

Belfast Metropolitan College Erasmus Policy Statement

Belfast Metropolitan College's international strategy is to seek opportunities through the development of sustainable global partnerships to develop lifelong learning opportunities for staff and students to meet economic and workforce needs, through raising skills and qualifications to address the needs of the local economy.

Partners will be chosen where there is close alignment with Belfast Met on:

- A strong commitment towards high quality, sustainable mobility of staff and students which is monitored and encourages continual development and improvement and is clearly related to linking education, scholarly activity with industry and work placement;
- Share a policy of internationalisation with a robust focus on the development of academic and vocational skills that enhance economic development;
- A promotion and communication strategy of Erasmus opportunities which is open and transparent and actively recruits from under- represented groups. This strategy will involve all partners within the organisation in particular student union and student groups;
- Viability template which meets the criteria for successful, sustainable partnerships and is clearly supported by resilient management systems and processes;
- Partner objectives, responsibilities and support facilities are set out clearly in submission documents;
- Clear understanding of the requirements to successfully offer short cycle and first cycle programmes including detailed learning programmes, assessment activity and methods of academic support;
- The provision of ECTS credits / Europass for all placement activity that is reported using a transcript of results in line with Erasmus expectations;
- A named individual as contact within the placement organisation who is suitable and relevant to the learning objective of the programme;
- A strategy of recognition of the mobility activities of staff and students which may include transnational sharing through good practice events, awards and graduations;
- Operate a system whereby all mobility activity is recognised as part of the duties of staff and a mandatory element of the programme of study for students;

- Support for staff and student includes language assistance such as classes or on-line development opportunities, individual link tutors for pastoral support, orientation events and socialisation such ongoing cultural integration within the wider college and student body
- Requirements for academic staff visiting students on placement is set out in advance

•An engagement in the development of integrated, transnational teaching activities particularly around module development emphasising vocational skills at a high and innovative level. Prepared to work with Belfast Met in maximising the opportunities for student and staff within the Erasmus programme and our Teaching and learning strategy which focuses on active learning through economic engagement based on innovative academic engagement
Through Erasmus Belfast Met will extended its extensive experience of working with European and non-European countries. It will extend involvement with:

- Trans-national projects including production of film, media and performing arts, engineering, science, sport, business, hospitality, renewables and health sciences;

- Student conferencing eg on engineering issues and development of knowledge transfer

- Trans-national learning resource and teaching strategy development including e-learning and information learning technology

Belfast Met will work with any suitable partner within the EU as part of Erasmus who meet the objectives and criteria of the college as well as those of the programme.

Objectives

- Develop the vocational skills of staff and students through the linkage of European businesses, enterprises and academic activity

- Quality, sustainable mobilities and placements for target groups

- Increased student exposure to diverse populations to develop transferable skills. This includes team working, soft-skills and improved understanding of the economic and social culture of the host country

- Develop teaching skills in the delivery of higher education within vocational areas. There is a strong interest in developing active learning strategies informed by e-learning technologies which enhance the student learning experience and promote independent learning

Target groups

Belfast Met is actively seeking opportunities for short cycle and first cycle students in science, engineering, sport, performing arts, health care, computing, hospitality, renewable technologies, media and business.

'Knowledge Triangle' partnerships in all vocational disciplines. Belfast Met specialises in industry and education training and development.

Staff development options in scholarly activities including research and teaching strategies. As Belfast Met wishes Erasmus to be open to all staff for continuing professional development all vocational curricular areas are part of the target group.

Organisation and implementation

- An annual college mobilities plan with clear objectives and committed resources is agreed by Belfast Met management.
- Erasmus agreements are approved by the Principal, managed and monitored by the Higher Education Coordinator who reports to the Senior Management Team.
- An internal college panel chaired by the Higher Education Coordinator and members from the International Development Unit, Students Union and academic staff assesses School bids based on the viability template.
- Partnership criteria reflect the headings within the viability template. To ensure that proposed partners are compatible academic and student profiles, timelines, linguistic proficiency, support for participants are related to potential projects. Contacts are established in line with the communication strategy and support lines through the Head of School for the staff and students involved.
- The template assesses the suitability of all prospective organisations, in the private and public sector, which takes placement students and offer staff mobility. This includes requirements for HEIs in a non-participating country.
- A named individual is appointed as contact for staff and student mobilities. They produce a time bounded action-plan to manage the project both internally and externally.
- Internal preparation includes student assessment requirements, pre-orientation sessions, language preparation, health and safety needs including insurance oversight of accommodation, travel, transfer and staff contact levels.
- External partner preparation includes ensuring staff and student induction and briefing on assessment needs.
- The named contact liaises with Belfast Met examination office for accurate accreditation and transcript of results.
- Following the visit the named person will manage Belfast Met evaluation process for the project including the management of dissemination of outcomes including staff and student development sessions.
- The process is part of the annual monitoring cycle

Impacts

- The number of higher education graduates will be increased as Erasmus facilitates the development of the number and type of placements with vocationally relevant skills especially in the hospitality, science and engineering disciplines where opportunities for placement in the Belfast Met catchment area is limited. Without Erasmus providing the possibility of placement opportunities offering additional higher education places will be difficult in the current economic climate.
- The College Curriculum Plan targets the development of teacher and researcher training at higher level skills to develop core transferable competences including:
 - complex vocational skills within realistic European work settings;
 - develop a range of concepts, knowledge and skills informed by the international strategy;
 - provide opportunities to develop graduates with an independent approach to study based on academic research and evidence informed by European settings
 - develop skills which facilitate engagement with complex and/or unpredictable situations
 - develop personal and team skills to work with others in unusual and diverse settings
- The College actively seek out opportunities for students to gain additional skills through study or training abroad by:
 - Specify, manage and monitor the expected additional skills within the partnership agreements;
 - Include additional skill attainment as part of student learning plans for example through language preparation, socialisation and orientation preparation and;
 - Relate all activity to the credit framework for the UK and the ECTS framework and include activities on transcript of results.
- The 'knowledge triangle' is central to Belfast Met's Knowledge Transfer Partnership, Curriculum assessment policy and Continuing Professional Development policies. The College has well established processes linking education, research and business within Northern Ireland, China, South Africa and USA and the EU through Comenius. Erasmus will extend these opportunities for higher education staff and students. This is a significant development of current college strategy to develop well-qualified graduates and enhance the economic prosperity of the region. This will assist in developing the economic base of Northern Ireland in a period of challenge by exposing staff and students to external influences both socially and within their academic fields thus enhancing and developing relevant skills and knowledge. Belfast Met has shown its commitment to the triangle by engagement with over 1500 business in Ireland. Erasmus will help to widen these horizons for the College.
- Belfast Met has effective governance and funding mechanisms to support excellence and these are audited regularly by external bodies and found to be substantial in terms of robustness and effectiveness.

The governance mechanisms cover: Internal audit; Budgetary processes; Adequacy of governing bodies and processes; and Management of processes including externally funded projects.