

Policy Statement on Study Abroad

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Policy Statement on Study Abroad supports the University Strategy, particularly the aim to provide education that empowers, and the commitment to internationalism.
- 1.2. Study abroad provides students with valuable opportunities to develop global perspectives and awareness, enhances employability, and assists students in developing a range of qualities and skills, including in cross-cultural communication. Student exchanges can reinforce existing teaching and research collaborations and assist in building strategic and

Document Control

Policy Owner(s): **SAAA - Academic Quality / Global Opportunities**

Approval Committee: **UTC**

Version: **10/2023**

Next Review Date: **06/2024**



sustainable research relationships whilst strengthening the University's global profile. Incoming exchange students increase the diversity of the student body, bring different perspectives, and contribute to the internationalism of the University.

2. Scope

- 2.1. This policy statement covers periods of study at other higher education institutions outside the UK (including CITY College, University of York Europe Campus) where these study periods form part of University of York programmes. In the context of this policy, study abroad refers to either:
 - 2.1.1. Replacement credit (whereby part of a York programme, either a semester or a year, is replaced with study at an overseas institution) or;
 - 2.1.2. Additional credit (lengthening the normal period of study for that programme and leading to a specific award recognising the time spent on study abroad).
- 2.2. This policy should be read in conjunction with [Study Abroad Schemes and Visiting Student Programme: Guidelines on Responsibilities \(Annex 1\)](#) and [Procedure for Establishing a Programme 'with a year abroad' \(Annex 2\)](#).
- 2.3. This policy is applicable as appropriate to research degree students who are involved in a formal exchange with another institution (i.e. in instances where they become a visiting student of another institution, but remain solely registered on a York award).
- 2.4. Information on alternative forms of collaboration with other higher education institutions is available on the [Collaborative Provision](#) webpage, whilst work placements (including those overseas) are addressed in the [Policy Statement on Work-Based Learning \(WBL\)](#).
- 2.5. This document does not directly relate to procedures for visiting students whilst at York; please refer to the [Policy Statement on Visiting Students](#). Policy on the assessment of visiting students is set out in the University's [Guide to Assessment, Standards, Marking and Feedback](#).

3. Responsibilities

- 3.1. This policy will inform staff involved in study abroad activities on the requirements of each party involved, although it is advisable to direct all enquiries regarding the development of study abroad programmes in the first instance to Global Opportunities.
- 3.2. The University
 - 3.2.1. The University is responsible for the academic standards and quality of all awards made in its name, including those involving study abroad (whether this takes place as replacement or additional credit).
 - 3.2.2. The University will demonstrate and review its responsibilities for study abroad opportunities through University Teaching Committee (UTC), Faculty Learning and

Teaching Groups (FLTG) and Student Experience Operations Group, including by Chair's Action decisions.

3.3. Global Opportunities

3.3.1. Global Opportunities (GO):

- 3.3.1.1. shall be the hub for managing all study abroad projects. GO is committed to developing university-wide programmes as well as offering specialist resources to each faculty.
- 3.3.1.2. advise and support the development and implementation of international student mobility programmes and funding mechanisms such as the Turing Scheme, as well as activities related to individual learning outcomes such as field trips and electives.
- 3.3.1.3. offer a range of opportunities for students to gain valuable international experience, alongside credit-bearing study abroad. For example, through summer schools organised by international partner universities and GO's own International Study Centres.
- 3.3.1.4. provide funding and support for students who intend to travel whilst participating in independent projects. Although such projects are extra-curricular, they are strategically aligned programmes enabling students to develop skills and gain inter-cultural experience to articulate global competencies sought after by graduate employers.

3.4. Participating Individual Schools, Departments or Faculties

3.4.1. Schools, departments and faculties:

- 3.4.1.1. are strongly encouraged to provide students with opportunities to undertake study abroad.
- 3.4.1.2. are responsible for discussing with GO, prior to seeking formal University approval for new study abroad programmes, the capacity to provide study abroad exchange places from existing or new school, departmental or university partnerships with overseas institutions.
- 3.4.1.3. communicate with GO to consider the variation in relative responsibility, taking into account different factors depending on the scheme or project involved. Noting in particular:
 - the specific considerations for exchanges involving replacement credit compared to those involving additional credit;
 - the differences for exchange agreements with partner universities that are university-wide (between the University and another university) and those at faculty, multi-department or individual

departmental level and another department or group of departments at a partner university.

- that exchanges can be developed as an individually brokered exchange with a partner university overseas.

- 3.4.2. Once a school or departmental exchange agreement has been signed, the proposer should exchange departmental and institutional literature with the new partner, and establish application deadlines and procedures. GO will oversee the incoming visiting student application process and contact the new partner with instructions as appropriate.
- 3.4.3. Schools and departments should promote exchange opportunities to students. Each school and department as a whole should take 'ownership' of the exchange: that is to say, exchanges should not be reliant on personal links between an individual member of staff and the partner institution. Notwithstanding, it is important that the school or department appoint a Departmental International Officer in order to liaise with students and work with Global Opportunities.

4. Programme Approval

- 4.1. The University is committed under consumer protection regulations to provide the advertised programme of study a student enrolls onto, including the provision of study abroad opportunities that are a named part of the programme. The programme approval process will take into account, advised by GO, the potential to provide the required number of study abroad places through new or existing exchange partnerships.
- 4.2. All partnerships with other institutions for the purposes of study abroad should be developed through the Global Opportunities, and approved prior to any exchange of students taking place (see section 6).
- 4.3. The following should be considered as part of the University's [Programme Approval Process](#) and [Modification Policy](#):
- 4.3.1. The University, its schools, departments and faculties (as appropriate) must be satisfied that study abroad makes a clear, defined contribution to programme learning outcomes, that specific study abroad opportunities (and thus partner institutions) can provide appropriate opportunities to achieve those outcomes, and are of sufficient quality so as to protect the student experience.
- 4.3.2. Where study abroad is an integral part of a programme of study, schools and departments should ensure that the overall programme outcomes include appropriate specific outcomes relating to the period of study abroad, which are appropriately assessed with marks incorporated into the final degree classification as appropriate (this can be on a pass/ fail basis for additional years: see section 5.2.1). These outcomes should be reflected in the relevant programme

documentation as part of the programme approval process, with said programme documentation provided to students.

4.4. Assessment

- 4.4.1. Schools and departments should be clear on how grades gained by students at partner institutions will be converted to marks on the University's scale. Where available, the standard, institution-wide grade conversion tables should be used for this purpose¹.
- 4.4.2. Students should be made aware that reassessment opportunities cannot be guaranteed in relation to study abroad: partner institutions may not offer such opportunities and this cannot be enforced. There is accordingly no automatic right to reassessment.
- 4.4.3. Progression decisions should take place prior to a student embarking on any period of study abroad. Students who fail the preceding or 'normal' credit-load stage (taking into account the outcome of any reassessment) will not be allowed to embark on study abroad². Schools and departments should be aware that partner institutions commonly set minimum standards of academic achievement (for instance, a certain average mark in the preceding year).
- 4.4.4. Study abroad should be monitored through the University's regular quality assurance monitoring and enhancement procedures. Appropriate use should be made of external examiners in scrutinising marks gained whilst studying abroad, noting that (as module details will not be available to external examiners), their role is likely to be limited for practical reasons to scrutiny of the processes used to convert marks from partner institutions for the purposes of progression or classification.

5. Learning Agreement

5.1. All Study Abroad agreements

- 5.1.1. Before a York student embarks on an exchange (whether involving additional or replacement credit), the sending school or department and the student should agree a programme of study to be undertaken at the partner institution (i.e. which modules/ courses), to be documented in a learning agreement. This should be authorised by the Departmental International Officer.

¹ Information about these tables is available on the [Study Abroad Website](#). Guidance on establishing and amending grade conversion tables is available in the [Guide to Assessment, Standards, Marking and Feedback](#).

² See section 2.4 of [Undergraduate Programme Design Framework 2023/24](#) 2023/24 onwards.

- 5.1.2. Learning agreements should be flexible and able to evolve in dialogue with the student, as for practical reasons such as timetabling, students and staff often do not know the details of the module diet available to them until arrival at the partner institution.

5.2. Study Abroad Involving Replacement Credit

- 5.2.1. When study abroad involves a process of credit transfer, the outgoing York student imports credit from the partner institution to count towards their York degree, replacing the credit they would have taken at York had they not undertaken study abroad. In effect, the participating York school or department agrees that the students' learning undertaken at the partner institution is equivalent to that they would have undertaken at York. In developing new partnerships, and in drawing up learning agreements with students, the following factors are relevant:

- 5.2.1.1. **Credit level:** sending schools and departments should assure themselves that the outgoing student will take modules/ courses of a level appropriate to their stage of study at York, by reference to learning outcomes and any credit frameworks (rather than just subject content) if these are available. If departments are unsure about this, they should contact Global Opportunities to source information.
- 5.2.1.2. **Credit volume:** schools and departments should assure themselves that the course/ credit load to be undertaken at the partner institution is equivalent to the missed credits at York (undergraduate degrees at York operate on the basis of 120 credits per stage) so that the student is able to gain the full credit needed to progress from their stage at York. GO will provide guidance on the number of credits constituting an equivalent full credit load at partner institutions.
- 5.2.1.3. **Subject:** in drawing up learning agreements with outgoing students, schools and departments should:
- assure themselves that the study to be undertaken at the partner institution will facilitate the student achieving the overall York programme learning outcomes;
 - pay particular attention to core modules, to ensure as far as possible that the student will study modules/ courses with commensurate outcomes at the partner institution;
 - consider the implications of the period of study abroad for the student's future study at York, paying particular attention to modules the student will miss at York that are prerequisites for later modules in the programme. Typically, the student will either need to take modules/ courses with commensurate outcomes whilst abroad, or be

made aware that, by missing the relevant York pre-requisites, choice will be narrowed later in the programme. The school or department should ensure that the student will have a viable route through the programme;

- consider the appropriateness of the mode(s) of assessment at the partner institution;
- consider, and ensure that the outgoing student is aware of, any implications of the period of study abroad in relation to the requirements for accreditation/ recognition from relevant Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies.

5.2.1.4. **Curriculum Mapping:** the school or department should map its curriculum against that of the partner institution to take into consideration the above factors (noting that, for practical reasons, it may not be possible for the student to follow a precise module diet set out in advance). This will be an important factor in ensuring a sufficient number of students come to York to make a reciprocal exchange viable.

5.2.2. Study abroad involving replacement credit will be reflected via student transcripts.

5.3. Study Abroad for Additional Credit

5.3.1. Study abroad undertaken for additional credit (i.e. an additional year) should be reflected in a distinctive programme title, to be recognised on degree certificates (see the policy on programme titles within the [Institutional Framework for Taught Programme Design](#) for 2023/24 onwards).

5.3.2. Schools and departments need to be clear on how study abroad for additional credit will be assessed for the University's purposes:

5.3.2.1. whether this will be on a pass/ fail basis;

5.3.2.2. whether it will be given marks on the University's scale and incorporated into final degree classifications and, if so, in what proportion.

Students should be made aware of such arrangements, as this may have implications for their decisions regarding study abroad. To ensure equity, the same arrangement should be used for all study abroad for additional credit on the same programme.

5.3.3. Where a student receives an outright fail mark for a period of study abroad taken as additional credit, they should be permitted to progress on the standard bachelors or integrated masters programme. Marks for the failed credit will

appear on the student's transcript but will not contribute to the calculation of the final award.

- 5.3.4. In the event that a school or department wishes to establish a new variant of an existing programme 'with a year abroad' (e.g. 3 +1 years, where the 3 year standard variant already exists and there are no other changes), this will require approval by the relevant Faculty Learning and Teaching Group, according to the [Procedure for Establishing a Programme 'with a year abroad' \(Annex 2\)](#) of this document.
- 5.3.5. In drawing up learning agreements with students undertaking study abroad for additional credit, the process is necessarily different (and lighter-touch) to that for replacement credit. Schools and departments should nevertheless consider the following factors:

5.3.5.1. **Credit level:** sending schools and departments should assure themselves that the outgoing student will take modules/ courses of a level appropriate to their stage of study at York, by reference to learning outcomes and any credit frameworks (rather than just subject content) if these are available. If departments are unsure about this, they should contact Global Opportunities to source information.

5.3.5.2. **Credit volume:** an additional year is equivalent to 120 York credits. Schools and departments should ensure that the student undertakes a volume/ credit load of study equivalent to this amount.

5.3.5.3. **Subject:** Schools and departments should consider if they wish to specify that some or all study at the partner should be in the student's subject(s) at York, noting however that there may be limitations on the amount of credit a student can take in a particular subject imposed by certain partner institutions.

- 5.3.6. The above factors are collectively especially important where a school or department has agreed that marks gained whilst on study abroad for additional credit should 'count' for the purposes of York degree classification.

5.3.7. Research student exchange agreements

- 5.3.8. Research student exchange agreements must be approved by the Chair of York Graduate Research School's PGR Policies and Programmes Committee (PPPC). Instances where research degree students visit other institutions in the ordinary course of their research are not covered by this policy and are addressed under the University's standard insurance arrangements. More formal collaborations, leading to a research degree student receiving a joint or double award with another institution, are addressed on the [Collaborative Provision webpage](#).

6. Approval of Study Abroad Partner

6.1. Establishing an exchange agreement

- 6.1.1. The University encourages schools, departments and faculties to establish bilateral agreements with partner institutions overseas where these will contribute to the school or department's overall objectives in teaching and learning; are suitable in providing a good match for York in quality and standing; and where the experience of students at the partner institution will be appropriate.
- 6.1.2. It is important that schools and departments commit to working closely with Global Opportunities to make the agreement work in practice. Schools or departments should nominate a member of staff to coordinate the exchange, to promote it within the school or department, and to provide advice and guidance to students who might wish to participate.
- 6.1.3. Schools and departments must discuss any potential exchange agreement with a new study abroad partner with Global Opportunities in the first instance.
- 6.1.4. All partnerships with other higher education institutions for the purposes of study abroad should be approved in advance of any exchange of students taking place. Agreements should first be considered by the relevant Board of Studies, which should take a decision on whether to recommend the proposed partnership for approval.
- 6.1.5. Agreements with partner institutions should be made for set periods; indefinite agreements should not be made. If the school, department or University wishes to extend an agreement, the suitability of the proposed partner and success of the exchange should be reviewed (taking into account the steps and factors articulated section 6.3.1 - 6.3.2., and feedback from students in the student reports submitted after completion of exchanges).
- 6.1.6. GO will work with schools, departments and faculties to develop bespoke versions of the standard templates for agreements with partner institutions. Templates provided by partner institutions may also be used provided that Global Opportunities has reviewed them and confirmed that they are equivalent in terms and conditions to York's template.
- 6.1.7. Authority to approve all taught exchange agreements (whether at institution, multi-department or individual department level) rests with the University Teaching Committee (UTC), usually by chair's action.

6.2. Formalising an exchange agreement

- 6.2.1. Following approval at UTC, a formal agreement should be established for any exchange. This requires the approval of the PVC for Teaching, Learning and Students, and should be signed by both parties before an exchange commences.
- 6.2.2. Global Opportunities should be involved in drafting agreements/ considering agreements prepared by partner institutions.
- 6.2.3. Proposals to establish agreements with partner institutions should be developed with reference to this policy statement, guidance from GO and by using the associated GO checklist form (available in the online [Staff Mobility Toolkit](#), Development of Exchanges tab).

6.3. Departmental approval

- 6.3.1. **Academic considerations** to be taken into account when developing partnerships include:
 - 6.3.1.1. the academic quality of the proposed partner institution (for instance, by reference to rankings, teaching and research quality, international reputation);
 - 6.3.1.2. the suitability of the partner institution's curricula and procedures. Particularly for exchanges designed to replace, rather than additionally supplement, credit at York, the school or department will need to carefully think through the compatibility of the partner institution's courses and structures. The school or department should obtain sufficient understanding of the partner institution's curriculum, calendar, credit structures, assessment and grade reporting procedures to be confident in recommending the exchange to its students;
 - 6.3.1.3. being confident in the quality and integrity of the proposed partner's arrangements for assessment and credit transfer;
 - 6.3.1.4. language issues, including any requirements the partner institution might have on language competence, and how students will be prepared and supported for study and day-to-day life using another language (as relevant) prior to departure;
 - 6.3.1.5. that facilities, resources and student support arrangements at the proposed partner institution are appropriate and adequate, including support arrangements for disabled students and those with particular needs;
 - 6.3.1.6. the ability of the proposed partner institution to provide an appropriate and safe working environment, taking into account risks students might face by being resident in the host country;

- 6.3.1.7. the higher education structures, methods and assumptions that operate in the partner institution/ host country.
- 6.3.2. **Practical considerations** to be taken into account when developing partnerships include:
 - 6.3.2.1. any barriers that may be posed by the legal, regulatory, political, ethical and cultural context of the host country;
 - 6.3.2.2. the legal status of the proposed partner institution, and its relationship with the state in which it is located;
 - 6.3.2.3. any reputational risks that might arise from a relationship with the proposed partner (for instance, in relation to their business or ethical interests);
 - 6.3.2.4. the viability of the exchange, taking into account likely demand from students. One useful indicator of demand is the record of participation of the school or department's students in existing study exchanges. The school or department should consider if it can achieve an equal balance between incoming and outgoing students;
 - 6.3.2.5. for replacement exchanges, if the exchange is for less than a full academic year, the school or department should consider if this is viable in the context of the structures of the academic year at the two institutions;
 - 6.3.2.6. issues of intercultural awareness; day-to-day culture and practice (this could involve, for instance, referring students to Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office advice);
 - 6.3.2.7. financial implications for York students participating in the exchange, including the likely accommodation and living costs, as lack of funds is a significant barrier to exchanges. Second-year students may be 'locked in' to private accommodation contracts and thus may need to pay twice for accommodation;
 - 6.3.2.8. the expectations of the partner in terms of the modules/ subjects that students will wish to study at York;
 - 6.3.2.9. the administrative impact of the exchange on the school or department, and decisions about how and where this will be handled. Issues include the handling of incoming and outgoing applications and advice to incoming and outgoing students. In the case of the latter, responsibility for the handling of particular matters such as credit transfer needs to be clearly defined. There may be separate academic and administrative responsibilities handled by different people in the school or department. Schools or departments should ensure that they have sufficient resources and expertise to handle the impact of the exchange;

- 6.3.2.10. **site assessment:** normally student exchange agreement should not be entered into without a site visit having taken place (see section 9.6). Some of the points in section 6.3.1 - 6.3.2. and set out in the [New Reciprocal Student Exchange Agreement Checklist](#) can be covered in discussions at distance, but a site visit may be necessary for others;
- 6.3.2.11. **if another school or department covering the same subject already has an approved arrangement** with the proposed provider, schools and departments may not need to undertake the full vetting process. This is most likely to be relevant in the case of combined programmes/ teaching units. However, in such cases the academic suitability of the partner's curriculum will still need to be assessed; the partner approved by the relevant Board of Studies and UTC, and an agreement drawn up. All such cases should thus still be routed through Global Opportunities.

6.4. Risk Assessment

- 6.4.1. In force majeure situations (e.g. severe civil unrest or natural disaster), depending on when the event occurs, the University of York may require students to terminate their placement early or withdraw them before starting their time abroad. In such circumstances, the University of York will make reasonable attempts to find alternative arrangements to allow the student to continue study.
- 6.4.2. If students do not wish to take up an alternative placement, they may need to take a Leave of Absence until the beginning of the next academic year when they can continue their studies at the University of York. If a student is undertaking a replacement credit exchange, this may require them to repeat some or all of the period that was planned abroad.

7. Record Keeping

- 7.1. GO will maintain clear records of all partner institutions with whom the University (or its schools/ departments) have entered into UTC approved exchange agreements, including the associated contracts.
- 7.2. Schools and departments must keep accurate records of exchange documents and all correspondence regarding the exchange (noting however that Global Opportunities is the ultimate repository for copies of contracts).

8. Creating a Shared Understanding

- 8.1. For school and departmental exchanges, once an agreement has been signed the proposer should exchange departmental and institutional literature with the new partner, and establish application deadlines and procedures. GO will oversee the incoming visiting student application process and contact the new partner with instructions as appropriate.
- 8.2. Schools and departments should promote the new exchange opportunity to students. Each school and department as a whole should take collective 'ownership' of the exchange; exchanges should not be reliant on personal links between an individual and the partner institution. Notwithstanding, it is important that the school or department assigns a Departmental International Officer to liaise with students and work with GO.

9. Student Information and Support

- 9.1. The University (through GO, other professional services and academic schools/ departments) will work to ensure that students undertaking an exchange are prepared and supplied with relevant and timely information, support and guidance prior to, during and after study abroad. In addition to the learning agreement (section 5), this will include:
 - 9.1.1. information on students' rights and responsibilities during study abroad, including the complaints process ([\(Procedure for Establishing a Programme 'with a year abroad' \(Annex 2\)](#) for more information);
 - 9.1.2. information on student support services whilst abroad, including local sources of support;
 - 9.1.3. information on processes of assessment, rules on progression, grade conversion and credit transfer.
- 9.2. Schools and departments should support students if their circumstances change and they are no longer able to achieve the assessed outcomes in the agreed setting.
- 9.3. **Equality and diversity** issues for students should be considered, noting particularly that:
 - 9.3.1. in discussion with the student, study abroad partners will need clear information on student needs and how or whether those needs can be met;
 - 9.3.2. the University needs to obtain a student's permission to disclose a disability to the partner University.
- 9.4. **Supervisory arrangements** in place for students whilst at York should continue in an agreed form during a period of study abroad. Students should be encouraged to keep in contact with their supervisors by email/telephone/letter/VLE/virtual meeting. Agreement should be reached with the student before departure on any requirements regarding the frequency of communications. These arrangements should be supplemented by the Departmental International Officer where appropriate.

- 9.5. **Additional attendance monitoring** is required during study abroad for international students studying at the University on a Student Visa. These are set out in the [Student Academic Engagement and Wellbeing Policy](#).
- 9.6. **Site visits** are required during the lifecycle of the study abroad agreement in order to evaluate quality of learning, logistical and pastoral support and to maintain good partner relations. Site visits can be carried out by a member of academic or professional services staff provided that they are briefed on the requirements of the visit. GO should be made aware of any site visit and its outcomes, and funding to support site visits (contribution to expenses) if available, may be claimed through GO. GO staff will contact departments if they are visiting countries where site visits may be incorporated into their schedules.
- 9.7. **Additional Information** to the advice available from the Global Opportunities can be found on [Student Support Services Webpages](#). Furthermore, various bodies produce guidance which may assist in the development of placement information. The list below is not exhaustive but provides some links to specific sites which could be of use:
- [International Unit of UUK](#);
 - [The British Council](#);
 - [Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office](#) (FCDO);
 - [British Universities Transatlantic Exchange Association](#) (BUTEX);
 - [UKCISA: UK Council for International Student Affairs](#);
 - [Caroline's Rainbow Foundation](#) (student focused travel advice).

10. Documentation and Links

- 10.1. [A University for Public Good: A strategy for the University of York to 2030](#)
- 10.2. [Collaborative Provision: Undergraduate, Taught Postgraduate and Postgraduate Research Programmes](#)
- 10.3. [Policy Statement on Work-Based Learning \(WBL\)](#)
- 10.4. [Policy Statement on Visiting Students](#)
- 10.5. [Guide to Assessment, Standards, Marking and Feedback](#)
- 10.6. [Programme Approval Process](#)
- 10.7. [Modification Policy](#)
- 10.8. [Study Abroad Website](#)
- 10.9. [Institutional Framework for Taught Programme Design](#)
- 10.10. [Undergraduate Programme Design Framework 2023/24](#)
- 10.11. [Staff Mobility Toolkit](#) (York IT login required)
- 10.12. [New Reciprocal Student Exchange Agreement Checklist](#) (York IT login required)
- 10.13. [Procedure for Establishing a Programme 'with a year abroad' \(Annex 2\)](#)
- 10.14. [Study Abroad Schemes and Visiting Student Programme: Guidelines on Responsibilities \(Annex 1\)](#)
- 10.15. [Student Academic Engagement and Wellbeing Policy](#)
- 10.16. [Student Support Services Webpage](#)