a way to have an international experience, regardless of financial barriers.

## Measuring success

Significant evaluation was undertaken, both pre-departure, during the programme, and upon completion of the week. This provided a wide range of data to work with to identify the tangible outcomes, in addition to the incredibly positive qualitative feedback received.

- Following the programme, 83% of students reported increased cultural intelligence and 91% expressed confidence in speaking to employers. 91% of students feel confident working in a team. Care leavers who participated in this experience had previously been disengaged to some degree in university life. However, following the mobility experience, students became noticeably more engaged and took the initiative to seek out other potential international opportunities, as well as a range of other services that are available to them.

### Tips from City University of London

1. Ensure there are sufficient resources to provide significant support to students pre-departure. This trip required a greater amount of support than other international programmes, especially given the fact that many students had little to no previous travel experience.
2. Manage student expectations of what they will experience abroad and what will be required of them pre/during/post programme is crucial. Be as clear and detailed as possible.
3. If fully-funding an experience for students, consider ways in which students can 'give back' (eg keeping a blog/documenting the trip with photos/video to be used as promotion and dissemination upon return to the UK, writing a report, becoming ambassadors to help the following year's cohort).

## University of Greenwich



Funding



Short-term

### Global Greenwich Mobility Scholarship

The Global Greenwich Mobility Scholarship programme gives students the opportunity to participate in educational visits with partner universities across the world. Since summer 2015 undergraduate students have participated in a two-week intensive Spanish language programme at Universidad Técnica Federico Santa María in Chile during the summer term.

### Background and aims

The University has historically low rates of outward student mobility, and this initiative set out to redress this by offering a fully funded non-credit bearing mobility programme outside of the academic year. In 2013/14 Greenwich sent 47 students abroad and in 2015/16 sent 125 abroad – more than double the numbers sent before starting this initiative.

The programme is primarily aimed at students in year 2 or 3 of their undergraduate degree. This approach was decided as these students are likely to have missed the opportunity to undertake long term mobility, such as Erasmus+. When shortlisting applicants, priority is given to students from a widening participation background with limited international experience – in 2015 cohort 55% of attendees were in receipt of a maintenance or special support grant from Student Finance England.

The programme was initially piloted in the Faculty of Architecture, Computing and Humanities and following its success was opened up to undergraduate students across all academic disciplines.

### Summary

The programme involves a mix of Spanish language teaching, cultural activities and social activities such as kayaking, sandboarding, day trips and walking tours.

The programme is marketed to students via emails and social media. The International Office host information sessions on all three campuses which advertise the programme and a further drop-in session for those who cannot attend the initial information sessions. Students complete an application form followed by interviews for shortlisted students. This provides students the opportunity to develop application and interview skills, expanding their employability skillset. In 2016 Greenwich received 246 applications for 56 places.

The International Office provide extensive pre-departure information via group sessions and the opportunity for a one-to-one session for students with additional concerns. These meetings cover everything from travel advice, cultural guidance and health and safety information, to outlining the programme agenda and expectations while in Chile. The session also introduces the group to the staff member who will be accompanying them in-country, reassuring parents and students that they will be adequately supported while abroad.

Whilst in Chile the students are assigned to a host family who assist them during the transition period, often taking them to the university and providing local information such as bus routes. Student ambassadors from the host university support the students while they are on campus.

The programme is part-funded by the Santander Universities scheme, and part-funded by faculties at the University. Students are required to pay £200 to attend the trip which can be paid in instalments.

## Measuring success

- Outward student mobility at the University of Greenwich has more than doubled since the programme was introduced.
- Students have gone on to participate in other global opportunities, for example the Generation-UK China Scholarship funded by the British Council and a Chinese partner institution; one student has applied to take part in a two-year Masters which will include a mobility period.
- Students have fed back that since participating in this trip they feel more confident to go travelling in the future and are eager to see more of the world.

'The Global Greenwich Mobility Scholarship has raised the aspirations of Greenwich students and offer more of our students from diverse backgrounds global opportunities which will enhance their job prospects and futures. The programme has had buy-in from across the University and we have increased mobility significantly in a relatively short time and the demographic of our students who avail of study abroad.'

**International Partnerships Director,  
University of Greenwich**

## Tips from University of Greenwich

1. Support – Ensure that the right level of support is offered when targeting students who may not have been abroad before.
2. Feedback – Ensure that programmes are evaluated and make changes to the programme following student feedback.
3. Students as ambassadors – After the pilot programme in 2015 this programme received further internal funding after returning students presented formally on their experience at a senior staff international strategy committee of the University.

## Cardiff University



Marketing



Collaboration

### Marketing outward student mobility

Cardiff University believe that studying, working or volunteering abroad is a great way for students

to broaden their academic knowledge, learn about other cultures and gain skills that are highly-valued by employers. The University is committed to ensuring that all students can participate in mobility opportunities and extensively market the diverse range of international opportunities the University.

## Summary

Cardiff University produces a range of materials, in English and in Welsh, to advertise mobility opportunities to students. However, the University recognises that it is important to move beyond traditional marketing methods to ensure that messages reach as wide an audience as possible.

Mobility opportunities are advertised through various social media channels including Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. The social media profile is managed by student interns in the Global Opportunities office. The University has student bloggers called 'Globetrotters' who blog about their experience while abroad.

The University has a YouTube channel, hosting videos which promote Global Opportunities programmes, as well as a digital storytelling project. This project involves training students in photography and editing skills before they go abroad. The University asks the students to make a short video of their experiences which is shared with prospective applicants to mobility programmes. The University films the students before they go, and when they return they are asked to reflect on their experiences.

Cardiff runs a Student Ambassador scheme with participants attending events such as the Global Opportunities Fair and giving talks in academic Schools as well as supporting social media activities. The University has undertaken focus groups with ambassadors to gain insight into how they can best promote opportunities to the student population.

The Global Opportunities team circulate a monthly e-newsletter to students and exchange coordinators in academic Schools who flag opportunities to students. The team produce focused newsletters for specific subjects where students are under-represented in mobility activities, such as physics. The team produce personal tutor sheets for each school which help tutors signpost students to mobility information. The team also attend academic orientation programmes and present on global

opportunities and encourage academic colleagues to engage with the programme.

The team host a Global Opportunities Fair with the Students' Union which gives students the opportunity to hear about mobility experiences and the potential programmes they could participate in. The team also have a presence at Freshers and Careers Fairs. The Global Opportunities team are involved with Student Union events such as 'Give it a Go' which introduces students to opportunities across the University and the Students' Union. The team also work with the International Student Support Team in a 'Global Week' to raise awareness of international activity.

## Measuring success

- The Global Opportunities team asks students how they heard about the opportunity in the programme application forms, signalling to the University which marketing activities were most effective.
- Social media accounts are monitored and the University also monitors how many students open e-newsletters and which particular opportunities receive the most clicks.

### Tips from Cardiff University

1. Digital storytelling ensures that students' experiences are captured and viewed by a wide audience of potential applicants. It also expands the skillset of formerly mobile students.
2. Collaborate across the institution, brief colleagues in other departments, promote mobility at events and workshops, and create targeted e-newsletters.
3. Events are a great way to promote opportunities and build excitement around mobility. Invite key partners and student ambassadors to discuss their mobility experiences.

## Middlesex University



Post-mobility



Student Support

### Student peer mentoring for outbound exchange students

Middlesex University has introduced a Student Peer Mentoring scheme which has been designed to support outgoing exchange students during the application process, while abroad and after the exchange period. On return to the UK students are trained to become mentors for the next outbound cohort. The scheme not only provides support to outgoing students but expands skillsets of formerly mobile students.

#### Summary

Middlesex University has experienced a significant gap between the number of students expressing interest in taking part in an exchange and the number of students who participate in a mobility experience. This is notably an issue with students from a widening participation demographic who are under-represented in mobility at the University. The Student Exchange Mentoring Programme was designed to close the gap between initial enquiry to participation in exchange, to decrease the number of drop-outs during the exchange, and to provide a positive overall experience for students.

Participation in the Mentoring Programme was an opportunity for outgoing mobile students to receive support and assistance from trained student mentors, who were either returned exchange students or full-year incoming exchange students. Students who wished to be mentors undertook formal training and on completion were allocated a mentee who would be visiting the host country the mentor had previously been mobile to. This set up allowed the cohort of mobile students to discuss any questions they had about the host country or institution with an experienced peer.

Outgoing students were provided with mentoring during all parts of the mobility journey through regular one-to-one meetings directly prior to the exchange, where students discussed concerns they had about the experience and were given guidance and tips for preparing to be mobile; and by distance meetings during the exchange via email, Skype and social media, where they could discuss any particular challenges they had encountered.

On return to the UK, mentees are offered the opportunity to become mentors for the new mobile student cohort. The mentoring training allows students to develop their communication and employability skills and can be included on their CV.

#### Measuring success

The programme's success was evaluated quantitatively using existing data gathering methods on participation in student exchanges, and comparing previous data statistics with that during the project, and qualitatively using questionnaires, feedback forms and sample interviews with both mentees and mentors. Findings were:

- Increased conversion rate of exchange enquiries to successful exchange visits year-on-year.
- The University has recorded an increased take-up of exchange opportunities by students from disadvantaged backgrounds, including widening participation students, students from black and ethnic minority BME backgrounds, and students with disability.
- The University has seen a reduction in issues with sociocultural and academic integration reported by exchange students.

'We value and build on peer to peer support and learning; we recognise the excellent support our returned exchange students provide to their peers through the mentoring programme offered at Middlesex. Students are given a certificate of recognition for their roles as mentors and this they can add to their CV.'

**Professor Tim Blackman, Vice-Chancellor  
Middlesex University**

'My mentor prepared me well for my exchange study as she had been to the university where I was going. I did not feel anxious as I did before I had a mentor and at one time I was thinking of not going on the exchange. But thanks to my mentor, I was encouraged to – if she could go on an exchange I could too and I could see the benefits of exchange through her.'

**Mentee - Student on exchange in 2016/17**

### Tips from Middlesex University

1. Respect diversity of experience and support the needs of all students.
2. Ensure continuity of support for exchange students.
3. Do not underestimate the lack of confidence of students, even when they appear confident, and ensure that support is in place for them.

## Northumbria University



Post-mobility



Student Support

### Northumbria International Mobility Ambassador Scheme

Northumbria University has established an International Mobility Scholarship Programme for students who want to study abroad and who in return will contribute to promoting international mobility opportunities to other students through being a mobility ambassador.

### Background and aims

Mobility to the European Union (EU) by students from the University has increased slowly over the last five years. Non-EU study abroad has also become more popular, but it presents financial challenges for students as there was only funding available for EU mobility via the Erasmus+ programme. Northumbria provides support to students who struggle with funding to study abroad, with the goal of increasing outward mobility year-on-year. By recruiting students who are enthusiastic about the opportunities they had experienced abroad, the University raises aspirations of other students to engage with mobility programmes.

## Summary

The Northumbria International Mobility Ambassador Scheme gives Northumbria students a £1,000 or £500 grant to study outside of the EU. The scheme is funded by the International Development directorate and managed by the International Mobility team. All students can access the scheme.

In taking up the scheme, students commit to becoming an “ambassador” for Northumbria whilst on study abroad and when they return to help promote study abroad opportunities to students at the University.

Northumbria have a ring-fenced pot of funding for widening participation, which is funded by Santander. The University target students who have a low household income level to encourage students to apply and to provide additional support. The University is flexible with the grants, and if a student can demonstrate financial difficulties which require multiple grants, then they assess on a case by case basis.

The process is competitive and includes an application form and interview. The team members get to know the students very well and explain the aims of the programme clearly before making a decision. Students are given a contract, which includes all the activities the University expects them to carry out including participation at study abroad fairs at the partner institution and at Northumbria, management of the university’s study abroad Facebook account, participating in social media activity and contests, such as photo and video competitions, in addition to being a point of contact for students interested in studying abroad.

## Measuring success

- The University’s study abroad option is promoted as part of the placement year offering. Analysis has shown that students at the University who take up work or study abroad opportunities, including the placement year, receive higher classifications than those who were not mobile.
- The University has seen an improvement in students’ academic performance and experience at Northumbria.
- The University plans to measure the salary prospects of graduates who have studied abroad during their degree..

### Tips from Northumbria University

1. Collaborate: Work with the Student Support and Wellbeing team from the start.
2. Ask: You don’t lose anything by asking the executive to support your initiative if it improves the student experience.
3. Communicate value: Give students a clear idea of the benefits for the of outward mobility, for both themselves and the university.

## Birmingham City University



Short-term



Funding

### Birmingham City University short-term mobility programme

Birmingham City University recognises the value of all international mobility periods. The University is fully committed to transforming the experiences of their students by providing education that is employer-driven and has a global outlook.

Traditionally, the University has had a low rate of outward student mobility. Almost 60% of the University's scholars are from the West Midlands, which includes many low participation areas. The Birmingham City University student body is one of the most diverse in the UK, with 48% of the student cohort from black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds.

### Summary

Long-term mobility is a challenge for a large proportion of the student body. In 2015–16 the University made a conscious effort to focus on providing short-term study abroad programmes with its partner institutions across the globe in order to increase mobility. The University currently offers places for students on summer school programmes in Brunei, India, Taiwan and South Korea.

The application process for the summer programmes is competitive, enabling students to expand their employability skillset by completing an application form and attending an interview. Furthermore, the application process has made the programme more aspirational: the summer school in South Korea received 50 applications for four places, compared with a programme where students needed only to only register their interest which experienced a 50% dropout rate.

Places on the summer programmes are not offered based solely on academic merit. Students are asked to discuss the extra-curricular activities they participate in that complement their academic achievement, including Student Union engagement and commitments away from the University, such as community activities, sports clubs and volunteering.

The University invited students to feedback on the new summer programmes. Students appreciated knowing in advance what they would be doing while in country and they were keen to engage in cultural activities and local customs. The link between the students' cultural background and a new experience in Brunei was highlighted by students who were keen to develop their understanding of their own faith in other contexts. The Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD) Global Discovery Programme was particularly attractive to female Muslim students, who were confident they would be able to practice their faith while abroad, with both mosques present and halal food readily available in the local area.

'I had the best time in Korea. It's like all my dreams came true – the memories I shared there and the things I learnt will stay close to my heart forever.'

**Muslim student on short-term mobility**

### Measuring success

- The University has seen increased student engagement in mobility projects. As a result, this year Birmingham City University has recorded over 500 instances of mobility of any duration worldwide, with students going to nearly 40 countries.

'Internationalisation is vitally important to us at Birmingham City University; we believe that a truly modern university must look beyond traditional boundaries of practice or geography. As a result, we are determined to make outward mobility available to as many of our students as possible, no matter what their background or personal circumstances are. We want all our students to develop into global citizens, who are highly employable and open to new opportunities in this fast-changing, increasingly international economy.'

**Professor Julian Beer, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Birmingham City University**

## Tips from Birmingham City University

1. Speak to colleagues across the institution to ensure that international opportunities are promoted effectively and do not go to waste.
2. Tailor opportunities to the student body; for example, short mobility programmes suit Birmingham City University students better and fit seamlessly into the curriculum design at the University.
3. Check with your partners to see whether there are new ways of collaboration and exchanging students.

## University of Edinburgh



Short-term



Post-mobility



Funding

### The Principal's Go Abroad Challenge

The Principal's Go Abroad Challenge (PGAC) was created to deliver immediate impact and long-lasting enrichment to the student experience. The programme provides flexible and accessible short-term international experiences, enabling the University to diversify its engagement with different student groups.

### Background and aims

Providing transformational international experiences for students is a key strategic priority for the University of Edinburgh. The University has ambitious targets, first set out in the strategic plan 2012–2016 to create 800 new international experiences for students over four years, and then in a strategic commitment to create "a more international student body – offering all our students an international learning experience; enabling the university to make a truly global impact..." by 2025.

PGAC was created to maximise the number of international opportunities available to students, to combat barriers to engagement and to widen participation in mobility.

## Summary

PGAC is a platform of several short-term international experiences. It draws on lessons learned from previous experience, and is focused around four strands:

- 1.** The Principal's Go Abroad Fund; a large-scale scholarship programme aimed at incentivising as many students as possible to engage with an international educational experience during their summer holidays.
- 2.** An array of custom-designed short-term initiatives created opportunistically in close collaboration with key partners and stakeholders, both internally and externally, and targeted at specific under-represented groups. For instance, the Widening Horizons Programme offers fully-funded summer opportunities to students from widening participation backgrounds.
- 3.** Wrap-around reflective components to all these programmes enable participants to develop vital reflective tools, derive maximum benefit from their experiences, and fully articulate these benefits to a range of audiences including prospective employers. These sessions include career workshops, an online reflective tool, and short reflective essays.
- 4.** Two yearly showcase events: The Go Abroad Event, aimed at promoting best practice amongst staff and inspiring colleagues to create their own initiatives, and The Homecoming Event, aimed at providing students with a forum to share and reflect on their experiences.

PGAC has instituted a culture which has made progress in circumventing traditional barriers to participation in international educational experiences by:

- Providing less expensive alternatives to traditional exchange options.
- Providing flexible funding models.
- Providing shorter durations for students who rely on part-time work to support themselves, or who might have caring responsibilities.
- Eradicating issues around accommodation.
- Sending out a targeted message to key under-represented groups to clearly communicate that these experiences are accessible to all.

## Measuring success

- Since its implementation in 2013 PGAC now accounts for 26% of outbound mobility with 317 students benefiting from a short-term experience in 2015–2016. Over this period outward student mobility at the University has increased by 105% which would not have been possible without the addition of these short-term programmes.
- Of those 317 students who participated on PGAC in summer 2016, 24% were students from lower socio-economic backgrounds.
- Through bi-annual events and promotion of these programmes the Business School, the School of Economics and the School of Engineering have started their own short-term initiatives.
- In 2016 the Principal's Go Abroad Fund received a record 1630 applications.

'I can't even put into words how beneficial a trip like this could be. I feel as though the trip has enriched my life in many ways. I feel more mature, confident and understanding of different people and cultures. The memories that I have made over there will always stay with me and I can confidently say that it was the best thing I have ever done.'

**Widening Horizons Programme participant**

### Tips from The University of Edinburgh

1. Reflection is key: the right reflective programme will ensure your students can derive the maximum benefit from their experience.
2. Be bold: funding opportunities for short-term experiences aren't plentiful, so when one comes along take advantage of it.
3. Engage and inspire staff across your institution: create champions in your schools and colleges to help promote and create new international experiences.

## Newcastle University



Student Support



Collaboration

### Newcastle University - supporting students on the autism spectrum disorder (ASD) onto mobility

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a condition that affects social interaction, communication, interests and behaviour. Newcastle University is committed to providing a friendly and accessible service to assist students with a diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome/ASD in achieving their potential. The Wellbeing Team work with the International Team to support students with ASD onto mobility. Support delivered includes:

- One-to-one support with a qualified tutor/mentor.
- Transitional and social support.
- Assisting with exam concessions.

- Advice on applying for Disabled Students Allowance (DSA).
- Advice and support for students who think they may have Asperger's; Syndrome/ASD.
- Advice and information for academic staff.

### Outward mobility

Where a student is interested in pursuing a mobility opportunity, the Wellbeing Team provide them with an opportunity to have an initial discussion to explore what support options are available at the new institution and discuss alternative support activities where the offer is not the same as at Newcastle. The International Team share contact details with the support team to allow them to ask the institution questions directly. The International Team support the student when applying for an Erasmus+ support grant.

The student's reasonable adjustments agreement is revisited as the exchange will involve a change of

environment and support available. Student support recommendation (SSR) documents outline measures such as extra time in exams, notes in advance of lectures, recommendations for staff to use clear unambiguous language (particularly in feedback), digital recorders for lectures, alternative methods of completing group work, and exam paper written on plain paper in one colour. The SSR is reviewed when considering what can and what cannot be delivered by the host institution during the mobility period.

Once a suitable mobility opportunity has been secured, the Wellbeing Team will meet the student for a pre-departure information session. This session involves discussing specifically what will be needed for the period, what might be challenging – such as balancing workloads, group work, presentations – and the support that will be in place.

The Wellbeing Team offer support to the student while they are abroad via email correspondence. Advisers work closely with the International Team if there are any specific concerns for a student.

### Tips from Newcastle University

1. Start early – begin the process as soon as possible to ensure you allow the student enough time to make the right choice of institution and to consider the potential challenges of a new environment.
2. Student-led – students know what they need to study effectively and the strategies that work for them. Providing institutional information helps students to prepare for the mobility and feel more confident.
3. Collaborate – it is crucial to ensure a level of continuity for the student when on mobility, such as assigning student advisors as a key point of contact while on mobility as they will understand the support required.

## University of Strathclyde



Student Support



Collaboration

### Supporting disabled students into mobility

The Disability Service at the University of Strathclyde understands the benefits of mobility. In addition to the impact on employability and degree outcomes, mobility experiences increase resilience, independence and confidence in students.

The Disability Service is committed to supporting delivery of mobility for students. This starts by flagging mobility opportunities in their first

meeting with all new students, this “plants the seed” as early as possible.

### Background

The origin of the approach came from the experience of a disabled student. The student was enrolled on a modern language programme and was therefore required to undertake mobility as part of their academic programme. The student had a complex set of support measures in place that needed to be replicated for their time abroad. The department supported the student onto mobility and on the student’s return witnessed the positive impact the mobility experience had on the student.

The Disability Service held an audit of support measures for outward mobility and have since embedded support for mobility within the service.

'At the University of Strathclyde we are committed to ensuring every student has the opportunity to participate in Erasmus+. We recognise the significant benefits our students gain through participating in outward mobility study, both in personal development and academic achievement. We are keen to capture the outstanding work that the Disability Service has achieved in promoting and supporting Erasmus+ to students with disabilities and to extend this exceptional support to other under-represented groups across the University.'

**Gill Watt, Deputy Director Student Experience**

## Summary

The Disability Service decided that for mobility, support in-country should be replicated like-for-like when a student goes abroad. This can be challenging, for example, a student with visual impairment who uses a guide dog in the UK may be unable to in Europe as the road and traffic systems are different, in which case employing a support worker may be necessary.

The service collaborates on support requirements with the Erasmus team. The University undertake extensive risk assessment that includes a section on partners support for disabled students. A preparatory visit along with the students is usually required in order that the disability service is able to fulfil its responsibilities of carrying out a thorough risk assessment and to ensure that any reasonable adjustments recommended for the student are put in place where possible; if not, alternatives are negotiated. This preparatory visit is also used to gather information and practical experience of travelling to the host institution and familiarisation of the new town or city.

The service works very closely with their partner institutions to confirm what support is available for students. The staff take part in both targeted and non-targeted work shadow visits to institutions to understand what support institutions offer. Staff mobility weeks are essential as they inform the University on available support measures and extend networks of practitioners, who can share best practice and guidance.

When a student decides to undertake a period of mobility the service aims to begin planning a year before the mobility is expected to take place. Pre-visits are undertaken by the Disability Service with students and when necessary with parents. This provides an opportunity to experience the cultural response to the student's disability.

The Disability Service will review the student's reasonable adjustment agreement prior to their departure. On occasion, students are asked to complete an additional skills assessment, for example, if the university needs to confirm their level of capacity for independent living. Again, this ensures that appropriate support is in place for the student while abroad.

Strathclyde's Disability Service takes a proactive role in supporting students into mobility: they promote the programmes, they visit institutions to confirm support measures in advance, they work closely with students to agree support measures that will be in place, they conduct risk assessments, skills assessments and review reasonable adjustment agreements. Strathclyde is committed to ensuring that any student who wishes to go abroad during their degree can do so.

## Measuring success

- The University of Strathclyde has supported 20 disabled students into mobility over the last five years.
- Staff within the disability service have visited six different countries as part of the work shadow and pre-visit programme, meaning they are now better informed regarding disability support available in these countries.

‘Taking part in the Erasmus programme was life changing for me. I studied for a full year abroad and this opportunity came at the end of year 3 on my course. This was the first time I had lived away from the family home, an experience that most students get in their first year. The Erasmus experience for me was not just about learning the language and culture of another country, it was also about learning new life skills and the ups and downs of sharing accommodation with others. It gave me the confidence to know that I can live and work independently.’

**Blind student studying Law  
and Modern Languages**

## Tips from University of Strathclyde

1. Aim to offer students “like for like” support while on mobility.
2. Be proactive in finding out what support is in place at partner institutions so that students can make informed early choices.
3. Start planning support early and involve the student at all stages of support discussion.

# Good practice: colleges

## Foreword by Dugald Craig, Chief Executive, Colleges Partnership

Around 25% of UK higher education is delivered in colleges, and many institutions hold Erasmus Charters for Higher Education (ECHEs). However, the assessment parameters, a requirement of the awarding bodies in the sector, often leave little space or time for colleges to contemplate offering longer term periods of mobility for their students and little scope for academic mobility. Although there are some notable exceptions to this, most colleges have, traditionally, concentrated on short-term mobility, of two to four weeks, linked to structured work experience in other countries. There are examples, in the college sector, of institutions making use of the higher education strand of the programme, too, for staff or student mobility or to enhance relationships with trusted partners.

The vast majority of students participating in such projects and activities are younger than their counterparts in the university sector. Therefore, the sending institution in the UK will be extremely concerned that it does everything possible to honour its duty of care to those students. In addition, the bulk of student mobility is undertaken as a group rather than an individual activity. These factors make the VET strand of the Erasmus+ programme more attractive to colleges as it supports shorter-term mobility in workplaces, encourages group participation and provides financial support for accompanying members of staff.

One of the consequences is that colleges and training providers have, under the existing mobility programme and its various antecedents, been able to adopt an inclusive approach to supporting and encouraging participation across the widest spectrum of learners in terms of health, gender, race, religion and individual needs. In fact, it is no understatement to acknowledge

that this has allowed some colleges and their partners to ensure that their mobility activities reach out and engage young people for whom such activity is a first or a once-in-a-lifetime experience. There are some examples of how colleges have approached this in the case studies that accompany this toolkit and many more to be found in the sector and in the youth sector, too.

A number of colleges will perceive widening participation as inherent in their mission to the communities they serve but all will identify things like extensive staff support during student mobility, intensive preparatory programmes fostering social as much as linguistic competence and the company of fellow students and peers during mobility as helpful factors. Furthermore, colleges like all institutions promoting student mobility, are keen to disseminate what they have achieved and are keen to engage with those universities interested in learning from them about how they approached widening participation amongst specific student groups and more generally. In fact, there is a sound reason for promoting such cross-sectoral learning when widening participation is such a strong strategic priority.

An informed focus on widening participation may benefit from exemplars from the youth sector, too. In turn, there are benefits for the college sector in learning from universities about how staff mobility and longer-term student mobility may be better promoted.

## Bridgwater & Taunton College



Careers



Short-term

### Bridgwater & Taunton College: enabling mobility for all

Bridgwater & Taunton College recognises that outward mobility helps students develop personally and professionally; that students gain valuable international experience, broaden their horizons, experience new cultures and discover new ways of working. The College is located in a rural part of Somerset, and many of the students are from disadvantaged backgrounds.

#### Summary

The College is committed to providing opportunities for all students to be mobile. Popular programmes including the Automovet programme aimed at increasing mobility in the automotive sector, placements for engineering students to visit northern Europe, opportunities for construction students to travel to Lithuania, and mobility programmes to Spain for catering students. College lecturers act as ambassadors for the programme, promoting opportunities at mobility events and induction events with a focus on how mobility will help students to learn new skills, improve their employability prospects, and develop their confidence.

The Erasmus Team work closely with the College's curriculum areas to ensure that students who may need additional support to be mobile are fully engaged from the beginning. Students often need encouragement to undertake a period abroad, and as part of the pre-mobility support the team deliver an information evening for parents and guardians. The team also meet with students in groups to answer further questions – this approach has proven effective as students see that they are not the only ones interested in going abroad.

All mobility opportunities include an application and interview process. These are focused on the students' ambitions and motivations for undertaking a mobility period, rather than just their academic attainment. Tutors provide references and students are given feedback on their application. This process encourages students to think through what the mobility period will be like and consider any additional support they may require.

When students return to the UK they are asked to complete the Europass, which asks students to reflect on their time abroad and the skills they have developed. Students are invited to present on their experience to the rest of the group, which develops their public speaking skills and expands their network. Students are advised to keep a blog and take pictures during their trip to include in their presentation, encouraging them to be reflective during the mobility period. Students are also invited to write for the College newsletter and website.

#### Measuring success

- Following their mobility experience an automotive student was offered a highly sought-after apprenticeship by the automobile manufacturer Mercedes.
- Feedback from a group of sports students who undertook mobility to Spain showed that students are now considering working abroad on completion of their studies at the College.

'Visiting and coaching in the local college and schools was a great experience as it was a new environment and a challenge for me to work around the language barrier, however with some help from the Spanish students I learnt some Spanish phrases. It put my coaching skills to the test but I gained so much confidence from the experience. I had a lot of fun and would love to return.'

**Sports student, one-week mobility to Spain**

### Tips from Bridgwater & Taunton College

1. Creating strong working relationships with European partners is vital for successful mobilities. Start small, this takes time.
2. Ask alumni to show how exciting mobility can be: create videos with previous students presenting on their experience.
3. Do not rush the student. Ensure there is enough time to plan and to get their parents or guardians on board. Taking the 'one step at a time' approach works.

## Lancaster & Morecambe College



Post-mobility



Careers



Short-term

### A whole institutional approach to outward mobility

Lancaster & Morecambe College aim to embed outward student mobility across the whole institution to create an internationally outward-looking college with vocational, adult and further education students and apprentices who are global citizens.

### Background and aims

Lancaster & Morecambe College (LMC) enrolled 5,200 students in 2016–17, with a significant proportion being from disadvantaged backgrounds. These include those having specific support needs, learning difficulties or disabilities, as well as those from low income households or care. Out of the 1,487 full time learners 29% were support fund learners, with 16% claiming free lunches. A further 10% of full time students were in receipt of free school meals. More than 20 areas in the Lancaster district are within the most deprived 25% of the country, seven areas are in the worst 5% nationally, and one area in the most deprived 1% of all 32,468 areas in England.<sup>5</sup>

The College employs a range of funding approaches to open access to mobility for wider cohorts of students, principally Erasmus+, but also drawing on other sources to enable students to undertake a variety of mobility opportunities that range from short to long-term, and

which include training, working and volunteering. The College is involved in international collaboration projects which often provide learners their first taste of travel and experience of other cultures.

## Summary

Lancaster & Morecambe College has offered European work experience projects for over a decade. During this time, students have attended programmes including IT work placements in the Czech Republic and Lithuania, Hospitality, Business and Tourism placements in Italy, nursing placements in Sweden, Iceland, Spain and the Netherlands, Leadership and Public Services summer camps in Bulgaria, Estonia, the Netherlands and Slovakia, and Animal Care work placements in Belgium, Italy and Poland.

The College supports all students in accessing mobility opportunities and actively seeks opportunities to benefit all the students regardless of their background. Where possible, the College seeks 'exceptional cost' allowances to ensure the maximum support for those that need it. This budget can then be used to support disadvantaged students to overcome additional financial barriers. In the past, 'exceptional costs' funding or College hardship funds have supported students getting their first passport, paid for train journeys to embassies for visas, for immunisations and medications, and for protective equipment required for international work placements. A significant proportion of the LMC students apply for their first passport so they can participate in mobility projects as part of their initial vocational course.

Parental buy-in is important to enable students to travel abroad. For many students, this will be their first time abroad and, in some cases, even their first time leaving their home town. The College invites parents to attend introductory and pre-departure briefings, and staff meet with parents to answer any concerns they may regarding funding, support and risk.

To encourage students to consider going abroad, the College offers very short-term mobility exchanges

as part of other Erasmus+ projects, often only for a few days, so students can sample independence, domestic and international travel. The aim is that by undertaking small-scale, short-term mobility, students will be more likely to consider undertaking a period of long-term mobility and may be more prepared for employment or further education opportunities in the future.

'As the incoming principal at Lancaster & Morecambe College I was delighted to discover the positive impact of Erasmus+ and international activities on the College and more importantly our students who come from a diverse range of backgrounds. The team that coordinates our Erasmus+ and international activities are now firmly placed at the very heart of the College to ensure maximum exposure and accessibility, whilst minimising barriers to participation. Though new to the college I have already heard multiple examples of how these Erasmus+ opportunities enhance our students' lives, and raise their aspirations whilst increasing their employability.'

**Wes Johnson - Lancaster & Morecambe College Principal**

## Measuring success

- Since first introducing Erasmus+ at the College in 2014, over 125 LMC students have participated in short-term mobility. Over 60 students have participated in exchanges as part of Key Action 2 projects.
- In 2016 four LMC students were offered jobs abroad after their mobility placement overseas, two students returned for an extended internship at a sister hotel in another region of Italy, several others used their experience to apply for international opportunities such as Camp America.

- One 2015 participant took a gap year opportunity after his short-term Erasmus+ mobility experience to participate in a 12-month voluntary project in Slovakia.

'I've become an entirely different person, I can now confidently stand in front of a crowd and talk about myself and anything for however long. I can speak another language. I can work and live independently and I've made new friends from different backgrounds that I would have never usually had the opportunity to meet. I can now say for sure, this has been one of, if not the best year of my life.'

Erasmus+ Student

### Tips from Lancaster & Morecambe College

1. Prepare your students well, and manage their expectations carefully.
2. Allow the students to lead in their activities abroad and watch them shine as they become leaders.
3. Get the support and buy-in of teachers and lecturers early in the project development process. They will take ownership of the project and ensure the right students are placed on the right projects.

## New College of Lanarkshire



Student Support



Post-mobility



Short-term

### New College Lanarkshire outward mobility

New College Lanarkshire (NCL) provides one of the largest mobility programmes in the UK further education sector. The NCL European internationalisation strategy 2016 – 2020 incorporates the best elements and good practice from previous mobility projects and activities to integrate an international and cultural dimension into the teaching and service functions of the organisation and drive forward global ambition and aspiration.

### Background and aims

Participation in the Erasmus+ programme has enabled the college to increase the number of students and staff participating in mobility to better internationalise the curriculum and outlook of teaching staff. Activities have supported the professional and personal skills development of learners, which in turn will equip them with the skills and knowledge to find the jobs and careers to which they aspire, as well as improving the continuing professional development of staff.

### Summary

The broader partnership has enabled NCL to offer mobility in a wide spectrum of curriculum areas across faculties that include health care, childcare, hairdressing, beauty therapy, make-up artistry, sport, football, rugby, motor vehicle, motor cycle maintenance, hospitality, travel and tourism, computing, dental studies and anima science.

Mobility activity at the College is managed through a well-established steering group with representatives from each College faculty, UK partners, finance department and on occasion, EU partners if they are in the UK. The steering group meets regularly and have developed a framework which covers key elements such as project management structure, communications mechanisms, roles and responsibilities and sets the timeline for identified stakeholder requirements. The framework ensures a consistent approach to delivering the mobility activities and continuous quality improvement.

The College has a well-established programme of interventions in place to ensure learners are fully prepared to engage in their work placement abroad and maximise the opportunity. In late autumn learners are issued with an application pack highlighting the opportunities available under Erasmus+ funding and guidance on completion of it. They are assessed on three main criteria: achievement, attendance and attitude.

Students attend preparatory meetings, identify needs and set personal objectives, agree and sign individual learning plans with their course tutor, participate in planning their work experience, prepare a Euro CV, undertake language learning, research cultural issues, sign the mobility contract and code of conduct, and receive their log book. The goal is to ensure that students have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities within the work environment. The College also delivers a series of evening family events prior to departure to inform the parents and guardians of the participants about the arrangements in place to support the students during their placement.

The College has put in place a high degree of monitoring and supervision of participants. The main tool for monitoring participant progress is the mobility log book that is completed daily and incorporates aspects of soft skills, experiential learning and reflection on activities covered during the placement. The process includes a distance travelled exercise for pre and post-placement self-assessment of skills and competences,

completion of a daily diary to record and assess the day's achievements, peer observation and tutor practical observation on performance during placement visits.

On their return to the College, students become mobility ambassadors for the programme. This includes speaking to new students about their experience, writing for the website and attending events. Recently, student ambassadors training as chefs ran a food fair with Maltese cooking, and delivered presentations on their placement to Malta.

### Measuring success

- NCL will deliver a mobility experience to 424 students and accompanying staff in the 2017-18 and 2018-19 academic years.
- Of the 209 participants who successfully completed a two or three-week work placement in 2016: 123 returned to College the following year to continue their studies at level 6, 53 continued on to Higher National Certificate level and 25 have gone on to employment.
- 20 participants in 2016 successfully achieved the "Life in Another Country" language module.

## North West Regional College



Student  
Support



Short-term

### North West Regional College (NWRC) EXCISE project

The EXCISE project, funded under Erasmus+, facilitated exchange mobilities for 21 students to Korsor in Denmark. Four trips took place within 18 months. The aim of the project was to offer participants the opportunity to gain wider experience in skills and employability mechanisms used in other countries with a focus on the non-learning environment and to tackle social inclusion.

All participants had learning difficulties, special needs or disabilities and were actively engaged in support interventions provided by the College's Student Services and Learner Support Centres. Students selected were drawn from across all curriculum areas. Students were aged between 16 and 25 years old. Disabilities included hearing impairment, visual impairment, mobility impairment and wheelchair users.

'The trip was the best experience of my life... my time in Denmark has given me more independence and taught me to make my own decisions.'

**Student on EXCISE programme**

### Summary

The programme was specifically designed and drawn up in conjunction with the partner institution, Korsor Production School. The programme was designed so it could meet the needs of the target groups. It involved positive learning opportunities through educational, training and culture and allowed students to develop a sense of independence by travelling and living away from home. Students developed their personal skills, enhanced their independence and acquired knowledge to further their ambitions and broaden their horizons. Accompanying adult funding was provided to support groups on a level that was dictated by the individual needs of participants.

Students participated in a range of co-ordinated educational and learning experiences in their field of study, including catering, hospitality, media, music, IT, sports, childcare, fashion and textiles, art and design and apprenticeship in construction and light vehicle bodywork. Students experienced the curriculum in a different cultural setting applying local educational approaches and traditions.

Students were placed with host families for a period of three weeks and additional needs interventions were provided such as adapted transport, hearing induction equipment and support assistants. During their mobility students attended the local Production School in Korsor. The school offered all the training and educational requirements of the students participating in the mobility. Students worked alongside their Danish counterparts.

The programme was a challenge for many of the students and had a positive impact on their ability to cope and to manage more independently within a different cultural and educational environment. This encouraged self-confidence within the target group and consequently raised their levels of self-esteem. Subsequently, students became the best ambassadors

for the recruitment phases and preparation sessions for future groups.

NWRC and Korsor received approval for their 2017 application which will offer an increased number of mobilities opportunities to students over the next two years.

### Measuring success

- The project was evaluated and the final report found that the experience was challenging, stimulating and enjoyable for students.
- Student feedback suggested they became more confident in continuing their individual areas of study whilst experiencing a new culture and learning approaches during the programme.

'I noticed I became more sociable and talked to lots of people and started enjoying myself... I have left Denmark with more confidence and I am proud of myself.'

**Student on EXCISE programme**

'This was the best experience of my life and I don't regret going, it's broadened my mind to so many possibilities and has inspired me to keep doing what I want to do.'

**Student on EXCISE programme**

### Tips from North West Regional College

1. Work with trusted partners to develop bespoke programmes that meet the needs of your student body.
2. Ensure robust preparation for students prior to the trip to support health, safety and personal care.
3. Place students with host families to support holistic development and integration with the local community.

# Student voice

## Foreword by Yinbo Yu, International Students Officer, National Union of Students, UK

The publication of this toolkit by Universities UK is timely, coming as it does at a time when the uncertainties of Brexit appear to threaten aspects of the UK's proud tradition of academic collaboration and outward mobility. It is important that we ensure mobility remains an integral part of UK higher education and that these opportunities to go abroad and experience new cultures and ways of thinking are open to all. There is no question that studying abroad is a transformative experience, research suggests that those who have taken up the opportunity find that five years after graduation they have a 23% lower chance of being unemployed.<sup>6</sup> It's not just the academic gain, it's the development of confidence, self-reliance, social capital and the soft skills that can enhance employability.

Much of the evidence and case studies in this toolkit acknowledges that students value the opportunity to experience new cultures, meet new people and evaluate different perspectives on the curriculum. As graduates need to differentiate themselves in the labour market, the potential benefits of engaging in study abroad with opportunities to develop a wide range of skills and experience are increasingly attractive. A British Council survey has shown that 79% of CEOs surveyed think that a new employee's knowledge and awareness of the wider world is more important than a degree classification.<sup>7</sup>

Even before the complications of Brexit there were many students who felt unable to study abroad, especially those who face difficulties in accessing education in the first instance. Given the known

employability dividend there is a danger that another level of inequality can seep into the system, and with the uncertain future of Erasmus+ funding, and increases in course costs to and from the European Higher Education Area, this valuable opportunity will be further restricted to those who can afford it.

In a post-Brexit UK, the country will need internationally literate graduates, people who have been exposed to and respect other cultures, these graduates will be developing the trade deals and partnerships of the future. The UK should be making it easier for students to come here to study making attractive offers that include post study work visas. The UK should also maintain its contribution to Erasmus+ programmes and universities should be looking at creating flexible windows for international study that accommodate the parent, the carer and those whose courses are so intense short-term options are the only option.

An integrated approach between colleges and universities, secondary schools, employers, the sector as a whole and student organisations will articulate the benefits for students and wider society. Student and academic mobility formed the foundations of early universities in Karueein, Bologna, Paris and Oxford, making sure they were rooted in their communities and at the same time outward looking and collaborative.

<sup>6</sup> <https://esn.org/erasmus-impact-study> (Accessed 27 October 2017).

<sup>7</sup> The Global Skills Gap: Preparing Young People for the New Global Economy (British Council/Think Global, 2011) P.3.

## Student focus groups

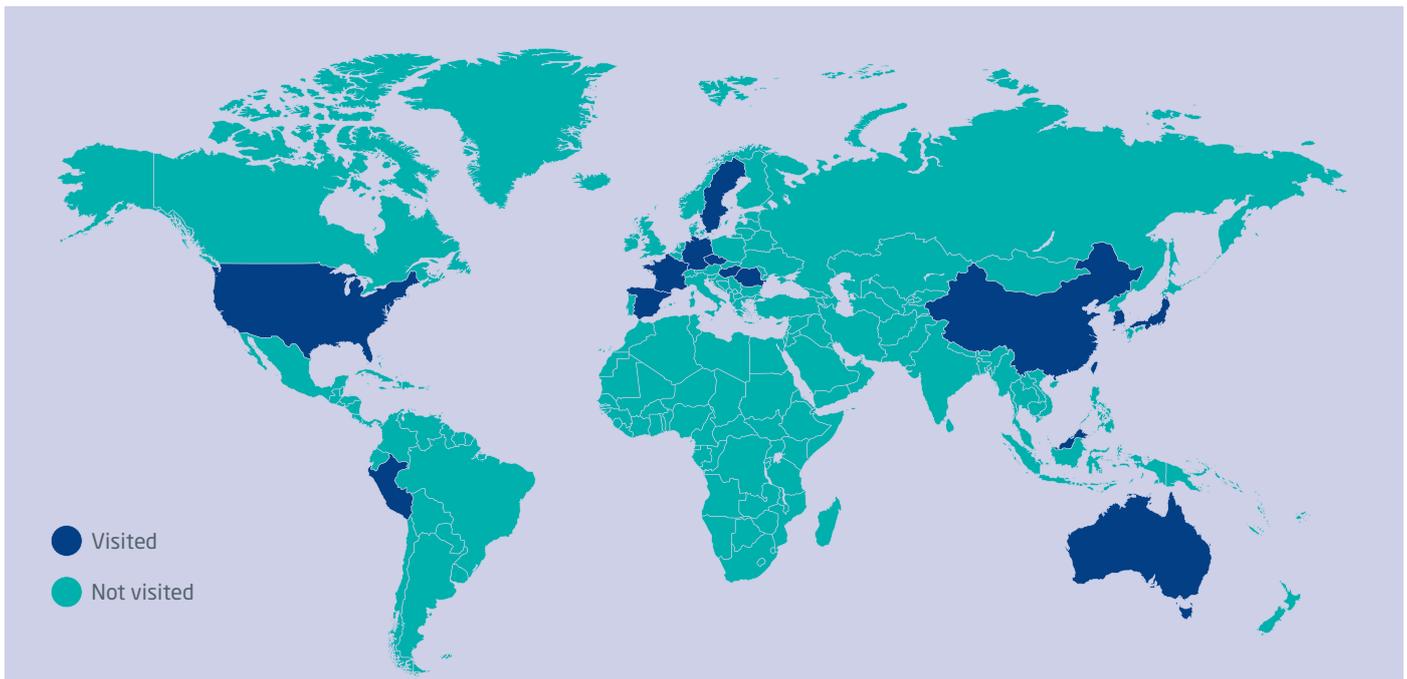
Placing student voices at the centre of efforts to widen participation in outward mobility is crucial. The Widening Participation in Outward Mobility project conducted a series of focus groups across the UK from April to September 2017. Students from each of the five target demographics were invited to participate. The workshops covered motivators, barriers and challenges to mobility and discussed how best to address the gap in participation.<sup>8</sup>

The focus groups had the following aims:

- Gaining an understanding of the benefits of mobility.
- Identifying existing barriers to participation as perceived by students.
- Discussing ideas around increasing participation of mobility programmes.

Details of the focus groups methodology are at Annexe B.

### Countries visited by focus group participants



**Note:** some countries were visited by more than one student

### Subjects studied focus group participants

Accounting  
Business  
Drama  
Economics  
Education

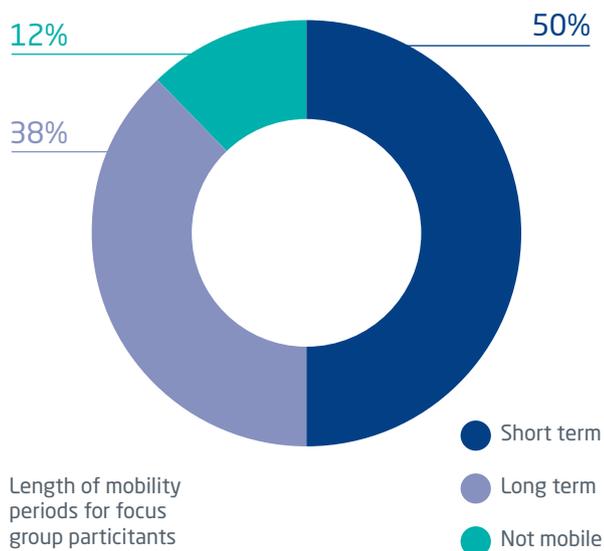
English Literature  
Fine Art  
Football  
French  
International Relations

International Tourism  
Nursing  
Politics  
Professional Care  
Psychology

Software Engineering  
Spanish

<sup>8</sup> Focus Group Methodology is in Appendix A

### Length of mobility periods for focus group participants



## BENEFITS

### What attracts students to mobility?

The responses to this question were similar across the groups: the opportunity was exciting. Students felt it was a "unique" experience to spend time abroad and suggested that studying with an international university is "different to travelling as a tourist". All the students were encouraged by the support offered, both financially and in terms of programme logistics.

The students were attracted to the opportunity to learn a language, to experience a new culture and to travel.

Many students commented on the attractiveness of studying an international curriculum, which they felt would add richness to their degree programme. Students were interested in the opportunity to approach their studies from another point of view and to root their discipline in a different culture.

For some students, the mobility provided the opportunity to learn about their heritage: students expressed interest in learning more about their families' culture and their parents and grandparents place

of birth. For other students, a mobility programme presented an opportunity to learn more about an area of interest, for example a student with a disability chose to volunteer with vulnerable adults and children, to learn more about disability rights in the host country.

Many students were encouraged by friends who had been mobile or their academic leads, showing how important student ambassadors and academic champions are in reaching students from the target groups.

### How does mobility help students?

Many of the participants described their mobility experience as life changing. One student noted that the mobility "changed [their] entire worldview in a year" another said that it was a "really interesting and eye-opening experience". One student found the experience "life affirming", with another claiming it "literally changed everything" for them.

Mobile students claimed the mobility experience helped their personal development, particularly their self-confidence, which had "massively increased". One student commented that they can "talk to people without being scared [and] say hi to anyone now". Students reported a change in attitude following their time abroad: while mobile they felt "in a position to say yes" to "an incredible amount of opportunities". As one student noted: "I thought if I'm going to do this I'm going to do it properly and fully go for everything they offer". This led to students being more ambitious on return and more likely to "go for it" when presented with a new opportunity. All students were committed to future travel, with one participant suggesting that you receive "the best education through travel". Being abroad had also given students a "new level of independence and maturity".

Students developed global skills while abroad, including language ("you learn more in two weeks than in two years of classes") and intercultural skills. Being mobile was a "great way to meet people from different cultures" and this exposed students to new ideas and ways of thinking. One student said it was "embarrassing to

think about how ignorant [they were]" before they were mobile. Other students agreed that they are now "much more informed". One student suggested: "having responsibility, being in a new environment, meeting new people, and discovering new things" had made them realise that "the world isn't just your world at home".

Students also felt they had improved their employability skills, students suggested that the mobility enabled them to "expand their professional experience". They were also able to create "a brilliant network of people from everywhere in the world".

Students enjoyed learning an expanded and international curriculum which allowed them to study their subject from a different perspective which they found "really valuable" and felt added richness to their overall programme.

Students felt that the experience helped their post-graduation confidence and decisions on next steps after university. As one student put it, "after being thrust into an adult experience of going to a new country, doing admin and tax in a foreign language, building a social network, I am now more ready for graduation".

## BARRIERS

Barriers fell within two broad groupings: firstly, perceptions and challenges for mobility that are commonly voiced amongst students; secondly, limiting factors to mobility specific to the cohort populations that this research focuses on.

Common across focus groups:

- **Finance:** This was raised in every group and by most students. Concerns related to the cost of the programme, accommodation, travel, subsistence, course materials, visas, passports, insurances and health services.
- **Accommodation:** When mobile, students often found it difficult to source accommodation within budget; on return to the UK, particularly for students on semester mobility, many

encountered issues if trying to secure a lease for less than 12 months.

- **Language:** This was particularly raised by students in the context of short-term mobility, who voiced uncertainty about having the language proficiency to navigate the host country.

These observations echo earlier findings, such as the British Council and UUKi's Student Perspectives research.

### Cohort-specific factors

This section focuses on barriers encountered by the students where these barriers might have a stronger impact for these groups of students, or be mainly experienced by students in these demographics.

### Pre-mobility barriers

#### What concerns do students have before going abroad?

For many students it was their **first time abroad** and they were nervous as they did not know what to expect. They suggested that social groups often dictate "*what you are primed for*" and that for some students "*travel is expected and encouraged*", whereas other students will have "*no frame of reference*" for travel abroad, and may be unable to ask family and friends. Students were nervous about "*travelling alone for the first time*" and "*being on a plane on [their] own*".

Students were concerned about **leaving their support networks**. One student explained that attending university was already outside of their comfort zone, commenting that "*even coming to university [they were] so nervous and anxious for the first few months*" and going abroad was even further away. Other students had commitments at home that they felt they could not leave. One student said that they would only consider mobility for a work and study placement: they were the primary carer for their family and "*would need to know what [they were] getting out of the experience*" to justify the time away from home.

For one black and minority ethnic (BME) student the **“prime concern” was how they would be “perceived”** wherever they might visit for mobility. The student said that in advance of any travel they had *“to find out the perception of black people”* by locals and *“find out about any instances of racism”* that had been reported. A Muslim student commented that there were *“not many Muslims in [the host country], especially wearing a headscarf”* and that they were therefore *“nervous”* about being visibly Muslim in-country.

Another concern for students was the **medical support** that would be available. One student noted: *“I suffer from anxiety and depression, I didn’t have any idea as to what would be on offer”*. Another student with a disability said that undertaking the mobility *“was a massive leap of faith”* as they were unsure what support would be available in country for their disability.

**Funding** was a major concern, many students said the bursaries and grants they received were essential for their mobility experience. One noted that *“without that help [they] would not have been able to go abroad, the financial situation would not have worked”*. Barriers for students on funding included upfront payments such as rent, moving costs, and deposits for accommodation, and travel. Visa requirements for some locations ask for proof of available funds, sometimes up to £10,000, which means that some countries were *“off limits”* to students without access to savings.

### Challenges during the mobility period

BME students experienced behaviour from local residents in some settings that **made them feel uncomfortable**. One student described how they had travelled to countries where locals asked if they could take a picture with them. They would also notice people taking a photograph with them in the background, and strangers had asked to touch their skin. Another was followed by a person taking photographs which they described as *“awkward”*.

Muslim students noted that when they arrived in their host country *“there was no halal food”*. The students

understood that this would be the case before arriving, however they *“didn’t expect it to be so much of a search”* to find halal food. This challenge was compounded by the fact that many food items packaged as vegetarian contained pork products.

Many students encountered challenges with the **in-country support**. For one student, their *“medication wasn’t available in the host country”* which meant they needed to buy it privately before travel. The student recognised that this would be a greater barrier for students without parental support. Another student with a disability claimed that they were *“wary if things started to go wrong [they] didn’t know if there was someone [they] could go to”* as they did not know what support service their host institution offered.

**Visa and immigration** processes presented difficulties for participants. One student described undergoing *“pretty intrusive checks”* including ultrasounds, mammograms, injections and pregnancy tests for their visa. The student said that *“there should be some kind of warning”* as they were *“not prepared [and] it made [them] feel uneasy”*. Other students encountered challenges when crossing borders, with one saying that they *“felt intimidated going through border security”*. A BME student described how they were stopped and held at a border which made them miss their connecting flight. They described this experience as *“actually scary”* as they *“didn’t know [their] rights at the time or what to do”*. Another BME student described being *“fully grilled”* at a border: officials required a full address for where they were staying, which the student did not have as their accommodation had not been confirmed.

Some students experienced mental health and physical **health crises** while abroad. This was challenging for students whose host institution required a high level of attendance to pass the year. The attendance policy meant that one student failed a module due to sick leave. When students visited the hospital they often needed a local person to accompany them due to language barriers.

## STUDENT RECOMMENDATIONS

The students in all groups were very positive and solution-orientated. They proposed a variety of ways in which they thought students' experience of mobility could be improved.

### 1. Messaging

**Marketing:** Participants advised against intense activity in the first term as it could be overwhelming. One student remarked: *"Students are experiencing culture shock. I've just moved 100 miles from home, I don't know if I want to do this course yet, I don't know if I want to live in this city"*.

Many students *"didn't know international study was available"* or *"didn't think [they] were allowed"*. Most participants found out about mobility opportunities through friends and academic leads. There was universal consensus that social media was *"the most effective tool for getting information out there"*. Platforms that were recommended include Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat. Other methods recommended for marketing options were presenting in lectures early in the second term, with a focus on *"how [mobility] fits into degree programmes"*. A stand on registration day manned by mobility ambassadors was also suggested.

**Open days:** Students felt a stand at open days would *"plant the seed"* by encouraging prospective students to consider mobility earlier in their student journey. One student said, *"if you introduce the idea when the parents or carers are there, any initial questions they might have can be answered straight away by people who know the answers"*. Students agreed discussions at open days were an effective way to convince guardians of the value of mobility.

### 2. Information

**Funding information:** A major concern for students when considering mobility was, as one student put it: *"how do I (pay to) get out there in the first place?"*. All students wanted there to be *"ring-fenced funding"* for

mobility and suggested that if programmes were funded or part-funded this should be made clear from the outset. Students were also keen to have early access to information on available funding and grants, particularly any additional targeted funding for their demographic.

Students requested information on the cost of living for different locations, which they suggested would help inform decision-making as they would have a better understanding of affordability.

**Parents and guardians:** Students suggested that the university should invite parents and guardians to mobility information sessions. One student noted *"if you let parents or carers know what the benefits are they will want us to go"*. The group suggested that the session should focus on the employability value of going abroad and the fact that mobile students achieve better degree results.

Many of the students' parents and guardians were unable to visit them on mobility due to cost. One student commented that *"parents visiting students would be very impactful and might initiate further cultural exchange"*. The student suggested a flexible approach to funding could enable family mobility: if a student did not wish to return to the UK during their mobility, they could use their allocated funding to enable parents and guardians to visit them abroad.

**Pre-departure session:** Students wanted more help in organising their placement logistics. Students were keen for pre-departure sessions which could include advice on websites to support sourcing flights, taking out insurance, securing visas, and guidance of what paperwork would be needed in-country, particularly for those working abroad. Students who were impacted by border stops suggested that a transparent conversation about potential border issues and advice on what to do if you are held at a border could be included in a pre-departure session.

**Information packs:** A popular suggestion was an information pack from the host institution covering laws, healthcare, police services, banking, local customs and

cultural etiquette, mobile phones, emergency funding, and local government and embassy details. It was suggested the packs also provide maps or information leaflets outlining places of interest. It was felt that an information pack would help students prepare and navigate their first 48 hours in-country. This was particularly important to the students who had declared a disability.

### 3. Logistics

**Short-term opportunities:** Many students commented that committing to a year abroad might be a challenge; one student suggested it was “*a massive step*”. Students argued that shorter mobilities would be more manageable for students with work commitments as they could take annual leave, or those with caring commitments who could arrange temporary or hospice care. There was consensus across the groups that providing summer placements and short-term mobility programmes would encourage more students to engage. Students recognised that short-term mobility had value in itself, and that it could act as a taster for future mobility.

**Curriculum:** Students wanted “*confirmation of how the academic system works*” and “*information on how credits transfer to [their] programme*”. Where the year was assessed, students wanted to select modules and have these signed off with their academic department prior to departure. Students also wanted to be alerted to any attendance policies that might feed into their module assessment.

**Accommodation:** One solution offered to this challenge was the opportunity for students to stay with host families. Students felt that this would enable further cultural assimilation, and provide access to local knowledge and a network of support.

### 4. Support

**Disabled student support:** A student with a disability suggested the university should “*encourage more students with disabilities to take up these*

*opportunities*”. They went on to explain “*I was very worried about would people understand I get anxious sometimes and verbal processing can be an issue for me*”. There was consensus that students with complex support needs could be dissuaded from taking part in mobility schemes and therefore it was important that the university have discussions early with students regarding “*how their needs would be met*”. The students suggested that it would “*be good for some students to start conversations with disability advisors, somebody they know, so they can feel comfortable to discuss [their] worries or [any] accommodations they might need*”. The student could then give permission to the advisor to discuss their concerns with the mobility team.

**Risk assessment:** Participants suggested students could undertake self-assessments prior to the mobility as this would encourage students to think through any risks and reflect on what the mobility experience would be like for them and what they would do if they found themselves in crisis. This was thought to be an important exercise particularly for students who are not independent in the UK but may need to be independent while on mobility.

**Language learning:** There was consensus across the groups that the university should make clear the language requirements of different mobility programmes. The students suggested any language teaching offered should focus on conversational and colloquial language. One student commented that classes should “*just teach what is practical*”. Students were keen to undertake language courses in advance of the mobility to build confidence and in-country as a form of continued in-country support. Students flagged that the language classes would need to be made accessible to all students, and to address particular learning difficulties, for example for students who are unable to use phonetic techniques an alternative teaching method should be provided.

**In-country support:** Students wanted a single point of contact at host institutions and to have a conversation with them prior to their departure. When students arrive in-country they often have no telephone access, sometimes no confirmed accommodation and

no network of friends. It is therefore important to have a member of staff to support them, particularly in the first 48 hours of arrival. Students were keen to be put in contact with local students prior to the mobility who they suggested could act as buddies while they were abroad. Students felt this would help with any potential language barriers and in navigating the local area. In return they suggested they would help local students improve their English language skills.

## 5. Networks

**Mobile student network:** A popular suggestion was a mobility network to address concerns around isolation and loneliness. Students suggested that there should be *“more forums for students going [as] if you are travelling alone you rely on the other attendees to be your friends and family abroad”*. Participants felt that a pre-mobility network would enable students to prepare for their mobility together including researching the placement as well as practical activities such as sharing the cost of cabs to the airport. Students suggested that Skype and webinars could be used as *“face to face helps”* and would enable *“multi-way conversations with people going [on mobility] the same year”*. One student suggested that the university could create a *“speed dating environment”* for students who were going on mobility to the same location. One student commented that an online portal *“would solve 80% of the problems”* they had before they went abroad. The students were also keen for the portal to include articles *“written by students for students, with recommendations and checklists”*.

**Ambassador scheme:** Students suggested that the university could *“do more to facilitate face to face discussions with formerly mobile students”*. Another suggested *“if you have students who have been to that place before, group them together with students who are about to go out, so they can give you some tips”*. Participants were keen to speak to students like themselves who will have faced similar challenges to them. Students suggested that ambassadors could participate in Q&As and that this would pass on their

knowledge. This Q&A could form part of any pre-departure briefings provided by the university. Students were also keen to meet with ambassadors one-to-one.

**Post-mobility network:** Students were keen for an opportunity to engage with other students on return from mobility. This would help with reverse culture shock and integrating back into life at the university as well as challenges such as finding flatmates when securing new accommodation. Participants suggested that students, rather than the university, should host the network and organise informal events and meet-ups. This would further develop their employability skills, and potentially make the network more attractive to students. Students wanted time to *“reflect on the experience”* and suggested that through a mobility network they could *“host webinars, write blogs, [and] participate in sub networks”*. Students were also interested in participating in a national network.

## 6. Post-mobility

**Buddy scheme:** On return to the UK students were keen to *“buddy-up”* with incoming students from the same region that they had visited. They were keen to *“give back”* as they understand now how challenging it is to be an exchange student in an unfamiliar country. There was a further suggestion that this scheme could potentially operate as an exchange programme, for example by enabling incoming students to take over an outgoing student’s accommodation lease.

**Employability workshops:** Students were keen to learn how to frame their mobility experience effectively in job applications and interviews. Suggestions included establishing an employability network, delivering a skills session, providing public speaking practice and opportunities to write blogs, and a mobility targeted CV workshop.

## Student spotlights

**Simmons Mclean,  
BA Childhood and Youth, The University  
of Northampton, Six months Erasmus+  
in Nijmegen - Netherlands**

### What attracted you to study abroad?

I have always liked the idea of travelling the world and embracing different cultures but the right opportunities were never available to me. After the birth of my daughter Hannah, travelling seemed to be the content of a playful daydream. I spent my late-teens and early 20s becoming accustomed to single-parenthood and travelling to study was truly an unrealistic goal. However, when I started my degree and I was told about the travelling opportunities available, I just knew they were for me. My daughter was in school and I could afford to take a week-long field trip to the Netherlands where I fell in love with Dutch culture. While on that field trip, I knew I had to come back to the Netherlands; we had to come back.

### What was great about your experience?

Does it sound over-enthusiastic to say 'everything', because that is my honest opinion. Hannah and I fully immersed ourselves into Dutch culture without much effort at all. The course I studied was Creativity and Art at Work, which encouraged all students to have a more creative approach to their professions and in their lifestyles. There was a large focus on cultivating a more playful attitude to life in general which was unlike anything I had ever been taught in the UK. I found creative outlets through the classes in music, drama, creative lab and art, which helped me write and perform an original song and contribute to a book. Hannah was enrolled in a Dutch school where she was taught to speak Dutch and made lots of friends from all over the world. We travelled to different countries including Belgium, Germany and France, which was amazing.

### What was challenging about your experience?

Although this experience was amazing it was by no means a walk in the park. Money was an ongoing concern and I had to work and save for months before going out, and live on quite a tight budget while out there. There was no university protocol for taking a child on an Erasmus exchange. I would never have chosen to be away from Hannah for so long and so I always knew that she would accompany me, but it did create obstacles that no other students had to deal with. For example, the student accommodation in Nijmegen was not available to parents with children and the only alternative was to try and rent a studio room off campus. Thankfully, we found an apartment which was only 20 minutes away from the university. The cost of the apartment was cut in half as I shared it with a fellow student from my home university. Enrolling Hannah into a local school was also difficult. The Dutch school system dictates that children must speak fluent Dutch, something I found out after I arrived. Fortunately for me, my landlord was an ex-teacher and helped me to navigate the Dutch system. Hannah attended university with me for our first month while we sorted out her enrolment. The programme I undertook was really relaxed and both the tutor and students welcomed Hannah and missed her when she started school.

Being so far away from my family and support system was difficult at times, but it forced me to come out of my comfort zone and really acclimatise to my new environment. In hindsight, I feel that all the difficulties I experienced became character-building opportunities that helped to enhance my personal development.

### What have you taken from the programme?

I will never be the same person again; I'm changed forever, for the better.

I realise now that before I went to the Netherlands I wasn't living, I was existing. I had limited my own imagination and was conforming to ideals set out for me by society rather than doing what I wanted to. Those six months were the most challenging, enlightening and rewarding months of my life. I feel more confident and self-assured and have become more reflective and open-minded. As a parent, I've changed as well. I really want to help Hannah achieve any dreams she may have for herself. Living abroad has given her an amazing experience so early in life and she now has skills she would have never had before, like speaking Dutch and coping in new situations. More importantly, our time together strengthened our mother-daughter bond which is a priceless gift.

Setting the goal of living abroad with Hannah, then actually succeeding has built my confidence and has helped me to realise that the only limitations on my life experiences are set by me. If I want to achieve a goal or travel more, I can. Will it be an easy feat? Not at all, however it's not impossible, nothing is.

---

**Sonny Williams,**  
**BA Software Engineering, Kingston University,**  
**Year Abroad, 2015 California State**  
**University - USA**

### What attracted you to study abroad?

The idea of challenge, financial freedom and adventure. I had spent time alone abroad before and it was an incredible experience so I thought what better time to spend a year in another country. I was also aware that I would likely not get the opportunity to spend that much time abroad for "free" in my life.

### What was great about your experience?

I met people abroad who I consider family now. I discovered a wealth of information about how I act, some assumptions I had about the rest of the world that were entirely unfounded and was forced to address some of my own personal failings. Study abroad is a sink or swim endeavour and I got to show myself I could swim in deep water while also experiencing some of the most incredible nature and events in my life.

### What was challenging about your experience?

I was missed, a lot. Not being able to be there for people who suddenly rely on you is very difficult. The course structure and methods of teaching are also much less rigid in America, with a bigger focus on self-management and more responsibility when you fail (which I did, once, the first time I have ever failed anything academic). Money was a small challenge as long as you are smart about it and do not over-indulge, the bigger challenge is managing the flow of it from abroad to yourself while keeping your money safe. I had no trouble making friends, but coming back home and not being able to see them was heartbreaking beyond description.

### What have you taken from the programme?

I have much more confidence in myself and my ability to manage crises. I also have a whole second family in a different continent, a wonderful partner who I met during my study abroad time and memories of experiences that not only could I never have replicated in the UK, I wouldn't have even thought to. The world holds so many little secret wonders and people will share them with you, given time, trust and enthusiasm.

---

**Conor Shanahan,**  
**BSc (Hons) Film & Television Production,**  
**University of Greenwich, Two weeks summer**  
**mobility scholarship in Valparaíso - Chile**

### What attracted you to study abroad?

I was attracted to applying for the two-week intensive Spanish course in Chile as it was an opportunity to learn a new language, immersed in a different culture, in a new country that I would never have the opportunity to visit outside of this trip. As I was in my final year of study it was also a good way of increasing my employability and setting myself apart from my peers. I also hadn't been able to commit to a semester or year abroad financially so the two-week scholarship was ideal for me to be able to have some international study experience before I graduated.

### What was great about your experience?

My experience enabled me to learn the basics of a new language in an immersive situation where I could use the language practically. It also allowed me to experience a different culture, and push myself out of my comfort zone, in a group with 19 other students all experiencing the same thing. Being in a group of students in the same position was great as it allowed us to support each other and bond over the amazing opportunity we had been given.

### What was challenging about your experience?

Although it was a great experience, I did come up against a few challenges. I was worried about being in a foreign country, so far away from home, as I had only travelled on family holidays to Europe before, so travelling so far away with a group of people I had never met before was a daunting prospect.

I was also nervous about staying with a host family as this was also a brand new experience for me. My host family didn't speak any English so we had to use Google Translate to navigate the language barrier which was

a bit awkward considering the translations aren't always perfect (one WhatsApp message from my host mum translated to "I'll keep you in the fridge"). However, this was also a great way to learn Spanish, as it meant I got to use the language in real life situations which enabled me to remember it – such as when my host mum moved my towel and I had to ask in Spanish to find out where it had gone.

However, despite being away from home on my own, the language barrier, and the different culture, after a couple of days I felt at home in my new surroundings and was able to thoroughly enjoy the rest of the experience.

### What have you taken from the programme?

From this experience I have been able to learn the basics of Spanish. I've learned that I can adapt to new situations and cultures, as well as becoming a more confident and independent person. I now work in the International Office at the University of Greenwich and had the opportunity to return to Chile as a group leader for one of the sessions in 2017 as well as travelling to Spain, Norway and Russia for international recruitment events.

---

**Lovena R. Nawoor**  
**Neuroscience BSc, Kings College London,**  
**Short-term study abroad in Nairobi - Kenya**

### What attracted you to study abroad?

Firstly – that it was free. I knew that going to Kenya would be little more than a dream, had it not been for the Broadening Horizons award I received. Secondly, I knew going to Kenya would be a completely new experience. I would be worlds away from my comfort zone, from flying independently for the first time, even having to get a connecting flight, to meeting new friends and exploring another culture, all whilst trying to find solutions to very complex situations. At the very least, I knew the experience would teach me things that I'd otherwise perhaps never know. All in all, it seemed like too good of an opportunity to pass up.

### What was great about your experience?

Sitting in a jeep, the windows rolled down, watching zebras graze against the city background. Learning to haggle in the Maasai market with local Kenyan students. If there was a constant underlying theme, which made most of my experiences in Kenya great, it would be the openness of the local Kenyan students. They were warm, welcoming and wise. It seemed that the challenges of my generation transcended continents, making it easier for us to connect. Their insight was second to none and the way they welcomed us made me feel at home.

### What was challenging about your experience?

Mosquitos – they seemed to have a penchant for my blood. I soon learnt that insect repellent would be my best friend. And the effect humidity had on my already unmanageable hair.

Something which was challenging about my experience was changing my perception of Kenya, and in fact, Africa as a whole. This was a perception which had been constructed from a lifetime of misleading and biased media reports – I had been led to believe and accept poverty as the sole fate for Africans. I never stopped to consider that one word cannot possibly define such a diverse place. It is true, there is poverty in Kenya. But there is so much more. To condemn Kenya as just poverty stricken, is to be blind to the richness it offers. To focus only on the poverty, is to be ignorant to the progress that Kenya has made, of the people who have flourished despite their circumstances. The view I had of Kenya up until this trip was ignorant and blind, and I'm so grateful that I got the opportunity to change that first-hand.

### What have you taken from the programme?

Learning about the Kibera slums, for me, was uncomfortable. When one hears the word Kibera, the biggest slum in Africa, they think of poverty. But there is more to the slums than the poverty there. It is a community, a home, where sharing is crucial for survival. People are living day-to-day, but they are doing everything in their power to live. They fight, they struggle, they try endlessly day in, day out. There is so much resilience in that. Despite their circumstances, or any setbacks, they still move forward. Progress is progress, no matter how small. The people there have learnt to be so resourceful with what they have, and simply make the most of it. This is something I'd like to do too.

---

#### **Berfin Karaaslan**

#### **English BA, King's College London, Short-term study abroad in Nairobi - Kenya**

### What attracted you to study abroad?

University is the time when you can really try new things, challenge and develop yourself. By interacting and communicating with lots of different people from different places around the world, I realised my growing interest for different cultures and traditions and believed that a study abroad opportunity would really allow me to explore that interest. In addition, the idea of studying abroad, being so far from home, seemed dreamlike because I am the first person in my family to attend university. I felt like studying abroad would break that imaginary boundary that students like myself have created.

### What was great about your experience?

The experience was incredible. Even though our programme was for a short period of time, I was exposed to a major issue within Nairobi. The contrast between the affluent and poverty-stricken areas was intense. One minute you are driving past Kibera and are exposed to the cramped conditions people there live in and the next minute you are surrounded by beautiful

buildings. The best part of this contrasting experience was the fact that Kibera defied the stereotype attached to it. The people within Kibera had huge potential and it was only the lack of resources that hindered their development. Everyone I met within Nairobi was super friendly and I loved that we were doing a programme with local students in Nairobi.

### **What was challenging about your experience?**

The challenging part of the experience started from the day I found out that I had been accepted onto the programme. Even though I felt extremely excited that I was going, I was also anxious. I had never travelled that far away from home and it was slightly frightening. Nairobi is a completely different place to the UK and not being aware of the scale of difference was challenging. However, I never let my anxious feelings override the positive ones. Luckily some of my friends were also picked to go to Kenya and so planning the trip there and back reassured me. I felt safer and more positive about travelling that distance with a few other people. Personally, I like challenges because I like to prove to myself that I am capable of overcoming whatever I am presented with. I enjoyed overcoming my fears of travelling that far and felt like I developed as a person whilst I was there.

### **What have you taken from the programme?**

The programme was a huge eye-opening experience and I took a lot away from it. One thing that I feel that was a huge lesson was the idea about core and flex. Our cores can differ depending on what we value eg honesty, equality, religion etc. and our flex is what makes us understand other people's cores. Learning about this has enabled me to develop my cultural intelligence.

# Conclusion

Students from disadvantaged groups are under-represented in outward student mobility, but impressive and inspiring work is being driven across universities and colleges to address this gap in participation.

The Widening Participation in UK Outward Student Mobility report highlighted disparities in outward student mobility take-up across five key demographics: students from a low socio-economic background; students from low participation neighbourhoods, black and minority ethnic (BME) students, disabled students, and students who are care leavers. The report found that while there is a trend of increased mobility across the UK, gaps in participation rates remain: mobility is still mostly undertaken by students from more advantaged backgrounds. This toolkit moves that discussion forward and seeks to find ways that educators can address those disparities.

Institutions where mobility is embedded across departments and where support is delivered through collaboration between different teams have high levels of engagement from disadvantaged groups. A whole institutional approach ensures long-term and sustainable outward mobility programmes, and institutional targets which reflect the student cohort can support this activity. Academic buy-in creates successful mobility programmes and persuades students of the value of mobility.

Advances are likely to be small when programmes are initiated, but all have the potential to expand over time as their successes are increasingly recognised. There are some critical changes in practice and support which organisations could adopt, to enable change to happen more readily.

Short-term programmes provide a valuable international experience that can be life-changing for students.

A consistent feature of the recommendations offered by universities and colleges which have succeeded in widening participation has been to offer mobility which does not require long periods overseas. Some students will not be able to participate in long-term mobility due to barriers such as work or caring commitments, or concerns for first-time travellers, and short-term opportunities overcome barriers.

Funding is a principal barrier to mobility for under-represented groups and ring-fenced funding enables students to overcome this barrier. When allocating funding to students it is important to consider the scales of support in place and ensure that targeted funds are allocated to those most in need of financial support. Making information available about funding is key and the use of digital marketing and social media can support dissemination of information on mobility funding.

Employability remains a core concern for students, but particularly those in the demographics the project focused on. Post-mobility activities provide students with opportunities to further develop their employability skills, through CV workshops, ambassador schemes, public speaking engagements and writing for blogs and vlogs. Examples of good practice in this toolkit include training students as mentors and creating academic modules to support mobility experiences.

These interventions are meaningless if they do not address concerns from students, or actively engage with student communities. Consistently across mobile alumni, the majority of students are keen to ensure that their experiences of mobility are not isolated but

available to all. They have been frank with us about their experiences, and suggested activities that universities might consider when delivering mobility placements in the future. Responding to the requirements of the

student community is crucial to effectively expand mobility programmes and institutions should consult their student body to ensure that activities adapt in line with students' ambition and support requirements.

## Next steps

The *Widening Participation in UK Outward Mobility Report*, and this toolkit, are important steps to understanding and addressing the gaps in outward student mobility participation.

This project has raised important questions on barriers to mobility and ways in which these barriers might be overcome. There are three specific areas of work that would benefit from further exploration following the publication of this toolkit.

- Further examples of good practice on targeted support for care leavers and BME students to encourage access to mobility opportunities.
- Good practice on support for demographics who are outside of the scope of this project but who may face barriers in going abroad, including part-time students, lesbian, gay and bisexual students, trans students, mature students and students with caring responsibilities.

- Clarity on the extent to which short-term mobility results in positive outcomes. It would be valuable to explore students' progression from short to long-term activities, and the relative impact of mobilities of different durations.

UUKi will continue to work in this important area, gathering information about what works and collaborating with partners to produce guidance on policies and programmes to widen participation in outward mobility.

Practitioners and policy-makers must continue the work to better understand the challenges of outward mobility for students, and by doing so introduce measures to help students benefit from going abroad. Mobility can be life changing and in an increasingly globalised world the need for international experience and intercultural skills becomes even more critical. Supporting mobility for all students ensures that the UK produces a generation of globally-connected graduates able to communicate and collaborate across nations.

## Acknowledgements

Christopher Reilly, Department for Education  
 Alison Havelin, Department for Economy,  
 Northern Ireland  
 Brian Herbert, Welsh Government  
 David Hibler, British Council  
 Dugald Craig, Colleges Partnership  
 Professor Ella Richie, University of Newcastle  
 Fiona Waye, Universities UK  
 Professor John Reilly, University of Kent  
 Professor John Storan, University of East London  
 Rebecca Robinson, Scottish Government  
 Sinead Lucey, Irish Universities Association

---

British Council  
 British Universities Transatlantic Exchange  
 Association (BUTEX)  
 Continuum, Centre for Widening Participation  
 Policy Studies  
 Department for Education  
 Education, Culture and Audiovisual Executive Agency  
 Equality Challenge Unit  
 European Commission  
 European Students Network  
 Eurydice  
 Forum for Access and Continuing Education  
 Global Graduates  
 The Association of UK Higher Education European  
 Officers (HEURO)  
 Irish Universities Association  
 National Education Opportunities Network  
 National Network for the Education of Care Leavers  
 National Union of Students  
 Race Equality Campaign, Business in the Community  
 Stand Alone  
 Student Loans Company  
 Student Minds

Aston University  
 Birmingham City University  
 Bridgwater & Taunton College  
 Cardiff Metropolitan University  
 Cardiff University  
 City University London  
 Glasgow Caledonian University  
 Glasgow Kelvin College  
 King's College London  
 Kingston University  
 Lancaster & Morecombe College  
 Middlesex University  
 New College of Lanarkshire  
 Newcastle University  
 Northampton University  
 Northumbria University  
 Northwest Regional College  
 Southampton Solent University  
 University of Birmingham  
 University of Bristol  
 University of Edinburgh  
 University of Exeter  
 University of Greenwich  
 University of Hertfordshire  
 University of Strathclyde  
 University of Warwick

## ANNEXE A - Further resources

### Erasmus Student Network, ExchangeAbility and MappED!

The Erasmus Student Network is committed to providing the conditions and opportunities for students with disabilities to actively be involved in and benefit from exchange programmes at their home universities. The long-term vision of the ExchangeAbility programme is to open up access and support offered for students with disabilities to study abroad. Current activities include the MappED! project, a ground-breaking online map designed to inform students with disabilities about the accessibility level of European Higher Education Institutions.

<https://esn.org/mapped>

### Erasmus+ Disabled Student Grant

Erasmus+ provides additional funding support for students with a disability. Funding is assessed and awarded on a case by case basis. The amount of funding awarded can vary greatly depending on the costs that need to be covered. For example, the grant awarded might need to cover the costs of an accompanying person which would involve a greater amount awarded than that to cover the costs of a weekly Skype consultation. More information can be found on the Erasmus+ website.

<https://www.erasmusplus.org.uk/higher-education-projects>

### Equality Challenge Unit

The Equality Challenge Unit working with universities to create an inclusive environment for all staff, students and visitors. They work on common issues in further and higher education to design inclusive support services, develop accessible campus environments and make everyone feel welcome. They provide advice and guidance on providing equitable support services for students going abroad.

<https://www.ecu.ac.uk/guidance-resources/>

### Student Minds

Student Minds is the UK's student mental health charity. They empower students and members of the university community to look after their own mental health, support others and create change. Their website is full of resources to support students including a dedicated section on year abroad.

[www.studentminds.org.uk](http://www.studentminds.org.uk)

### Global Graduates

Global graduates provide resources and guidance to support students while on outward mobility. They support students by providing information on topics such as money, mental health and accommodation abroad, while sharing articles, blog posts, questions and answers written by a community of students about their experiences.

<https://globalgraduates.com/>

### **Santander Universities**

Through its Santander Universities, Banco Santander has collaborated with universities for 20 years on a unique global initiative to support internationalisation which include international mobility scholarships, exchange programmes and transversal cooperation projects between institutions from various countries. The scheme also supports employment market access initiatives for university students with scholarship programmes for internships and training scheme.

**[http://www.gruposantander.es/univ\\_uk.html](http://www.gruposantander.es/univ_uk.html)**

### **British Council Generation UK - China**

Generation UK – China was launched by the British Council in 2013. By 2020, it aims to help 80,000 students from the UK boost their employability, enhance their long-term job prospects, and develop a global mind-set through study and work experience opportunities in China.

**<https://www.britishcouncil.org/education/ihe/what-we-do/international-mobility/generation-uk-china>**

### **The Go International: Stand Out campaign**

UUKi manages a portfolio of work supporting the growth of outward student mobility, including case studies, guidance and blogs. UUKi convenes the UK strategy for outward student mobility 2017–2020, which aims to double the proportion of UK students going overseas as part of their degrees, and has a strong focus on widening participation within mobility.

UUKi is coordinating a three-year campaign, Go International: Stand Out, which includes resources for universities to increase outward student mobility.

**<http://international.ac.uk>**

## ANNEXE B

### Focus Group Methodology

Student focus groups were held to help the project gain an understanding of the perceived benefits of mobility amongst target groups, to identify existing barriers to participation and to brainstorm ideas around increasing participation of mobility activities.

A call was circulated to Outward Mobility Network member organisations inviting them to host a focus group facilitated by UUKi for their students. In addition to this, the four project institutions were invited to host a focus group with their students.

Five focus groups with a total of 26 students were held in April, September and October 2017. Focus groups were delivered at the following institutions: Birmingham City University, the University of Exeter, Kingston University, Southampton Solent University and the Northwest Regional College. Groups contained a mix of students who had been mobile, and students who were considering mobility. The groups participants engaged in a range of types and durations of mobility.

Focus groups were interactive sessions to encourage students to engage with the topic. Methodologies used included: round table consultation, paired discussions, group work and action ranking activities. Data was collected via digital recording, scribed harvesting of discussions (flipchart notes and post-its) and through note taking.

### Questions groups were asked included:

1. Where did you hear about the programme?
2. What attracted you to the programme?
3. What convinced you to apply and accept the offer?
4. What support did you have when you were applying for the programme?
5. What was challenging about the application process?
6. What would have made the application process easier?
7. What support did you have when you were preparing for your departure?
8. What was challenging when preparing for your departure?
9. What would have made preparing for your departure easier?
10. What support did you have when you were abroad?
11. What was challenging about your time abroad?
12. What would have made your time abroad easier?
13. Would you take part in outward mobility if it was offered to you again?
14. How do you think outward mobility has impacted you – academic, employment, personal?

Students who had been abroad were more able to engage with certain questions, as they had concrete experiences on which to base perspectives. However, when these students related motivations and decision-making, some post-mobility rationalisation was likely to have been involved.



**Universities UK  
International**



**Universities UK**

---

**Universities UK International**

Woburn House  
20 Tavistock Square  
London  
WC1H 9HQ

[www.international.ac.uk](http://www.international.ac.uk)  
[www.go.international.ac.uk](http://www.go.international.ac.uk)

Follow us on twitter @UUKIntl



**go international**

All you need to know about study and work abroad