

ERASMUS+ POLICY STATEMENT

Birkbeck is a world-class research institution, and the UK's leading provider of part-time, evening education for mature students. The principal aims of Birkbeck are:

- To provide part-time courses of study to meet the changing educational, cultural, and training needs of adults who are engaged in earning their livelihood.
- To enable adult students from diverse social and educational backgrounds to participate in our courses.

Over the years we have developed links with a number of international universities; this has supported and developed our understanding and commitment to international students through knowledge exchange.

We are currently running an exchange scheme with our Chinese partners to support students who wish to work internationally or develop their understanding and experience of other cultures. Birkbeck is also involved in the Executive Master programme in European Sport Governance (MESGO).

Many of our Erasmus partnership have grown up organically. There has been no deliberate plan of cultivation and the establishment of these alliances has been ad hoc, but they are rational because scholars clustered around certain interests have set them up and populated them.

We focus mainly on staff exchanges, given the nature of our part-time student body. With the increase in the number of full time students, though, in future this might be a route to explore.

Hence Staff exchanges are at the heart of the mobility activities as they promote both the internationalization of Birkbeck's curriculum by bringing the outstanding European scholars in the field to Birkbeck, and by enabling Birkbeck academic staff to develop their understanding of the wider European environment by teaching in the partner institutions, and by laying the foundation for the development of future research relationships. PhD student exchanges will help to enrich the quality of the research environment at Birkbeck by hosting high quality PhD researchers from peer institutions at Birkbeck, and by allowing Birkbeck's own PhD students to develop their international research networks.

Erasmus has enabled us to benefit from the scholarship of colleagues in Europe. During 2011-12, a strategic decision was taken to change the business model of employer engagement at Birkbeck in order to increase the effectiveness of the knowledge triangle.

To develop a more cohesive platform for knowledge exchange activity, responsibility for business engagement and knowledge transfer was devolved to our five schools and individuals were recruited who had a background in the relevant disciplines and could

perform a conduit role between Higher Education and business. Examples of current projects linking HE, research and business are as follows:

Employability

- Collaborating with professional bodies to produce qualifications which enable students to gain both technical expertise and soft skills to support them at work.
- Delivering taster sessions on workplace well-being within central and local government to encourage staff to engage with learning

Research and Innovation

- Collaborating with local employers, particularly in computer science, where students have delivered in-house projects in and we are also developing proposals for the commercialisation of products.

Widening Participation

- We continue to develop our flexible pathways for work based learning along with collaboration with the unions to encourage members to develop their careers through higher education.

Our Erasmus work has led to discussions and practical knowledge relating to the bologna process and its implications for both us and for the European universities that are our partners. We believe that these discussions and the exposure of our partners to our working practices have facilitated the introduction of Bologna's agreements here and abroad. We are acutely aware of the increased internationalisation of education and the Erasmus scheme has helped us to make links with bodies of international students and academics.

We aim to increase mobility of staff, and then, wherever possible, of students, as part of our modernisation agenda.

By enhancing the quality of the curriculum through incorporating the teaching input of the best international scholars in the field, and the international mobility of Birkbeck academics and PhD researchers, the following "modernisation" agenda objectives are achieved:

- Enhancement of the research training of PhD Researchers.
- Graduate employment is enhanced through a higher quality curriculum.
- Enhances the professional development of those academic staff participating in the Erasmus Exchange.
- Encourages the building of learning mobility more systematically into the curriculum.