

Erasmus Policy Statement

This policy statement was submitted as part of the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education application in 2013.

Buckingham is unique. It is the only independent university in the UK with a Royal Charter, and probably the smallest with around 2000 students (approx 1,300 on campus). Honours degrees are achieved in two intensive years of study with the normal academic year running from January to December. There are multiple entry points at other times of the year which consists of 4 terms. Class sizes are small, with a student:staff ratio 10.5:1 and the Oxbridge style tutorial groups are personalised. The university has a long history of recruiting and supporting international students so the strategy for internationalisation has been embedded in its ethos and culture since it was established. Our commitment to internationalisation and modernisation is reflected in the fact that students choose to study with us from over 90 different nationalities and comprise 50 percent of our student body.

The university was founded on the principles of classical liberalism, and has taught the ideals of free-thinking, liberal political thought, and maintained the independence of academia for over 30 years. www.buckingham.ac.uk/independence

The university seeks to enhance its reputation of working successfully with a range of national and international organisations. It follows that collaborative partnerships bring specific advantages, in that;

- a) Staff and students at the partner institutions benefit from the expertise and experience of staff at the university in devising, developing and enhancing high quality programmes of study
- b) The partner institutions benefit from the university's expertise in matters of quality assurance and enhancement
- c) The partner institutions are better able to develop and increase their higher education portfolio with the support of the university
- d) The university benefits from enhancing its reputation and providing opportunities for students at the partner institutions to progress at their university
- e) The university benefits from the enhanced profile and reputation internationally which accrue from overseas partnerships, and from the enhanced opportunities for international recruitment
- f) Both the university and the partner institutions benefit from increased opportunities to develop new programmes, forge new research links, to deliver programmes which are closely related to employability, to engage with wider communities and stakeholders

New collaborative partnerships will only be entered into with institutions which are financially stable and in which the financial agreements are satisfactory to the university. The university will continue

to be alert to further opportunities for suitable collaborative partnerships with institutions are compatible in terms of standing and reputation, and will monitor regularly the its current portfolio to ensure relevance and compatibility with the changing educational, business, regional, and political landscapes.

Under the Erasmus Charter, the university would primarily promote staff exchanges, with student exchanges being available only with selected partners. The University of Buckingham will consider partnerships with suitable educational institutions in all parts of the world. However, current partnerships are predominantly with institutions in mainland Europe. The university seeks to be actively involved with partnerships within developing nations. The university was instrumental in assisting with the setting up of the Sarajevo School of Science and Technology in 2004 for the provision of double awards. We are currently working with institutions in Kurdistan and Iraq to set up similar arrangements and intend to work with institutions in France and Spain.

Organisation and implementation of international co-operation projects will be undertaken by the university's Collaboration Department with institutional oversight provided by the Vice-Chancellor, Registrar and Senate via UCC. Staff and students participating in projects will be fully briefed prior to taking part in international co-operation projects and will be expected to provide feedback on their experience to their peers with 'best practice' disseminated through a systematic programme to all relevant departments and the university's committee structures.

Staff and students visiting the university will be provided with a full programme of activities to enable them to gain the maximum benefit from their visit. Their induction programmes will be specifically designed to ensure they are able to access all the support systems they require and obtain the full benefits from working and living in a different culture.

The university's strategy for growth for home and collaborative partnerships includes a variety of progression routes and recognition of prior learning and experience. Traditionally this has been embedded in the recruitment strategy. The university already provides targeted financial support for those who would otherwise not be in a position to benefit from the university's educational opportunities. The university has a low drop-out rate owing to its culture of personal attention, small group tutorials, personal tutor system and pastoral care. It has high levels of student satisfaction evidenced by the National Student Survey. The impact will be to enhance this provision and increase the sharing of cross-border research opportunities with collaborative partners.

The university is an independent institution but is reviewed by the QAA. It publishes Key Information Sets confirming excellent levels of graduate employability through the Destinations (DLHE) Survey. The programme will increase graduate employability through projects that improve mobility for students. Programmes with international partners are approved by the university in accordance with the UK Quality Code thereby ensuring that academic standards and quality of learning opportunities at partnership institutions are equivalent to those at the university. The university has a tradition of tailoring teaching and learning strategies to the needs of a multi-national student body and for excellence in teaching.

Participation will enhance international co-operation through the collaborations strategy, increasing the potential mobility of students. Mechanisms for recognising achievement of study undertaken abroad (ECTS) are already in place. It has the potential to enable recognition tools to be expanded potentially to include the Diploma Supplement and/or HEAR. The university's internationalisation strategy permits the sharing of teaching, research and innovation with international partners. Participation offers a further opportunity to expand this. Some collaborative partners have strong systems for cooperation with business through placement opportunities. The option of a 3 year degree offered through collaborative partners already offers increased mobility opportunities. The programme may result in more structured mobility including greater links between business and teaching, involvement of students in projects and staff mobility to increase knowledge and innovation exchange.

The university's effective system of governance is based on its Royal Charter awarded in 1983. This permits the university to offer high quality education, notwithstanding its independence and lack of state funding. The programme will enable it to expand its modernising influence in the international HE sphere to complement its current influence on UK Higher Education. The programme will enhance the autonomy of the university in the context of the 5 priorities.