



STRANMILLIS UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
A College of Queen's University Belfast

Erasmus+ Policy Statement

Stranmillis University College's International Strategy 2018-21 is founded on the College's core mission of *'transforming the lives of children, young people and communities, through excellence in teaching, scholarship and research'*. Involvement in the Erasmus+ scheme has played a major part towards achieving this mission.

Our International Strategy is made up of a number of strands including student mobility, staff mobility, and the development of cooperation in areas of mutual concern, such as teaching and learning, research and scholarship, consultancy and professional development activity with partner institutions. The University College will continue to develop an international perspective underpinned in order to enrich student and staff experience.

We have participated in Erasmus projects since 1994 and these are now an intrinsic part of our University College community. Through Erasmus+ we now have partnerships with 29 institutions in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey. Based on Erasmus+ principles we have also formed international partnerships with institutions in China, Hong Kong, USA, Malaysia, Uganda and India.

We encourage student and staff engagement across all of our programmes, providing a positive experience for all incoming and outgoing students, promoting critical reflection of personal and professional development, and strengthening international partnerships in line with the aims and aspirations of Erasmus+.

Our participation with Erasmus+ is aligned to the key strategic objectives in our International Strategy to:

- Enhance the quality of the student experience for all students, local and international;
- Build research and scholarship partnerships and strengthen the University College's international networks;
- Strengthen the University College's international networks by building strong collaborative teaching and learning partnerships;
- Raise awareness of the Stranmillis brand in international arenas.
- Ensure appropriate student support systems are in place for international students for both outgoing and incoming students.
- Review and enhance pre-departure and orientation processes for Stranmillis students involved in international exchange.

- Promote the internationalisation of the curriculum for the benefit of all Stranmillis students.
- Ensure that student satisfaction surveys are conducted on an annual basis to monitor the effectiveness of the College's international strategy.
- Identify areas of teaching, learning, research and scholarship that have the potential to deliver successful long-term international collaborations.
- Provide staff development opportunities to support the establishment and maintenance of international teaching, learning, research and scholarship collaborations.
- Develop a briefing pack for Stranmillis staff to support visits to overseas universities and contact with international delegates at conferences to ensure the promotion of a coherent and consistent message.
- Capture and consolidate intelligence about collaborative opportunities by working with colleagues on their return from academic visits e.g. overseas universities, international conferences (including UK venues).
- Develop the necessary awareness and expertise among academic and professional staff to effectively communicate the College's international standing.

We align these objectives with the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education 2014-2020 and uphold these principles as follows:

- We ensure equal access and opportunities to participants from all backgrounds, and full recognition for satisfactorily completed activities.
- The course catalogue is published in advance on our website and we continue to make improvements to our public website and our student intranet.
- We only carry out mobility within the framework of prior agreements with partner institutions. These agreements demonstrate commitment to shared quality criteria in the selection, preparation, reception and integration of participants.
- Learning agreements for students and mobility agreements for staff are validated in advance between the institutions.
- We ensure that outgoing mobile participants are well prepared for the mobility. We provide assistance related to obtaining language training, insurance, accommodation etc.
- Equal academic treatment and services are provided for both incoming and outgoing students.
- Incoming students are integrated into the everyday life of our College and have equal access to student support services.
- Language training is a prerequisite for outgoing students and linguistic support is also available to incoming students through our Communication Skills Centre.
- We support the reintegration of our outgoing students and give them the opportunity, upon return, to build on their experiences.
- We maximise the impact on individuals and participating institutions and encourage peer learning with the wider academic community.

Erasmus+ student mobility is an attractive and beneficial opportunity for full-time and part-time students across our BEd, BA and BSc programmes in Education (primary

and post primary), Early Childhood Studies, and Health, Physical Activity and Sport respectively. Our College Widening Participation Strategy encourages students from disadvantaged or minority groups to avail of mobility opportunities. Through outward mobility our students develop personal and professional skills by living, working, learning and communicating abroad. Activities of participants on student mobility programmes include study (embracing a range of relevant modules related to the specialisms and interests of the students concerned), associated professional placements, cultural and linguistic learning, the development of networks of personal and professional relationships, and travel.

Intercultural skills are evidenced in teaching and learning interactions in College and in the teaching of primary languages in schools. These short to medium term benefits stand to develop in the longer term throughout the professional and personal lives of the participants in student mobility, given the personal and professional networks established during the project. Our students are strongly encouraged to use the skills and knowledge they have acquired in the development of their professional profile, thus strengthening their employability and sharing their learning across Stranmillis. While on placement all of our outgoing students engage in valuable reflective journaling, which enables a critically reflective approach on their placement. On return, our students also complete a Placement Experience Survey which provides evidence of impact and also suggestions for how we can continue to improve our participation in Erasmus+ moving forward.

Incoming international students and staff bring diversity and vibrancy that enhances both academic and extracurricular activities. This has promoted an outward-looking, global perspective throughout Stranmillis that enriches teaching and learning throughout College, and in the wider sphere of professional practice. We have an extensive regional partnership network of over 750 schools and alternative placement providers. Therefore, participation in Erasmus+ enhances internationalisation regionally, bringing value to local communities, and enabling Stranmillis University College to become a centre of excellence exemplifying and promoting international principles.

Participation in Erasmus+ has also allowed us to provide staff mobility opportunities to 4-5 members of staff each year. The objective of these is to develop clarity of understanding with partner institutions, deepen relationships in terms of knowledge exchange in teaching and learning, and explore opportunities for collaborative international research and scholarship. Activities include lecturing, quality assurance, campus visits, workshops and individual meetings.

Staff from our partner institutions join us every year for our 'International Week'. An extensive programme provides opportunity for international staff to explore our campus, our programmes and some Northern Irish landmarks, as well as meeting Stranmillis staff to discuss potential collaborative scholarship and research. The annual highlight is our International Day, which is attended each year by over 150 students who are considering international placements. Each year, returning Erasmus+ students give oral presentations to students and staff about their experiences.

Stranmillis is a founding member of the 'Symposion' (www.symposionnetwork.com). This is a network of European Teacher Education institutions that have come together through Erasmus+ initiatives. It serves as a platform for developing and encouraging cooperation and promoting an international dimension in education.

The Erasmus+ programme is managed by the Director of Community Engagement and External Affairs, the Director of Research and Scholarship, two International Student Exchange Coordinators, and two experienced administrators in our International Office. All academic and professional support staff at Stranmillis contribute to Erasmus+ programmes. Staff teams across the College engage with the International Strategy in order to translate it into a three-year operational plan with clear objectives, timescales and Key Performance Indicators. Priorities are identified in the Annual Corporate Plan and reviewed on an annual basis. International Student Exchange Coordinators produce reports as requested.