



GUIDE for OUTGOING ERASMUS STUDENTS

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YOUR PERSONAL CHECKLIST

NECESSARY ARRANGEMENTS: (Please tick boxes on completion.)

PAPERWORK YOU NEED TO DO

1. Complete and submit Student Release Contract.
2. Complete and submit online Erasmus Grant Application.
3. Submit application to Host University.
4. Submit application for accommodation to Host University, if desired.
5. Inform Local Education Authority of exchange plans, by way of "To Whom it May Concern" letter.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE

1. Ensure you have a valid passport.
2. Arrange accommodation.
3. Make money/bank arrangements.
4. Make travel arrangements.
5. Arrange travel insurance.
6. Obtain European Health Insurance Card for emergency medical cover.
7. Purchase ISIC card from STA Travel (if desired).
8. Obtain birth certificate translation (if host university requires it).
9. Obtain passport photos (you may need up to 16).

WHEN YOU ARRIVE

1. Register with Police (if required)
2. Complete and return Confirmation of Course Registration form, with signatures.

OTHER PAPERWORK

1. Sign and return grant contract before departure and acknowledgement forms on receipt of grant (usually emailed to you in October and March).
2. Complete and return Student Report forms (usually sent near the end of your exchange).

1. INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide is intended to help you through the preparations for studying abroad under the Erasmus programme, and to give you some useful advice for when you arrive. Read through it once to get an overview, then go through each section in order to make sure that you have covered everything.

At the front of this guide there is a checklist of things you need to do in preparation for your placement abroad - **use it!** Its main purpose is to make your life easier in the long run.

This guide has been produced by the International Office. We are the office within the University that administers the Erasmus Programme, and are happy to try to answer any non-academic questions you might have about your forthcoming exchange. (For academic questions, we suggest that you speak to your Departmental Erasmus Coordinator and/or your Director of Studies.) The International Office maintains a small library of information about our partner universities as well as reports from students who have been on Erasmus exchanges in past years. Our contact details are:

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Every effort has been made to provide both accurate and comprehensive information. If, whilst away, you find any information in this guide which is inaccurate or out-of-date, or you come across extra information which would be useful to future students, please pass it on to us so that we can improve our service. **Thanks.**

2. THE ERASMUS PROGRAMME

WHAT IS ERASMUS?

In 1987 the European Commission initiated a new programme for student mobility in Europe called **ERASMUS** - the **E**uropean **A**ction **S**cheme for the **M**obility of **U**niversity **S**tudents. For the first time, this gave European undergraduates the opportunity to study for part of their degree programme in another European country and to receive recognition of this period as an integral part of their overall degree. Erasmus is now part of a larger programme for educational co-operation called the Lifelong Learning Programme and operates via a number of bilateral agreements between higher education institutions, through which the partners agree upon exchanges of staff and students. The University of Edinburgh currently has agreements with more than 150 partner institutions in 23 countries across the European Union and European Economic Area.

From your second year onwards you can spend between 3 to 10 months studying at one of our partner institutions in another European country. Most Erasmus students at Edinburgh go on exchange in their 3rd year.

The credit you gain for work done whilst on exchange will be transferred and credited towards your degree on your return to Edinburgh, but your grades will generally not be converted. This means that, while you will have to pass your exchange year, your grades will not count towards your final degree classification in Edinburgh.

WHAT IS ECTS?

Most European institutions use the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) in order to provide common procedures to guarantee academic recognition of studies abroad. ECTS credits are a value allocated to course units to describe the student workload required to complete them. They reflect the quantity of work that each course requires in relation to the total quantity of work required to complete a full year of academic study at the home institution; that is lectures, practical work, seminars, and private study (both in the library and at home).

A typical annual Edinburgh courseload of 120 credits is equivalent to 60 ECTS credits so you should plan to obtain around 30 ECTS credits per semester whilst away. Please talk to your Departmental Erasmus Co-ordinator and/or Director of Studies for advice on course requirements.

3. INITIAL APPLICATION PROCESS: requirements for Edinburgh

Throughout the application process, please remember to keep copies of all your documents.

STUDENT RELEASE & GRANT FORMS

Before departure, you must complete a Student Release Contract and an Erasmus Grant Application.

The Student Release Contract should be completed online then printed off and signed by you and your Departmental Erasmus Coordinator. It **must** be returned to the International Office before you leave Edinburgh for your exchange (and before the summer if you are going away for the autumn semester).

The Erasmus Grant Application should be completed and submitted online. This should be done as soon as possible so that a grant contract can be produced and sent to you before your departure. ***We cannot pay your Erasmus grant (if you are eligible) without the grant application and subsequent contract.*** (For further information about the Erasmus Grant, please see Appendix I.)

Both these applications can be found here:

http://www.international.ed.ac.uk/exchanges/Erasmus_Outgoing_Students/ERASMUS_applying_paperwork.html

COURSE OPTIONS

Discuss your course options with your Departmental Erasmus Coordinator and Director of Studies, and agree upon a programme of study that will enable you to study approximately 30 ECTS credits per semester (equivalent to 60 Edinburgh credits per semester). It is important to keep your Departmental Erasmus Coordinator and DoS informed of your plans to ensure that you will satisfy the academic requirements of your 3rd year.

Information about courses should be available online on your host university's website, or will be available in hard copy - the International Office holds prospectuses from partner universities in its Library at 57 George Square which you are welcome to use for reference (prospectuses may not be removed from the office). We also hold feedback reports from former Erasmus students which you may also find helpful in finding out about courses, term dates, holidays, accommodation, etc.

COURSE REGISTR- ATION

This point relates to a requirement AFTER your arrival but is important nonetheless. When you arrive at your host university, you are required to fill out a Confirmation of Course Registration form - this indicates that you have arrived and registered, and lets us know which courses you have actually registered for (which may differ from the courses you planned to take before departure). This form should be signed by an academic member of at your host university (usually your academic supervisor), and returned to the International Office in Edinburgh as soon as possible after your arrival. We will then forward it to your Director of Studies for information and to ensure that the courses you have registered for are appropriate.

4. APPLYING TO YOUR HOST UNIVERSITY

The next step is to apply directly to your host university - although you have been nominated by the University of Edinburgh to study at the host university, your place is usually provisional until you have completed your host university's application procedure. If you do not submit applications for courses/accommodation by your host university's deadlines, you may not be admitted.

If your host university asks for Edinburgh's Erasmus code, this is UK EDINBUR01. Your host university's Erasmus code can be found by inputting your host university's name on our online Search Exchange Links facility:
<http://www.international.ed.ac.uk/exchanges/index.php>.

HOW TO APPLY

Once you have been nominated by the International Office, you must complete your host uni's admissions process. Your host university may send you their application forms and information by post or by email. It is, therefore, important that you provide us with postal and email addresses which will be occupied/checked during term time and during holiday time as information may come at any point between your nomination and departure - a permanent address is usually more reliable than your university address, and you should check your university email account regularly, before and during your exchange.

Some institutions may not send you their application materials but expect you to locate and complete their online applications - use the Search Exchange Links facility online:
<http://www.international.ed.ac.uk/exchanges/index.php> to see if your host university's application materials are available online.

Our host universities all have their own application procedures, with different deadlines and different requirements - the International Office will be happy to try to help with the application procedures if needed, but you may find that you need to contact your host university in order to complete their forms. Be sure to do everything in good time in case you have difficulty in contacting the correct person at the last minute.

Throughout this application process, again, remember to keep copies of all your documents (originals occasionally do get lost) and be sure to meet any deadlines which your host university has set. Remember also to take copies of any forms/confirmation of acceptance letters, etc, with you when you travel to your host university in case these are required for matriculation/registration.

ACCOMM- ODATION

If your host university offers help in finding accommodation, this may make your arrival a lot less stressful and will help you meet other students. Be aware that standards of university accommodation may vary around Europe - if rent is very cheap, bear in mind that you usually get what you pay for. You generally need to apply for accommodation at your Host University at least three months before you arrive.

If your host university does not offer accommodation, or you opt not to stay in university accommodation, you may need to arrive early (or visit your host destination during the summer) to find a room. For many rooms and flats you need up to one month's rent as a deposit plus one month's rent in advance. Make sure you have access to this money, that you get a receipt for any money you hand over, and that you **fully understand** any contracts you sign. If necessary, talk to the International Office or Accommodation Office at your Host University for advice.

If you do not mind sharing a room, there are often options for flat-shares with double rooms. A good place to look for rooms is the University. Check out notice boards for adverts - you will have to be quick as there will be lots of students looking for rooms. If you are struggling to find a place to live you can always seek professional help from an agency. However be careful and only register with genuine agencies. Unfortunately there are people who will try to make the most out of your situation. Do not be pressured into signing a contract or handing any money over.

It may be a good idea to live with local students. This will give you a more complete experience, assisting you with your language skills and knowledge of the local culture. Try to arrive a little while before your lectures begin to allow you to settle into your new housing and to become acquainted with your new environment.

**ORIENT-
ATION**

Some institutions organise orientation courses for incoming students to introduce them to the University, the local area, the culture and each other. They are rarely compulsory, but if you have the opportunity they do help as 'culture shock absorbers'. The choice is yours.

**LANGUAGE
TUITION**

Many host universities provide free or subsidised language tuition before or at the start of each academic year or semester, so try to find out if this is on offer at your host university. Your host may send you information about language courses or you may find this on their website. If your host university does not offer language tuition, you may wish to attend a language school in the UK or in your host country before beginning your Erasmus exchange period. For either option, Erasmus funding of up to 500 euros may be available to reimburse you for any language training you undertake before your exchange period - all receipts and evidence of attendance on an official course must be provided in order to claim reimbursement. Generally, funding is only available to students who are *not* studying a language as part of their degree programme.

If you are going to a country whose language is not widely spoken or taught abroad, there may be an Erasmus Intensive Language Course (EILC) offered at your host university. These are free (although accommodation and meals must be paid for by you) and normally last for between 3 and 8 weeks and take place in the host country during the summer before your exchange period. Full information and application forms can be found online at http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/llp/erasmus/eilc/index_en.html. Please note, if you go on an EILC course, you are not entitled to reimbursement of further language courses.

**NO INFO
ABOUT
YOUR
HOST
UNI?**

If your chosen University does not contact you and you cannot find any information online about how to apply to them, then you should come to see us at the International Office. We have application forms for some of our partner institutions or we can contact the Host University for you.

5. PREPARING TO GO

With most of the university related paperwork out of the way, you will need to start considering more practical matters, i.e. money, travel, insurance, things to take with you, etc. Early planning can save you a lot of time and trouble in the long run. This section is designed to help you with your planning but please note that it is by no means definitive. You may want to invest in a guide book to the country you are going to for more in depth information about day-to-day living.

CONTACT YOUR LEA If your tuition fees are usually paid by your Local Education Authority (LEA) or the SAAS, or if you have a student loan, you must advise them that you are going on an Erasmus exchange - you are still entitled to receive any funding which they usually provide but it is important to let them know that you will be away on an Erasmus exchange. You can send them one of the two "To Whom It May Concern" letters enclosed with your initial Erasmus pack.

INSURE YOURSELF Some institutions require that you have insurance before you can enrol, but even if they don't, **make sure you insure yourself**. Arrange travel insurance that will cover you for the entire period you are abroad. Neither the University of Edinburgh nor the UK Socrates Erasmus Council can accept any responsibility for any accident, illness, injury, loss or damage to persons or property resulting from or in any way connected with your participation in the Socrates Erasmus Programme - it is your responsibility to make appropriate insurance arrangements.

You may want to shop around online to find the best deal. However, the University of Edinburgh also provides standard insurance cover for exchange students - you can complete a Travel Questionnaire [online](http://www.finance.ed.ac.uk/finweb/insurance/Travelinsurance.cfm) at www.finance.ed.ac.uk/finweb/insurance/Travelinsurance.cfm in the Travel Insurance Section, giving your reason for travel as "Erasmus exchange". The cost of a full academic year's cover is approximately £100 (one semester costs around £60) and information is given online as to what is covered. For more information, please contact the Insurance Office directly - contact details are on the website. Be prepared for the unexpected to happen - it is always better to be over rather than under insured.

EHIC You will also need to obtain a European Health Insurance Card - this entitles you to free or reduced cost medical treatment in the countries of the European Economic Area (EEA - the 25 EU

Member States plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) and Switzerland. **It is very unwise to go on an Erasmus exchange without this and you should apply for this in plenty of time.**

The EHIC replaces the old E111 health insurance form (which is no longer valid) and is free. Further information about the countries involved and what treatment is covered can be found on the Department of Health's website (www.dh.gov.uk/travellers). You can apply for an EHIC online in just a few minutes via the following website: <http://www.ehic.org.uk>. Make sure that you have your National Insurance number to hand. You can also apply by telephone: 0845 605 0707.

TRAVEL

How you get to your host destination is up to you. If you are in a rush and have a lot of luggage, obviously plane travel is your best option. If you fancy an adventure and you travel light, you might want to spend a couple of weeks travelling overland. However you travel, you are advised to purchase an International Student Identity Card (ISIC) before you go. This will be sufficient ID to get any student discounts that are available (both here and abroad) on anything from air travel to museum visits. ISIC Cards are available from STA travel at a cost of approximately £7 or can be arranged online: <http://www.statravel.co.uk> (click on "Book and Buy" then "ID and discount cards").

BANKS & MONEY

You may wish to open a bank account in your host country, although this could prove difficult if you're only there for one semester. In this case, it may be simpler to keep your money in your UK bank account, and then access it from abroad. Some banks can charge up to £20 to transfer money abroad, and it can take up to a week, so talk to your bank about the options available. It may also be worthwhile applying for internet banking before you go away - that way you can keep track of your finances and be sure that any grants or loans are paid into your account.

You may be able to draw money out of your UK current account by using facilities such as 'Cirrus' or 'Maestro'. Alternatively, a credit card or Visa card could be just as useful. Check with your bank for details about ATM charges when abroad and perhaps look into finding a bank or building society which will not charge for withdrawals abroad (such as the Nationwide). Make sure you have enough cash for your first few days abroad. About £150 in local currency should be a reasonable amount to tide you over until you have settled in. Do not carry large amounts of cash with you, for security reasons.

ARRIVAL If you have not arranged accommodation before you leave, remember to book a room in a hotel or hostel as somewhere to use as a base when you first arrive. It is not a good idea to arrive in a foreign environment complete with your luggage whilst worrying about where you will sleep for the night. You can use the internet to reserve a bed in many hostels and hotels, so **book it from home**: then use it as a base while you find something more permanent.

THINGS TO TAKE Try to travel light but consider packing the following useful items:
A first aid kit: you can buy them ready-made from chemists.
A good pair of shoes: i.e. ones that are versatile and will last.
A toilet roll: so that you don't get caught short.
A sewing kit: for emergency repairs.
A tin / bottle opener: for obvious reasons.
A small alarm clock: so you do not miss all those important lectures.

Remember that you can buy clothes as you need them; you do not need to pack a range of clothes for all possible (although unlikely) situations. You must also be aware that airlines have strict limits on the amount you can take on board (usually about 20kg - please check with your airline). You will be charged for any excess baggage. If you do have a lot of things, it is a good idea to check how you are going to get from the airport to your destination. You can find a lot of information on the internet - check out your arrival airport's website. It is a good idea to buy a local map before you arrive to allow you to get acquainted with the region.

MOBILE PHONES If you are travelling with your mobile, be sure to contact your service provider who can give you details on International Roaming. Your mobile may not operate unless your provider registers your phone for international access. When using your phone abroad you will often get charged for the expensive 'international' part of the call. Talk to your supplier and be sure to shop around for the best deals.

THINGS NOT TO TAKE To avoid problems at customs avoid taking non-prescription drugs, firearms(!), etc. abroad with you. Make sure you do not have sharp knives, scissors, etc in your hand luggage, as these will be confiscated. If you are flying, do not pack gas canisters or aerosols, as these tend to blow up or ignite at high altitudes. Find

out your duty free entitlement and stick within the limits, keeping all receipts for your purchases just in case.

**TAKING
YOUR
OWN CAR**

If you are taking a car to continental Europe remember to drive on the RIGHT- HAND SIDE of the road! Complete all the legal stuff; making sure your insurance, MOT, etc. will cover the period that you are abroad. Make sure you reset your headlights, and respect the local highway code. If your vehicle has British licence plates you are required to have a **GB** sticker on it. If you sell your car whilst abroad you will need permission from the Customs Authorities.

GENERAL

Try to find out as much as you can about your host institution and their academic system. We will give you access to what information we have in the International Office. It is often better to refer to the web for detailed, more up to date information.

Get yourself a good guidebook. *Lonely Planet* or *Rough Guide* books are well respected, and will give you a wealth of information on the country you are moving to, the town/city you will be living in, places to visit and other important information. Look out for local entertainment guides - they are also good for highlighting the more distinctive cultural elements of a particular country. Be sure to respect the local culture to avoid offending the locals.

Use the Internet for up to date information on a particular town or country. For instance, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's Travel Advice site is worth a visit, and is also good for health and safety information. Additionally, you might want to contact the relevant Consulate here in Edinburgh.

6.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Much of what we can tell you about health and safety whilst abroad is common sense, but even if you are an experienced traveller we advise you to read through this section as a precaution.

If you have a particular health condition, discuss the details of continuing your prescription abroad with your GP. Also be sure to get translated copies of any important health documentation you may have. Once you have settled in to your new accommodation, it is a sensible idea to find out the location of the nearest hospital and A&E department in case of an emergency.

PERSONAL SAFETY

- ! The less conspicuous you look, the less interest you will be likely to attract from unwelcome quarters, so do not make it obvious that you are a foreigner. Perhaps you could consult your map in a shop or café, rather than looking lost in a back street.
- ! **Certain behaviour can also leave you vulnerable. For instance, getting completely drunk can attract unnecessary attention, as most young Europeans drink comparatively sensibly. If someone in your company is in a bad condition, do make sure that they get home safely.**
- ! Avoid wandering aimlessly, or going into areas of town which are known to be dangerous, especially after dark.
- ! **Do not carry large amounts of cash or valuables on your person. Try to divide up what you do carry on you. A money belt or wallet that fits inside your clothing is a better place to hide valuables and documents.**
- ! Do not try and retaliate should someone try to mug you; your personal safety is more important than any amount of money you may have on you.
- ! **If you are finding your own accommodation, talk to other students in the same areas that you are looking at and who have been through the same process. For safety, take someone with you when you go flat hunting. Also have an idea of what the going rate is in the area to avoid being overcharged.**
- ! Hitchhiking is not advisable as a method of transport, and in some countries; (e.g. France) is illegal.
- ! **Beware of taking taxis from unlicensed operators.**
- ! Speak to a local or the host accommodation office about where the dangerous places are in the area.

- DOMESTIC SAFETY** ! Check the electric/gas/water connections, etc. where you are living. If they look suspect, call someone in to examine them.
- ! **Fit a smoke alarm. They can save your life and for a small price you will have peace of mind.**
- ! Most European countries use electric currents of 220 volts AC with two pin plugs as standard. Take a few adapters, but do not take your television - the chances are it will not be compatible.
- HEALTH AWARENESS** ! Find out where the nearest emergency hospital is to where you live and where you study. Also make sure you know the local emergency phone numbers.
- ! **Register with a Doctor.**
- ! Have a dental/eye check-up before you go.
- CRISIS PREVENTION** ! Keep your family, your host university, and us informed of where you are living.
- ! **Always make sure that you have access to some money; if something does go wrong, it will help you cope with most situations.**
- ! Take a First Aid kit with you.
- ! **Make sure you keep photocopies of all your important documents on you just in case.**
- ! If possible try to always have a back up ATM card that you can leave in a safe place. This can be used whilst waiting for replacement cards which can often take several days to reach you.
- ! **Keep a note of emergency numbers for your bank and credit cards so that you can cancel them if they are lost or stolen.**
- THE LAW** ! Drugs. Just say no! You really do not need the hassle.
- ! **Do not carry weapons around with you. (That includes CS gas canisters).**
- ! Remember to carry ID, if the country you are staying in requires you to carry ID, at all times.
- ! **In the unlikely event of you being arrested, insist on the British Consulate being informed. That way, a consular officer can advise you of the local procedures, etc.**

**ADVICE
FOR
WOMEN**

Unfortunately women still need to take extra precautions when travelling abroad. Specifically, try to avoid moving into a ground floor flat or somewhere that is easily accessible from an outside staircase. If travelling at night, try and stay in a group of people. If you think someone may be following you, make it obvious that you've noticed him or her and stay somewhere with a lot of people around until you judge it to be safer to continue.

The way you dress can influence the way you are treated. Young women in short skirts and bare midriffs may find themselves verbally and physically harassed in some countries. Talk to your peers for guidelines to avoid any unpleasant situations.

GENERAL

Guide books such as *Lonely Planet* or *Rough Guide* have good hints on health and safety in the host country and are good sources of countless other information useful during your stay. Most importantly, just relax and concentrate on trying to settle and feel at home as quickly as possible. Just like in your home town, a little common sense goes a long way.

**AND
FINALLY...**

Phew, the reading is almost over! By now you should know everything you need to successfully integrate yourself into your chosen country. If you need any more advice, please do not hesitate to contact the International Office. Now it is over to you. Please ensure that you come prepared and remember to utilise the checklists at the beginning of this guide to help you.

We hope that you enjoy your exchange. Please remember that the Erasmus exchange is not just for academic purposes but is also an opportunity to experience and enjoy a new culture whilst making friends from all over Europe. Throw yourself into your new life and be willing to meet new people at any events organised for you by your Host University. You will not be the only person alone in a new country so do not be scared, just be proactive. This will make the transition period easier for you. Remember E is not only for Erasmus but also for enjoyment, experience, exploring and education. Enjoy your exchange!

APPENDIX: THE STUDENT MOBILITY GRANT

Funding, in the form of an Erasmus Grant, is available for students who are citizens of the UK, EU and EEA, in addition to any funding and support in the form of loans or grants that you usually receive from your Local Education Authority. The Erasmus Grant is intended as a contribution towards the additional costs of studying abroad, such as travel and possible differences in the cost of living.

The Erasmus grant in 2006/07 provided a total of around 400 euros per month for each month of study. In past years, this has been paid in two instalments, one in October/November and one in March/April (this was the case even if you were only going on an Erasmus exchange for one semester). The first instalment usually provided around 60-70% of the total grant, with the second instalment providing around 30-40%. There may be some changes to how much, how and when the grant allocations are made in 2007/08 - this information will be updated once we are made aware of what these changes will be and how they will affect students.

Students who are not citizens of the EU or EEA member states are not eligible for Erasmus funding but can normally participate in Erasmus exchanges.

There are a number of basic requirements for eligibility for the grant, and there are conditions of payment which you must consent to before you receive any money. Three important things to note are:

- i. We cannot pay you a grant unless we receive your Erasmus Grant Application and Erasmus Grant Contract.
- ii. If you do not complete at least 3 months of study on your Erasmus exchange, you will have to return the total grant that you received. If you do not return the grant, you will be deemed to be a debtor to the University and may not be able to graduate until you settle that debt.
- iii. On payment of each instalment of your grant, the International Office will email you some forms relating to the grant - you are required to sign and return these forms to confirm that you have received your payment. Failure to complete and return this paperwork after the first allocation may well lead to your second allocation being delayed or withheld.

Erasmus students who are going to study in Switzerland will not receive an Erasmus grant from Edinburgh but will be entitled to a grant paid by the Swiss authorities - your host university should be able to advise on amounts and how to apply.

