

Northern Regional College Erasmus Policy Statement

Introduction

Northern Regional College (NRC) was founded in 2008 following the merger of three legacy colleges. Since the establishment of NRC, the College has been engaged in a range of international activity, much of which has been a result of relationships and partnerships that were developed within the institutes that came together to form NRC. The majority of international activity is supported by external funding, often from EU funding programmes, but also supported by other sources such as local councils, Connected, Invest NI and companies.

Why international activity

The Department for Employment and Learning's Strategic Approach to International Activity (2006) notes the increased globalisation of economies, trade and services and the challenges this creates.

‘ As a region of 1.7 million people on the western edge of the European Union, with increasing competition from both developed and rapidly emerging developing nations, it is even more imperative that we maximise our opportunities for international collaboration and involvement. By developing strategic international partnerships we can increase our influence and reputation as a global player; thus attracting more inward investment, skilled workers and high calibre overseas students coming to study at our Higher and Further Education (HE and FE) institutions. This outward, forward looking approach offers the best means of securing our place in the world for the benefit of all citizens of Northern Ireland. ‘

Given the key role played by NRC in skills development within Northern Ireland, involvement in International activity is critical rather than optional.

The potential benefits for stakeholders of the college that accrue from international activity are many and are outlined below.

Students benefit from:

- Greater awareness and comprehension of global issues
- Greater understanding and appreciation of different countries, their cultures, and working methods and therefore better equipped to live and work in a global economy and multicultural society
- Access to study/work placements abroad, which will increase their future opportunities for mobility

College staff benefit from:

- Increased staff development opportunities via international placements, exchanges and project assignments
- New and creative ideas through collaboration and sharing of experience and

- best practice with overseas partners
- Opportunities to create new strategic partnerships with local, national and international businesses

Employers benefit from:

- Access to a workforce which is better equipped with the appropriate skills for a global economy and which will help to increase UK competitiveness

Local communities benefit from:

- Improved cohesion through the development of globally aware citizens with increased understanding and tolerance of others

International Strategy

Within its International strategy NRC has set out a Vision for International activity:

1. to be recognised as a valued partner in all strands of international activity
2. for each Faculty within the College to be involved in international activity
3. to enhance the NRC student and staff experience and mobility by developing new international partnerships.

NRC's International Strategy has four strategic aims, these relate to:

- Student staff mobility
- International Students
- International Projects
- Overseas training and consultancy

In achieving these aims the Erasmus Charter will enable NRC to deliver focused activities that set Faculty targets for International projects leading to student and staff mobility. This will increase the diversity of the student population by engaging with increasing numbers from other European countries. Erasmus Charter activities will also allow students to experience an enriched educational experience both in language development and culturally by attending third level institutions across Europe.

Visibility to Erasmus Activities

To develop and market courses that allow for the broadening of a student's knowledge and to develop networks within the existing partner colleges.

Erasmus University Charter & European Policy Statement

The Erasmus Charter and the EPS will be published on our web, notice boards, emailed to students & staff and College Newsletter.

1.1 Strategy and Objectives

NRC's Erasmus Strategy in the context of the Lifelong Learning Programme (2014-20) will be to strengthen our European links and broaden the range of Erasmus activities available to our staff and students.

Student mobility will remain as the College's priority. With the development of new programmes which promote a study period abroad, NRC aims to increase the numbers of students participating.

Staff Mobility will continue to underpin our bi-lateral relationships and serve as a starting point for the further development of multi-lateral projects as outlined below. The opportunities offered in the Lifelong Learning Programme will provide for overseas internships for NRC students and enable students from Partner Institutions to undertake internships in Northern Ireland.

NRC will form new partnerships at Short Cycle and 1st Cycle degrees.

A further strategy will be to develop partnerships with the objective of developing and exchanging information and professional experience on teaching and learning systems.

1.2 Publicising the Erasmus Charter and the EPS

Information concerning Erasmus activities will continue to be publicised on the NRC website, in the Student Handbook, Admissions Handbook, newsletter and local media. The Erasmus University Charter and the Erasmus Policy Statement will be published on the NRC website. Students will receive a copy of the EUC and pre-departure preparation will include references to the content of the charter. Erasmus activities will be promoted among students and staff by email and presentations.

1.3 Compliance with NRC's non-discrimination objectives

Compliance with the NRC's Equality Policy is ensured through the work of the Equality and Careers Unit. NRC strategy for the next five years includes guarantees of Equality of Access to all short cycle and undergraduate programmes irrespective of age, gender, race, disability or social background. NRC has a national profile as a location which caters for a high proportion of learners drawn from backgrounds traditionally under-represented in third-level education. The Careers Unit provides support for these groups, facilities for students with special needs, and develops quality initiatives for different groups of students.

2.0 Quality of Academic Mobility Activities.

The BDU operates within the NRC Quality Management System in executing all its academic mobility activities. This sets down norms and procedures to ensure compliance on the use of ECTS to facilitate academic recognition of all credits earned by both incoming and outgoing students. The European Credit Transfer System will be used to facilitate academic recognition for both incoming and outgoing students.

The information regarding programmes currently published on the NRC website will be reviewed and updated to include full programme details, including module descriptors.

Outgoing students are informed and counselled by means of presentations and regular meetings, in preparation for mobility.

An orientation week will be organised for incoming students, including campus tours, introduction to student services, clubs and societies and social functions. English language classes are provided for all incoming students on a semester long basis. Outgoing students studying abroad through French, German or Spanish receive 3-4 hours tuition weekly for two years prior to departure. Tandem learning assists students to integrate.

Through its Student Services Office, NRC provides a comprehensive range of services, including a health unit, counselling and careers services, sport and recreation, clubs and societies.

Accommodation is organised for incoming students off campus as appropriate.

Staff mobility is promoted and supported through the Business Development Unit.

3.0 Quality of Student Placement Activities

A number of programmes incorporate a period of work placement, varying from one or two days per week over a three- month period to fulltime placement over several months. While few of these take place abroad at present, it is envisaged to expand these placement opportunities to include overseas internships under the framework of the Lifelong Learning Programme.

Work placement constitutes an integral part of these programmes. It is recognised as a central learning experience and credits are awarded for successful completion of the placement.

NRC has a team of Training Support Officers that act as a point of liaison for the student and the workplace supervisor prior to and during placement. Management of placement will involve:

1. Orientation of the student towards the workplace.
2. Management of the student during placement.
3. A system of liaison with the employer.
4. Evaluation of the student.

While it is not NRC's policy to place barriers in the way of incoming students, involvement in placement will be limited by available resources and strict reciprocal arrangements will have to apply.

1. Ensuring a **quality** higher education system
2. Adopting a two- or three-cycle system of study (BA, MA, PhD)
3. Promoting the **mobility** of students and academic and administrative staff
4. Introducing a **credit system** (ECTS) for the assessment of study performance
5. **The Recognition of levels:** adopting a system of easily identifiable and comparable levels
6. **The Active involvement** of higher education institutions, teachers and students in the Bologna Process and student participation in the management of higher education
7. Promoting a **European dimension** in higher education

8. Promoting the attractiveness of the European higher education area
9. **Lifelong learning**
10. A European higher education area and a European research area – **two pillars of a society based on knowledge**