

## **ERASMUS**

European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of  
University Students

### **Higher Education Student Finance in Wales 2013/14 Academic Year**

For the attention of assessment officers and managers

August 2013

Dear Colleague

#### **HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENT SUPPORT IN WALES 2013/14: ERASMUS**

Attached is guidance for assessors on HE Student Support for students who are participating in the ERASMUS scheme.

This guidance is designed to assist with the interpretation of the Student Support Regulations as they stand at the time of publication. It does not cover every aspect of student support nor does it constitute legal advice. Whilst every endeavour has been made to ensure the information contained is correct at the time of publication, no liability is accepted with regard to the contents. The Education (Student Support) (Wales) Regulations 2012 (the "Regulations") are the legal basis of the student support arrangements for the academic year 2013/14. In the event of anomalies between this guidance and the Regulations, the Regulations prevail. Please note the Regulations are subject to amendment.

#### ENQUIRIES

If you have any queries on this guidance, please contact:

Higher Education Division  
Welsh Government

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## **Introduction**

1. This guidance looks at the particular eligibility criteria for students who are undertaking a period abroad as part of their course under the ERASMUS scheme, either on a study placement, a work placement, or a combined work and study placement.
2. The main eligibility criteria can be found in the 2013/14 guidance on 'Assessing Eligibility'.
3. Portal guidance relating to ERASMUS study and work placements can be found in the Administration section of this chapter.

## **Definitions**

4. Student cohorts entering higher education and the Erasmus scheme:
  - 'Old system students' refer to those who started their studies before 1 September 2006;
  - 'Continuing new system' students (including 2010 and 2011 cohort but **not** 2012 cohort) are students entering higher education up to and including academic year 2011/12;
  - New '2012 & 2013 cohort' students are students entering higher education thereafter (from academic year 2012/13 onwards);
  - 'ERASMUS rules' referring to decisions made by the European Union (EU) on the operation of the ERASMUS scheme which may be found in the British Council's 2013/14 Operation Handbook and associated Annexes which can be found at: <http://www.britishcouncil.org/erasmus-institution-funding.htm>
  - 'Regulations' refer to the Education (Student Support) (Wales) Regulations 2012.

## **Policy**

### **What is ERASMUS?**

5. ERASMUS (European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) is the higher education strand of the Lifelong Learning European Education programme funded by the European Commission. The Erasmus scheme for student study and work placements is administered by the UK National Authority, the British Council. The main aim of Erasmus is to promote the mobility of students, teachers and academic staff throughout Europe through a system of partnerships between universities and colleges in the 33 countries currently participating in the scheme. All EU and certain non-EU countries are included in the ERASMUS scheme; a full list of the countries taking part can be found at Annex 1.
6. ERASMUS allows students to participate in study placements, work placements, or combined work and study placements abroad. The scheme works on the basis that the ERASMUS student must be enrolled at a higher education institution which holds an ERASMUS University Charter (EUC), or in the case of work placements, an Extended Erasmus University Charter (EEUC). ERASMUS placements abroad last from a minimum of three months to a full academic year (defined in the British Council's 2013/14

Operational Handbook as at least 24 weeks excluding weekends and the usual holidays). Students are not eligible for ERASMUS study placements in the first year of study (these placements can take place in any year of study after that), but are eligible for ERASMUS work placements in the first year of study. LAs should note that students may be allowed more than one ERASMUS grant during a course (see page 18 of the Operational Handbook). It is participation in ERASMUS that is the overriding factor for determining the amount of statutory financial support received by the student, not the type of ERASMUS placement that the student undertakes.

### **Work placements under the ERASMUS scheme**

7. ERASMUS work placements have to be recognised by the HEI as contributing to the final qualification. This is because the training agreement between a student, an HEI and a host enterprise abroad sets out the specific programme for the student to complete; therefore the ERASMUS work placement is contained within a three or four year undergraduate course. Students do not stay in higher education for additional time like students on sandwich placements; ERASMUS work placements are not sandwich placements. Students on an Erasmus scheme can participate in study placements, work placements or a combination of both.

### **Fee support for ERASMUS students**

#### **Full-year ERASMUS**

8. The rules of the scheme are such that students cannot be charged 2013/14 tuition fees by the receiving institution. Please refer to the Academic Fees and Fee Waivers sections on page 12 of the British Council's 2013/14 Operational Handbook.
9. A tuition fee waiver, or concession, has been available for a number of years for UK students who go abroad on ERASMUS for a full academic year ('ERASMUS year'). The fee waiver scheme, which compensates higher education institutions for loss of income, has been operated in each of the devolved administrations, and will continue to operate in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland as in previous years. As the fee waiver operates on an institutional basis, students who were ordinarily resident in Wales, studying at higher education institutions in England, Scotland or Northern Ireland, and who went abroad on ERASMUS for a full academic year, were not charged fees for this year.
10. In Wales, 2011/12 was the final year that there was a specific allocation for the ERASMUS fee-waiver. For 2012/13 and 2013/14, higher education institutions in Wales may, at their own discretion, use funding from the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales or their institutional fee income to provide fee support for Erasmus students. Higher education institutions in Wales are aware that their students who go abroad on ERASMUS for a full academic year are not eligible for statutory fee support. **Therefore it is expected that such students should not be required to make a contribution towards their tuition fees during their ERASMUS year.**
11. **Old-system** students are not eligible for an assessed grant for fee support for any academic year in which they are participating in the ERASMUS scheme and all the periods of study or work during that year at an institution outside the United Kingdom. Similarly, **'new system' students (all cohorts)** are not eligible for a tuition fee loan or fee grant. This is the case regardless of the subject of study or type of ERASMUS placement. **(Tuition fee loan – Regulation 21(2)(a). Fee grant – Regulation 16(3) for 'old-system' students, and regulations 19(2)(a) and 20(2) for 'new system' students**

**(all cohorts)**). A '2012 cohort' accelerated graduate entry student would not be eligible for an accelerated graduate entry fee loan in respect of an academic year which is an Erasmus year (regulation 24B (2)).

12. The tuition fee waiver, or concession, is not available to all students who take part in the ERASMUS scheme. **Students to whom the tuition fee waiver for the ERASMUS year may apply are:**
- **'old system'** students who, but for their full year on ERASMUS, would otherwise be eligible for a grant for fees under **regulation 16** of the student support regulations;
  - **'old system'** students who, but for their full year on ERASMUS, would otherwise be eligible for a grant for fees under **regulation 16** but are liable for 100% contribution towards their tuition fees under the income assessment contribution; **and**
  - **'new system' (all cohorts) students who, but for their full year on ERASMUS, would otherwise be eligible for a tuition fee loan under regulation 21 of the student support regulations.**

**Students for whom the tuition fee waiver does not apply:**

- **'old system'** students who are not eligible for a grant for tuition fees under **regulation 16 and new system students (all cohorts) who are not eligible for a tuition fee loan**, because of previous study;
- students who are not eligible for any student support under the student support regulations, for example because they do not meet the residence criteria.

The fees for these students are set by institutions themselves and it is for the institution concerned to determine what fees a student in this situation should pay

### **Part-year ERASMUS**

13. The ERASMUS tuition fee waiver only applies to eligible students who spend a full academic year abroad under the ERASMUS scheme (including any periods of work experience under the scheme and regardless of the subject of study). The definition of a complete academic year for this purpose (defined on page 12 of the British Council's 2013/14 Operational Handbook) is at least 24 weeks (excluding weekends and the usual holidays).
14. Within the rules of the ERASMUS scheme (defined in the British Council's 2013/14 Operational Handbook), students who spend a year abroad work placement which spans two academic years are not eligible for the tuition fee waiver. Although rare, if this occurs, the student must complete the ERASMUS work placement by 31 October 2014 (page 22 of the British Council's Handbook).
- **'Old system'** students who spend a work placement year abroad which spans two academic years may be charged up to **£1,380 in their first academic year and £680** in their second academic year (**Regulation 17**). **Continuing 'new system' students might be charged fees of up to £3,465 in the first academic year and £1,725 in the second academic year (regulation 23(2)).**

15. Since AY 2012/13, higher education (HE) institutions and further education colleges in Wales, which offer eligible HE courses, may charge fees of up to £9,000 for full time undergraduate students from the UK and European Union. Any institution charging above £4,000 must submit an acceptable fee plan to HEFCW detailing its new fee levels and outlining investments it intends to make using a proportion of this new income to encourage: further equality of access; and activities which promote higher education in Wales.
16. **'Old system'** students who go abroad only for part of a year under the Erasmus arrangements will be charged up to **£1,380**, or up to **£680** where the periods of full-time study at the home institution are in aggregate less than 10 weeks (Regulation 17 (4)(d)). Continuing new system cohort students will be charged up to **£3,465 or £1,725** where the periods of full-time study at the home institution are in aggregate less than 10 weeks.
17. Students who started their courses on or after **1 September 2012** at publicly funded institutions might be charged up to £4,000, or where a fee plan is in place up to £9,000 for the first academic year as indicated in paragraph 14. Where the periods of full-time study at the UK institution are, in aggregate, less than 10 weeks, fees of up to £2,000 and £4,500 respectively might be charged for the second academic year.
18. Students who are abroad for a whole academic year but only part of that year is under the ERASMUS scheme are liable for an income-assessed contribution of up to **£680** towards their tuition fees **if they are an 'old system' student, they could be charged variable fees of up to £1,725 if they are a continuing 'new system' student** who began their course before September 2012 or they could be charged £4,500 if they are a new system student who **began** their course on or after 1 September 2012.
19. Please refer to the guidance in the 2013/14 chapter on 'Assessing Eligibility' for students, including language assistants, who spend a period abroad, which is not under the ERASMUS scheme.

#### **Students from elsewhere in the EU**

20. Students from elsewhere in the EU (but not the non-EU Erasmus countries) studying at a UK HEI and who are eligible for fees support from Student Finance Wales and are taking part in the ERASMUS scheme are eligible for the same tuition fee concession (if any) as UK students. Please refer to the Eligibility Section on pages 11 and 13 of the British Council's 2013/14 Operational Handbook.

#### ***Maintenance support (grants and loans)***

21. There are no special provisions in the student support Regulations for the assessment of living costs support (grants and loans) for students undertaking a period abroad under the ERASMUS scheme. Such students should be considered for maintenance grants and loans **costs** in the usual way **depending on whether they are an 'old system' or 'new system' student (all cohorts)**.
22. **Part 5 and Schedule 1 of the Regulations** sets out the general qualifying conditions specific to grants for living and other costs. These include amongst other factors (please though see the full text of regulation 28):
  - students from elsewhere in the EU who are not EEA migrant workers or the spouse or child of an EEA migrant worker, are not eligible for living costs grants; except in the cases of those students meeting the

conditions of the EU directive, and those students meeting the conditions of the Bidar judgement;

- students in receipt of an income assessed NHS Bursary are not eligible for living costs grants;
- students on a course for the initial training of teachers where the periods of full-time attendance are in aggregate less than 6 weeks, are not eligible for living costs grants; and
- students on a sandwich course where, in the academic year in question, the periods of full-time study are in aggregate less than 10 weeks, are not eligible for living costs grants unless the periods of work experience constitute unpaid service.

### ***Travel grant***

23. Where ERASMUS students meet the eligibility criteria for travel grant under **regulation 37**, they shall be eligible for a grant equal to such reasonable expenditure which they are obliged to incur within or outside the United Kingdom for the purpose of attending, as part of their course, an overseas institution. The first **£303** of such expenditure is disregarded when determining the amount of travel grant due.
24. Assessment officers have responsibility for assessing eligibility for and entitlement to the grant. It is therefore for assessment officers to determine whether expenditure is reasonable. However, in determining whether expenditure is reasonable, this should not take into account students' income from other sources such as the British Council's ERASMUS grant, for example. The student's contribution depends on the household income which is determined in accordance with paragraph 3 of **Schedule 5** to the Regulations and is applied to grants and loans in accordance with regulations 37 - 39 for 'old system' and 'new system' students (all cohorts), as described below and in the 2013/14 chapter on 'Assessing Financial Entitlement' guidance chapter.

### ***The financial assessment***

25. Paragraph 4 of **Schedule 5** to the regulations provides for the calculation of students' income by reference to 'taxable income'. Any payments made to students under the British Council's ERASMUS grant scheme shall be disregarded when determining students' income because such payments are non-taxable.

### ***Application of the household contribution***

26. For '**old system**' students on a full-year ERASMUS scheme placement who are not eligible for tuition fee support under **regulation 21(2)(a)**, the **household** contribution is reduced by the amount the contribution exceeds **£1,380** before the contribution is applied to any grant for dependants, then the portion of the student loan subject to income assessment and finally, any travel grant. For '**new system**' students (**all cohorts**) the **household contribution is applied in full first to any grant for dependants, then the income-assessed portion of the student loan and lastly, any travel grant.**
27. '**Old system**' students who spend part of a year abroad under the ERASMUS scheme and who are eligible for an income assessed contribution of up to **£680** towards their tuition fees **should have any**

**remaining unspent contribution reduced by a notional £680** before this is applied to dependants grant, student loan and travel grant.

28. See the 2013/14 guidance chapter on 'Assessing Financial Entitlement' for further information on the calculation of the **student or household** contribution and its application to the assessed student support.

### **Administration**

29. Where a student indicates in Section **4f** of the PN1, or Section **3h** of the PR1 'About Your Course, and your College or University' that they have been accepted onto the ERASMUS exchange scheme the system will flag the application status as 'Pending manual assessment'.
30. As stated above at paragraph 6, ERASMUS study placements, as opposed to work placements, cannot take place in the student's first year of study; students need to have taken at least one year of prior study to be eligible.
31. Therefore, assessment officers should be careful to check the validity of an indication on form PN1 (and any PR1 form completed by a first year student in error), either paper or on-line, that the student will be taking part in the ERASMUS study scheme. Form PN1 is most likely to have been submitted by a prospective first year student.
32. The assessment officer will be required to validate (Validate Evidence Screen) that appropriate evidence / information has been received from the student's HEI and is satisfactory.
33. The Assessment Summary screen will display a message for the assessment officer to check the information shown on the screen. Generally, the rules engine will return an assessment to show that tuition fees are not payable (as these are funded through ERASMUS). The value of maintenance loan shown will depend on the student's circumstances.
34. Using information provided by the student, it is the responsibility of the assessment officer to determine the student's entitlement, check the entitlement result returned by the rules engine, edit and amend fields where appropriate and resubmit to the rules engine.
35. Refer also to the System User Guide Section 12 'Performing the Assessment' which explains automated, semi-automated, manual assessment and using the assessment summary screen.
36. General guidance on the administration of student support for students, including ERASMUS students, can be found in the 2013/14 '**Guidance on General Eligibility and Financial Assessment Administration**'.

**Annex 1****LIST OF COUNTRIES IN THE ERASMUS SCHEME**

All member states of the EU participate in the ERASMUS scheme. These are:

Austria	Latvia
Belgium	Lithuania
Bulgaria	Luxembourg
Cyprus	Malta
Czech Republic	Netherlands
Denmark	Poland
Eire	Portugal
Estonia	Republic of Croatia
Finland	Romania
France	Slovakia
Germany	Slovenia
Greece	Spain
Hungary	Sweden
Italy	United Kingdom

ERASMUS also includes the EU accession country Turkey and the European Economic Area (EEA) countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway). Since academic year 2011/12 Switzerland also participates in the Erasmus Scheme. Please note the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia's participation in the scheme is currently suspended.