

ERASMUS

European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students

Higher Education Student Finance in England 2009/10 Academic Year

TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES
(For the attention of the Student Finance Manager)

November 2009

Dear Colleague

HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENT SUPPORT IN ENGLAND 2009/10: ERASMUS

Attached is a revised version of the consolidated "Guidance for Local Authorities on the Administration of Student Support 2009/10", which provides guidance on HE Student Support for students who are participating in the ERASMUS scheme.

ENQUIRIES

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

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Practitioner Helpline	0845 602 0583	ssin_queries@slc.co.uk

Text referring to new or amended provisions for 2009/2010 is set in blue bold type.

November 2009 amendment

Following enquiries from colleagues regarding a reminder about ERASMUS courses in Student Support Update in England, issue 96, we have amended paragraphs 6 and 14 of the Guidance to clarify that students participating in ERASMUS, whether they are on a study placement, work placement, or a combined study and work placement, are entitled to have their student grant or loan maintained while they are abroad. All students participating in ERASMUS should be treated in the same way. ERASMUS work placements abroad should not be interpreted as sandwich year placements. HEI's treat ERASMUS work placements as they would an ERASMUS study placement. Subject to parliamentary approval, regulations will be amended for the avoidance of doubt at the earliest opportunity

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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. References to regulations relate to the Education (Student Support)(No,2) Regulations 2008 (SI 2008 No. 1582).
2. The main eligibility criteria can be found in the guidance on 'Assessing Eligibility'.
3. Portal guidance relating to ERASMUS study can be found in the Administration section of this chapter.

Policy

What is ERASMUS?

4. ERASMUS is the higher education strand of the Lifelong Learning European Education programme funded by the European Commission. 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 31 countries currently participating in the scheme. Certain other non-EU countries are also included in the ERASMUS programme. A full list of the countries taking part in the ERASMUS scheme can be found at Annex 1. LAs will wish to note that Switzerland is not a part of the ERASMUS scheme.
5. ERASMUS study periods are for a minimum of three months and a full academic year (at least 24 weeks excluding weekends and the usual vacations). ERASMUS study periods cannot take place in the first year of study but can take place in any year of study after that. LAs should note that under new arrangements students may be allowed more than one ERASMUS grant during a course.

Work placements under the ERASMUS scheme

6. Some students may participate in a work placement or part study/part work placement abroad under the ERASMUS scheme. It does not matter whether periods of work experience are paid or unpaid. LAs should be aware that the ERASMUS scheme allows for periods of 'stand alone' work placement of up to 12 months' duration in the host country provided that the periods of work placements are organised and given credit by the host institution; and are recognised by the home institution. Students who participate in the ERASMUS scheme, whether on a study or a work placement abroad, should be treated in the same way. Work placements abroad on ERASMUS are **not** sandwich year placements.

Fee support for ERASMUS students

Full-year ERASMUS

7. The position of students taking part in the Lifelong Learning exchanges is unique. The arrangements are intended to operate mainly on a reciprocal basis. The rules of the scheme are such that students cannot be charged tuition fees by the receiving institution. UK students on ERASMUS exchanges are not required to pay the fees of incoming EU ERASMUS students.

8. The tuition fee waiver, or concession, for full-year UK outgoing ERASMUS students is provided for in **regulation 25(4) for old-system students and regulation 20(2) for current-system students**. **Old-system** students are not eligible for LA assessed fee support for any academic year in which they are participating in the ERASMUS scheme and all the periods of study during that year are at an institution outside the United Kingdom. Such students are not required to make a contribution towards their tuition fees. **Similarly, current-system students who spend a full academic year abroad under the ERASMUS scheme will not be charged tuition fees by their institution and are not eligible for a tuition fee loan.** This is the case regardless of the subject of study. Instead, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) compensates institutions via the block grant for the loss in fee income from such students. Similar provision is made for students whose courses are at institutions in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Since 2003/04, HEFCE's compensation arrangements have been based on actual numbers of outgoing students. This means that institutions who have boosted their numbers receive additional funding, while those who have experienced a decline receive less.

The tuition fee waiver, or concession, is not available to all students who take part in the ERASMUS scheme.

Students for whom the tuition fee waiver applies:

- **old-system** students who, but for their full year on ERASMUS, would otherwise be eligible for a grant for fees under **regulation 25** 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 25** but are liable for 100% contribution towards their tuition fees under the income assessment contribution; **and**
- **current-system students who, but for their full year on ERASMUS, would otherwise be eligible for a tuition fee loan under regulation 20 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 25** and **current-system students 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

9. **The ERASMUS** tuition fee waiver only applies to eligible students who study for 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 is at least 24 weeks (excluding weekends and the usual vacations). Within the rules of the ERASMUS scheme, students cannot spend a full year abroad if it is spread across two different academic years.

10. **Old-system** students who spend a year abroad which spans two academic years may be liable for an income-assessed contribution for **the full rate tuition fee of £1,285 in the first academic year and the half rate tuition fee of £640 in the second academic year (regulation 31(2))**. **Current-system students might be charged variable fees of up to £3,225 in the first academic year and £1,610 in the second academic year (regulation 24(3))**.
11. **Old-system** students who go abroad only for part of a year under the Erasmus arrangements will be liable for an income-assessed contribution of **£1,285** towards tuition fees, **£640** where the periods of full-time study at the home institution are in aggregate less than 10 weeks. **Current-system students can be charged variable fees of up to £3,225, £1,610 where the periods of full-time study at the home institution are in aggregate less than 10 weeks**. 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 **£640** towards their tuition fees **if they are an old-system student, or could be charged variable fees of up to £1,610 if they are a current-system student**.
12. Please refer to the guidance in the 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

13. Students from elsewhere in the EU studying at a UK HEI and eligible for fees support from England and taking part in the ERASMUS scheme are eligible for the tuition fee concession in the same way as UK students.

Living costs support (grants and loans)

14. 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 grants and loans **for living costs** in the usual way, and treated in the same way regardless of whether they participate in an ERASMUS work placement or an ERASMUS study placement, **depending on whether they are an old- or current-system student**.
15. **Regulation 38** sets out the general qualifying conditions specific to grants for living and other costs. These are:
 - 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 as detailed in the Education (Student Support) Regulations 2009, 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.

Travel grant

16. Where ERASMUS students meet the eligibility criteria for travel grant under **regulation 52**, 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.
17. LA's have responsibility for assessing eligibility for and entitlement to the grant. It is therefore for LAs to determine whether expenditure is reasonable. However, in determining whether expenditure is reasonable, LAs should not take into account students' income from other sources such as ERASMUS grant, for example. The student's contribution depends on the household income which is determined in accordance with paragraph 3 of **Schedule 4** to the Regulations and is applied to grants and loans in accordance with **regulation 98 for old-system students, regulation 100 for current-system students**, as described below and in the chapter on 'Assessing Financial Entitlement'.

The financial assessment

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

Application of the household contribution

19. For **old-system** students on a full-year ERASMUS scheme who are not eligible for tuition fee support under **regulation 25(4)**, the **household** contribution is reduced by a notional **£1,285** 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 (**regulation 98(5)**). **For current-system students 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 (regulations 97 and 100).**
20. **Old-system students who spend part of the year abroad under the ERASMUS scheme and** who are liable for an income-assessed contribution of up to **£640** towards their tuition fees **should have any remaining unspent contribution reduced by a notional £640** before this is applied to dependants grant, student loan and travel grant (**regulation 98(4)**).
21. See the 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

22. Where a student indicates in Section **4i** of the PN1, or Section **3j** 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 LA manual assessment'.
23. As stated above at paragraph 5, ERASMUS study periods cannot take place in the student's first year of study.

24. Students need to have taken at least one year of prior study to be eligible.
25. Therefore, LAs 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 scheme. Form PN1 is most likely to have been submitted by a prospective first year student.
26. The LA 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.
27. The Assessment Summary screen will display a message for the LA 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 loan shown will depend on the student's circumstances.
28. Using information provided by the student, it is the responsibility of the LA 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.
29. Refer also to the LA Portal System User Guide Section 12 'Performing the Assessment' which explains automated, semi-automated, manual assessment and using the assessment summary screen.
30. General guidance on the administration of student support for students, including ERASMUS students, can be found in '**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	Romania
Finland	Slovakia
France	Slovenia
Germany	Spain
Greece	Sweden
Hungary	United Kingdom
Italy	

ERASMUS also includes the EU accession country (Turkey) and the European Economic Area (EEA) countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway).

NOTE: Switzerland is not a part of the ERASMUS scheme.