



Going Mobile: Internationalisation, mobility and the European Higher Education Area

Simon Sweeney

This booklet is designed to identify challenges to and opportunities for UK higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). It aims to:

- engage UK HEIs more actively in the spirit and application of the Bologna Process;
- identify ways in which UK HEIs might benefit from more active commitment to the Bologna Process;
- provide a basic understanding of the principles underlying the Bologna Process and the EHEA.

The Bologna Process presents challenges to UK higher education, several of which reflect issues of current debate. These include:

- the relationship between the Bologna Process and European politics;
- the global dimension of Bologna and implications for the international attractiveness and competitiveness of UK qualifications;
- Bologna and Doctoral studies, including prerequisites for entry to Doctoral-level programmes;
- the impact of Erasmus Mundus Doctoral programmes;
- curriculum reform and the European dimension;
- student mobility in all cycles;
- staff mobility;
- quality assurance, accreditation and ranking;
- transcripts, the proposed Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR) and the Diploma Supplement;
- credits, workload, learning outcomes and ‘fast-track’, two-year, first-cycle degrees;
- integrated Master programmes – one- and/or two-year Master programmes;
- increased transparency on the comparative costs of UK higher education;
- the impact of more teaching through English in other EU countries;
- social inclusion.

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Foreword from the British Council

The British Council has for many years supported opportunities for students to undertake periods of work and study overseas in the belief that student mobility is beneficial not only to students, but also to sponsoring institutions and to the country as a whole.

The benefits of outward mobility, both personal and professional, are well documented. Returning students report increased self-confidence, independence and an ability to communicate across cultures as concrete personal benefits derived from work and study placements. Graduates are today faced with an increasingly competitive international employment market and recent reports provide compelling evidence that student mobility supports graduate employability. The 'International Student Mobility Literature Review' jointly commissioned by the British Council and The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) concludes that study abroad can significantly boost the chances of a student's success in later life and bring benefits to the UK's knowledge economy. The Council for Industry and Higher Education (CIHE) report, 'Global graduates for Global Leaders' highlights the importance of global employability skills in the international market place and recognises the part that student mobility plays in enabling students to develop these skills. In the light of such evidence the importance of outward student mobility and the urgent need to increase the number of UK mobile students is clear.

Simon Sweeney's review of the present status of UK student mobility and its part in the internationalisation of universities, 'Going Mobile', provides an analysis of obstacles to greater participation in mobility by students and some proposals for how the situation can be improved. It is a valuable and thought-provoking contribution to the debate on what universities and sector stakeholders, such as the British Council, can do to increase participation rates.

Student and teacher mobility is central to the work of the British Council. Programmes such as Erasmus, Language Assistants, Fulbright Teacher Exchange and IAESTE make a significant contribution to the personal and professional development of students and teachers in this country. Through its work with these programmes, and its association with the UK Bologna Expert team, of which Simon Sweeney is a member, the British Council aims to support the efforts of UK universities to develop outward mobility as an essential part of their internationalisation strategies.

Dr Jo Beall

Director, Education and Society
British Council

Foreword from the Higher Education Academy

I am delighted to be asked to write a forward for this publication. As an international student who came to study in the UK more than 25 years ago, I have been a strong supporter of internationalisation, including student mobility, since I experienced my own life-changing international education experience. Then not long after arriving in the UK, I again participated in a mobility programme with Charles University in Prague which commenced another lifelong and life-altering relationship with friends, colleagues and universities in Eastern Europe.

Through this publication I am hoping the UK higher education system will take the opportunity of moving from spectator status in relation to European initiatives such as the Bologna process and Erasmus for All and become a leading national supporter of student-centred tertiary education experiences which help build graduate attributes creating attractive employees who are more worldly, more aware and more grounded.

This publication provides a useful summary of the broad general approach to internationalisation in the UK and then focusses the reader nicely onto descriptive analysis of student and staff opportunities related to mobility. The final sections give useful guidance on what can be done to increase participation and extol the virtues of mobility, including changing student perceptions and the removal of barriers. The advice to locate mobility more centrally into the mission of higher education institutions begins to identify how participation rates might be expanded. Future work might focus more on hidden barriers such as failure to fully recognise credit, extended study programmes, financial issues and personal circumstances.

I commend this publication to you as an excellent resource for higher education institutions wanting to engage more widely with mobility of staff and students. There is no doubt this is an important report which raises awareness of the hugely-missed opportunity that has been on our doorstep yet not been energised by a higher education system focussed more on the financial aspects of internationalisation than the life-changing opportunities arising from mobility. If the true potential of mobility is to be realised in a UK context, higher education institutions must take heed of the advice here and work to place mobility into the minds of students prior to their arrival at university and then consistently make this attractive during the early period of their tertiary educational experience.

Craig Mahoney

Chief Executive, Higher Education Academy

Acknowledgements

Going mobile has an intentionally polemical tone, calling for a much greater effort from our universities to ensure that internationalisation strategies are driven by educational imperatives rather than dictated by economic ends. A critical component of a successful internationalisation strategy should be full institutional and departmental engagement with all aspects of mobility and particularly with the Erasmus student exchange programme. Not everyone will agree with the arguments presented, but *Going mobile* is designed to promote discussion and to encourage UK universities to improve performance in respect of internationalisation and mobility, areas that have a major impact on student experience and employability.

I am grateful to Katherine Gent and colleagues at the Higher Education Academy who commissioned *Going mobile*, especially Liz Day who co-ordinated the editing and production process with patience and diligence, and Claire Holden who proof read the manuscript. I am also grateful to the British Council for providing financial support for publication. Two colleagues deserve special mention. First Irene Aves, formerly with the British Council, who played a key role at the outset, and secondly Ozan Revi, co-ordinator of the UK Bologna Expert team at the British Council, for helping to bring the project to a successful conclusion and for ensuring wide distribution, especially among all 130 Universities UK members.

My long time Bologna colleague Anthony Vickers of the University of Essex cast a critical eye over the manuscript and suggested various changes. Other colleagues who suggested improvements and additions include Liz Day and Jeanne Keay at the Higher Education Academy, and David Hibler at the British Council. Lucy Shackleton from the UK Higher Education International Unit and fellow Bologna Experts Mike Blackstone and Graeme Roberts provided significant help with source material for which I am most grateful.

Needless to say, what is left, including any weaknesses, is entirely my own responsibility.

Finally, out there in the world somewhere is a Hull graduate called Dave Clarke (Sociology and Politics, 1978). He doesn't know this but he had a big influence on me when I was a raw monolingual undergraduate and he was a mature student fluent in Spanish. Dave spent some years in Mexico working with underprivileged children in a remote village. I've been somewhat mobile ever since leaving Hull, often in pursuit of learning languages. That Dave learnt Spanish and had never looked at a textbook made a huge impression on me. He was a lesson in mobility, internationalisation and internationalism that shaped my career in significant ways. Thanks, Dave. Where are you?

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About the author

Simon Sweeney is a Lecturer in International Political Economy and Business in the York Management School at the University of York. He was previously at Sheffield Business School, Sheffield Hallam University and at York St John University.

His own mobility experiences came *after* graduation from the University of Hull in 1978: he spent six years in Italy and Spain teaching English as a Foreign Language, an experience he describes as life changing as he learnt two foreign languages, and gained an invaluable education living and working in cultures different to his own.

Simon then completed an MA in Linguistics at the University of York and spent ten years as a communications training consultant, translator and writer, producing numerous textbooks for professional learners of English, mainly for Cambridge University Press.

He began full-time work in higher education in 1995, teaching European and International Studies, modern foreign languages, development education, business management, and politics. In 2006 he was awarded a National Teaching Fellowship by the UK Higher Education Academy in recognition of excellence in multidisciplinary teaching and innovative approaches to distance/blended learning. In the same year he joined the team of UK Bologna Experts, tasked with promoting the frameworks and principles of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). He remains a UK Bologna Expert until at least 2013. He is currently completing a PhD at the University of Leeds on European Common Security and Defence Policy.

He is the author of *Europe, the State and Globalisation* (Longman, 2005) and *Bologna Process: Responding to the post-2010 Challenge* (Higher Education Academy/British Council, 2010).

Simon is a passionate Europeanist, convinced that British students and graduates can benefit from a better understanding of our Continental neighbours, their languages, and the rich European cultural heritage to which we island Britons, a mongrel race carrying the genes of generations of mobile antecedents, make a massive contribution.

As a Bologna Expert, Simon is always happy to talk to anyone who wants to know more about the European Higher Education Area and the internationalisation of higher education, as well as mobility. Like other members of the UK Bologna team he can be contacted via the British Council, but he also welcomes a direct approach through the University of York.

Going Mobile: Internationalisation, mobility and the European Higher Education Area¹

1 Introduction

1.1 Scope and aims

The purpose of *Going mobile* is to raise debate about the **internationalisation strategies** of UK universities and the UK's relatively low level of participation in student **mobility** through the **Erasmus** action of the **Lifelong Learning Programme**, to be renamed **Erasmus for All** in 2014. The document further aims to discuss barriers to mobility, and to highlight the benefits that greater participation in mobility would bring to the student experience, to institutional reputation, to research, to graduate employability and to enhanced cultural understanding. *Going mobile* calls for mobility to be central to universities' internationalisation strategies, along with a strong commitment to the principles that underpin the **European Higher Education Area** through the **Bologna Process**.

This introduction will place the issue of mobility within the **context of the Bologna Process** and the reform process that has been in progress throughout European higher education since 1999. The second context referred to is the **revolution in funding** taking place in the United Kingdom.

Section 2 of the booklet examines **internationalisation** and how this has been applied in the internationalisation strategies of UK universities. This is a key part of the document as it consists of a call for an attitudinal change in our universities to ensure that international strategies embrace internationalism and put mobility at the heart of endeavours to ensure an effective internationalisation of the university experience. This section also includes reference to the major changes in the culture of UK higher education, changes that began in the 1980s but have accelerated markedly in the past decade or so in a process of marketisation that is having a profound effect on how internationalisation is viewed by UK universities and their senior management teams in particular. It is impossible to write about the need for greater student and staff mobility without referring to this context.

Section 3 considers **types of mobility** including study abroad opportunities as well as work placements and staff mobility.

Section 4 focuses on **enhancing the student experience** and the **benefits of mobility**, including how mobility can contribute to educational and cultural improvements in the student experience, but also assist graduate employability. Mobility should also be extended into opportunities for work placements and internships preferably with an international dimension.

1 I am indebted to Pete Townshend and The Who for the title. 'Going Mobile' is from the 1971 album *Who's Next*, still inspirational after all these years.

Section 5 considers the important question of **barriers to mobility** and suggests ways that these can be overcome.

Section 6 looks at **student perceptions regarding mobility**. *Going mobile* does not look in detail at student views on internationalisation, but a recent British Council report (British Council/YouGov, 2011) gives valuable insight into student perceptions regarding both internationalisation and mobility. *Going mobile* makes various references to this important study.

Section 7, the **conclusion**, is a call to arms to ensure that in spite of difficult economic circumstances and an ever more competitive employment market, universities should do more to ensure that all students are offered the opportunity to study or work abroad. Students who for a variety of reasons are not able to spend time abroad should nevertheless benefit from an institutional reorientation of internationalisation towards a focus on the student experience and a sociocultural orientation to the framing of internationalisation strategies, as opposed to the economic imperative that currently dominates².

1.2 Defining mobility

Mobility is loosely defined as a period of study or work of at least one semester in another European country as an integrated part of a UK study programme. There is also reference to **virtual mobility**, achievable not through time spent abroad, but through participation in networks facilitated by technology and involving links to students and institutions abroad. A third type of mobility involves participation in **brief study visits**, seminars or conferences held over a few days in another higher education institution (HEI) abroad. It is recognised that some students are not in a position to take advantage of full mobility through a semester or more away from their home institution, but such students should nevertheless have the opportunity to engage in other kinds of mobility.

In official documentation precise definitions of mobility are avoided, and a Bologna Process Working Group cites an Academic Cooperation Association report³ as follows:

It can be taken for granted that there is a conventional wisdom of what student mobility means. An internationally mobile student is a student having crossed a national border in order to study or to undertake other study-related activities for at least a certain unit of a study programme or a certain period of time in the country he or she has moved to.

2 This sentence owes a debt to Hans de Wit (2011), who frames the problem in slightly less stark terms. He says "whereas before the drivers of internationalisation were mainly political and socio-cultural, economic reasons are now gaining ground and there is a stronger accent on content-oriented considerations". I think he would agree that in the UK this process is much more advanced than in Continental Europe.

3 Kelo et al. (2006) cited in Bologna Process Working Group on Social Dimension and Data on Mobility of Staff and Students in Participating Countries (2007).

1.3 The Bologna Process

The **Bologna Process** was launched in 1999, initially with 29 signatory countries, with a target for the establishment of the **European Higher Education Area** (EHEA) by 2010. It was not a European Union or European Commission initiative – the Union had only 15 members in 1999. Bologna in fact owed more to the Council of Europe, UNESCO and the Lisbon Recognition Convention agreed two years earlier. The Bologna Declaration adopted six Action Lines, two of which were to enhance student mobility and to extend the **European dimension** in undergraduate studies. From the outset, Bologna adopted the Erasmus Programme as a key instrument in fulfilling these aims. The EHEA was declared established in March 2010 and now has 47 members. Now signatory countries and their universities must play a full role in the consolidation and development of the EHEA. This involves enhancing operational performance in respect of student experience, teaching and learning, transparency and proper recognition of the EHEA qualification frameworks, as well as rigorous attention to quality assurance, the enabling of high quality student and staff mobility, building institutional partnerships, and the development of research co-operation and contribution to the European Research Area (ERA).

Approximately every two years the Bologna Process has involved a Ministerial Meeting that engages in a stocktaking exercise. Ministers set priorities for the next stage in the development of the EHEA. While the Bologna Process is not owned by the European Commission, the Commission takes a close interest in the initiative through its representation in the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG), and it supports its primary activities. The Bologna Process embraces established initiatives previously set up by the Commission, most notably the Erasmus Student Exchange Programme, which became a key part of the Lifelong Learning Programme and is the primary vehicle for student mobility. The Commission also sponsors the Erasmus Mundus scheme, which involves international partnerships offering Masters-level degrees. Thirdly the Commission is the main sponsor of the European Research Area. All of these activities are within the scope of the Bologna Process.

1.4 The Bologna Process, the Leuven commitment and Erasmus

Going mobile calls on UK universities to show greater commitment to meeting the challenge set by the 2009 **Leuven Ministerial Meeting** to secure a 20% participation in mobility among all higher education students by 2020: the so-called **Leuven 20/2020** commitment. This requires more than a mechanistic approach to meeting this target in some technical sense. Indeed it might already be claimed that UK HEIs as a whole already meet this quota, once short-term study visits, work placements, internships, seminars or symposia in another country are taken into account. However, the implication from Leuven is that mobility involves gaining at least 15 ECTS abroad and/or a minimum of three months spent in another country through a placement or study period co-ordinated between two HEIs. Achieving this requires a major institutional commitment at all levels. Currently only around 2% of UK undergraduates engage in a study or workplace mobility of this kind (EHEA Ministerial Conference, 2012a).

Meeting the Leuven target of 20/2020 requires a commitment to an institution-wide **mobility culture** across all disciplines and in all programmes. The obvious vehicle for mobility is the **Erasmus Programme**, originally established in 1987 to provide a cultural interaction between students from one country of the European Community and another, and as a contribution to individual students' personal development and life experience that would enrich their wider educational and employment opportunities. In 2014 the European Commission will launch the next phase of the Education and Training programme, **Erasmus for All**⁴.

The Erasmus initiative has been highly successful, with almost 3 million European students and staff benefiting from exchange opportunities since its inception. However, participation rates in the UK have always lagged behind other larger European countries. In 2010-11, despite three years of increase, fewer than 12,000 UK undergraduates took part in an Erasmus Exchange, compared with almost 30,000 in Spain and 27,000 in France. This low level of UK participation demands an enormous effort to raise the number to the level of other major European Union member states.

Going mobile discusses why UK Erasmus participation is so low, outlines the reasons why senior management and faculty staff in our universities should be concerned about this, and suggests ways that we might correct an anomaly that detracts from the quality of educational experience for all students. It also emphasises that student mobility should be a central part of universities' internationalisation agenda.

The educational benefits of the Erasmus Programme are highlighted in Section 4. Nevertheless, we should not underestimate the challenge facing the UK and individual institutions in raising the level of participation in Erasmus. Reasons for the current poor take-up are addressed in Section 5, 'Barriers to mobility'.

1.5 The European context: the Higher Education Reform Project

The Bologna Process is also known as the European Higher Education Reform Project. This title demonstrates the considerable efforts that have been required in several countries to make the EHEA a reality. Throughout Europe across 47 EHEA signatory states there have been major efforts to align with the objectives and frameworks of the Bologna Process. Briefly these comprise the three-cycle structure of higher education – undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral studies – and the commitment to transparency and recognition contained in the Lisbon Recognition Convention and taken up by Bologna as the Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA (Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks, 2005). The framework is designed to facilitate recognition and comparison among and between signatory states across Europe. The Bergen Summit in 2005 stressed the need to focus on learning outcomes and competences achieved at the end of a period of study (Conference of European Ministers responsible for higher education, 2005). The London Communiqué of 2007 emphasised that “qualification frameworks should be designed so as to encourage greater mobility of students and teachers and improve employability” (Conference of European Ministers responsible for higher education, 2007). There has always been a strong interplay between different instruments and Action Lines of the Bologna Process and the link between mobility and employability is a particularly key aspect of Bologna.

4

http://ec.europa.eu/youth/news/20111123-efa_en.htm

European higher education reform has required the universal adoption of a system of credits assigned to modules so that awards are made on the basis of credits achieved. Bologna uses the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), while in the UK one ECTS credit equates to two UK credits. A further dimension to Bologna is quality assurance and the application of transparent and comparable quality assurance initiatives across the EHEA. Quality assurance agencies are aligned with, and members of, the European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies (ENQA).

In April 2012 the Ministers of the EHEA agreed the Bucharest Communiqué, which commits Ministers to the consolidation and improvement of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG). The Communiqué explains that ENQA, the European Students Association (ESU), the European Universities Association (EUA) and the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), collectively known as the E4 group, will in partnership with Education International, BUSINESSEUROPE and the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR), present proposals for the enhancement of the ESG to the Bologna Follow-up Group. This process demonstrates the extent of international engagement with the quality assurance process and the scope of consultation that informs the Bologna Follow-up Group. The Bucharest Communiqué (EHEA Ministerial Conference, 2012b) also welcomes the external engagement of EQAR, and further encourages national quality assurance agencies to become EQAR-registered.

The degree of reform needed to establish the EHEA has varied significantly across Europe. The Commission has assessed progress on the reforms through the periodic **Tuning Process**, and generally reports positively on the degree of alignment with the Bologna frameworks and systems. However, in practice we know that there remains a range of compliance or non-compliance. In the UK we persist with UK credits. This is hardly conducive to transparency where international students are concerned.

More controversial is the issue of **compensation and condonement** in the case of module failure. Awards should be made on the basis of students achieving assessed learning outcomes module by module, and level by level. Failure to pass a module indicates failure to achieve the learning outcomes required in order to progress, or in order to receive an award. Clearly multiple module failure indicates a failure to meet programme learning outcomes. The creeping application of tolerated failure, however calculated, undermines standards and devalues qualifications.

It is also true that the duty of care exercised by universities in relation to **student support**, quality of provision, learning facilities and transparency of procedures varies enormously. While the Erasmus Programme has been enormously successful, the treatment of visiting students remains highly variable. Despite the Commission-endorsed Erasmus University Charter being a form of quality kite mark, and one that entitles institutions to participation in and funding from the Erasmus scheme, student experience for outgoing students, and also for students coming to the UK, is sometimes rather poor. Difficulties associated with study abroad are examined below in Sections 5 and 6.

While there is no room for complacency and in some respects substantial improvement is needed, the UK and its universities are in general quite well placed as regards the European higher education reform. We have a long established three-cycle framework, a credit system that is broadly effective despite anomalies, and long experience of both institutional autonomy and quality assurance. It is on the question of mobility that many of our universities do not have a particularly good record.

The **Bucharest Communiqué** reaffirms the main Bologna Process Action Lines that underpin the consolidation and development of the EHEA, while it also highlights the need for renewed efforts to support the social dimension of the Bologna Process. Furthermore it stresses the need for mobility to be incorporated into the internationalisation of higher education.

As well as the Bucharest Communiqué, ministers issued a statement from the Third Bologna Policy Group Forum (EHEA Ministerial Conference, 2012c), which emphasises the importance of global mobility to foster active citizenship and the exchange of ideas through innovative networks. Ministers call for continued commitment to quality enhancement as a means to secure transparency and trust. It also refers to mutual recognition of qualifications as an aid to employability. All of these dimensions are consistent with the aims of the Bologna Process and collectively they signal the need for consolidation and development of the European Higher Education Area.

Ministers also affirmed the public (i.e. government) responsibility for higher education while commenting on the need to open a dialogue on funding and governance, referring to the importance of developing adequate funding instruments. This controversial issue is considered in the next section, and in Section 2.3, given that it has such significant bearing on both internationalisation and mobility.

1.6 The UK context: changes in university funding

Economic austerity and new funding arrangements from September 2012 present major challenges. Every institution has to deal with the particularities of its own situation. Students face a tough environment, not only because of higher fees, but also because of depressed confidence in the national and global economy, a tight and competitive labour market, and the near certainty that graduates should not limit their job search to their local or national environment. The focus of attention in *Going mobile* is student mobility, but graduate mobility is arguably even more important. These are two sides of the same coin. Student mobility is an irrefutable, logical contribution to graduate employability as it will encourage students to look further afield for career opportunities. This fact underlines the added value of a mobility experience.

Individual HEIs will respond differently to the external challenges they face, and also to the internal challenges outlined in this document, none of which can be dissociated from the economic outlook. The International Monetary Fund judges the immediate economic outlook to be particularly grim (Wearden and Rogers, 2012). The poor health of the global economy, however, is actually a further reason why universities should embed a culture of mobility in their internationalisation agenda. This should be integral to a student-centred service, quality enhancement and enhancing graduate employability. Encouraging mobility should be part of the strategic ambition of every university that wishes to secure relevance in an internationally competitive environment.

It is important to view the Leuven 20/2020 target as more than mechanistic compliance. *Going mobile* argues for a mindset that incorporates the philosophical origins of the Erasmus initiative. It is an unequivocal appeal for universities to promote the European dimension at the heart of every European university, no matter where placed in national or international rankings. The European university, established in the 12th century, is a tradition worthy of celebration and careful nurturing. The Erasmus scheme, 25 years old in 2012, is central to this aspiration.

2 Reshaping internationalisation in a changing HE environment

2.1 Misconceptions about internationalisation

It is indisputable that competition and market processes have more and more influence on the manner in which internationalisation is implemented. (de Wit, 2011)

Hans de Wit criticises the way in which internationalisation is constructed and implemented in many (European) universities. He frames this around nine key misconceptions:

Internationalisation is about teaching in English

A consequence of this misconception is that there is a reduced commitment to learning other languages, especially among native speakers of English. It may also lead to recruitment bias in favour of native speakers, and tolerance of poor English in those who study or teach in English.

Internationalisation is studying or staying abroad

Mobility is an instrument of internationalisation, it should not be seen as a goal in itself. In other words, mobility must be set within a context of promoting internationalisation. The claimed benefits of mobility should be properly assessed and “embedded in the internationalisation of education”.

Internationalisation equals an international subject

Simply providing an international or regional dimension to curriculum content does not equate to a proper internationalisation strategy.

Internationalisation implies having many international students

Too often students barely integrate or fail to develop much intercultural interaction. There needs to be a focus on interaction and global citizenship, but this is usually lacking.

A few international students makes internationalisation a success

There needs to be a good balance of numbers between home and international students. Ideally there should also be mixed international cohorts, rather than groups dominated by one national group.

No need to test international and intercultural competencies

There is a risk that students isolate themselves from international experience or even from the host culture and language during their stay overseas. Erasmus students may even become an almost closed group. Host universities and lecturers need to assist integration by setting up shared activities with home students.

The more partnerships the more international

Bilateral strategic partnerships do not necessarily promote or equate with successful internationalisation. Instead they may contribute to reinforcing the tenets of contemporary economic globalisation and add little in the way of intercultural exchange, integration or intercultural learning.

Higher education is international by nature

Internationalisation needs to be nurtured through integratory processes. It does not happen of itself simply through being set in a university context.

Internationalisation is a goal in itself

Any of the above misconceptions arises because of confusion between tools and goals. All are instruments towards internationalisation, not end results. The same is true of internationalisation, which de Wit (2011) defines as follows:

Internationalisation is a process by which intercultural, international and global dimensions are introduced into higher education to improve the goals, functions and delivery of higher education and to improve the quality of education and research.

Knight (1994) defines internationalisation as:

The process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the (university).

The **internationalisation strategies** of UK universities, however, have tended to focus on recruitment and overseas campuses (Fielden, 2007). This trend is in response to the perceived competition threat from global markets, the need to match other regions economically and the need to secure economic growth whatever the associated costs may be. In other words, internationalisation strategies are driven by the imperatives of contemporary economic globalisation, and the need for income generation.

This conception of **internationalisation** needs to be broadened, if not abandoned altogether. Instead internationalisation must accommodate internationalism, defined as “a commitment to wider societal benefits as represented in the UN Universal Declaration on Human Rights and UN Development Goals” (Sweeney, 2010). This must be embedded in institutions’ understanding of internationalisation.

Fielden (2007) argues that HEIs must adopt a dual strategy of internationalisation at home and internationalisation abroad, summarised in Figure 1 below.

<u>Internationalisation at home</u>	<u>Internationalisation abroad</u>
<u>Internationalising the curriculum</u>	<u>Home students studying abroad</u>
<u>Foreign language study opportunities</u>	<u>Staff mobility, research and teaching</u>
<u>Mix of international students</u>	<u>Courses abroad jointly with partner HEIs</u>
<u>Engage international students in teaching and learning processes</u>	<u>Joint awards/accreditation</u>
<u>International academic staff</u>	<u>Research and scholarship partnerships abroad</u>
<u>Intercultural campus events</u>	<u>Capacity-building/technical assistance projects</u>
<u>Student placements with ethnic groups/organisations</u>	<u>International volunteering and charity work</u>

Figure 1: Institutionalising internationalisation – at home and abroad

Internationalisation should be integral to a proactive approach to improving the student experience. It should be central to the mission of the university and embrace mobility opportunities through study or work abroad. Mobility therefore becomes a key component of internationalisation strategy. There should be no illusions about the scale of the task, as achieving this requires a change of culture. In recent years the culture in British universities has been moving in a different direction, despite modest increases in Erasmus participation (see Section 3.1 below).

2.2 Universities and economic growth

There has been a profound cultural change across UK higher education in recent years, during which the sector has become a major part of the UK economy, worth around £59 billion per annum (Kelly *et al.*, 2009). Universities have been increasingly directed towards the **marketisation of higher education**, a process condemned as “half baked” by Stefan Collini (2011). This shift in the function of universities is epitomised by the dominant discourse around internationalisation and internationalisation strategies. Government policy has revolutionised the sector in England and Wales, where universities increasingly operate in the service of economic needs and are reshaping curriculum content according to perceived employer expectations. Research increasingly reflects the interests of private sponsors from industry or other external organisations, and universities risk being compromised by questions of research ownership.

Income generation and sponsorship has become a major part of operational activity, occasionally bringing unwelcome publicity as in the 2011 examples of the London School of Economics links with the Gaddafi regime in Libya (Vasagar, 2011) and the Said Business School at the University of Oxford, sponsored by a Syrian/Saudi businessman with close ties to the arms industry⁵. Course design incorporates key skills intended to match workplace needs, and curriculum is to a large extent geared towards graduates’ contribution to gross domestic product with an emphasis on the logic of economic growth as received wisdom⁶.

The Bologna Process tends to the view that European higher education should remain primarily publicly funded, but accepts that all institutions need a **diversity of income streams**. In the UK the principle of institutional income generation is well established, as it is in the United States, where private sponsorship and alumni support is more advanced than in Europe. The sudden change to students paying fees of around £8-9,000 per annum, however, represents a major shift in how UK higher education is funded. It remains to be seen what the impact over the next half decade and beyond will be. It does, however, seem certain that the fees and funding issue presents new challenges that could adversely affect student and staff mobility⁷.

While institutions are technically autonomous, university education has become instrumentalised as a tool of government policy. Changes include the modularisation of courses, training in generic key skills and specification of learning outcomes. With the proportion of school leavers entering university rising to 40%, the expansion of higher education caused satisfaction and alarm in equal measure among those who either saw a necessary response to globalisation consistent with international trends, or others who saw growing student numbers as an indulgence we would come to regret.

5 See Feinstein (2011) on Wafic Said who used profits from arms deals to set up the Said Business School at the University of Oxford; see also Padel (2011).

6 Collini (2011) says “the government is hell-bent on trying to make universities function more like cost-cutting skills retailers, to whom employers can outsource their job-training”.

7 Glee (2011) argues that US higher education offers very poor value for money compared with Continental Europe, but that the massive fees increases in Britain will make a degree from the University of Bolton 60 times more expensive than a degree from the University of Bordeaux: “Doctors with French or German degrees are no worse than those with British ones”.

David Docherty, Chief Executive of the Council for Industry and Higher Education, has placed the important issue of skills in the wider context of remembering the **purpose of the university**. He emphasises learning and critical and reflective theoretical thinking:

This emphasis on the vital importance of non-academic skills to employability and productivity will come as no surprise to anyone in the UK higher education system, where this awareness is deepening with every piece of analysis, and where universities are setting out a vision of mass participation in placements, internships and a range of business engagements. But as we quite rightly develop this agenda, we must not lose sight of the talent universities are really put on earth to deliver. They must provide us with people with the ability to continually learn, to think critically and theoretically, to be reflective and reflexive, to innovate and break the status quo, and to navigate in the unstable waters of the global economy. (Docherty, 2012)

A starting point for the reaffirmation of the central purpose of a European university should be to highlight the centrality of learning and intellectual endeavour. This priority should be embraced in tandem with a fresh approach to internationalisation that prepares students for the difficult challenges endemic to contemporary globalisation.

2.3 The funding revolution

The Labour Government introduced annual fees of £1,000 in 1998, and increased this to £3,300 in 2006. It commissioned Lord Browne to conduct a full investigation into the best way to fund universities. The Coalition Government from May 2010 implemented in full the recommendations of the **Browne Review**, cutting teaching grants by up to 80% and sanctioning fee increases up to a ceiling of £9,000 a year. The dramatic cut in central funding consolidates the competitive ethos of the marketplace and is likely to have unpredictable consequences for many universities. The sector may suffer a contraction due to turbulence in the economy just as many students begin to question the value of going to university at all, especially if it entails heavy personal debt. The situation in England and Wales is unique, however, as the great majority of European Union member states either offer free university education or fees at a fraction of the UK average. In Scotland the Scottish Parliament has sanctioned the introduction of fees, but at a lower level than south of the border. A similar situation prevails in Northern Ireland.

The burden of costs has shifted from Government to students, albeit with loans and some grants potentially leaving the Government to meet an unknown proportion of costs, depending on graduates’ income, place of domicile and other circumstances. There is an air of ‘back of the envelope’ about the fees increases following on from the Browne Review. Time will tell as regards the effect on student numbers, social mobility, and cost to the Treasury in chasing and eventually writing off unpaid loans. There are even legal challenges to Scottish universities who set different fees for Scottish and English-domiciled applicants.

Many graduates will begin their working lives with debts of up to £50,000 at a time when personal debt is recognised as a contributory factor in the economic turbulence since the 2007 sub-prime lending crisis in the United States (Mason, 2010). Couples setting up home post-graduation might even begin their working lives with a household debt in excess of £100,000.

2.4 Overseas recruitment and cash generation

Since the end of the Cold War contemporary economic globalisation has been a key driver of the rapid expansion of the global higher education market. Education has increasingly become a business, “economically motivated and commercial” (Yang, 2003)⁸. Universities have encouraged and compounded the marketisation of the HE environment by increasing overseas recruitment⁹. Many campuses are heavily populated with international (non-EU) students, the largest contingent being from China¹⁰. International students are promised a UK university experience. In many instances this consists of being housed in a campus residential block with scores of co-nationals speaking one’s own language and studying the same or a similar course. There will probably be a small number of students from other far away countries, but rather fewer home students from Britain or Europe than might have been expected. Home students are more likely to live off campus. As well as course fees and accommodation, international students face food, laundry and other costs, which further add to university income. Every foreign student, other than those on university scholarships, directly subsidises home students paying lower fees. Some business and management courses are up to 70% Chinese. Their experience could frankly be gained more cheaply by studying at an ‘international’ campus of a UK university in China.

These developments are typical of what, in practice, an internationalisation strategy means to senior management teams, and to vice-chancellors and finance directors in particular. In many universities an internationalisation strategy equates with income generation. Establishing campuses abroad has the same end, as well as internationalising the brand name of the university and its Business School, itself awash with accreditation from numerous bodies that bestow ‘reputation’ and ‘credibility’ in the marketplace. Commercially driven internationalisation is consistent with the demands of contemporary economic globalisation, and the pressures on universities that at least in part come from government.

In 2007 the Department of Education lost responsibility for universities. Under New Labour, higher education was assigned to the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills, which in June 2009 was renamed the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. For 800 years universities were primarily concerned with education, the pursuit of knowledge, ideas and research, but under Labour they were refashioned as economic units tasked with contributing to national wealth. The Coalition Government post-2010 has continued in the same vein with the increase in fees and cuts to central funding indicating that the process has in fact accelerated.

This repurposing of universities means that creating a genuinely inclusive internationalisation strategy with a focus on educational benefits is especially daunting. It requires individual universities to swim against the prevailing currents. It therefore demands a bold response from those institutions that wish to demonstrate a commitment to an educationally driven internationalisation.

Securing genuine student-centred internationalisation and increased mobility is a difficult challenge. Nevertheless it is clear that a major drive towards these goals would bring significant benefits to students and their learning experience. Institutions should interpret internationalisation as central to the creation of educational value, rather than economic value. Of course this endeavour involves costs, so we should be under no illusions about the scale of the task. Nevertheless, university executives and senior policy makers have a responsibility to prioritise the fundamental purpose and ethos of the university, and they must ensure that their internationalisation strategies are fully aligned with these core objectives.

2.5 Redefining internationalisation strategy

An ethically run university would ensure a diverse intake in order to internationalise the student experience. However, this should be accompanied by other efforts to the same end, such as the provision of a curriculum that embraces **internationalism** and incorporates a commitment to societal benefits as represented in the UN Universal Declaration on Human Rights. Internationalism also includes measures to enhance **linguistic diversity**, rather than the de facto assumption that English – the lingua franca of the international education marketplace – is all that should concern course providers.

Several UK universities including Bath, Coventry, Edinburgh, Exeter, Swansea and York, have – to their credit – developed effective Languages for All programmes, offering a wide range of foreign language courses free to all students. These modules should be credit bearing, and up to 20 UK credits in any one year should contribute to the final award in any discipline. This would represent a more responsible commitment to modern foreign languages than is the case on many campuses and could provide a stronger incentive to students considering study abroad.

Mobility should be a core component of internationalisation, and enshrined in the university’s internationalisation agenda. While mobility is normally understood in relation to the Erasmus student exchange programme, as Section 3 below makes clear, there are a number of ways in which mobility could be encouraged. The Erasmus Programme/ Erasmus for All should be a core element of each university’s internationalisation strategy.

In Bucharest in 2012 Ministers of the EHEA affirmed the notion that mobility should be integrated within universities’ internationalisation efforts. Specifically that:

Institutions adopt and implement their own strategy for their internationalisation and for the promotion of mobility in accordance with their respective profile involving the stakeholders (in particular students, early stage researchers, teachers and other staff in higher education). (EHEA Ministerial Conference, 2012a)

Staff mobility is referred to in Section 3.4 below.

8 Yang’s arguments are echoed by Stefan Collini (2011, 2012).

9 Brady (2008) cites a British Council report *Vision 2020* (2004), which forecast an increase in demand for overseas study from 2.1 million places to 5.8 million, and emphasises how determined UK universities were to hold onto their share of this market. This expansion in demand has been central to university internationalisation agenda.

10 See UK Higher Education International Unit/Universities UK (2011). During 2009-10, of a total of almost 406,000 non-UK students in UK HEIs, 72,020 were from China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, representing almost 18% of the total.

2.6 Erasmus Lifelong Learning Programme and foreign language learning and teaching

The Erasmus Lifelong Learning programme began in 1987 as an attempt to promote international exchange and the learning of foreign languages. This commitment has been diluted as more programmes in continental Europe are taught in English rather than in the home language of the host institution. Nevertheless, the best Erasmus provision includes foreign language study alongside subject-specific modules, whether these use English as the medium of instruction or not. It is an unfortunate consequence of the spread of English as a lingua franca that third-language studies in much of continental Europe is in decline. However, this is a minor problem compared with the precipitous fall in foreign language studies, and spoken competence, among UK undergraduates, a very high proportion of whom have no foreign language studies post-GCSE. While GCSE is not a reliable indicator of spoken competence, it can provide a platform for further learning.

Misguided education policy at secondary level and the under-resourcing of foreign language teaching, as well as indifference among parents, often themselves monolingual, and encouraged by erroneous perceptions of foreign language study being a 'waste of time' because 'the whole world speaks English', mean that fewer students continue language studies beyond GCSE, or even beyond the age of 14. The result is fewer foreign language A-levels and a fall in modern foreign language studies at degree level¹¹. This decline risks a continuing shortage of young teachers at primary and secondary level with a modern foreign language. It seems likely that the proportion of foreign language speakers among UK graduates has never been lower, a fact which undermines UK competitiveness and impacts negatively on graduate opportunities¹².

The Erasmus Programme, especially in its expanded post-2013 format, and engagement with mobility, can help to address these problems. It can help students to realise their potential as learners and users of foreign languages; it can enhance employment opportunities in an international marketplace where many leading employers operate in several countries and have bi-, tri- and multilingual staff.

Foreign language teaching and learning should be a priority component in any internationalisation strategy. In a survey carried out for this publication via the examination of 25 UK university websites, just 12 referred specifically to the Erasmus Lifelong Learning Programme or to foreign language learning opportunities in an internationalisation agenda, or strategy. Many appeared wedded to an internationalisation that focuses almost exclusively on recruitment and the apparent needs of foreign students here in the UK. Even a major study of internationalisation strategies among the 1994 Group of research-led universities, while affirming that "internationalisation is embedded within all aspects of a university" then lists these aspects as "the research undertaken, the business links created, recruitment of the most talented staff from around the world, a diverse multicultural student body, teaching which is globally informed and made available to students around the world" (Nivesjö et al., 2011). These may all be worthy dimensions to an international strategy, but there is no mention of study abroad opportunities for home

11 See UCU (2012). The report indicated that between 2006 and 2012 the number of single subject courses in the UK in French and in German had both declined, French from 47 to 39, German from 36 to 32.

12 See House of Lords Select Committee (2012). The report states: "The growing trend of using English as the dominant language in the academic world, as well as in the EU institutions, should not encourage the United Kingdom to be unconcerned about the opportunities and benefits presented by learning and working in another language. The United Kingdom has already fallen behind in language-learning capability. If this is not reversed it will not only threaten its ability to participate fully in EU programmes such as Erasmus but will also severely hamper individuals' employability and the country's competitiveness within the Single Market and beyond" (para. 84). The report goes on to recommend compulsory foreign language learning in both primary and secondary education (para. 85).

students, international work placements, nor foreign languages, or of the internationalist ethos that should underpin a properly inclusive strategy. Reference to a diverse multicultural student body too easily becomes prioritisation for overseas recruitment in order to generate income.

Alongside an objective to internationalise the campus environment through recruitment and a multicultural environment, there should be a parallel ambition to internationalise through student mobility, for which Erasmus is an obvious vehicle.

A significant vehicle for mobility during the second cycle is the widely available **Erasmus Mundus (EM)** programme¹³. EM involves consortia of three or more institutions in different countries offering joint or multiple awards at Masters level, with study in at least two locations. See Section 4.3 below.

2.7 The student view of internationalisation/international experience

In 2011 the British Council and YouGov surveyed undergraduate opinion on globalisation, on international experience and its relevance to their life and career choices. The study also explored student attitudes towards mobility opportunities. The study found that 78% of those surveyed thought having international perspectives was important and that this was necessary in order to be an open-minded and well-rounded individual with an **understanding of other cultures**. The report refers to a Council for Industry and Higher Education study that claims students tend not to see an international perspective as particularly significant in relation to their careers, but employers on the other hand do value the enhanced **cultural awareness** that international experience tends to promote (Fielden, 2007).

An alarmingly high proportion of respondents (81%) thought they were not at all or not very involved in any international activities at their university. Arts students were more likely to be involved than science students, 18% as opposed to a mere 8%. The study also revealed that students had differing perceptions of the extent to which their universities promote **international experiences**, depending on whether they were Russell Group, pre-1992 or post-1992 universities. The latter group appeared to provide much less opportunity and less information about study, volunteering or work abroad, while Russell Group institutions tend to offer the most. This also translates into a significantly greater likelihood of international experience, and also foreign language skills, among undergraduates at Russell Group universities. In general it is clear from the study that students would like universities to provide more and better information regarding international opportunities, as well as more provision of mixed home and international student accommodation in post-1992 institutions, where this occurs less frequently than in pre-1992 universities. The study also reveals that 41% of students thought their universities should do more to offer international experiences, especially in relation to **volunteering**, while a third would like the opportunity to study for part of their degree abroad. Given that the study also showed that very few students, only 2%, knew that the Erasmus Programme supported **work placements** abroad, it is clear that this is another area where universities could do much more to promote what is available.

When asked about the **benefits of international experience**, students most frequently cited cultural benefits (60%), 'it sounded like fun' (55%) and language learning opportunities (50%). Interestingly 69% of students surveyed wished that they had better foreign language skills. These motivational factors are important in understanding how best to promote international opportunities.

There are further references to the British Council/YouGov study in Sections 4.1 'Benefits of mobility' and 5 'Barriers to mobility' below.

13 http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/results_compendia/selected_projects_action_1_master_courses_en.php

3 Types of mobility

3.1 Erasmus Programme

The most obvious and best established type of mobility is the Erasmus student exchange initiative, which has supported over two million students from across Europe since 1987 (British Council/YouGov, 2011). UK participation has historically been low in comparison with other large European countries, particularly France, Germany and Spain. Nevertheless, after years of decline recent years have seen rising numbers of UK students spending at least one semester abroad on an exchange and many choose to spend a full year abroad. The latter option benefits from a UK-fees waiver for the year abroad¹⁴:

The number of outgoing students from the UK participating in the Erasmus programme rose in 2009/10 to over 11,700, the largest number since 1994, when 11,988 students took part. The last year has seen an increase in both study and work placement elements: over 8,000 students carried out a study period and almost 3,700 took part in a work placement. This represents an increase of eight per cent on the previous year and is the fourth successive increase since 2006. (British Council/YouGov, 2011)

The Lifelong Learning Programme will be branded as **Erasmus for All** from 2014, together with a widening of mobility opportunities to encompass individuals not necessarily in higher education, but in employment. The sector has broadly welcomed the Commission's proposals in Erasmus for All, but is concerned that carefully established brand names such as Erasmus Mundus may be lost. While there are concerns about the adequacy of funding, the supply of guaranteed loans to Masters students, efforts to increase staff mobility and to promote more links between universities and business are seen as positive steps (UK Higher Education International Unit, 2012).

Erasmus for All, like the already established Erasmus Mundus programme, extends mobility opportunities beyond the EHEA and encourages partnerships with HEIs in other regions. This consolidates the international/global dimension of the Erasmus brand and indeed is a significant means by which the EHEA and the Bologna project extends its global reach, which is all the more reason why Erasmus, the EHEA and Bologna should all figure in a central position in universities' internationalisation strategies.

The House of Lords report on the modernisation of higher education in Europe is extremely positive about the Erasmus Programme, and points out that while there is a major imbalance between incoming and outgoing student participation in the UK, incoming students bring many benefits to our universities (House of Lords Select Committee, 2012).

5 below, 'Barriers to mobility', looks at why UK participation in Erasmus is low and proposes ways to overcome difficulties encountered by students considering study or placement abroad.

¹⁴ The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills announced in May 2012 that HEFCE will continue to support students who opt for study or work abroad with a 25% grant, while students themselves will contribute to their home institution up to 15% of the maximum tuition fees cap. This arrangement is extended to all mobile students, whether part of the Erasmus scheme or not. See UK Higher Education International Unit (2012, p.5).

3.2 Work placement

Single semester or two semester work placements are also offered under the framework of Erasmus and receive similar levels of funding. A positive aspect of work placements is that they are usually paid by the employer, so not only do UK students on a one-year placement benefit from a fee waiver and an Erasmus grant, but they also usually earn a wage while gaining valuable skills and work experience abroad.

Feedback from students returning from work placements is extremely positive, even more than for those returning from a study exchange. In particular many cite the placement as being highly beneficial in relation to employment opportunities post-graduation.

Erasmus for All urges increased partnership between universities and business, and this should facilitate more systematic and regular arrangements that can generate Erasmus-funded work placement opportunities. With a continued emphasis on employability and workplace experience, placements should have a key role in developing mobility and internationalisation opportunities.

3.3 Other study and work abroad opportunities

There is some evidence of growing engagement with short-term study visits abroad such as assignments involving projects, participation in symposia or colloquia, conferences and other activities stemming from collaborative initiatives between universities offering innovative learning opportunities to their students.

Such opportunities could either be discipline-related or in entirely different areas, adding breadth and diversity to the student experience. Universities should lead on setting up partnerships to devise student-led colloquia or conferences on issues of contemporary social, economic or political importance, such as development, human rights, employment and civic responsibility¹⁵.

Attending such seminars and colloquia is an excellent way to prepare students for the more advanced discipline-level conferences dominated by academics and established researchers. It also gives practical experience in skill sets that can be important in future careers, and so brings significant added value in terms of personal and professional development.

Mobility involving **short-term work placements** or **internships** should also be encouraged. These may be more practical for students unable to commit to a full semester abroad. Universities with strong links to outside organisations, industry and the voluntary sector as well as governmental or non-governmental organisations may be in a good position to secure long-term relationships that can be of considerable benefit to students wishing to broaden their experience and extend their learning beyond conventional 'at home' course participation.

Work placements or internships may be organised inside the usual semester structure or across the **Summer vacation** period where there is a three-month window of opportunity. It seems axiomatic that in a climate in which **employability** is an important dimension of graduate skills, universities should take more interest in their students' Summer work experience and should liaise with employers in formally recognising such experience so that it can be incorporated into the graduate's Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR), and referred to in Section 6.1 of the Diploma Supplement¹⁶.

¹⁵ The author participated in planning and running the 14th Symposium on Education for Peace, Justice and Human Rights at ITESO Jesuit University of Guadalajara, Mexico on 8 September 2008, a week-long event involving faculty and student participation from 11 different countries.

¹⁶ Following the recommendations of the Burgess Report (Universities UK and Guild HE, 2007) all graduates should be provided with a Higher Education Achievement Report and in accordance with the Bologna Process, with a Diploma Supplement. The relationship between the two remains contentious and unresolved.

3.4 Staff mobility

Setting up Erasmus partnerships necessarily involves faculty staff travelling to negotiate new relationships to determine the framework within which student mobility can happen. This is vital to ensure the quality of the student experience, but also to garner staff commitment to encouraging exchanges to take place. Periodic visits also oil the institutional relationship. Staff mobility is supported by the European Commission through the National Agencies.

A further benefit from staff mobility is the possible **staff exchanges** whereby individuals organise a swap and teach on each others' modules as guest or visiting lecturers, giving variety and fresh or different expertise to module teaching as well as enhancing the European dimension for students in their home university. This facility seems to be underutilised, but it offers a number of benefits, among them the enhanced ability of staff to sell the idea of study abroad when tutors are able to speak with first-hand experience of the campus and institution that potentially mobile students might visit.

A further advantage is the professional development that such visits afford to lecturers and the potential for fresh partnerships in shared scholarly and research activities, as well as a broadening of knowledge about systems and procedures in other parts of the EHEA.

There are also European-Commission-funded opportunities for full staff exchanges extending over a semester, which, though rare due to a range of personal and institutional impediments to such an arrangement, can be highly rewarding in professional development terms for staff. Once again, institutional encouragement of such initiatives could make a significant contribution to this practical dimension of internationalisation.

A further dimension to staff mobility and the contribution that this makes to internationalisation is highlighted by Leask (2007). She refers to the context of **international education** where students from a range of backgrounds come together in a predominantly English-speaking environment or where students from a common linguistic and cultural background are taught by a tutor from another cultural and linguistic background, often English speaking. She argues that teachers should be skilled intercultural learners and reflective managers of **intercultural learning environments**. It is vital that universities take account of the need for professional development and training in order to prepare staff for such contexts. Staff mobility can make a vital contribution to professional development and training, both in order to prepare for teaching in intercultural contexts at home, and prior to teaching abroad. Staff mobility should be a significant part of institutional and departmental planning to ensure a high quality provision for international and culturally diverse student cohorts whether at home or abroad.

Ministers of the EHEA meeting in Bucharest in 2012 issued a call for enhanced staff mobility opportunities, urging institutions:

To pay attention to the mobility and international competence of their staff, in particular to give fair and formal recognition for competences gained abroad, to offer incentives for their greater participation in internationalisation and mobility measures as well as to ensure good working conditions for mobile staff. (EHEA Ministerial Conference, 2012a, p. 5)

3.5 Virtual mobility (e-learning)

For some staff and students physical mobility is not an option due to a range of constraints, including financial, family and other personal commitments, or employment needs. Internationalisation strategies should, however, promote ways to secure some of the benefits of physical mobility even where this is not practicably feasible. With adequate preparation and planning, and with the benefit of strong institutional links, courses should be able to facilitate joint efforts at sharing teaching and learning using technologies, including webinars and other information exchange, research tasks and joint projects. Module sharing, buddying and mentoring, use of podcasts and other similar endeavours can provide a rich seam of opportunities for interaction across borders.

As with all forms of mobility the major barrier to setting up sustainable and long-term initiatives tends to be shortage of time, pressures of work and a surfeit of tasks within what might be considered 'normal' duties. Pushing for a greater degree of internationalisation in all its guises requires institutions to prioritise this at a strategic level, to incentivise efforts in this direction and to reward achievement. There has to be a top level **strategic commitment** to making internationalisation a reality. Furthermore there has to be a good system of communication, monitoring, feedback and revision of practice to secure ongoing improvements.

4 Enhancing the student experience

4.1 Benefits of mobility

Every home student I've ever spoken to who studied abroad has found it to be transformative. It changes lives, and this is what universities are about. It gives them a global mindset, a sense of intellectual achievement very early on in their careers. (David Pilsbury, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for International Development, Coventry University¹⁷)

One of the most comprehensive analyses of the benefits of mobility is a House of Lords Select Committee report, *The Modernisation of Higher Education in Europe* (2012). The report gathers evidence from a variety of stakeholders, including students, and mentions social benefits, personal development, maturity, confidence, adaptability, and enhanced employability, as well as societal and economic benefits¹⁸.

While there is patchy empirical evidence to support claims that mobility is beneficial to students, anecdotally and mainly based on returning students' reports, they clearly value the experience. It seems clear from the British Council/YouGov study (2011) that there are considerable **educational and personal benefits** from study abroad, with students recording significant personal benefits in relation to enjoyment, cultural awareness, and soft skills such as communication, including foreign language learning.

While students do not appear to recognise the benefits of international experience in relation to employment prospects, HEFCE report that study abroad enhances **employability**, though the evidence is somewhat limited as there has been little research (King *et al.*, 2010). It would be necessary to gauge employers' perceptions, but it is difficult to gain more than impressionistic reactions, such as 'Employee A had a study abroad experience, and is very confident and competent', but we cannot draw cause and effect from this information. Nevertheless, given what employees who have studied abroad tell us, it is circumstantially possible that they were aided in their work performance by the mobility experience. Students claim added maturity and confidence, and enhanced ability to get on with people, cope with difficult situations, manage the unpredictable, and even that it may have contributed to technical abilities.

Graduates with a mobility experience point to it being helpful both in finding work and in their careers. Some leading employers indicate that they look favourably on applicants who have had a study abroad experience, and also on those with foreign language experience. It is clear that research is needed to get a clearer picture of the relationship between mobility and employability, just as it is also clear that the sector as a whole would benefit from detailed studies of how higher education in general can improve graduate employability. Employability has become a buzzword in recent times and since the London Communiqué of 2007 the Bologna Process has included employability as a priority area¹⁹.

HEFCE also reports evidence that students with a mobility experience achieve **better degree performance**, but again it is difficult to draw direct cause and effect from this as other factors including demographic and social circumstances may be more significant²⁰. Students who participate in the Erasmus Programme self-select and may already be highly motivated and likely to be high achievers. It is impossible to know what degree they would have achieved had they not been mobile.

It seems obvious that a mobility experience will deliver **cultural benefits** through exposure to other environments, another university, another town and country. Despite a broadly shared European culture that owes much to a Judaeo-Christian tradition and Greco-Roman antiquity, as well as the flowering of the European renaissance and the Age of the Enlightenment, what is common is also marked by regional and sub-regional differences, different linguistic and ethnic histories, religious diversity and other cultural peculiarities from the banal to the sophisticated. Food, fiestas, sporting heritage, as well as architecture and weather show enormous variation across Europe. Living abroad can be a stunning and rewarding learning experience for those who make the effort to embrace others' cultural heritage.

Uppermost among the cultural benefits is the opportunity to learn or improve **foreign language learning**. The Erasmus Programme pushes this as a central benefit and key objective of mobility. Many courses are increasingly taught through English, especially business-related and STEM subjects. Much the largest proportion of Erasmus students are studying a foreign language as a primary or ancillary degree subject, but greater Erasmus participation should be achieved in all disciplines, not only the traditional Erasmus domains of modern languages and business/management²¹. Whatever the discipline and whatever the medium of instruction, an exchange should include foreign language study as well as opportunities to use the host community language in social settings outside the lecture or seminar room.

Mobility offers fresh **networking and friendship** opportunities to students, meeting new people in new environments, both from the host community and among other Erasmus students from all over Europe, especially given that most universities report the existence of international student communities that include Erasmus scholars. This is often reported as a singular and wonderful feature of the study abroad experience, the opportunity to mix with students from a diverse range of backgrounds and to be a member of an international community.

Finally, an opinion to gladden the hearts of the European Commission comes from the writer Umberto Eco, who reports colourfully on the success of the Erasmus Programme in contributing to **European identity**:

Erasmus has created the first generation of young Europeans. I call it a sexual revolution: a young Catalan man meets a Flemish girl – they fall in love, they get married and they become European, as do their children. The Erasmus idea should be compulsory – not just for students, but also for taxi drivers, plumbers and other workers. (Eco, 2012)

Perhaps a step in this direction is the expansion of the Erasmus Lifelong Learning Project from 2014 under the new **Erasmus for All** programme, which signals an increase in funding and access to Erasmus for individuals not necessarily in full-time higher education.

17 David Pilsbury, cited in Baty (2009).

18 See para. 62.

19 See the *Leuven Communiqué* (Conference of European Ministers responsible for higher education, 2009).

20 King *et al.* (2010). See also National Union of Students (2010): the study reports 75% of students who had studied abroad achieving a first or an upper second, compared with a national average of 60%.

21 See National Union of Students (2010). Based on 2008 figures the NUS report 4,920 Erasmus students studying languages/philology, and 1,414 studying business/management of a total of 10,251 (including work placements).

4.2 The European dimension

The Bologna Process refers to enhancing the **European dimension** as one of its Action Lines, but nowhere is this clearly articulated and it is not well understood. Arguably it refers to the place of Europe in the curriculum. This section outlines how the European dimension can be developed across the curriculum, and developing mobility opportunities should be at the heart of this endeavour.

There is a very low level of participation – less than 2% – in the Erasmus Programme in all subjects with the exception modern foreign language degrees, or where language study is a significant part of the course as in International Business with a foreign language²². Business and management studies is the second most likely discipline to participate in Erasmus.

The most obvious enhancement of the European dimension would be to raise the level of participation in Erasmus in all disciplines. This requires universities to apply the spirit of their Erasmus University Charter and accept flexibility in accommodating modules from partner institutions without the requirement for an exact match in relation to content or learning outcomes. There is a tendency in some quarters for the perceived lack of matching or equivalent modules to be used as an excuse to justify what is in fact departmental inertia, or worse, outright lack of interest in mobility as an educational benefit.

If institutions are not prepared to accept flexibility on the matching of modules, there are other ways that mobility can be enhanced and the European dimension built into course design. These include work placement, allowing a whole year abroad usually after Year 2 and therefore requiring a four-year degree. In this case the extra year should be treated as credit bearing, and so a typical UK graduate would graduate with 480 UK credits (240 ECTS) instead of the usual three year 360 UK credits (180 ECTS). This would ensure the year abroad was given proper status inside the degree, but students would undertake the year in the knowledge that they would be required to complete a fourth year in order to receive their award from their home university.

The European dimension can also be enhanced in ways that do not require a full semester or year abroad, such as participation in **seminars or symposia** undertaken in collaboration with European **partner universities**. Other possible means include shared projects, shared modules, research initiatives, other forms of partnering, staff exchanges, and mentoring or buddying between departments and between students. Such initiatives can be supported online using webinars or other e-facilitated technologies.

Course content can also be given a European flavour in relation to looking at discipline-related history in other countries, employment opportunities, using contributions from partner institutions abroad, links to industry and to employment and professional organisations abroad, and shared career advice and information on research opportunities. In many disciplines, especially in the humanities and social sciences, it should be straightforward to ensure inclusion of modules with specific Continental European content.

22 See British Council (2010). Only ten institutions managed to send 2% of their students on an Erasmus Programme in 2008-09, and only 18 out of 130 UK HEIs sent at least 200 students on an outgoing Erasmus mobility.

Finally the inclusion of modern **foreign language studies** should be encouraged across the curriculum, preferably with credits awarded either as a contribution to the final degree or within a separate certificated programme. The University of York runs a successful York Award scheme, which includes extra-curricular activities, work opportunities, placements, voluntary efforts and also modern foreign language study if students choose that option. It should be straightforward to devise a European dimension within such initiatives.

All the above can be incorporated in an institutional Europeanisation agenda, which should be a component of the overarching institutional internationalisation strategy.

4.3 Erasmus Mundus (EM) and the European Research Area (ERA)

Erasmus Mundus involves consortia of European universities funded by the European Commission to set up collaborative Masters or doctoral-level programmes. Many such partnerships also involve institutions outside Europe and these also benefit from Commission funding. EM Masters courses normally last two years with students studying in at least two of the partner universities and sometimes in three. The final award is issued by a minimum of two of the consortium members.

The European Commission established the **European Research Area** and the **Marie Curie** research actions²³ in order to promote research co-operation across the continent and to develop opportunities for enhanced synergy between different European universities and thereby stimulate international co-operation in longer-term research initiatives.

Universities can play a significant role in educating undergraduates to be aware of these opportunities while also developing their own direct contribution either by joining an Erasmus Mundus consortium, or by taking on a lead role in setting up a new consortium, or by becoming involved in a research initiative with European partners and European funding, and embedding this inside the ERA framework.

Another initiative that boosts institutional Europeanisation is a joint **doctoral programme** set up by two partner universities. Doctoral candidates are supervised in two locations and the final award is from both of the universities involved.

23 <http://ec.europa.eu/research/mariecurieactions/>

5 Barriers to mobility

It is well known that the UK fares notoriously badly when it comes to outward student mobility. While approximately 370,000 foreign students come to the UK every year, only 33,000 UK students study abroad. Alternatively expressed, for every UK student studying abroad, 11 foreign students come to the UK. (UK Higher Education International Unit, 2012a).

Needless to say there are substantial and several barriers to mobility that contribute to the imbalance highlighted above. Factors that negatively affect the student take-up of study or work abroad opportunities can be divided into two categories: those where the barriers are institutional and those that reflect personal circumstances.

5.1 Institutional barriers to student mobility

According to an NUS study there is a decisive gap between Russell Group/pre-1992 universities and post-1992 universities in students considering study abroad. In the former group 23% of Russell Group students had considered study abroad, and 18% of the pre-1992 university students. Among post-1992 universities, a mere 11% had considered study abroad (NUS, 2010). The British Council study reports a similar difference between these three categories of institution (British Council/YouGov, 2011).

A frequent explanation for poor take-up of Erasmus mobility is that **degree structure, terms and semester** arrangements make study abroad impractical. This is often linked to **examination and assessment timetables**. Similarly some universities may insist on the **requirement to take 'core' modules** at home in order to meet **programme learning outcomes**. In the British Council/YouGov study (2011), a **lack of time** was given as a reason by 42% of respondents, presumably meaning that the degree structure left no opportunity for undertaking study abroad.

Some UK universities continue to operate within a terms system whereas continental Europe and most of the EHEA uses semesters. Study abroad therefore can be more complicated, especially where assessment is concerned, if there is a lack of compatibility in this area. Furthermore some UK institutions set examinations in May, which would directly conflict with the second semester abroad norm of Erasmus Exchange.

How can these problems be overcome? Universities should move to a **semester system** and/or allow for much greater **flexibility** in assessment, recognition of assessment undertaken abroad, or substitution of other means to assess and award credits. Possible alternatives means to award credits include independent learning units (ILUs), special provision, project work or measured/examined foreign language competence. The alternatives would supply the equivalent number of credits as would have been achieved by staying at home. A lack of flexibility in this area can be institutional, i.e. at registry level, or departmental where the department insists on its own structures and measurements being the only ones that can possibly meet 'our exacting standards'. There may be an element of hubris in this argument.

Barriers can also be constructed around **credits, module compatibility, module descriptors and learning outcomes**. In some instances credit and modular frameworks, which ought to facilitate flexibility and do so in the case of rescuing students who get into difficulties through enforced absence or illness, are actually used to argue against the notion of equivalence applying to modules taken elsewhere. Not only is this a barrier to student mobility, it is fundamentally against the spirit of the EHEA approach to credit transfer. Module descriptors should not be straightjackets and indeed for a variety of sound practical and pedagogical reasons they and programme documents should allow for amendments and even quite substantial modifications so long as the headline programme learning outcomes are not unduly compromised.

Flexibility at Board of Studies level should be the rule of thumb in order to ensure maximum opportunity for study abroad and credit transfer. If the institutional partnership is founded on trust and mutual responsibility for quality assurance, and if communication channels are open and effective, there should be no reason why difficulties in these areas should prevent study abroad or impede its full incorporation into the programme and eventual award.

Poor levels of participation in the Erasmus Exchange programme are often a consequence of **institutional inertia** and **lack of commitment**. Of course facilitating effective internationalisation and enhancing the student experience requires resourcing and sustained effort towards realising these outcomes. Without sufficient will and without resourcing there will be no increase in uptake of Erasmus, so students will be deprived of the opportunity to benefit from mobility.

Any of the initiatives recommended in this booklet, whether directly Erasmus-related or confined to other partnership-based efforts, require resourcing both in **financial and human resources terms**. In times of austerity this is an especially big ask. However, it is essential that for sound educational reasons universities prioritise mobility and the reshaping of internationalisation that a full commitment to the principle of mobility must involve. Establishing an institution-wide **mobility culture** requires the commitment of resources and clear prioritisation at institutional, faculty and departmental levels.

The most radical, but at the same time simplest solution to the practical barriers around credits, learning outcomes, equivalence, examination timetables and requirements, and terms or semesters, is to develop **four-year programmes** with a full year abroad. This is an excellent solution that gives students an additional choice. In this instance the year abroad should be monitored and institutionally supported, and governed by learning outcomes agreed through institutional partnerships, or a variant allowing for employer engagement in the case of work placements. In either case the year should be credit bearing so that graduates benefit from their degree transcript, the Diploma Supplement, recording that the eventual award is made on the basis of four full years of credits (480 UK credits, 240 ECTS).

In conclusion, universities need to make significant strategic and structural efforts to develop a **culture of mobility** that can overcome these barriers. Only through making mobility a strategic priority can student mobility become fully institutionalised and widely available.

5.2 Personal circumstances as barriers to student mobility

Personal barrier no. 1

Although rarely cited as a reason for not undertaking study or work abroad, **student diffidence** is surely a significant factor. Individuals may lack confidence, or prefer the easy option of staying in the one place and meeting normal programme obligations. It is evident that some students never really consider whether an exchange would suit them, and they do not attend information meetings intended to spark interest. They may not be aware of mobility opportunities, or at best only dimly conscious of them. Within this category one may include **lack of confidence in language** ability, cited in an NUS study (2010) as the third most significant factor²⁴. Poor language skills are cited by 46% of respondents in the British Council/YouGov study (2011) as the main or a major disincentive to study or placement abroad.

Universities should get round this by making study abroad options an integral part of **open days**, pre-course information and part of **welcome week**. There should be a high level of quality information continuously available, including opportunities to hear from returning students able to report on their Erasmus experiences. Universities should require their international offices to engage with the students' union in providing much more information as well as special Erasmus events, perhaps through an **Erasmus Society** using the enthusiasm and knowledge of past Erasmus students, to promote mobility and its benefits. Universities should also make available, and stress the opportunity for, **foreign language** study as preparation for study abroad or a work placement.

The British Council/YouGov study (2011) found that many students are unaware that study abroad often involves English as the medium of instruction, so there may be an information deficit for potentially mobile students.

Personal Barrier no. 2

It is true that for many students, **friendships, relationships** and **family concerns** deter them from pursuing enquiries about study abroad. To a degree this may also reflect family nervousness about offspring travelling abroad, being away for six months at a time and encountering perhaps a sharply different environment. This perception should be countered as surely the entire university experience should be geared towards opening up fresh avenues and new ways of thinking. Studies do not seem to research whether this is a likely reason for not taking part in a mobility experience, perhaps as respondents might be unlikely to give this reason.

Personal barrier no. 3

Different studies highlight **extra financial cost** as the major barrier to international experience or study abroad. The British Council/YouGov (2011) identifies this as the most frequently cited barrier along with a lack of foreign language skills. The NUS (2010) also identifies cost as the critical barrier to mobility²⁵. Despite the availability of Erasmus funding, and despite work placements also being subsidised and in fact frequently consisting of paid employment, students perceive study abroad to entail additional costs.

This may well be true, but it is difficult to get a full picture as there are so many variables. One difficulty is that at the outset there may well be additional costs from transport, rental deposits and settling-in expenditures. This may be one of the reasons why Erasmus Exchange is skewed towards students from higher socio-economic groups. These students may also be much more familiar with travel abroad, and may even have visited their destination countries or cities with their families.

Bureaucratic hold-ups in getting the Erasmus grant in a timely fashion certainly risk increasing the financial stresses around study abroad, and home universities and the National Agency need to ensure that such problems are minimised and that early financial support and loan transferability is timely and efficient.

Personal barrier no. 4

Another common concern is problems over **rental agreements** set in the previous year. Contracts make it difficult for students to contemplate going away for a semester, especially if they cannot be sure that their place would be filled by an incoming student, and rental agreements may even prohibit this form of sub-letting. There is certainly a tendency for students to be tied to rental agreements that militate against any change of circumstances before June or July of the following year.

This difficulty highlights the need for **early information** about mobility opportunities and the need to set the organisational wheels in motion at an early stage.

Personal barrier no. 5

A final significant barrier for some students is **part-time employment**, in many cases a vital contribution to meeting living costs incurred while at university. Students are often reluctant to give up part-time work and fear that the job will no longer be available on their return from a semester abroad.

A possible means to counter this barrier is for institutions to develop links that can provide opportunities for paid work placements. These can ensure valuable work experience as well as income. Study abroad is unlikely to combine with working abroad, so this is a further reason why participation in Erasmus may be skewed towards better off students.

These barriers are significant and individual circumstances will determine whether they are surmountable. In the case of rent, often the only solution is to plan well ahead and take a full **year abroad** rather than a single semester. This is also the best way around the institutional barriers in Section 5.1.

24 The report says that 76% of students in a sample of 2,430 had not considered studying abroad as part of their degree. Of these students, 19% said a lack of foreign language skills was their main reason for not considering study abroad (third highest category).

25 The report identified Erasmus mobility as 'not relevant for my course' as the most cited reason for not engaging in the Erasmus Programme (55%), but 33% gave financial concerns as their primary reason for non-participation.

5.3 Barriers to staff mobility

Where staff mobility is concerned barriers may be similar to those encountered by students. Institutional inertia, lack of support from within departments and the disruption of one's own and colleagues' work patterns and responsibilities make staff mobility a complex challenge. Academics typically have teaching, research and administrative responsibilities so it is difficult to envisage taking a semester out without it having a major and disruptive impact²⁶.

Short-term mobility for a week or so should not be that difficult to support and the synergistic benefits to the individual, the department and to the institution are significant. Many of the mobility types referred to in this document certainly do require staff visits to partners to set up structures that adequately support student mobility and related projects.

Institutions need to prioritise staff mobility and build it into professional development plans and appraisal procedures, ensuring full departmental support. Unfortunately in straitened times this is unlikely to happen, so in practice staff mobility depends on individuals and their ability to negotiate with colleagues and managers. It is likely that only short-term mobility is a practical proposition in most cases.

The exception where mobility for a longer-term release is a viable proposition is where mobility is undertaken in the form of a research sabbatical. This must comprise full release from normal departmental responsibilities and it will then be up to the individual concerned to ensure that the sabbatical is undertaken abroad and thus constitutes international mobility.

26 It might be pointed out, somewhat mischievously perhaps, that staff seem to have less difficulty in taking up a sabbatical in order to undertake research, should the opportunity be available.

6 Students' reporting on mobility

6.1 Positive experiences

A 2005 Erasmus Students Network survey reports a high level of student satisfaction (68% very satisfied, 26% rather satisfied) with the Erasmus Programme (Krzaklewska and Krupkik, 2005). The British Council (2010) also report enthusiastic accounts of student experience through the Erasmus Programme.

A Europe-wide survey by the International Exchange Erasmus Student Network (ESN) reports general satisfaction among Erasmus students with their studies and stay abroad, both evaluated at more than 80% satisfied or very satisfied. British Council figures based on surveys of returning students show even higher levels of satisfaction²⁷.

The British Council (2010), the Europe Unit (2010, pp. 12-13) and the NUS (2010) have all recently published pamphlets extolling the virtues of study abroad, or work placements, as educationally valuable and enjoyable, as well as useful in relation to career development. Such publications are full of personal testimonies from students who have benefited from taking up mobility opportunities.

6.2 Negative experiences

Most students report a positive experience from their study abroad. However, the reality is that this is variable and in some instances the experience is one of survival in the face of adversity due to **institutional failings**, such as poor or virtually non-existent welcome arrangements, irregular office hours, lack of institutional support in finding accommodation, poor information about expectations and module enrolment, and student responsibilities. In some instances the teaching is poor and staff indifferent to the specific needs of Erasmus students²⁸.

There are also instances of no **foreign language support**. Appropriate foreign language classes should be a staple and obligatory part of all Erasmus students' timetables, if requested by a reasonable number of students.

However, in a **climate of austerity** and budget cuts it is likely that there will be a decline in standards across the European HE sector. The public spending cuts now experienced by several eurozone member states could be deep and longer lasting, and may even be a signal of what may be a more widespread experience in future (Grove, 2012).

A further problem is that students may experience **delays in receiving funds** from their National Agency and other **bureaucratic obstacles** slow down or block access to loans, even where in theory loan transfer is facilitated.

27 85% 'good' or 'excellent' on a five-point scale on the personal experience; 66% on the academic professional experience; 88% overall. Email correspondence from David Hibler, British Council, to the author, 16 May 2012.

28 Various personal communications to the author from returning Erasmus students, typically that they had "had a great time" but "the level of organisation and help from the university was hopeless". Responses are very variable and by no means universally positive in relation to institutional support.

All of these problems need to be addressed by National Agencies, while universities themselves have a particular responsibility to meet their obligations under their Erasmus University Charter.

UK higher education institutions have broadly welcomed the Erasmus for All proposals, and their response also signalled a need for the Commission to strengthen the outcomes and conditionality attached to mobility – in other words to demand higher standards of quality assurance concerning the student experience (UK Higher Education International Unit, 2012b p. 2).

7 Conclusion: What must be done

In summary this document calls for a radical and transformative approach to internationalisation that puts student mobility at the heart of institutional internationalisation strategies. This requires a fundamental and **strategic commitment** to establishing an institutional **mobility culture**.

Universities should ensure that their internationalisation strategies reflect educational benefits for all students both at home and abroad, and in both the traditional 'Home/EU' and 'International' categories. Internationalisation strategies should embrace both internationalisation at home and abroad as described by Fielden (2007). Encouraging student mobility and raising the level of participation in the Erasmus scheme should be an aspiration for all universities. This should be incorporated in a Europeanisation strategy, itself within the wider internationalisation strategy. Europeanisation should include not only study abroad, or work placements whether inside Erasmus or not, but also the promotion of the European dimension and in particular foreign language learning opportunities. Obviously this should not be restricted to European languages and while this document has focused mainly on Erasmus and the special status of the Erasmus Programme in the European Higher Education Area, naturally any mobility beyond Europe and the study of non-European languages should also be encouraged as a valuable contribution to students' international education and learning experience.

It is encouraging that a recently commissioned UK Higher Education International Unit report on how to encourage outward student mobility was welcomed by the Universities Minister, David Willetts (UK Higher Education International Unit, 2012c). The report recommends the development of a national strategy for outward mobility and a sector-led solution to the problem of low mobility participation by UK students. The report also recommends the continuation of the Erasmus fee waiver and indeed that the fee waiver should be available to support students on work placements outside the European Union, and outside the Erasmus scheme. Both the Chair of the UK Higher Education International Unit, Colin Riordan, and David Willett's affirmed the value of students' working, studying and volunteering abroad, identifying similar benefits to those highlighted in Section 4.1 above, with a particular emphasis on employability and financial benefits in relation to career opportunities. The report also stresses benefits to institutions and to the wider UK economy. Finally the report also identifies as barriers to mobility the lack of curriculum flexibility and the lack of formal recognition for the study or work abroad. These anomalies should be rectified as a matter of urgency in order to achieve adequate levels of outward mobility.

Going mobile is written from the belief that our universities must renew their commitment to the ethos and principles that have sustained the European university for several hundred years. A strategic approach to internationalisation that embraces internationalism, and is founded on an appreciation of the educational and personal benefits to be gained from mobility, is a fundamental part of that conviction.

In summary, our universities should:

- prioritise a strategic transformation of internationalisation away from economic and financial imperatives towards educational values and objectives;
- develop internationalisation strategies that place the student experience, and teaching and learning, at the centre;
- promote internationalism as a key component of internationalisation strategy;
- develop European strategies as a sub-set of an internationalisation strategy;
- promote mobility through the Erasmus Programme/Erasmus for All;
- promote the European dimension in all areas of the curriculum;
- promote internationalisation at home and abroad;
- ensure culturally and ethnically mixed campus accommodation and avoid concentrations of single national groups;
- promote student mobility for all disciplines and not simply those that traditionally supply the majority of mobile students;
- develop international work placement opportunities, and promote available work placements through Erasmus;
- develop partnerships with volunteering organisations and facilitate student participation in voluntary activities;
- encourage a greater level of engagement with international partnerships designed to promote mobility, and develop co-operation in scholarship and research;
- promote staff mobility, especially for short-term exploratory visits and setting up arrangements to support student mobility, including virtual mobility;
- provide increased virtual mobility opportunities within course design, fostering links with overseas partners;
- develop joint degrees through international partnerships;
- promote Masters-level and doctoral studies through the Erasmus Mundus programme;
- explore opportunities for joint doctoral supervision and dual awards;
- enhance opportunities throughout the university for foreign language learning, including non-European languages, in dedicated 'Languages for All' facilities;
- provide opportunities for language learning to be credit bearing and to contribute to final awards;
- facilitate credit transfer and accumulation where appropriate with partner institutions;
- introduce additional qualifications and awards with foreign language components, as well as opportunities to give formal recognition to volunteering;
- ensure that study abroad or work placements are adequately represented in the Diploma Supplement and that such is recognised by the award of credits;
- encourage staff and student participation in international partnerships leading to joint conferences, symposia and colloquia, including shared teaching of modules and common assessment, and encourage a diverse and multidisciplinary approach to such initiatives;
- encourage greater levels of international co-operation in research and scholarship;
- promote awareness of the European Higher Education Area;
- fully apply the tools, principles and practices of the Bologna Process, including Diploma Supplement, ECTS, and transparent and appropriate application of qualification frameworks, including correct adherence to the principle of the three-cycle framework, and adherence to effective quality assurance processes.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Institutions involved with European mobility

British Council – UK Erasmus National Agency:
<http://www.britishcouncil.org/erasmus>

European Commission – Erasmus Lifelong Learning Programme:
http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc80_en.htm

European Commission – Erasmus for All (2014):
<http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus-for-all/>

European Commission – Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses:
http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/results_compendia/selected_projects_action_1_master_courses_en.php

European Students' Union (ESU):
<http://www.esu-online.org/>

Higher Education Academy -Internationalisation:
<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/internationalisation>

National Union of Students (NUS) – Advice on Study Abroad:
<http://www.nus.org.uk/en/advice/your-study/overseas-study/studying-abroad/>

UK Higher Education International Unit:
<http://www.international.ac.uk>

Universities UK:
<http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk>

Appendix 2: Bologna Process

British Council – Bologna Process:
<http://www.britishcouncil.org/erasmus-bologna-process.htm>

European Commission – Bologna Process:
http://ec.europa.eu/education/higher-education/doc1290_en.htm

Higher Education Academy – Bologna Process resources:
<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/internationalisation/bologna-resources>

See also:

'Improving the participation in the Erasmus Programme' Brussels: The Directorate General for Internal Policies, European Parliament. July 2010. Available at http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus/doc/publ/parlreport_en.pdf [21 August 2012].

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Appendix 3: UK Bologna Experts 2012-13

Professor Tim Birtwistle, ECTS and Diploma Supplement Counsellor, Professor Emeritus, Leeds Metropolitan University

Mr Alex Bols, Executive Director, 1994 Group

Mr Andy Gibbs, Director of International Relations, School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Care, Edinburgh Napier University

Mr Huw Landeg Morris, Academic Registrar, Swansea University

Dr Graeme Roberts, Professor Emeritus, University of Aberdeen

Simon Sweeney, Lecturer International Political Economy and Business, The York Management School, University of York

Dr Anthony Vickers, ECTS and Diploma Supplement Counsellor, Reader, School of Computer Science and Electronic Engineering, University of Essex

Dyfed Griffiths, Teaching Fellow, Erasmus Co-ordinator and Part III Director of Studies in Architecture, University of Bath

Professor Michael Blakemore, Emeritus Professor of Geography, University of Durham

Richard Shearman, Director of Formation and Deputy CEO, The Engineering Council

Dugald Craig, International Development Manager, West of Scotland Colleges' Partnership

John Reilly, International Higher Education Consultant

Rory O'Connell, Senior Lecturer in Law, Queen's University Belfast

Natalia Kozłowska, Student at University of Glasgow

Kristin Meyer, Student at University of Nottingham

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