

Procedure for the Establishment, Renewal & Review of Student Exchange Partners

1. Introduction

1.1 This document is prescribed by Senate. It is intended for use by departments, the Registry's Quality Assurance & Enhancement (QA&E) Team, the Faculty Education Committees and/or Postgraduate Research Quality Committee (PRQC) and the Quality Assurance & Enhancement Committee (QAEC) to maintain oversight of the approval, renewal and review of student exchange partners.

1.2 The procedure covers arrangements for approving institutions of higher education abroad as partners in delivering study opportunities abroad as part of a degree programme at both undergraduate and postgraduate level and for the management of student exchange agreements in line with the requirements placed on the College by chapter B10 of the QAA Quality Code (<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/quality-code-part-b>).

1.3 The College will only enter into a student exchange partners with another institution whose quality of provision, mission, vision and ethos are compatible with that of the College. Imperial College has the ultimate responsibility for the academic standards of all the awards, conferred in its name, and for the quality of its learning opportunities, irrespective of where these are delivered or who provides them. The College therefore undertakes appropriate and proportionate due diligence checks before proceeding with the development of a student exchange arrangement.

1.4 All student exchange partnerships are also subject to review by the College. The College encourages the use of visits as part of approval and reviewing activities.

2. In particular the procedure covers:

- Submitting a proposal to establish or renew a student exchange partner.
- Who considers a proposal, and if approved for how long.
- The means by which the resultant agreement will be developed and administered.
- The annual review of student exchange partners (data).
- How the College handles situations which do not or do not appear to fit the procedure.
- The key contact for advice and assistance.

3. This procedure covers activity which results in the award of credit (UG and PGT) or to a PhD registration. Most proposals will focus on provision of either UG or PGT or PGR (*a common type of exchange would be one that supports undergraduate Year Abroad¹ degree programmes*), however, the procedure takes into account when a proposal is more complex.

¹ Any reference to 'Year Abroad' in this document also includes 'Research Abroad', 'Year in Europe', 'language for science' and 'International Programme of Study' degrees.

4. In the context of the curriculum (UG and PGT) or to a PhD registration, 'exchange' is defined as an agreement between two higher education institutions whereby both parties aim to exchange an agreed number of students on an annual basis for study periods, including projects or periods of research, and where both parties agree to waive tuition fees for students they host.
5. A Student Exchange Partner is normally considered for approval (establishment) on a subject by subject basis, which means there is normally only a single College department involved. The procedure focuses on this common feature while also making reference to when more than one department in the same faculty is involved or perhaps departments from more than one faculty are involved.
6. However, where there is a plan to establish or renew a faculty or institutional level arrangement with a single Student Exchange Partner (see 7.5) the process can be streamlined.
7. Submitting a Proposal to establish a New Student Exchange Partner
 - 7.1 **Identify a lead member of staff for the proposal.** The lead will be the principal contact responsible for student exchange links: for undergraduate exchanges this will normally be Director of Undergraduate Studies (or their nominee) in the Faculties of Engineering and Natural Sciences and the Director of Education (or their nominee) in the Faculty of Medicine; for postgraduate exchanges the Director of Postgraduate Studies (or their nominee) will normally act as the lead. With an institutional level arrangement the lead member of staff would normally be the Vice-Provost (Education) (or their nominee).
 - 7.1.1 Where a proposal concerns more than one Department, a lead Department/Faculty should also be identified.
 - 7.2 **Use Form A** (see Annex 1: Proposal Form for the Establishment of a New Student Exchange Partner). *Queries can be addressed to student.placement@imperial.ac.uk*
 - 7.3 Academic Governance and Committee Approval:
 - 7.3.1 In instances where the proposal only relates to UG and/or PGT activity, the Faculty Education Committee with responsibility for the lead Department will be responsible for consideration and approval of the proposal and any ongoing quality assurance following approval, in consultation with other committees as appropriate.
 - 7.3.2 In instances where the proposal only relates to PGR activity the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee will be responsible for consideration and approval of the proposal and any ongoing quality assurance following approval, in consultation with the other committees as appropriate.
 - 7.3.3 In instances where the proposal relates to both UG and/or PGT and PGR activity then Form A should be considered by both the relevant Faculty Education Committee and the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee, and both committees will be responsible for consideration and approval of the proposal and any ongoing quality assurance, in consultation with the other committees as appropriate.

- 7.4 In instances where the proposal includes departments in a different Faculty to the lead department, the proposal (Form A) should also be considered by the other relevant Faculty Education Committee(s). *This should be undertaken prior to the relevant meeting of the lead Department's Faculty Education Committee to provide evidence that there is support for all Departments to be included in the proposal.*
- 7.5 The **exception** to the above would be in the case of student exchange partnerships which are to be developed and managed at a Faculty or Institutional level. Contact the Assistant Registrar (Placements) for guidance on how to proceed.
- 7.6 **Form A should be submitted by the lead academic to the secretary of the relevant committee(s) via the DUGS or DPS (or their nominee) in the lead department:** <http://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/governance/academic-governance/> The lead academic should aim to complete this process well in advance of any plans to commence the student exchange activity.
- 7.7 **Where approval is given by the relevant committee it will normally be for a period of 5 academic years commencing at the beginning of the next academic year.** Where two or more committees are involved please note that complete approval is not obtained until all relevant committees have recorded their approval in the relevant minutes. The expiry date of the approval will normally be taken as 30 September. However, the Student Exchange Agreement which will manage the activity may be signed for a shorter period and may have a different expiry date.
- 7.8 Approval can be given by the relevant committee for less than 5 years if they believe there are reasons for doing so, for example, where they wish to monitor the development of a particular partnership.

8. Submitting a Proposal for the Renewal of a Student Exchange Partner

- 8.1 **When prompted by the Assistant Registrar the lead academic (with the support of the Assistant Registrar as necessary) will communicate with a Student Exchange Partner in the penultimate year of the Agreement in order to decide whether an agreement is to be renewed.**
- 8.2 **Where there is a mutual desire to renew the student exchange partnership, the proposal to the relevant committee or committees should be submitted no later than 6 months before the original approval period expires (see 8.4).**
- 8.3 **Use [Form B](#)** (see Annex 2: Proposal Form for the Renewal of a Student Exchange Partner). The reader is referred to 7.1 to 7.7 replacing "Form A" with "[Form B](#)". Queries can be addressed to student.placement@imperial.ac.uk
- 8.4 **Where approval is given by the relevant committee(s) the renewal will be for a further period of 5 academic years, normally commencing at the beginning of the next academic year.** The expiry date will be taken as 30 September. However, the Student Exchange Agreement which will manage the activity may be signed for a shorter period and may have a different expiry date.

- 8.5 When a student exchange partnership is renewed before the original 5 years has elapsed the new period of approval will commence from the beginning of the next academic year.

9. Administration of Student Exchange Agreements

- 9.1 **The Assistant Registrar (Placements) is responsible for the drafting of the agreement.** The lead academic must ensure that in the case of non-Erasmus or non-Swiss exchange links the Assistant Registrar (Placements) has access to the relevant contacts for agreement administration at the student exchange partner in the relevant proposal form (or the lead academic should contact the Assistant Registrar for advice).
- 9.2 The drafting of a Student Exchange Agreement (SEA) and liaison with the student exchange partner can begin by the Assistant Registrar (Placements) while the approval to establish the exchange partnership is being sought. However, it cannot be signed until the committee(s) have recorded their approval.
- 9.3 A SEA must be signed by the designated signatory (see 9.7).
- 9.4 A SEA can be signed any number of times up to a maximum of 5 years (during the lifetime of the approval). However, the norm would be to sign an agreement for 5 years (also see 7.8.)
- 9.5 A SEA cannot be signed beyond the existing approval expiry date.
- 9.6 A signed SEA must be in place [lodged with the Assistant Registrar (Placements)] before the activity constituting the exchange commences.
- 9.7 There are four main types of SEA²:
- 9.7.1 **Erasmus+ SEA (Key Action 1.03: an exchange with a partner based in an Erasmus “Programme” country).** Subject to the provisions of the College’s Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE)³ The SEA template is based on that provided by the Erasmus+ Programme but with additional clauses. The Assistant Registrar (Placements) acts as the College’s Erasmus+ Key Action 1 Co-ordinator. **The President has delegated the task of signing Erasmus+ Agreements to the Assistant Registrar (Placements).**
- 9.7.2 **Erasmus+ SEA (Key Action 1.07: an exchange with a partner based in an Erasmus “Partner” country).** Subject to the provisions of the College’s Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE)⁴ The SEA template is based on that provided by the Erasmus+ Programme but with additional clauses. The Assistant Registrar (Placements) acts as the College’s Erasmus+ Key Action 1 Co-ordinator. **The President has delegated the task of signing Erasmus+ Agreements to the Assistant Registrar (Placements).**

² SEAs do not apply to student mobility activities which are pursued on a network basis within the Erasmus + programmes; nor are they relevant to field trips or, ordinarily, work placements.

³ The ECHE was granted to the College in January 2014 for the period 2014-2020. The Erasmus Policy Statement which formed part of the College’s application for an ECHE is located with the ECHE at: <http://www.imperial.ac.uk/students/global-opportunities/erasmus/>

⁴ Ibid.

9.7.3 **Swiss-European Mobility Programme Agreements.** Signed between the College and specific Swiss institutions (currently ETH Zurich and EPF Lausanne) on the basis that partners agree to be subject to the spirit of the provisions of the College's ECHE. The SEA template is broadly based on that used for Erasmus+ SEAs. The Assistant Registrar (Placements) acts as the College's Co-ordinator for these links. **The President has delegated the task of signing Swiss-European Mobility Programme Agreements to the Assistant Registrar (Placements).**

9.7.4 **Other SEAs:** are typically lengthier documents which provide specific detail on how the student exchange will be managed. **Once finalised, such agreements will be presented by the Assistant Registrar (Placements) for signing by the Vice-Provost (Education). The President has delegated the task of signing non-Erasmus Agreements to the Vice-Provost (Education).**

9.8 Clauses within other types of agreement (for example Memoranda of Understanding [MOU]) which aspire to exchange students are not in themselves SEAs, and should not be used to manage student exchange activity.

9.9 Occasionally, a Student Exchange Partner might propose the establishment of an MOU alongside the SEA. The Assistant Registrar (Placements) can advise and liaise with the International Relations Office as necessary.

10. Situations which do not appear to fit the above procedure

Such situations may include undergraduate year abroad placements not based on an exchange; exchange activities operating on a network or consortium basis; short exchange visits of less than 2 weeks. The lead academic should refer to the Assistant Registrar (Placements) in the first instance for advice.

10.1 For undergraduate year abroad placements not based on an exchange a process identical to the one laid out here, but with adjustments made to Form A, would still be required to have the destination institute of higher education approved for the hosting on a non-reciprocal basis student(s). Departments should seek to avoid such non-reciprocal arrangements as there is no commitment on the part of the other institution to provide for and maintain study opportunities and safeguard academic standards for students of Imperial College. Therefore, a clear academic rationale is required about why this is the 'only' place a student could undertake this activity.

11. Register of Approved Student Exchanges; Reporting of Approved Student Exchanges; Depository of SEAs;

11.1 The Registry maintains a register of all formally approved student exchanges.

11.2 The originals of SEAs are held by Registry.

11.3 The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC) will receive an annual report on the number of active student exchange partners (and the individual exchange links by subject).

11.4 Committees report individual approvals and renewals to Senate via QAEC.

12. Review of Student Exchange Partners

This section is under review (August 2017)

13. Contacts

13.1 **Advice and assistance on this procedure and matters related to it can be obtained from the Assistant Registrar (Placements), Registry: <http://www.imperial.ac.uk/placements/contacts/>**

13.2 Guidance for lead academics on placement management, including the College's Placement Learning Policy, Good Practice and associated resources can be found at: <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/placements/information-for-imperial-college-staff/> and <http://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/governance/academic-governance/academic-policy/placement-learning/>

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