



STRANMILLIS UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
A College of Queen's University Belfast

ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT **International (EU and non-EU) Strategy**

Stranmillis University College strives to produce graduates who are creative, innovative, critical and reflective thinkers and views international mobility and internationalisation of the curricula as major priorities for helping to achieve this aim. This view is clearly articulated within the University College's [International Development Strategy](#) which states, "growing globalisation necessitates the development of an international perspective to and within education" and "universities should ... be standard bearers for the development of an international paradigm underpinning their work" (p1). Key areas of focus within the strategy include student mobility, staff mobility, international recruitment of both students and staff and the development of cooperation in areas of mutual concern, such as research, consultancy and professional development activity, with partner institutions. These fit effectively with the new Erasmus Plus proposals and support the basic premises of the new programme.

Stranmillis has a long, distinguished history of involvement in international work, with the first student exchanges dating back to 1994. Currently the University College has 29 partnerships with institutions across Europe and a further 8 links, based on the principles of initial Erasmus Charters for the exchange of students and staff mobility, with universities worldwide in Africa, USA and the Far East.

Some current European partners emanated from the original Socrates programme (1987): Stranmillis was a leading member of an Interuniversity Cooperation Programme (ICP) under Education. Other European partners have been chosen through networking and an informal Erasmus Symposium network. International partners have been chosen through networking with local, European and other international partners and through Education specialists who studied in Northern Ireland at Stranmillis or Queen's University Belfast.

The objectives of the Stranmillis strategy relate directly to student and staff mobility, international research consortia, professional consultancy, recruitment of fee-paying students and internationalising the curricula (p2).

Embracing the spirit of widening participation, student mobility is open to all full-time undergraduate students across all departments (Teacher Education, Early Childhood Studies and Health and Leisure Studies) and programmes. There are also opportunities for PGCE students to undertake placement abroad and the University College has been active in recruiting fee-paying students from USA. Currently some 25-30% of students participate in the mobility programmes although, in line with Erasmus Plus, the aim is to significantly increase mobility rates, ideally to 100%. Approximately 50 reciprocal students from partner institutions study at Stranmillis each year. Double/multiple/joint degrees are not offered, but the University College seeks to expand its

mobility provision to Masters-level courses, in particular the MTeach which has been reviewed and updated to facilitate international recruitment and collaborative delivery with international partners. Student mobility remains central to Stranmillis's international programme. It provides a touchstone to gauge how successfully an international paradigm has been integrated into the work of the University College. In order to maintain and increase mobility rates, partnerships need to be regularly reassessed and refreshed. Partner institutions will be visited on a regular basis and their contribution evaluated in the broad scope of the total programme.

Staff mobility also remains central to the international work of the University College. Approximately 20% of academic staff participate in mobility programmes annually and for many the experience leads to involvement in research projects and professional consultancy. Current participation includes professional consultancy in Malaysia and an IP in Physical Education with European partners. Given the wide range of expertise amongst University College staff, participation in research projects and consultancy, particularly in relation to initial teacher education (ITE) and continuing professional development (CPD), will continue to be encouraged and developed.

Similarly Stranmillis seeks to increase an already healthy incoming staff mobility (8-10 lecturers per year) with a view to developing opportunities for further collaborative research and joint teaching in line with Erasmus Plus proposals. Incoming staff mobility should become central to the development of the University College and the experience and perspectives of visitors regularly shared with academic staff who, in their turn, should avail of the opportunities the University College provides to broaden, resource and internationalise internal programmes.

International Cooperation Projects in Teaching and Training

Over the past 20 years Stranmillis has had involvement in a range of EU and non-EU international cooperation projects through Erasmus/Comenius funding and other funding bodies such as DFID. Comenius projects generally originated through Erasmus partnerships and addressed issues such as the teaching of underachieving young people, the management of violent pupils in the secondary school, the European dimension and working with children with special needs. The most recent Comenius project entailed student exchange, teaching and research with 3 European partners in France, Spain and Romania. The University College is currently involved in an IP with a focus on Physical Education with partners in Denmark, France and Sweden.

Such projects are usually conceived within the Erasmus Symposium or other existing network. The International Office circulates the information to relevant, interested colleagues who are then invited/invite others to join a project team. The University College will provide additional funding to staff to supplement Erasmus funding for relevant projects in line with College priority areas, subject to availability.

Staff may also express interest in international project involvement through application to the Head of International Development. Required paperwork includes a proposal, business plan and approximate costings. Plans will be assessed by the International Development Committee, in line with College priority areas, and approved or otherwise.

All staff undertaking international cooperation projects are required to keep the International Committee informed of progress through regular oral/written reports, account for all expenditure of College funding, complete a final written report of the project and present/disseminate their work to colleagues and students as relevant.

All international work, including cooperative projects, is reported by the Head of International Development in the University College's Annual Report to stakeholders.

Expected Impact of Participation in Erasmus Plus and the Modernisation Agenda

Stranmillis University College fully supports the priorities outlined in the Modernisation Agenda and seeks to address them through its International Strategy and a sustained programme of review and development, college-wide. With regard to Priority 1, the University College is entirely committed to raising academic attainment levels (already high) with the purpose of producing highly-skilled, reflective teachers/education professionals with the flexibility and adaptability to teach/work-throughout Europe (and worldwide). The student mobility objective plays a significant part in this development, increasingly so as student mobility rates grow. The College Widening Participation Strategy also ensures minority groups are targeted for inclusion across all courses and actively encouraged to achieve equitable standards and to avail of student mobility opportunities.

The quality and relevance of HE (Priority 2) is also a major priority at Stranmillis where all courses are continually reviewed and updated, with a formal review process on an annual basis. Flexible, innovative learning approaches are being further developed across courses to address diversity issues. Students are therefore well equipped with the knowledge and competences necessary for highly-skilled work in the local market. It is intended that the student and staff mobility objectives of the International Strategy will enhance these further for the international job market.

With regard to Priority 3, Stranmillis's long history of student/staff mobility and staff involvement in collaborative research work fully endorses the benefits of cross-border cooperation. By making joint research and professional consultancy strategic objectives, the University College aspires to develop partnerships which offer improved opportunities for collaborative educational research at both student and staff level. It would also be hoped to extend cross-border cooperation to the level of offering joint research-led modules and courses with a range of partner institutions.

Priority 4 (Making the Knowledge triangle work) has a particular focus for an institution which focuses largely on Teacher Education. Links with schools really become the third element in the triangle, alongside HE and research. To this end Stranmillis has always been committed to its numerous school partnerships and participation in Erasmus Plus is viewed as a way of enhancing local knowledge to a level which will enable students to teach anywhere worldwide and benefit, through student and staff mobility, from a much wider range of European and world perspectives which can only add value to the local community. Similarly, local governance and funding issues (Priority 5) can only benefit from international perspectives and experiences and it is intended that participation in Erasmus Plus will enable Stranmillis University College to become a centre of excellence which exemplifies and promotes international principles.



Signed: _____
Dr Maureen Thatcher, Head of International Development

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