



Student Exchange Framework

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International Policy Committee Task Group on Student Exchanges: Framework for Student Exchanges (Revised May 2004)

This document presents guidelines for the operation of student exchange programmes between Northumbria University and partner institutions abroad. It is recognised that a range of different exchange programmes exist, the exact details of which cannot be covered in this document. However, the document does seek to establish basic principles, which will guide rather than prescribe the operation of Northumbria's exchange programmes.

Underlying assumptions:

- exchange programmes can enhance Northumbria's international reputation;
- exchange programmes can lead to other collaborative international developments;
- opportunities to study abroad enhance the attractiveness of Northumbria's programmes to potential students;
- the opportunity to study abroad enhances the student learning experience;
- student exchange programmes must be established in the context of Northumbria's procedures to ensure quality of provision.

1. Types of Exchange Programme

Student exchange programmes involve the exchange of students between Northumbria and partner institutions on a reciprocal basis. In the context of Northumbria exchange, programmes normally fall into one or a combination of the following categories:

- the exchange is a requirement of the degree programme;
- the exchange is not a requirement of the degree programme;
- credit for the period of study abroad is required by Northumbria or the partner institution;
- no credit transfer is involved;¹
- a qualification is offered (e.g. a Northumbria degree, dual degrees)².

The arrangements for exchanges may differ slightly between each of these categories.

2. Eligibility of Students

Outgoing students

All Northumbria students are eligible to undertake a period of study abroad (subject to the availability of suitable places at partner institutions) except when it is precluded by:

- programme regulations;
- professional body regulations;
- their academic performance at Northumbria;

¹ in a situation where both Northumbria and the partner institution do not require credit transfer

² incoming students following a programme leading to a Northumbria award will be required to meet fully Northumbria's English Language requirements

- their disciplinary record at Northumbria.

Students who are eligible to study abroad can only undertake a programme of study abroad with the agreement of their Programme Leader (or equivalent). Such permission will not normally be refused unless there are strong reasons to believe that the student's academic performance will be seriously harmed. If such permission is refused the student has the right of appeal to the Faculty PVC whose decision is final.

2.1. Incoming students

Northumbria will normally accept any students selected by a partner institution to undertake study at Northumbria (subject to availability of places) unless there is clear evidence that:

- the student's academic record is unsatisfactory;
- the student's disciplinary record is unacceptable;
- the student's standard of English is not satisfactory for the programme selected;
- Northumbria cannot provide the required programme of study.

3. Programme of Study

3.1. Northumbria students abroad

A Northumbria student undertaking a period of study abroad must do so at an approved Northumbria partner's institution with whom Northumbria has signed an exchange agreement, which has been endorsed by the relevant Faculty Executive Group

It is recognised that Northumbria students are unlikely to be able to undertake a programme of study abroad, which is identical to that which would have been followed at Northumbria. Programmes of study abroad which do not exactly correspond to the Northumbria programme will be permitted as long as:

- the programme of study is approved by the Northumbria Programme Leader (or equivalent);
- pre-requisites to subsequent Northumbria modules are broadly covered;
- the subjects studied in a semester abroad correspond to a 'normal' semester programme of study at the host institution (i.e. that which would be taken by a student of the host institution);
- the level of the subjects studied corresponds to those, which would have been studied at Northumbria.

3.2. Incoming Students to Northumbria

Incoming students must be registered in a specific Faculty (normally the Faculty that is responsible for the exchange programme in which they are participating or the Faculty which owns the majority of modules that they study). These students must also be allocated to a named tutor who is responsible for their guidance and counselling.

Incoming students must undertake a programme of study, which is approved by Northumbria and by their home institution. While for administrative reasons it is preferable for a student to follow a validated Northumbria programme of study it is recognised that this may not always be possible. For example, students from the USA



are sometimes required to follow a 'liberal arts' programme, which consists of modules from several Faculties. Students who undertake such a 'combined credits programme'³ should normally only be allowed to do so if their programme is agreed before they arrive at Northumbria. It is better that students are given a restricted choice of modules, which is logistically possible and academically coherent.

Such 'combined programmes' are difficult and expensive to manage and administer and are therefore to be kept to a minimum. Inter-school co-operation is encouraged to make combined programmes possible where they are necessary.

4. Credit Transfer

Credit transfer will take place under the existing Northumbria credit transfer system. The Northumbria system is based on 120 credits per full year's study. Where exchanges are made with international systems based on a different number of credits then Northumbria credit will be allocated on the basis of the proportion of the full year's credits studied (e.g. ECTS require 60 credits for a full year's study, therefore 1 ECTS credit = 2 Northumbria credits).

In determining the equivalence of Northumbria percentage marks to grading systems used elsewhere, the following procedures will apply:

4.1. Incoming Students to Northumbria

Northumbria will provide to the incoming student and their home institution a Student Module Record Form showing percentage mark and credit weighting of each module together with a scale showing definitions of Northumbria percentage marks and proportions of students achieving each band (Appendix 1). Responsibility will rest with the home institution for determining equivalence of Northumbria percentages in terms of their grading system in accordance with their own approved procedures.

Where incoming students are taking a mix of modules rather than a recognised Northumbria programme, they will be registered at Northumbria on a Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme or single module basis to allow production of a Student Module Record Form.

4.2. Northumbria students abroad

Where partner institutions provide marks in the form of grades or other scales rather than percentages then translation can be undertaken in one of two ways, depending on the nature of the exchange programme. The method of translation must be agreed and notified to the student before the start of the exchange.

Either a) where the exchange has been specifically set up between a Faculty or Department at Northumbria and a partner institution. A specific system for translation will be agreed between Northumbria and the partner institution and approved by the Faculty Executive Group. The partner institution is asked to specify the number of students normally achieving the grade and it is expected that each Faculty will take this into

³ this is a combination of modules which does not correspond to a validated programme and may be a random mix of modules across Schools

account in determining the corresponding percentage to be awarded (Northumbria proportions are shown in Appendix 1)

Or b) where the exchange is part of a more general University-wide scheme (US only) translation will be undertaken on the basis of the scales included in Appendix 2.

Special modules (e.g. 'Study Abroad') will be created on the Northumbria Marks Recording System to allow the recording of the aggregation of the portfolio of marks brought back.

5. Assessment

Whenever possible Northumbria students abroad will be required to undertake the same assessments prescribed for the students of the host institution. Similarly, incoming exchange students will be expected to undertake the assessment prescribed by the descriptor for any modules taken at Northumbria whenever possible.

It must be recognised, however, that differences in semester dates and examination periods between institutions may cause practical difficulties, which make it impossible for students to undertake the prescribed assessments. In such circumstances, the Northumbria Programme Leader and their counterpart at the partner institution may agree to one or more of the following exceptional courses of action:

- students may be allowed to take assessments from the host institution at the home institution, as long as suitable arrangements can be made which safeguard the integrity of assessment;
- students may be allowed to undertake an alternative piece of work, which differs from the prescribed assessment for the module of study.

6. Preparation, Care and Responsibilities of Exchange Students

6.1. Ongoing students

6.1.1. Preparation

Northumbria is responsible for ensuring that students who are to study abroad are adequately prepared for the experience. Outgoing students must enrol/register at Northumbria prior to going abroad. Students will be subject to the assessment regulations and disciplinary/complaints procedures of the host institution whilst studying abroad. Once confirmed by the Host Institution, results will normally be aggregated and presented to Northumbria Examination Boards*. Should a student wish to make an appeal against a decision of an Examination Board where Northumbria is the awarding institution, then this should be via the University of Northumbria Principles and Procedures relating to Student Appeals. If the appeal relates to an award conferred by a partner institution (eg a dual degree) then the host institution's regulations would apply.

* May be a pass/fail module

Northumbria will ensure that:



- students are prepared as thoroughly as possible for any period of residence/study abroad. This process will start during the induction period of the year prior to the year abroad and will be a central theme of that year
- individual Faculties make appropriate arrangements to enable students to make an informed choice concerning their destination
- general information is disseminated; this may take the form of presentations by staff and students from Northumbria and partner institutions abroad concerning specific institutions in each country
- when a host institution has been allocated, as much information as possible concerning that institution will be made available to the student, (including details of relevant web-sites) and appropriate documentation provided
- information kept on file, {copies of application forms (institution and accommodation), information on academic calendar} is updated annually and any guides to institutions abroad are updated at regular intervals
- the co-ordinator for European funding is informed where students spend a period abroad under the Socrates programme.

Northumbria will also ensure that the academic requirements (of both the home and host institution) of the period abroad are fully understood by outgoing students prior to departure and that copies of any learning contracts are signed, returned and held on record.

Students from Northumbria will ensure that:

- they attend all scheduled meetings
- they act promptly by:
 - 1) making formal application to the institution abroad;
 - 2) applying for accommodation abroad,
 - 3) providing themselves with necessary documentation:-
 - passport
 - visa (if required)
 - examination results
 - birth certificate (translated if necessary)
 - insurance (travel/luggage, cash belongings)
 - insurance (health) and/or E128 forms
 - 4) organising their own travel arrangements

6.1.2. The Period of Study Abroad

It is important that Northumbria provide outgoing students with contact details for someone in the relevant Northumbria Faculty with whom they can liaise in the event of

problems while at the host institution. This would normally be the academic and administrative co-ordinators for the exchange programme. Also, this same team would be in charge of arrangements for incoming and outgoing exchange students, providing a single point of contact for liaison with partner institutions.

Northumbria will ensure that:

- distance tutorial support is provided to students while overseas
- students have contact details of a nominated person at the host institution
- students are following approved programmes at the academic institution
- allocations of money from the Socrates Fund (if applicable) are sent on time
- students are monitored to ensure compliance with deadlines for submission of work to Northumbria
- students are credited with work completed at the host institution
- documentation relating to the above is kept in student files

Northumbria students may be visited by a member of staff from Northumbria if funding for such visits is available.

Students will ensure that:

- they comply with deadlines for work to be submitted to Northumbria
- they undertake a programme of study approved by their Programme Director at Northumbria
- they undertake examinations and assessments required by Northumbria at the partner institution
- they register for the required number of modules at the host institution and have their academic programme approved by the Exchange Co-ordinator at Northumbria
- they comply with the regulations and customs of the host institution
- if required to complete a “placement” with a company, they arrange this at their earliest opportunity and provide Northumbria with detailed documentation regarding the nature of the placement. Note: Placements undertaken as part of a student exchange will be subject to the requirements of the QAA Code of Practice on Placement Learning
- on their return, they provide the university with relevant feedback concerning their period of study and work placement abroad

6.2. Incoming Students

6.2.1. Period prior to arrival



Northumbria will ensure that

- appropriate information is sent out to partner institutions well in advance of the start of the period of study: e.g.
 - guides for students
 - welcome letter
 - general information on how to apply, subject choice,
 - qualifications available, (if appropriate),
 - academic calendar
 - application forms
 - accommodation information
 - information on subject choices
- arrangements are made so that incoming students are able to select programmes from a range appropriate to their needs and that such selections are approved by their home institution. It would also be helpful for timetabling purposes, if arrangements could be made (i.e. by advance reservation of places on relevant programmes) to ensure that such students are not at a disadvantage compared with home students. This will apply to those students coming for one semester only as well as those coming for a full year.

6.2.2. Period of study at Northumbria

Northumbria will ensure that incoming students:

- are registered at Northumbria during their period of study
- allowed full use of Northumbria facilities including the library, IT facilities and student union
- are involved in an induction programme
- take part in a debriefing process before returning to their home institution
- have their examination results sent to their home institution as well as to their home address. Northumbria Student Module Record Forms should also have attached an explanation of the grades, if appropriate, and any other information that might be required by the partner institution to enable them to interpret the grades correctly.
- have the support of an academic and administrative member of staff during their period of residence. This team would be involved in all aspects of the exchange cycle.

Incoming students will be subject to the assessment regulations and disciplinary/complaints procedures of Northumbria University during their period of study here. Should a student wish to make an appeal against a decision of an Examination Board then this would be subject to the procedures operating at the awarding institution.

7. Funding and Fees

Exchange programmes are expected to be broadly self-funding through student tuition fee income. Northumbria will receive the normal tuition fee for a student who is to study



abroad. Such students will not be expected to pay tuition fees at the partner institution. In return, no tuition fee will be charged to an incoming student from a partner institution on a reciprocal exchange programme.

Northumbria will seek to obtain further funding from European initiatives, British Council and other suitable sources.

It is recognised that some extra costs may be incurred by Northumbria in the operation of exchange programmes but these costs are more than offset by the value added to Northumbria's programmes and the associated gains to our international reputation.

8. Student Numbers

The numbers of incoming and outgoing students between Northumbria and any partner institution are expected to balance or be favourable to Northumbria over a five year period. Similarly, exchange figures at the Faculty level would be expected to show a balance to avoid cross-subsidisation.

Glossary

Incoming student - an exchange student from a Northumbria partner institution

Outgoing student - a Northumbria student who studies abroad at a Northumbria partner institution

Partner institution - an overseas institution of higher education with which Northumbria has a student exchange agreement

Home institution - the institution from which the outgoing student originates

Host institution - the institution accepting the incoming student

Northumbria ICTS – Northumbria International Credit Transfer System

SOCRATES - European source of funding to assist with student and staff exchanges



Appendix 1:

Definitions of Percentage Marks used for Undergraduate Programmes at Northumbria University

	% of marks*	LEVEL FOUR	LEVEL FIVE	LEVEL SIX
Good First (80 - 100) Exceptional	3%	Exceptional comprehension of knowledge demonstrated. Sophisticated skill shown in formation of relevant argument or analytical reasoning.	Excellent knowledge and appreciation for subject. Fastidious eye for detail. Assured ability to challenge received wisdom and to sustain argument or logical reasoning under these terms.	Exceptional scholarship for subject. Outstanding ability to apply, in the right measure, the skills necessary to achieve highly sophisticated and fluent challenges to received wisdom.
First (70 - 79) Excellent	10%	Thorough knowledge and understanding demonstrated. Fluent and focused. Shows ability to contextualise knowledge and sustain a relevant argument or logical reasoning.	Impressive knowledge and understanding. Clearly demonstrates critical appreciation. Theory and evidence are invariably related. Argument or logical reasoning is always relevant and well sustained.	Knowledge and understanding is comprehensive both as to breadth and depth. A mature ability critically to appreciate concepts and their inter-relationship is demonstrated. Clear evidence of independent thought. Presentation of work is fluent, focused and accurate.
Upper Second (60 - 69) Very Good	29%	The knowledge base is judged sound and relevant. Material is well presented and organised. Occasionally, conclusions are reached on the basis of insufficient information	A maturing ability to relate theory and evidence, concepts and ideas is displayed. Critical appreciation is evident. Content is always relevant, generally well-focused and organised.	Knowledge base is up-to-date and relevant, but also may be broad or deep. Higher order critical appreciation skills are displayed. A significant ability to apply theory, concepts, ideas and their inter-relationship is illustrated
Lower Second (50 - 59) Satisfactory to Good	31%	Work is relevant, however, confusion shown at times. Over reliance on description rather than analysis. Perhaps some evidence of unstructured argument or illogical reasoning.	Knowledge base is generally sound and some critical appreciation shown. Analysis usually clear but can lack some clarity of focus.	Sound comprehension of topic. Reasoning and argument are generally relevant but not necessarily extensive. Awareness of concepts and critical appreciation are apparent, but the ability to conceptualise, and/or to apply theory is slightly limited.
Third (40 - 49) Adequate	18%	Basic knowledge-and understanding of subject shown. Work can lack focus, and is prone to unsubstantiated assertion or logic.	Legitimate content but relies heavily on the descriptive. Analysis may be unsophisticated. Work may contain some use of concepts, but is poorly set out and needs an appropriate focus.	Knowledge is adequate but limited and/or superficial. In the most part, description/assertion rather than argument or logical reasoning is used. Insufficient focus is evident in work presented.
Fail (30 - 39) Not Satisfactory	4.5%	Some elements of knowledge apparent but question/s inadequately addressed. Poor structure. Content often irrelevant.	Performance shows elements of legitimate content, but is more often than not inappropriate.	Minimal awareness of subject area. Communication of knowledge frequently inarticulate and/or irrelevant.
Clear Fail (0 - 29)	4.5%	Unable to grasp concepts, or to present facts in a relevant way. Often inarticulate and can be incomprehensible.	Majority of work is neither relevant nor accurate. Often inarticulate and can be incomprehensible	Poor grasp of topic concepts or of awareness of what concepts are. Failure to apply relevant skills. Work is inarticulate and/or incomprehensible.

* Approximate percentages of all undergraduate marks annually awarded in each category.



Appendix 2: Translation of Grades for Northumbria Students Studying Abroad

As specified in Section 4.2 above, grades brought back from partner institutions will normally be translated into percentages using a specific translation scale agreed with that partner and approved by the relevant Faculty Executive Group. In the case of US exchanges where there is not a specific arrangement between a Division or School at Northumbria and the partner institution than the scale below should be used (undergraduate programmes only):

US Grade	Northumbria percentage
A+	75 +
A	70
A-/B+	65
B	60
B-/C+	55
C	50
C-	45
D	40
F	30 -