

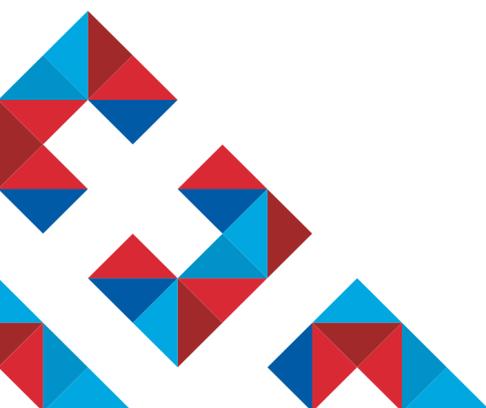
ERASMUS 

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE UK ACROSS EUROPE

Erasmus Charter for Higher Education

Compliance with the ECHE in the UK

May 2019



Erasmus+

Erasmus+ is the European Union programme for education, training, youth and sport.
The Erasmus+ UK National Agency is a partnership between the British Council and Ecorys UK.

Introduction

About the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education

In order to apply for Erasmus+ funding or participate in Erasmus+ projects, higher education institutions (HEIs) located in [Erasmus+ programme countries](#) must hold the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE).

The ECHE provides the quality framework for Erasmus+ funded activities carried out by HEIs. In particular, the ECHE aims to reinforce the quality of student and staff mobility. It is designed to foster an institutional culture of strategic thinking, transparency, fairness and effectiveness in internationalisation. Participating HEIs promise to abide by the ECHE rules - and to show that their Erasmus+ participation is part of their own strategy for modernisation and internationalisation.

At present, 209 UK HEIs hold the ECHE. You can find the list of ECHE holders here: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/actions/erasmus-charter_en.

If your HEI doesn't yet hold the ECHE, you can find out more and apply here: www.erasmusplus.org.uk/erasmus-charter-for-higher-education.

Monitoring compliance with the ECHE

HEIs must respect all of the principles and commitments of the ECHE throughout their Erasmus+ project. Compliance is monitored by the Erasmus+ UK National Agency. See the [ECHE Monitoring Guide for Erasmus+ National Agencies](#) for further information:

It is worth noting that monitoring ECHE compliance has become increasingly rigorous. Violation of any of the ECHE principles and commitments may lead to ECHE withdrawal by the European Commission, as was the case for two HEIs in France in 2018.

The most comprehensive checks on ECHE compliance take place through Systems' Checks. In the UK, the 2018 Systems' Checks comprised of a financial audit, conducted by UK National Agency staff, and a quality audit, conducted by a pool of peer Erasmus+ Quality Experts.

Each quality audit resulted in a report on the HEI's ECHE compliance, as well as programme requirements around participant selection and reporting to the UK National Agency. Additionally, the Quality Experts identified good practice that they came across during the audits. For this purpose, good practice means a process or approach which the Quality Expert perceives to go above and beyond what is required. Good practice will not highlight all items that are perceived as being done well, but will draw attention to approaches and processes that the Quality Expert identifies as making a particularly positive contribution which is worth highlighting.

Where non-compliance was identified, an action plan was agreed between the HEI and the UK National Agency to solve the issues. If the action plan is not implemented by the HEI within the agreed timeline, the European Commission may withdraw the HEI's ECHE.

About this report

In 2017, the Erasmus+ UK National Agency issued a report on the 2017 quality audits. This report aimed to improve ECHE compliance by highlighting good practice and areas for improvement, as

identified by the Quality Experts during the audits. The report can be found on the UK National Agency's website: www.erasmusplus.org.uk/file/6870/download.

The following report covers the 2018 quality audits. On a positive note, the report highlights many examples of good practice collated by the Quality Experts - however, many of the issues identified in 2017 were still present. In particular, it is concerning that in 2018, only one HEI was found to be substantially compliant with the ECHE.

The UK National Agency is now working with the audited HEIs on their action plans, in order to ensure that their compliance improves.

Action for all UK HEIs

The UK National Agency requires all ECHE holders to review their ECHE commitments and to take steps to improve their compliance.

Please refer to the [ECHE Annotated Guidelines for further guidance](#). You may also find the [ECHE Monitoring Guide for Erasmus+ National Agencies](#) helpful.

Any questions? Contact us

If you have any questions about the ECHE and its requirements, please contact the Erasmus+ UK National Agency helpdesk at erasmus@britishcouncil.org. We also welcome any suggestions on how we can support HEIs in ECHE compliance.

2018 Quality audit findings

The purpose of the quality audit is to assess how each HEI meets the requirements, principles and pre-requisites of the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE), as well as programme requirements around participant selection and reporting to the UK National Agency (hereafter Requirements). A list of the Requirements audited in 2018 can be found in Annex 1.

During the course of 2018, Quality Experts undertook a number of quality audits as part of the UK National Agency's Higher Education Systems' Checks. Some of these audits were in reference to Key Action 103 projects only - others looked at both Key Action 103 and Key Action 107.

Based on the information gathered during the audit, the Quality Expert established whether or not the answers provided by the HEI were sufficient to consider the Requirements to have been met.

Four outcomes were possible:

Endorsement	Requirement is met in full.
Suggestion	Requirement is substantially met (in this case the UK National Agency will raise a suggestion, which would enhance the HEI's efforts to meet the Requirement).
Explanation Required	Information captured during the audit has opened up some questions; clarification is required from the HEI.
Action Required	Requirement is not met or only partially met (in this case the UK National Agency would detail an action which the HEI will be required to address).

Additionally, the Quality Expert identified points of Good Practice. during the audit.

The level of compliance varied - the highest number of Actions Required for one HEI was 7, and the highest number of Suggestions was 6.¹ Only one HEI was substantially compliant with the ECHE, receiving no actions required during the audit.

In 2017 there were 22 Requirements, this increased to 24 in 2018, with the addition of specific Requirements for those HEIs which were subject to a Key Action 2017 component to their audit. In 2017, for 6 of the 22 Requirements, all HEIS were found to have met the Requirement in full. In 2018, this had increased to 9 out of 24 Requirements being met in full. Additionally, in 6 of the Requirements, all but one HEI was found to be fully compliant.

The Requirements which all HEIs were found to be compliant with in 2017 and 2018 varied; the below table shows you which they are:

Requirement	Fully met in 2018	Fully met in 2017
Charge no fees, in the case of credit mobility, to incoming mobile students for tuition, registration, examinations or access to laboratory and library facilities	Yes	Yes
Carry out mobility only within the framework of prior agreements between institutions. These agreements establish the respective roles and responsibilities of the different parties, as well as their commitment to shared quality criteria in the selection, preparation, reception and integration of mobile participants.	Yes	Yes
Provide assistance related to obtaining insurance, when required, for incoming and outgoing mobile participants	No	Yes

¹ When considering this figure, it is worth noting that each Requirement might receive more than one recommendation or suggestion.

Ensure that information about International Credit Mobility opportunities is communicated to disadvantaged groups in the partner country institution (Applicable to KA107)	Yes	No
Ensure equal academic treatment and services for home students and staff and incoming mobile participants	Yes	No
Integrate incoming mobile participants into the institution's everyday life	Yes	No
Have in place appropriate mentoring and support arrangements for mobile participants	Yes	No
Provide appropriate linguistic support to incoming mobile participants	Yes	Yes
Support the reintegration of mobile participants and give them the opportunity, upon return, to build on their experiences for the benefit of the institutions and their peers.	No	Yes
Display the Charter and the related Erasmus Policy Statement prominently on the Institution's website.	Yes	No
Reports are submitted to the National Agency on time and in the required format	Yes	Yes

Good practice

Quality Experts were pleased to identify points of good practice in two thirds of the 2018 audits. The following points of good practice were identified:

Respect in full the principles of non-discrimination set out in the Programme and ensure equal access and opportunities to mobile participants from all background	Policies in place that require disabilities to not be a factor considered during selection of students to go abroad
	Offering bursaries and fee reductions or waivers to Widening Participation students going abroad
	Providing dedicated information to disadvantaged groups, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer and others (LGBTQ+) and black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) students, ahead of mobility
	Using the HEI's Access Agreement to obtain funds to promote outward mobility to Widening Participation students
Charge no fees, in the case of credit mobility, to incoming mobile students for tuition, registration, examinations or access to laboratory and library facilities	Including confirmation of no tuition fees to be charged in Erasmus+ acceptance letters to all incoming students

Carry out mobility only within the framework of prior agreements between institutions. These agreements establish the respective roles and responsibilities of the different parties, as well as their commitment to shared quality criteria in the selection, preparation, reception and integration of mobile participants	Conducting a standardised risk assessment looking at various factors ahead of signing any new inter-institutional agreements
Ensure that outgoing mobile participants are well prepared for the mobility, including having attained the necessary level of linguistic proficiency	A comprehensive online facility providing prospective and outgoing Erasmus+ students with detailed information about all aspects of their mobility periods, including information for before, during and after mobility
	Providing guides/handbooks for all outbound staff
Provide assistance related to obtaining insurance, when required, for incoming and outgoing mobile participants	Offering free travel insurance to all outbound staff and students
Provide guidance to incoming mobile participants in finding accommodation	Providing information to inbound staff about finding accommodation
	Offering subsidised temporary accommodation for inbound students whilst they seek permanent accommodation
Integrate incoming mobile participants into the institutions everyday life	Handbook for incoming students offering advice on adapting to the different academic system they will experience, highlighting the types of differences they might experience
Have in place appropriate mentoring and support arrangements for mobile participants	Mobile participants are given assignments that not only work for monitoring but also for self-reflection, the completion of which leads to the achievement of a university award recognising employability skills
Support the reintegration of mobile participants and give them the opportunity, upon return, to build on their experiences for the benefit of the institutions and their peers	Paying students who have returned from their mobility for their work as Erasmus+ ambassadors
	On a student's return, providing them with advice on practical matters, a careers meeting, and advice on culture shock and social reintegration
Promote openly and consistently activities supported by the Programme, along with their result	Organising short/taster summer schools abroad as a way of promoting mobility to first year students

Non-compliance

Looking across the year:

- 24 Actions Required, (meaning that the HEI in question was found to not meet the Requirement or only partially meet it), were found across 11 out of the 24 Requirements. All but one of the HEIs was issued Actions Required as part of their audit
- 16 Suggestions (where the HEI was substantially compliant, but still needed to take action to be fully compliant) were found across 12 out of the 24 Requirements. Every HEI was issued with at least one Suggestion

It is particularly concerning that there were several Requirements where either no or one HEI was compliant in 2017, 2018 or both years. These requirements are:

- Participation in Erasmus+ must be part of the HEI's policy for Internationalisation - In 2017 and 2018
- Respect in full the principles of non-discrimination set out in the Programme and ensure equal access and opportunities to mobile participants from all background – In 2017
- Ensure full recognition for satisfactorily completed activities of study mobility and, where possible, traineeships in terms of credits awarded (ECTS or compatible system). Ensure the inclusion of satisfactorily completed study and / or traineeship mobility activities in the final record of student achievements (Diploma supplement or equivalent) – In 2017 and 2018
- Ensure that the partner HEIs abide by the requirements of the ECHE for the purposes of Erasmus+ mobility. (Applicable to KA107 only) – In 2018 only
- Ensure that staff are given recognition for their teaching and training activities undertaken during the mobility period, based on a mobility agreement - In 2017, although still high levels of non-compliance in 2018
- Ensure the sound and transparent management by partner HEIs of funds allocated to them through Erasmus+. (Applicable to KA107 only) – In 2018 only.

HEIs are reminded that they have committed to meet all the Requirements of the Charter. As such, the UK National Agency requires all ECHE holders to revisit the commitments they made when applying to obtain the ECHE.

We particularly encourage HEIs to review their compliance with the above six Requirements, with reference to the ECHE Annotated Guidelines² which provide the detail behind each of the Requirements listed in the Charter.

The next table provides a summary of the Suggestions and Actions Required issued in 2018:

² https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/eacea-site/files/annotated_eche_guidelines_2016.pdf

Actions Required	Inclusion of Erasmus+ specifically in the institution's internationalisation policy or strategy
	Have a student selection policy in place that ensures transparency and equal access to mobility opportunities
	Issue diploma supplements (or equivalent)
	Record detailed information about mobility activities on the diploma supplement (or equivalent)
	Recognise the credits of all satisfactorily completed activities from the learning agreement
	Record consistent information on the diploma supplement about the mobility period
	Ensure the course catalogue is available in a timely manner
	Ensure the course catalogue includes sufficient information for incoming students, such as number of credits, course description, pre-requisites and assessment method, as per the ECTS Users' Guide
	Put checks in place to ensure that learning agreements are completed in sufficient detail
	Ensure staff supporting outbound students have sufficient guidance in relation to completing the learning agreement accurately and in a timely manner
	Provide staff with advice and support on practical matters, such as securing visas and insurance
	Ensure students are well advised on the recognition process and how their results will be translated into their home records on their return
	Ensure that transcripts for incoming students contain the required information, including ECTS credits and an explanation of the local grading system, to facilitate recognition on their return home
	Ensure that staff mobility is formally considered as part of the professional development policy
	Include information about Erasmus+, including its benefits and the institution's partners, on the institution's public website

Suggestions

Develop an inclusion and diversity policy for access to the programme

Develop promotional resources in collaboration with institutional disability services

Consider a consistent approach to recognition across the institution

Ensure ICM partner institutions apply a transparent selection process

Offer preparatory sessions or materials to outgoing staff

Give outbound students more information about the consequences of failing or not completing activities on their learning agreements

Explicitly direct incoming students to insurance information

Give students more practical advice on what they can do and prepare for before arrival, and alternatives to hostel style accommodation

Ensure a consistent approach is taken across the institution to how credits achieved during the year abroad are counted towards the students' degrees

Ensure transcripts are consistent across the institution, i.e. that they all contain the same level of information

Develop a policy on staff mobility recognition

Review the management of KA107 grants to reduce, where possible, the amount of deductions that are taken from the participants' grants

Annex 1: The 2018 quality audit requirements

Please note, the following Requirements were audited as part of the UK Quality Audits in 2018. The European Commission sets the parameters for the Systems' Checks on a yearly basis. The Requirements always include those detailed in the ECHE and any additional points are broadly similar from one year to the next, with some minor changes.

1.1 Participation in Erasmus+ must be part of the HEI's policy for Internationalisation
2.1 Respect in full the principles of non-discrimination set out in the Programme and ensure equal access and opportunities to mobile participants from all background
2.2 Ensure full recognition for satisfactorily completed activities of study mobility and, where possible, traineeships in terms of credits awarded (ECTS or compatible system). Ensure the inclusion of satisfactorily completed study and / or traineeship mobility activities in the final record of student achievements (Diploma supplement or equivalent)
2.3 Charge no fees, in the case of credit mobility, to incoming mobile students for tuition, registration, examinations or access to laboratory and library facilities
2.4 Ensure that the partner HEIs abide by the requirements of the ECHE for the purposes of Erasmus+ mobility (Applicable to KA107 only)
3.1 Publish and regularly update the course catalogue on the website in the institution well in advance of the mobility periods, so as to be transparent to all parties and allow mobile students to make well-informed choices about the courses they will follow
3.2 Carry out mobility only within the framework of prior agreements between institutions. These agreements establish the respective roles and responsibilities of the different parties, as well as their commitment to shared quality criteria in the selection, preparation, reception and integration of mobile participants.
3.3 Ensure that outgoing mobile participants are well prepared for the mobility, including having attained the necessary level of linguistic proficiency.
3.4 Ensure that student and staff mobility for education or training purposes is based on a learning agreement for students and a mobility agreement for staff validated in advance between the home and host institutions or enterprises and the mobile participants.
3.5 Provide assistance related to obtaining visas, when required, for incoming and outgoing mobile participants
3.6 Provide assistance related to obtaining insurance, when required, for incoming and outgoing mobile participants
3.7 Provide guidance to incoming mobile participants in finding accommodation

3.8 Ensure that information about International Credit Mobility opportunities is communicated to disadvantaged groups in the partner country institution

(Applicable to KA107)

4.1 Ensure equal academic treatment and services for home students and staff and incoming mobile participants

4.2 Integrate incoming mobile participants into the institution's everyday life

4.3 Have in place appropriate mentoring and support arrangements for mobile participants

4.4 Provide appropriate linguistic support to incoming mobile participants

5.1 Accept all activities indicated in the learning agreement as counting towards the degree, provided these have been satisfactorily completed by the mobile students

5.2 Provide incoming mobile participants and their home institutions with transcripts containing a full, accurate and timely record of their achievements at the end of their mobility period

5.3 Support the reintegration of mobile participants and give them the opportunity, upon return, to build on their experiences for the benefit of the institutions and their peers.

5.4 Ensure that staff are given recognition for their teaching and training activities undertaken during the mobility period, based on a mobility agreement

6.1 Display the Charter and the related Erasmus Policy Statement prominently on the Institution's website.

6.2 Promote openly and consistently activities supported by the Programme, along with their result

7.1 Reports are submitted to the National Agency on time and in the required format

7.2 Ensure the sound and transparent management by partner HEIs of funds allocated to them through Erasmus+.

(Applicable to KA107 only).