Travel Grants 2018-19: Erasmus Staff Mobility for Training
(European Commission’s Erasmus+ Programme)

“This is a ‘must do’ experience and I’m encouraging other members of my team to consider taking part”

Are you keen to develop your knowledge of the sector, to transfer/share knowledge, consider good practice? Perhaps broaden your awareness of relevant roles in a wider context? Are there skills training opportunities to take advantage of? If so, does a short job-shadow, networking, training or study visit to a relevant higher education institution or commercial organisation within Europe appeal? Crucially do you have the initiative and perhaps contacts to further this goal? Still Interested? Overleaf you can find brief profiles from recent participants.

Up to 20 grants are available to contribute towards travel and subsistence costs. Please note that this scheme is not impacted by the UK leaving the EU in March 2019.

- **Who**: Administrative and Academic staff. Preference to first-time participants and those in the earlier stages of their careers. All individuals employed by Imperial College London may apply (with the exception of those who are also registered students of the College).

- **Where**: Visits can take place in the EU (except UK) plus the wider EEA plus Turkey and FYR Macedonia. **Switzerland does not participate**. A visit will be to a single org in a single country but more complex visits can be considered.

- **When**: The visit should be planned to take place between 1 April and 30 September 2019, and should not involve the member of staff taking annual leave, except for any whole non-visit and travel days (e.g. for sightseeing purposes).

- **Length**: A visit should last a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 7 working days including travel to and from the host organisation (e.g. **two visit days with travel included; five visit days plus two separate travel days; seven days with travel on the first and final day**). Ordinarily the grant system will allow for one or two unfunded days between any outward and homeward travel days and the start/end of the visit itself. However, you can also travel on the same day as the start/end of the visit.

- **Exclusions**? Visits to pursue only research are ineligible, as is conference participation (including formal meetings of organisations). However, **university-based Erasmus labelled staff-training events** are not classified as a conference and neither are specific workshops or short courses. The College’s Erasmus+ KeyAction1 Co-ordinator will be the arbiter here.

- **Value of the grant**?
  - **Travel element**: calculated by distance from London (within Europe = minimum: €180; maximum: €530; most €275)
  - **Subsistence element** (can include local travel costs and any workshop/course fees): based on a daily rate set by the Erasmus+ programme for the country in which the visit takes place, with the range being €120-€180. For example, Croatia is €140, Germany is €160, France is €160 and Sweden is €180.

  A grant is calculated in Euros. An employee would sign a contract for a maximum grant value equal to 7 days, and the final value would be based on actual attendance, actual separate travel days & receipted expenditure. Expenses incurred by the Grant Holder’s department, e.g. travel and accommodation, can be included and where approved reimbursed by GL Journal. All personal expense claims on the part of the Grant Holder are also subject to the College’s Expenses Policy. Grants are ordinarily paid in sterling (using the appropriate College corporate exchange rates for the month a receipt is dated). Grant holders will be guided through the process of submitting their claim to Registry via MyExpenses. Participants may need to explore other means to cover costs beyond the scope of the grant.

Further detail is provided to successful applicants.

**How to be considered for a grant**: Apply by **Monday 11 February 2019** to [a.hawksworth@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:a.hawksworth@imperial.ac.uk) and, very importantly copy your application to your line manager. Applications will be considered by the Erasmus+ Key Action 1 Co-ordinator (Adrian Hawksworth, based in Registry) and a senior member of College staff.

**Your application: prepare a word document (MAXIMUM 2 A4 pages doubled spaced) with the following sections**:

- **Opening Statement**: Briefly describe your role and why both you & the role would benefit from this type of activity.

- **My proposed visit**: A statement outlining your potential visit (600 words max). Include, but not limited to:
  1. Name & location of the host organisation(s) plus provisional dates of participation. If you do not have a specific host organisation in mind please indicate two or three potential hosts explaining why they are relevant.
  2. Overall aim and objectives of the visit. **Please note that a programme is not required at this stage**.
  3. How you will plan your visit, including the extent to which you are known to your potential host organisation (although it is perfectly OK for you not to be known to them at this stage).
  4. Expected outcomes of your visit and how you would plan to disseminate them after your visit.
If your application is accepted you will be contacted with further details by 1 March. The nominated employee would have until the end of March 2019 to have provisionally arranged their visit and visits should be scheduled April to Sept 2019. If you were to plan to go in April then you would need to react quickly to that guidance. All participants would be required to agree a training plan (using a proforma) approved by your line manager and the host organisation.

For background information on the Erasmus+ scheme: http://ec.europa.eu/education/opportunities/higher-education/staff_en.htm (or email queries to Adrian Hawksworth: a.hawksworth@imperial.ac.uk)

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**Is this for me? Perspectives from some previous participants**

Perhaps you have been involved in hosting someone here at Imperial with similar aims, hence your interest in reading this. Indeed, you might end up hosting someone as a consequence of taking part yourself.

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**A member of the College’s Advancement Team visited the Alumni Relations team at Lund University**

I spent most of my trip with the central Alumni Relations team, discussing their overall alumni engagement strategy. As my role focuses mainly on events, I was particularly interested to learn how the team at Lund design and deliver their events programme, and was lucky enough to have the opportunity to attend an event the team were coordinating in Malmö. The team were also keen for me to share my experience planning Imperial’s flagship alumni event, Alumni Weekend, as they had used our webpages as inspiration when planning Lund’s Homecoming Weekend in 2017.

The Alumni Relations team also arranged for me to have meetings with colleagues across the University who work closely with alumni, including staff from the Business School, the Faculty of Engineering and the International Institute for Industrial Environmental Economics (IIIEE). This helped me to get a better understanding of how the faculties and research institutes develop their own alumni engagement programmes while also supporting the work of the central team. I had a particularly interesting discussion with the IIIEE about their new online alumni network – which uses the same platform as Imperial. It was very useful to share experiences of using this relatively new system, and the different ways we use the platform to connect with alumni.

I would highly recommend the Erasmus+ staff mobility scheme to anyone looking to gain a new perspective on their role. It was a great experience, and it was extremely useful for me to learn how the alumni team at Lund deliver such a varied events programme with limited resources. It has also given me the opportunity to expand my professional network, and I have already arranged for the Lund Alumni Relations to visit Imperial when they are in London for an event later in the year.

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**A Research Assistant in the School of Public Health attended a summer school in epidemiology and biostatistics in Italy**

Thanks to the Erasmus+ Staff Mobility Grant I was able to take part in the Summer School on Modern Methods in Biostatistics and Epidemiology. It is a long-standing annual course established and run by faculty from Karolinska Institutet, Harvard University and Bocconi University, with guest lecturers from other institutions. The summer school presented itself as a unique opportunity to obtain training on novel topics and practical skills in statistical analysis directly from the very leaders in their respective areas of expertise. There was a wide choice of courses, which allowed for tailoring the programme of my stay to my particular goals.

I took Mediation Analysis, and Joint Modelling of Longitudinal and Survival Data. The former topic is increasingly becoming a mainstay of data analysis in modern epidemiology as a means to improve causal inference. The second topic is a recent
development in medical statistics, and its inclusion in the summer school’s programme illustrates the cutting-edge approach to teaching of its organisers.

In my judgement, I gained the practical skills necessary to apply both approaches in my own statistical analyses. I will commence a doctoral degree soon, which will provide ample opportunities to do so, with the potential to improve the quality of my prospective thesis. Also, the newly acquired skills and knowledge have stimulated new research ideas, both for my PhD and my scientific career in the long run.

The summer school was also a favourable networking environment. Hosted in a small, secluded Italian village, it gathered several dozen participants, mostly of junior academic level. However, it is not only my peers who I had been able to establish contacts and exchange research ideas with, but also the faculty who were available for informal conversations throughout the day in between the classes.

Overall, participation in the Erasmus+ Staff Mobility has been an invaluable experience. I wish to sincerely thank all those involved in creating this opportunity.

**A Research Associate in the Dept of Materials visited a research institute in France**

Under the Erasmus+ scheme I visited [Institution] in France during April 2017. I was hosted by the group of Professor X. The visit allowed me to both meet and network with Professor X and his team. The group has been responsible for helping to establish a major new research field (organic bioelectronics), an area which I am starting to enter through my work at Imperial College. With limited experience and resources of this field at Imperial, the trip established both a baseline for potential future collaborations as well as direct practical training and understanding about how to run similar experiments back at Imperial. In addition, I also had the opportunity to meet and discuss with Professor Y, Head of Department, about her team’s research and latest findings. Specific training included: learning about how particular equipment and process choices are used to improve productivity and workflow; different approaches to sterilization in the context of organic bioelectronics; discussions about the theory of underlying physical mechanisms in these systems. I had the opportunity to present my own research and promote the work of the research group at Imperial through a departmental seminar. I will also be presenting the outcomes of the trip back to my research group at Imperial in order to stimulate other potential collaborations. Overall, the Erasmus+ grant allowed me to meet and talk to researchers, learning about relevant and useful ideas and concepts in their own lab. This allowed a level of training and understanding that would have been difficult to achieve without visiting in person.

**An International Relations Officer organised a networking trip to the University of Lund in Sweden**

I undertook an Erasmus study trip to Lund University in May 2017 in order to learn more about the university’s Africa strategy. Like Imperial, Lund University is a LERU (League of European Research Universities) partner institution and is the only one with an explicit Africa strategy.

I spent the majority of the trip having interesting discussions with the Africa coordinator from the International Relations Office at Lund. We talked about how the strategy had been formulated, what level of consultation had been done with academics and how it had been implemented across the institution. In addition to these discussions the Africa coordinator had set up a number of meetings with other teams across the university including with: The Faculty of Engineering International Office, the Africa recruitment officers, the alumni team, the student mobility team and the Commissioned Education team. All of these meetings helped to give a greater insight into how Lund works and everyone I met was incredibly knowledgeable and patient at answering my endless questions!

I found it fascinating how some of the challenges they are facing, both within the institution and in the general higher education policy environment are very similar to our own while others were completely different. I think experiences such as these are an excellent opportunity to gain greater understandings and new perspectives but are also a time to reflect on our own working practices. I had previously undertaken an organised staff training week however I found this individual ‘work shadowing’ approach was on this occasion more productive and beneficial to my work and I would thoroughly recommend it to others.
Finally, I was delighted to take part in the weekly ‘Fika’ breakfast on Friday morning where the whole division sits down together for a breakfast, supplied by the university.

**A Research Fellow in the School of Public Health visited a research institute in Austria**

Thanks to the Erasmus+ Staff Mobility Grant I participated in a visit to the Vienna Institute for Demography (Wittgenstein Centre for Human Capital). It was a great experience. The Institute for Demography has researchers with many overlapping interests to my own. For this reason I choose to propose working there in order to exchange ideas as well as to develop a network of contacts.

When I arrived I immediately joined a weekly seminar related to global migration. The seminar was a great way to meet everyone at the Institute and to introduce myself. It gave me the opportunity to see the range of topics, interests and international collaborations already in progress, and I felt at home there right away. During the remainder of the week I met with colleagues to discuss my own recent research and future plans, and I learned about their research. This was a perfect opportunity to get to know about work that is in progress and not yet published.

This opportunity has allowed me to develop links with the Vienna Institute of Demography, and to link my colleagues in the UK at various institutions with colleagues in Austria. I'm certain that we will continue to work and contribute to each other's work in the future. Such mobility has immeasurable value in terms of creating new understanding both scientifically and in a humanitarian sense as we come to understand our international colleagues and their reasons for conducting their work the way that they do, which is often similar to our own objectives but often different with respect to methods. I'm very grateful for this opportunity.

**A Clinical Trials Manager in the Dept of Surgery and Cancer travelled to a pharmaceutical company in Spain**

I had made early contact with the R&D Manager of the company I wished to visit to develop a programme and was now looking forward to working on a project at the company that aimed to introduce an Advanced Therapy Medicinal Product (ATMP) across Europe.

The R&D Manager welcomed me warmly and introduced me to the heads of the various project areas. I learned about the company's origins, its close collaborations with academic institutions and success in becoming a leader in the development and production of advanced sterile biologics and drugs. My scientific background was naturally a huge asset in understanding the biological properties of the medicinal product and manufacturing requirements.

The following day I travelled to Madrid for a meeting with the Market Analyst of the International Division who was developing a market access strategy for the product. We exchanged our knowledge and experiences on regulations and processes. In the following session we developed a schedule for the rest of the visit and I started to investigate legal requirements of the targeted countries and analysing the applicable laws of the UK, Germany, the Netherlands and France, drafting specific approval processes for the individual countries.

The newly-gained knowledge from the various meetings and the progress I had made closed a gap in my understanding regarding technology transfer processes in medical research, i.e. between innovative academic research in basic science and clinical trials. At the same time, my knowledge as Clinical Trial Manager and my previous experience working on Clinical Trials of an ATMP in the UK meant I was effectively contributing to the work of the company. This was very important to me as it demonstrated the mutual benefit from the Erasmus+ programme to both the hosting and visiting party. It was also great to get a chance to “talk science” with laboratory staff and to meet with the company’s Financial Controller to share experiences about the challenges of prospectively costing research activities and to learn about the future growth of the company. The visit came to a very satisfying conclusion when I delivered the results of my work on European regulations and application procedures for advanced therapies to the team.

During my stay I was also given the opportunity to see the company’s drug manufacturing, packaging and quality control facilities. I was very impressed by the state-of-the-art unit which was certainly a highlight of the visit.

My host company went out of their way to make this an incredibly stimulating and rewarding experience and am grateful for their hospitality and for having been granted this opportunity as part of the Erasmus+ programme.

Upon my return I presented a visit summary to my colleagues at Imperial to benefit present and future projects.
An edited version of a personal perspective for a one week Erasmus-labelled training course in Germany: ‘New Challenges and Developments in University Life’ undertaken by a staff member in the Student Recruitment and Outreach Team (a mix of workshops and job shadowing).

It appeared the perfect opportunity to tailor the training to my own needs as well as taking part in discussion groups with the other delegates. My aim was to gain a better understanding of marketing & student recruitment in European universities as well as improving my general understanding of Higher Education in the different European countries. In particular, my specialist group for job shadowing, the most attractive element of the week, was the Press Office and Marketing department with a colleague from Portugal where we were able to share experiences. Whilst the universities and HE industry are set up differently in each country – often with less resources than the UK – the challenges we face are often still the same but we often approached the same problems in different ways. The host team were very welcoming with both the training and social programmes allowing extensive opportunities to network with the other delegates in both formal and informal settings. I particularly enjoyed learning about the different cultures of the countries represented and had the opportunity to practise my Italian. The care that the host team put into the week was evident creating a warm, friendly environment. Their enjoyment in meeting us all and in representing their institution was very clear. When reporting back to my team the key lesson I learnt is that it is very easy to assume that HE institutions around the world run in the same way as the UK, with the same priorities, but this is not the case. To anyone attending an Erasmus+ training, I say go with an open mind – you will learn a lot but it might not be what you expect to learn and in that way the training benefits us all as it challenges our preconceptions.