

The European Higher Education Area: Celebrating a decade of UK engagement

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The colours used on the cover represent those found in the flags of the 46 participating countries in the Bologna Process.

March 2010 marks the establishment of the **European Higher Education Area** and 10 years of the **Bologna Process**. This is an unprecedented achievement in higher education involving the constructive engagement and collective decision-making of 46 participating countries across Europe.

In the UK, we can be proud of our role in the Bologna Process since its inception. UK ministers for higher education and their government departments, the Higher Education Funding Councils, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, the National Union of Students, and higher education institutions themselves have worked together to implement the aims of the Bologna Process in the UK – enhancing student and staff mobility; enabling the comprehension and comparison of degrees; enhancing the student experience; and promoting the attractiveness of European higher education worldwide.

This celebratory publication sets out what has been achieved so far, profiling a number of key areas where the UK's engagement with continental Europe has been strengthened through the Bologna Process. It looks forward to the next decade in higher education as the UK forges closer links with other Bologna Process participating countries, widening its global appeal and strengthening its position as one of the leading countries in the world for the quality and reputation of its universities.

We hope that this publication will provide you with a real sense of what has been achieved in the UK over the past 10 years, and the tangible benefits of the Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area for our higher education institutions, staff and students.



Professor Steve Smith
President
Universities UK



Professor Ruth Farwell
Chair
GuildHE

An educational revolution is sweeping Europe!

'People at the time perhaps didn't realise how important the European Higher Education Area was going to be, how it would grow and embrace so many different countries and get so much buy in and commitment.'

Baroness Tessa Blackstone, Vice-Chancellor, University of Greenwich in London and the then Minister of State for Education and signatory to the 1999 Bologna Process declaration



'An educational revolution is sweeping Europe!'
This was the headline in June 1999 as government ministers from 29 countries gathered in Bologna, Italy to sign a historic pledge. The ambitious plan was for countries differing in language, culture and systems of education to find common ground through the creation of a new European Higher Education Area.

It was to be a 'Europe of knowledge' in which barriers to the movement of students and staff across national boundaries would be torn down. In an increasingly competitive global education market, the countries would have a shared mission to promote the excellence of European higher education.

In the huge and magnificent Aula Magna, the original library of the University of Bologna which is believed to be the world's oldest university, the 29 ministers signed their names. The process of creating a European Higher Education Area in Europe by 2010 was underway.

Each country was to retain its power over the shape, size and curricula of its higher education system. However, the founder members agreed that they would devise an overarching framework through which the thousands of different national qualifications could be mapped and more readily understood and compared.

There were some who said it could never happen, that nations would jealously guard their independence. But a decade later the doubters have been proved wrong. Fears expressed about a move to 'harmonisation' across Europe through common curricula, governance and funding structures have also proved unfounded. Higher education across Europe has continued to expand, with a diversity of mission and provision.

As planned, in March 2010 the European Higher Education Area came into being – and with nearly double the number of participating countries. The 29 signatory countries have expanded to 46 embracing the wider Europe from Iceland to Russia and from Norway to Turkey.

The UK higher education sector has been active in the process since the very beginning and its contribution has been substantial.

Already there is enhanced student and staff mobility across Europe, helped by the significant progress which has been made towards achieving a common 'space' in which the qualifications from different countries can be more easily weighed and compared. As a result it is now far easier for students to gain credits from universities in more than one country to count towards their final degrees.

The Bologna Process objective to increase student and staff mobility has been aided significantly through the European Commission's Erasmus Programmes. In 2008/09 the UK sent 10,843 Erasmus exchange students to other Bologna Process countries for study and work placements, a rise of 6 per cent on the previous year and the third successive annual increase. And it is not just students who are choosing to widen their experience: outward staff mobility rose by 10 per cent in the same year.

From now on UK higher education institutions can offer students from home and abroad not only the hallmark of a UK education but a calling card to the rest of Europe as well.

Creating the new European Higher Education Area

'The Bologna Process is important to the international recognition of higher education qualifications and the mobility of students across Europe. Being compliant with the European Standards and Guidelines is a key step for the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) and places us at the forefront of quality assurance throughout Europe and worldwide. This means that UK students can now have greater confidence that the level of their qualification will be recognised across Europe.'

Anthony McClaran, Chief Executive, QAA



Mobility, employability, quality and increased competitiveness are four of the guiding principles behind the six original objectives agreed in 1999.

Work to achieve these objectives is guided and assessed through ministerial meetings every two to three years where ministers in charge of higher education in each of the 46 participating countries meet to assess progress, and to plot the course for the near future. It is an independent, intergovernmental process outside the framework of the European Union.

Following six ministerial meetings there are 10 objectives in the Bologna Process:

- adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees through the development of qualifications frameworks and a three-cycle system
- the development of innovative, cooperative, cross-border study programmes and joint degrees
- promotion of student and staff mobility
- enhanced recognition of qualifications by institutions and employers through the establishment of a system of credits and a statement describing qualifications in an understandable way
- promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance
- enhancement of the social dimension through wider access to higher education and support for students
- enhancement of the employability of graduates
- focus on lifelong learning
- promotion of the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area
- focus on doctoral studies and creating synergies between the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area

The outcomes of each ministerial meeting are taken forward by a Bologna Follow-Up Group which is made up of ministerial representatives from participating countries, the European Commission, and other European-level organisations representing higher education institutions, universities, students and quality assurance agencies.

The UK takes the baton

'We commend the work that the Government and other agencies have been doing to help shape the modernisation process across the European Higher Education Area through the Bologna Process and support this continuing role in fostering a culture of respect for institutional autonomy and flexibility in higher education. We firmly believe that such modernisation is likely to be more successful and sustainable if it reflects a partnership between government and institutions.'

The House of Commons Education and Skills Committee commending the 'bottom-up' policy-making approach in its report on the Bologna Process in April 2007



As one of the founder members, the UK has played a key role in shaping the framework of the European Higher Education Area from the very beginning. Universities in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are independent bodies and this autonomy has given them a special interest in ensuring that the Bologna Process – as the preparations for the new higher education area became known – did not impose a centralised or bureaucratic structure on institutions.

As was the vision of ministers in 1999, the UK has taken a ‘bottom-up’ approach in which politicians and officials have taken their lead from institutions and their associations, professional bodies, representatives of other sectors, and employers.

From the outset of the Bologna Process the UK has played an active and leading role in policy development. During this time, it has also hosted a number of official policy-making seminars. These include two seminars in Edinburgh in 2004 and 2008 on the crucial principle of assessing the worth of a qualification by the quality of what students know and can do at the end of a course rather than the length of time they spend on it. In 2007 Wales hosted a policy-making seminar in Swansea on the European Higher Education Area’s contribution to enhancing the employability of students. London was the host city for a seminar on the mobility of staff and students in 2007 and in 2008 a seminar on quality assurance in transnational education.

With help from the British Council and funding from the European Commission, 14 ‘Bologna experts’ were appointed to help inform and advise institutions on developments in Bologna, and any implications for individual institutions. The advisers are senior academics and administrators plus representatives of the student body.

In 2004 the UK Higher Education Europe Unit was set up in London as a sector-wide body to raise awareness of the European issues and coordinate the UK’s involvement.

The UK also maintained a powerful presence in the Bologna Process through the staffing and funding of the Bologna Secretariat between 2005 and 2007. Staff were seconded from the then Department for Education and Skills and the Scottish Government to coordinate a series of official Bologna Process seminars in countries as far apart as Georgia and Norway. The UK Bologna Secretariat also maintained an official Bologna Process website, keeping the rest of the world updated with news of higher education developments in Europe. The UK Secretariat’s term in office concluded with the hosting of the fifth Bologna Process ministerial meeting in London in May 2007. The then Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education, Bill Rammell MP, successfully chaired the discussions on the London Communiqué which set the priorities for the Bologna Process for the following two years.

As well as hosting the Bologna Process Secretariat between 2005 and 2007, the UK also held the Presidency of the European Union from 1 July 2005 until 31 December 2005. At an informal meeting at Hampton Court in October 2005, European Union heads of state acknowledged that universities, and the research and development conducted within them, are the foundations of European competitiveness, thus kick-starting the European Union’s modernisation agenda for universities.

The key to the success of the European Higher Education Area is the cross-border readability and comparability of qualifications. Throughout the process the UK has stressed that it must be done in a way that avoids centralised bureaucracy and leaves the decision-making in the hands of individual institutions.

In 2005 a three-cycle framework against which qualifications from the different countries can be mapped – the overarching **Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area** was adopted. It comprises:

- a first cycle of at least three full-time or equivalent academic years
- a second cycle
- a third doctoral cycle

The three-cycle framework is based on the systems already in place across the UK. For the UK, this has meant fewer changes than in many other participating countries where students could take between four and seven years to complete undergraduate degrees.

The next step was to assign bands of credits to each cycle, a system which was familiar to many higher education institutions in the UK which have used them for over 20 years to help student choice and mobility.

The first cycle carries 180 to 240 European credit transfer system (ECTS) credits, the second 90 to 120, and the third is not normally credit rated.

The UK played a leading role in ensuring that, though the credits have notional study timespans attached to them (60 ECTS credits for a full year of academic study) the number of credits is determined primarily by the learning outcome – what students are expected to know, understand and be able to do.

The more widespread adoption of credits for completed sections of qualifications has already made it easier for students to attend universities in more than one country using the credits from different institutions towards the final award.

Crucial to the protection of individual country autonomy was the agreement that there would be no central body to oversee the formulation, awarding and description of qualifications. Instead, each country develops and implements its own qualifications framework and 'self-certifies' it according to standard criteria and guidelines to demonstrate that its higher education qualifications framework can be linked to that of the European Higher Education Area. The criteria include the need for a robust quality assurance system to be in place and a 'competent' authority to oversee credit awarding decisions made at institutional level. To ensure transparency, the self-certification process involves international scrutiny by experts appointed to be part of the process.

The self-certification processes for the two frameworks for higher education qualifications in the UK – **The framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland** and **The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland** – were managed by the QAA. These were completed by 2009 – an excellent achievement highlighted by the fact that of the seven national qualifications frameworks that have been self-certified so far, two are from the UK. This important step towards 'readability' means that the UK's higher education qualifications frameworks are fully compatible with that of the European Higher Education Area.

In parallel with the development of the qualifications frameworks, the **European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESGs)** were introduced in 2005. The ESGs are another Bologna Process tool developed to give greater transparency to the quality assurance arrangements in participating countries, thereby aiding the mutual recognition of qualifications and student mobility. National quality assurance agencies that are compliant with the ESGs can achieve full membership of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). In 2008, the QAA renewed its full membership of ENQA for another five years following a successful external review with international participation to establish its compliance with the ESGs.

Case study Loughborough University



Few areas are better served by the pooling of expertise worldwide than the search for reliable and cost-effective renewable energy sources.

Loughborough University's Centre for Renewable Energy Systems Technology (CREST) – based in the Department of Electronic and Electrical Engineering – is one of a network of eight European universities and research centres leading the way in renewable energy, research, development and demonstration. The three-semester, 15-month course amounts to 90 ECTS and is coordinated by the European Renewable Energy Research Centres Agency (EUREC) agency, a consortium of research centres which has its headquarters in Brussels.

The programme is designed to produce designers and developers of the next generation of renewable and sustainable energy systems. A common renewable energy core is taught at Loughborough or one of the other three universities in Europe and the second semester is spent at another partner university.

For the final part of the course students carry out a six-month research project, normally a work placement, in Europe or further afield, with academic supervision from the university which provided the core teaching.

Graduates go on to work or carry out research across the globe. One of them, Matthew Clarke, is in his first year of a doctorate in Vienna working in concentrator photovoltaics and heading off to Australia for four months to work on his thesis.

'I wanted to work in the field of renewable energy, but had nothing with which to entice employers other than a bachelors in mechanical engineering. I knew that I needed advanced knowledge and something to show for it,' he said. 'A masters in renewable energy was the right choice. It sets me apart from any other candidate. There is nothing quite like the experience of upending your whole life and moving to another country. It builds strength and character, and teaches you that you can do things you never thought you could. Employers respect this. Last but not least, I had a blast and made some of the most lasting friendships of my life.'

Case study Kingston University

Kingston University's Human Rights and Genocide Studies MA is taught simultaneously with partner universities in Italy, Germany and Poland over 18 months and is worth 90 ECTS.

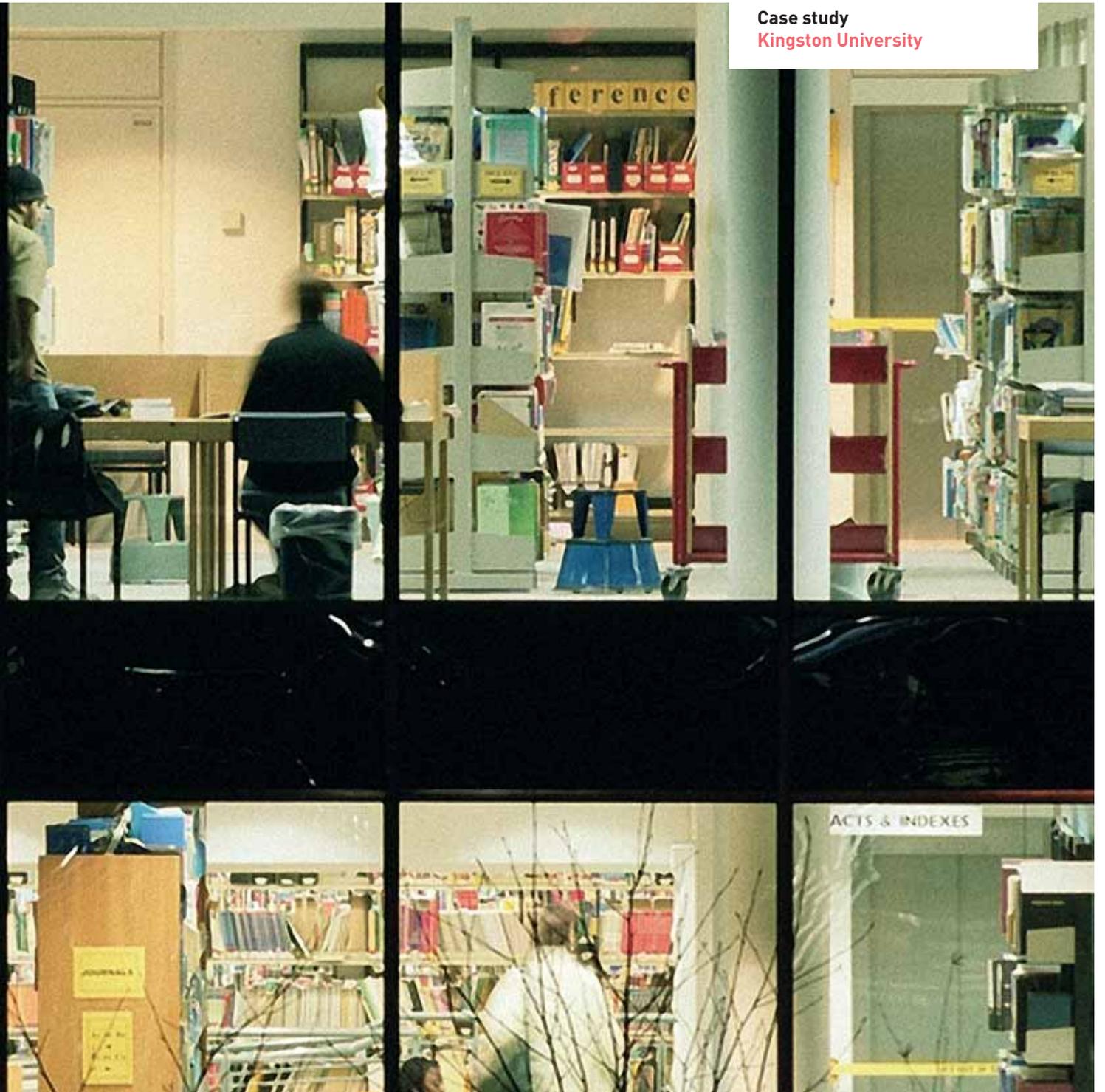
Students attend at least two of the universities – Kingston University, the University of Siena, Viadrina European University Frankfurt an der Oder, and the Collegium Civitas in Warsaw.

They also have the chance of internships and dissertations at Uppsala University in Sweden.

Italian Angela Lolli, 29, one of the first cohort of students on the new masters, said she wanted to study at the University of Siena in her home country and also to have a UK experience. 'More or less every week we have different teachers and we meet professors from all over the world. In our field of studies it is particularly important to develop an international approach and get different perspectives,' she said.



Students at Kingston University gain from different perspectives provided by the outside world.



Student and staff mobility

The UK's students and staff will increasingly gain unparalleled access to many of the 5,000 universities, academies and colleges in Europe as barriers continue to be broken down between the 46 different countries. They will benefit from the expertise and perspectives of staff from very different backgrounds and academic traditions.

Using ECTS means student qualifications will be increasingly understood and valued across national boundaries. Their achievements will be portable between those universities which have agreed to recognise each other's courses as contributing to the final degrees. Employers will be able for the first time to see at a glance where qualifications from other countries fit in with their own national awards.

Studies have repeatedly demonstrated the benefits of foreign exchanges. Mobile students have greater confidence, are more self-reliant and have improved employment prospects. A study by the Higher Education Funding Council for England in 2009 reported that six months after graduation Erasmus students were more likely to be employed or in further study and were substantially more likely to have above-average salaries.

UK students have been slow in the past to take up the opportunity for foreign study offered by schemes such as Erasmus, mainly because they do not have sufficient command of a language other than English.

However, there are signs of increased willingness of UK students to travel. The number of outward Erasmus students has gone up each year for the past three.

There are two reasons for this. Firstly, institutions in other European countries are providing tuition in English and secondly, UK institutions are making greater use of language labs and 'language buddy' systems to prepare their students for study abroad.

The attitude of academic staff towards mobility is another important factor in a student's decision to go abroad. If staff themselves have had a positive experience of being mobile, they are likely to encourage their students to do the same. The number of staff in UK higher education institutions travelling overseas as part of the Erasmus programme for teaching visits and training rose by 9.6 per cent in 2008–09, another positive indication that outward mobility is picking up in the UK.

The **European Diploma Supplement** is another key plank of mobility within the new education area. The aspiration is for every student graduating to receive the supplement describing the qualification in a standard, easily-understood and comparable format. To help readability, the supplement also contains contextual information about the structure of the higher education system within which it was issued.

Three universities in the UK already hold the Diploma Supplement label, Bournemouth University, University of Kent and Swansea University. This denotes that they issue the supplement as a matter of course to all students, use the correct format and are prepared to provide it in both a widely-spoken European language and, if requested, another language.

Progress towards UK sector-wide implementation of the supplement is likely to be accelerated by the wider introduction of the **Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR)** in the 2011 academic year. The HEAR incorporates the supplement, and adapted to the UK context, it provides the full details of a student's final achievement and has the potential to provide more detail about assessment outcomes and informal learning. This was recommended by the steering group on measuring and recording student achievement chaired by Professor Sir Robert Burgess, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Leicester.

Case study St Mary's University College



St Mary's University College, Belfast has embraced the spirit of the Bologna Process in its programmes. Over 20 per cent of students take up the opportunity to study abroad and about 50 per cent of academic staff are engaged in international activities. In 2010, the college will host an Erasmus Intensive Programme in Special Education and an International Week which will include classes given by European colleagues.

Students on St Mary's bilingual (Gaelic and English) Bachelor of Education and PGCE programmes are also encouraged to avail of international opportunities. Dr Gabrielle Nig Uidhir, Senior Tutor for Development, said that a mobility period is a benefit for both the outgoing student as well as home students. 'Students clearly learn from sharing their understanding of immersion pedagogies with international peers. Back in the classroom, the quality of class debates is enriched by these observations and insights gained abroad. This will ultimately benefit the wider community of young people in schools.'

Case study The University of Kent



The University of Kent has been a prime mover in the Bologna Process towards the European Higher Education Area, including piloting and implementing the ECTS from its inception.

Kent is also one of only three UK institutions to have been awarded the European Commission's Diploma Supplement Label for its full implementation.

The university offers a wide range of double degrees across the three cycles of higher education including the Bidiplome in Politics and International Relations where students spend two years in Canterbury and two years at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques in Lille.

Kent has long been committed to student and staff mobility under Erasmus and reports that a steady increase in numbers of outgoing students means that it is now achieving near parity in the numbers of outgoing and incoming students. It attributes this success to a wide range of courses which include a year abroad, the activities to promote and support mobility and its strong European outlook.

Case study King's College London

To help break down language barriers which might discourage student mobility, King's College London has launched an innovative collaborative project between the Graduate School and the university's Modern Language Centre. Research students can take up to 40 hours face-to-face language tuition and attend seminars, all at no additional cost. Many masters students are offered a 20-credit language module as one of their options.

Demand for the tuition exceeded expectations when the scheme was launched in September 2009. The language centre enrolled 150 postgraduate students, of which 76 were involved in research and 74 on taught programmes. So far the most popular languages have been French, German, Arabic and Italian.

'We want to provide our students with the necessary languages they will need to travel to Europe to undertake the joint higher degrees, which we are discussing with partners in France and Germany,' said Professor Vaughan Robinson, the Director of the King's College Graduate School.



Research students at King's College London benefit from language tuition.
photograph © Phil Sayer



New opportunities: Joint degrees

Joint degrees between universities in different countries have existed in a small way for years but developments such as the Erasmus Mundus programme have prompted a new wave of initiatives. The scheme offers financial support for institutions and scholarships for individuals embarking on joint masters and doctorates. It also funds projects to promote European higher education worldwide and partnerships with non-European higher education institutions. Both students and academics can apply for scholarships.

The fact that national qualifications frameworks are now visibly compatible within the European Higher Education Area has made it easier for academics to set up shared programmes to be undertaken in more than one country.

Many UK universities have been quick to respond and have used funding from two Erasmus schemes to build successful multilateral degrees, usually at masters level. The Erasmus Intensive Programmes are short periods of study lasting from two to six weeks of subject-related work bringing together students and staff from at least three participating countries. In 2009–10 the UK had an 82 per cent success rate with 14 out of its 17 applications for funding approved.

A second scheme – the Erasmus curriculum development project – supports innovation in teaching by combining the expertise of higher education institutions from at least three eligible countries. The projects are chosen for the contribution they can make to reinforcing the quality and European dimension of higher education teaching. Universities are encouraged to include public bodies, enterprises or associations in their networks or consortia.

The Bologna Process has encouraged many more joint degrees, both bachelor and postgraduate, in subject areas far beyond the ones traditionally and most obviously suited to international collaboration, such as tourism and hospitality, business and management.

Academics say the joint degrees have brought new energy and wider perspectives as departments share and complement each other's expertise. Staff exchanges have brought the benefits of a wider, international perspective to the academic and student body.

A recent development has been the emergence of 'cotutelle' at doctoral level with the cross-border PhD supervisions often linked to research ventures supported by private sector partners. Joint PhDs requiring a period of research at another European university allow students to experience different research cultures and access the very best supervision available in Europe.

Case study University of Strathclyde



Young Nigerian engineer Marvelous Onwukamike wanted to move beyond the knowledge of how things are done to explore the reasons why they are done in that way. He was working as a process engineer for Proctor & Gamble in Nigeria when he heard of a new joint masters programme being launched by universities in Scotland, Denmark and Germany.

He joined the University of Strathclyde in 2008 on the new two-year MSc in Global Innovation Management. The course gives students the opportunity to study and get industrial and business experience in two European countries.

'So far my experience has been awesome. The international aspect of this course is something that every student dreams of and for me it has proved very positive. Talking with companies in careers fairs both in the UK and Germany I have found they are always very interested in the fact that I have studied in two countries. It is a big plus for my CV,' said Marvelous, who studied first at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow and then at the Hamburg University of Technology.

After a successful summer placement he has already secured a very good job. The first students were mostly funded by the Erasmus Mundus programme which provided 17 scholarships of up to €21,000 a year for two years which has risen to €24,000 for 2010. Now privately funded students are joining up. In 2009 the consortium received more than 600 applications from students in at least 50 countries and this year it has risen to 800.

Professor Bill Ion, the programme coordinator in Strathclyde's Department of Design Manufacture and Engineering Management, said the diverse range of backgrounds and cultures of the scholarship candidates has added to the global focus of the programme.

'Staff from all the partner institutions work closely together to ensure the student experience is as cohesive and integrated as possible. We are building sustainable academic relationships and fostering research and further collaborative initiatives. The staff exchanges and funded academic visitors have brought new perspectives to the work of the department,' he said.

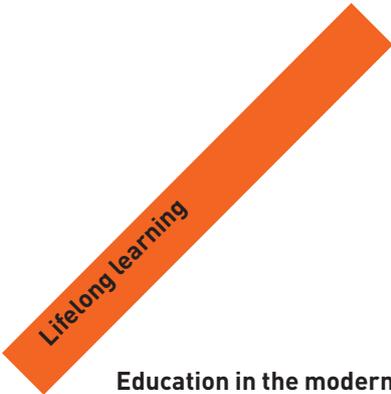
Case study University of Wales, Newport

University of Wales, Newport is participating in the latest round of the Erasmus Intensive Programmes. These are short programmes of study bringing together students and staff from higher education institutions from at least three participating countries, and, like the Erasmus exchange and placement programme, they can lead to sustained institutional links, such as joint degrees or research links. The University of Wales, Newport project Multi-disciplinary Perspectives on Working with Young People in Europe is led by the School of Health and Social Sciences with partners in Stavanger (Norway) and Vilnius (Lithuania). It is one of only 14 intensive programmes involving UK institutions from the 2009 call. The two-week project takes place in June 2010, with 12 students from each partner institution, five staff from Stavanger, four staff from Vilnius, and four staff from Newport.



Under the latest round of the Erasmus Intensive Programme, the University of Wales, Newport will be bringing together students from three participating countries.





Lifelong learning

Education in the modern world does not end at the school gate or in the halls of graduation. People can expect to live longer and embrace many changes, such as the rapid advance of information technology and the new awareness of the importance of preserving the world's natural resources.

The European Higher Education Area will play an important role in promoting the provision of continuing professional education and providing access for mature students who require more flexible programmes outside the formal structure. In addition, institutions will increasingly be called on to help validate more informal and work-based learning.

Lifelong learning is also an important focus for European Union member state governments. The **Lisbon Strategy** set out by the European Council summit in 2000 set a target of 12.5 per cent of the adult population participating in lifelong learning by 2010, rising to 15 per cent in 2020. The UK is the fourth best performer of the 46 countries in the education area with a lifelong learning participation rate of just under 20 per cent. It is also a signatory to the **European Universities' Charter on Lifelong Learning**.

Countries of the European Higher Education Area have pledged to promote higher education as both an individual right and a powerful force for social cohesion and citizenship. Equality of opportunity and barriers to access are regularly monitored.

The UK is committed to widening participation for under-represented groups in higher education. In the past few years it has made steady progress to increasing participation from lower socio-economic groups and institutions are working with children as young as five to raise aspirations in schools and colleges.

Across the 46 Bologna Process countries, 17 per cent of students have parents who proceeded no further than lower secondary education, in contrast to the UK figure which is 27 per cent. The proportion of UK students who enrol part-time is 27 per cent, 8 per cent higher than the European Higher Education Area average.

Case study
University College Birmingham



University College Birmingham is unusual in the UK higher education sector with a mix of 60 per cent higher and 40 per cent further education students. It is the lead institution in its Lifelong Learning network and has developed new credit sharing arrangements for people with few or no qualifications to progress through further and into higher education. Student mobility is promoted through the Erasmus programme which is at its highest ever level. The use of ECTS and the Diploma Supplement has encouraged an increase in international students to 1,100 of the 7,500 total.

Professor Paul Simpson, Deputy Principal, said that it was pleasing that the number of college students participating in exchanges to Europe is at its highest ever level. 'Clearly the use of ECTS is having a positive impact, and also the introduction of the Diploma Supplement has been welcomed by the students.'

Case study
Swansea University

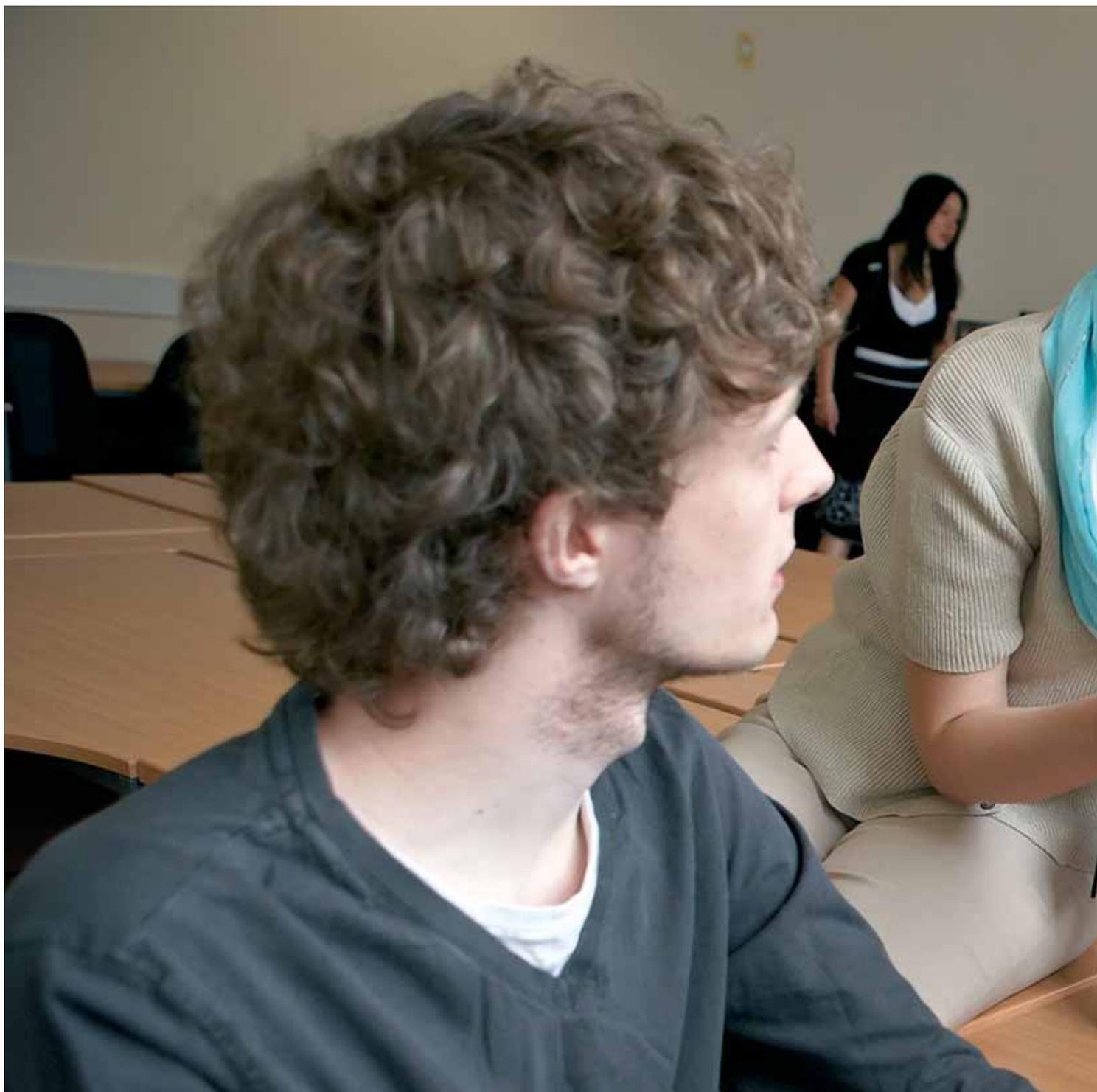
The Bologna Process has inspired Swansea University to plan and develop projects which are primarily designed for enhancing the employability prospects of its students at all three cycles – in accordance with the outcomes of the Bologna Seminar on Enhancing European Employability held at Swansea in 2006.

Looking to the future and building on its positive engagement with the Erasmus Mundus Programme, Swansea University is laying the foundations for increasing and expanding its mobility opportunities, through the development of international collaborations and joint doctoral degrees.

The momentum for joint doctoral degrees follows a successful pilot programme between Swansea University and its French partner institution, The University of Avignon, through which two students have graduated.

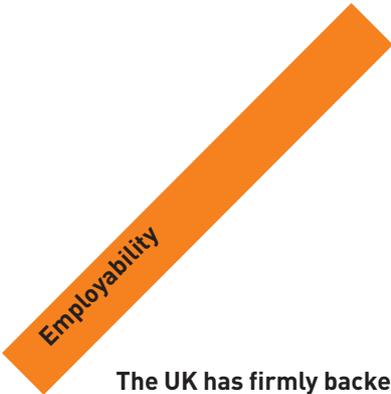
Huw Morris, Academic Registrar at Swansea University said that a series of 'cotutelle' arrangements with French institutions are being planned over the next few years and a series of international masters degrees within which will be a compulsory mobility placement to be spent in industry or in a higher education institution.

'The university aims to provide postgraduate students with opportunities which will broaden their horizons and expose them to new cultures, new ways of thinking and of undertaking research, in an international context – thus better preparing them for employment in a global marketplace.'



Postgraduate students at Swansea University will benefit from new 'cotutelle' programmes that will expose them to new cultures and new ways of thinking.





Employability

The UK has firmly backed the importance given within the European Higher Education Area to the employability of graduates. The Bologna Process has identified the need for greater dialogue between universities and employers so higher education can become more responsive to the needs of the labour market. It also wants to see an increased focus on work placements, enterprise education, lifelong learning provision and secondment of staff between academia and business.

The culture of universities being open to engaging with business is already well-established in the UK. Ninety per cent of higher education institutions in the UK offer flexible, tailor-made courses for business, 80 per cent offer education and training on company premises and 78 per cent report that employers are actively engaged in curriculum development.

In 2006, the Higher Education Academy's Subject Centres worked with the Academy of York and the Council for Industry and Higher Education (CIHE) to produce employability profiles of graduates in 53 disciplines. Using information from the subject benchmark statements developed by UK higher education academic communities and the QAA, the employability profiles identify skills that graduates develop through the study of a particular discipline. These skills have then been mapped against input from CIHE employer membership regarding the employability skills, competencies and attributes which they valued when recruiting.

Institutions in the UK can use these employability profiles to inform curriculum design, support the delivery of employability skills development in undergraduate students, and enhance the understanding of prospective students and their parents as to the value of degree level study. It can also enable them to communicate more effectively with employers in a shared language regarding the skills that students are likely to have developed with degrees in particular subjects.

Institutions in the UK also have a strong record in fostering university-business collaboration. During the height of the economic downturn, institutions in the UK were quick to promote how they could help businesses through the turbulent time, from providing advice on helping businesses to raise capital, consultancy services, research support and staff training. To make it easier for businesses to identify someone in their region within the higher education sector Universities UK launched the campaign **Standing Together: Universities Helping the Economy Through the Downturn**. The campaign included a website with an innovative, interactive map identifying every business-facing person in an institution ready to be contacted.

Working with businesses and employers, institutions in the UK are strongly supporting innovation, enterprise and skills, and helping to create wealth, job-generating opportunities and work-ready graduates to take these up.

'Graduate employability across Europe will be enhanced only by a system of greater recognition and comparability of degrees across Europe creating a more truly mobile workforce. The focus on the learning outcomes within qualifications will ensure greater emphasis on the skills necessary for the workplace and further enhance student employability.'

Aaron Porter
Vice-President (higher education)
National Union of Students

Case study Edinburgh Napier University



While students in other subjects were flying across the world on study exchanges, work placements and collaborative programmes, nurses at Edinburgh Napier University had fewer opportunities to travel.

The rules governing their training specified that they could not spend more than 10 per cent of their placement time outside the UK (six to eight weeks), too short a time to qualify for Erasmus or other scholarship funding.

Keen to make sure that the students at the school of nursing midwifery and social care had equal access to overseas study, the department set about finding ways to provide them with an international experience.

Using its existing links, such as the Florence Nursing and Midwifery Network, it arranged shorter, more focused placements and study exchanges with institutions in 10 other European countries.

Five students formed a society to promote links with institutions in other European countries and to provide support and encouragement for incoming and outgoing students.

'It started when we went over to Sweden for a Florence network conference and then everything just snowballed,' said Rebecca Gates, 28, one of the five students. 'Now most students get the chance to work or study abroad and widen their experience. People criticise the National Health Service but when you see other systems you get a better perspective. You can see the good things about what we have here and you can learn from the different ways things are done, such as the very good infection control system they have in Holland,' she said.

Andy Gibbs, the subject group leader for mental health and learning disabilities, said all students are encouraged to get some international experience, usually six weeks. 'If they can't manage it then we suggest they go to a short conference where they will meet professionals from other countries,' he said.

'Students have told us they got their jobs based on their international experience and the wider perspective it gave them. What it has brought to the course is the fact that there are different ways of doing things – you can challenge the status quo.'

Case study Leeds Metropolitan University

Leeds Metropolitan University offers a masters in International Communication (worth 90 ECTS) with a consortium of partners: Hanze University, Groningen, the Netherlands; the Budapest Business School, Hungary; Libera Università di Linque e Comunicazione, Italy; Vilnius University, Lithuania; and the New Bulgarian University.

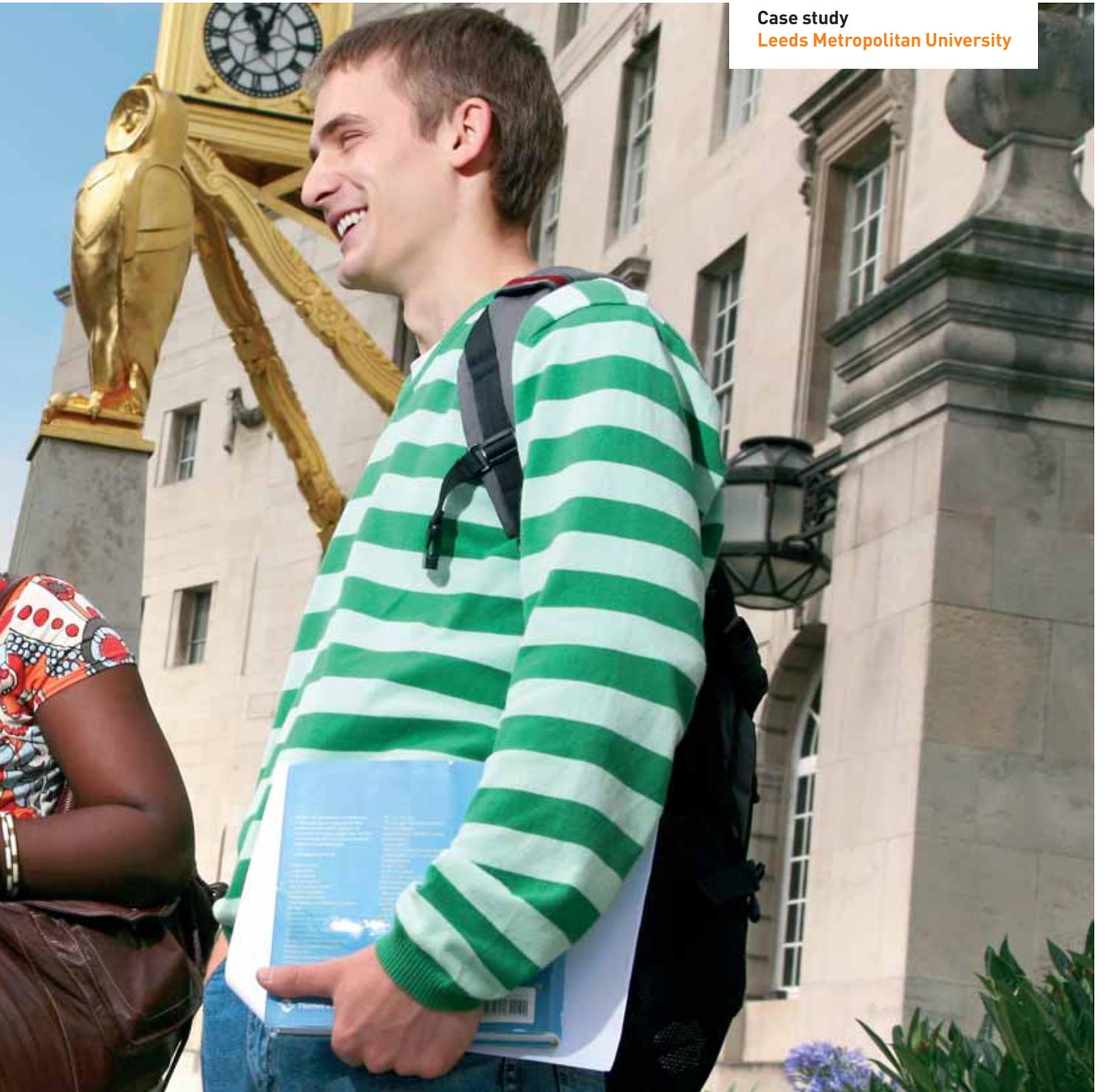
Hanze University in the Netherlands successfully bid for funding under the Erasmus Curriculum Development Study programme. By pooling resources the six partner institutions offer students a wide range of specialist electives and expertise, and the opportunity to work and study in different countries.

The programme is three semesters, first at the home institution, second at one or more partner institution, and in the third semester students write a thesis under the supervision of two of the partner universities.

David Braham, Director of International Development, said the aim of the programme is to ensure 'graduates of the MIC will be interculturally competent communication professionals able to work internationally'.



Masters students in International Communication at Leeds Metropolitan University study at one or more university in Europe.





Europe in the wider world

The Bologna Process has made waves beyond Europe with countries worldwide discussing what it will mean for them. Many are looking carefully at the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area and testing their own qualifications against it. Interest in, and a greater understanding of, the European Higher Education Area from the USA to Japan and from Egypt to New Zealand has brought an added bonus for students and graduates because their qualifications are becoming understood and appreciated far beyond the wider European area.

The need to promote the European Higher Education Area was emphasised by ministers of the Bologna Process countries at the 2009 ministerial meeting in Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve when they called in the Communiqué for increased global collaboration and policy dialogue with the rest of the world. At the same time, the first Bologna Process global policy forum was staged, bringing together the European ministers of higher education with those of 15 other countries, including Australia, China, Japan, the USA and Kazakhstan and also representatives from the International Association of Universities. It established an ongoing avenue for policy dialogue between the European Higher Education Area and the rest of the world.

At the national level, participation in the Bologna Process provides another way for UK institutions to engage in a broader global dialogue. Providing access to countries and institutions they may not previously have had, it also provides a greater opportunity for the UK to shape the development of higher education internationally.

UK universities have been leading actors on the global stage for many years and remain in the forefront of developments in transnational education and internationalising their institutions. However, mainland European universities are increasingly promoting their participation in the Bologna Process and the comparability of quality assured higher education qualifications across Europe to attract international students and to establish international collaborative links.

As the UK moves into the next decade of the Bologna Process, its higher education institutions can also brand themselves internationally as 'Bologna-compatible' when engaging in international collaborations and marketing themselves to increasingly sophisticated international students who seek more – and more detailed – information before deciding on where to study.

Case study
Robert Gordon University



Staff at Robert Gordon University decided that a new, eye-catching approach was required to raise the profile of the Erasmus programme when survey results showed that awareness was very limited.

Today's students want 24-hour, global access to information. As students have to access the university's new virtual learning environment, CampusMoodle, to gain access to their course materials, it was the perfect place to advertise Erasmus. In September 2008, a suite of 10 interactive Erasmus modules was created – one with general information plus one for each of the university's schools giving school specific material.

The modules are designed to be as interactive and attractive as possible and include videos of students talking about their Erasmus experience, interactive maps of destinations, images and details on partner institutions, message forums, calendars and newsfeeds.

In their first year, the modules received around 9,000 hits and outgoing student mobility increased by 40 per cent.

Case study
Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance

All students are encouraged to consider study exchanges overseas at Rose Bruford, a college in Sidcup, Kent which was the first in the UK to unify theatre practice and drama education in the 1950s.

Its popular European Theatre Arts bachelors degree offers students up to a year in another European country where they study at a partner institution and experience different theatre traditions.

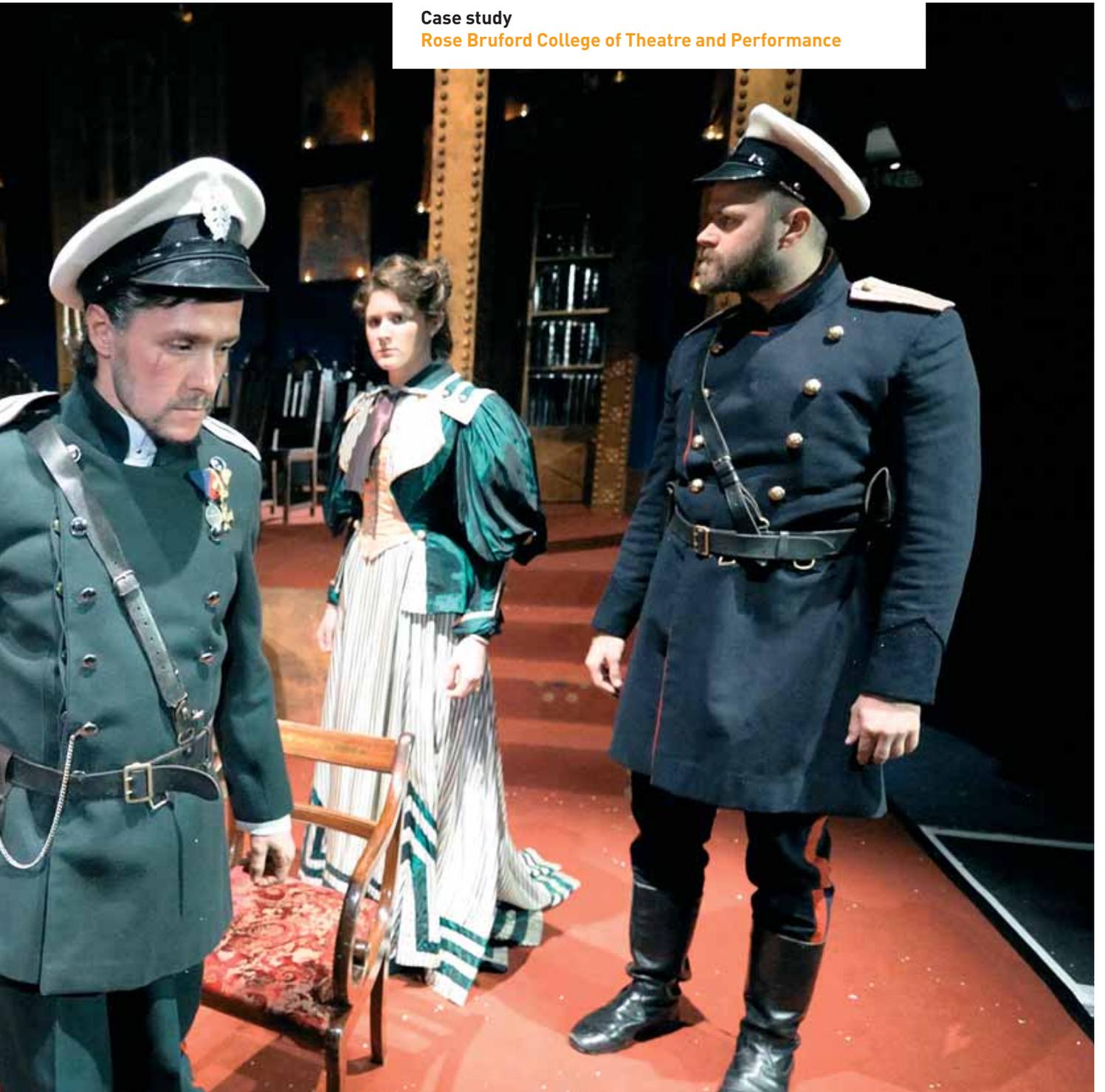
Georgia Munnion, a second-year student on the BA (Hons) European Theatre Arts programme spent five months at the Real Escuela Superior de Arte Dramático in Madrid. 'My five months on placement were a focal point of my time at Rose Bruford, introducing me to a variety of new and challenging theatrical trainings, which I will continue to use for my artistic development,' she said.

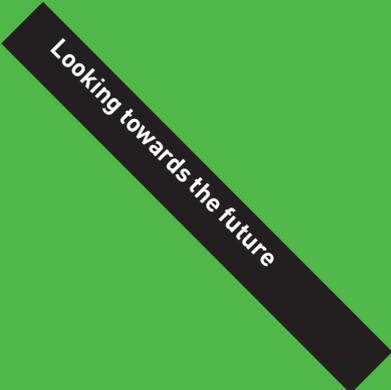
'I was given the opportunity to experience working in different cultural surroundings, learn a new language, obtain useful future contacts and grow as an independent individual. It was an eye-opener into the opportunities on offer for my future career, both in terms of possible trainings and countries in which to experience these.'

Emilio Romero, the Head of School Performance, added 'Our carefully-chosen partners in Europe provide students and staff with wider opportunities for mobility and future employment. We believe the international focus of our courses contributes to the enrichment of the theatre profession.'



Theatre students at Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance benefit from a mobility period at a European partner institution.





Looking towards the future

This publication has shown that the UK has been working towards a successful European Higher Education Area through engaging with the Bologna Process since its inception in 1999. In the areas of employability, staff and student mobility, quality assurance and lifelong learning, the UK has participated in policy development, sharing good practice with the other participating countries.

Looking to the next 10 years, stakeholders of the Bologna Process have renewed their commitment to the full implementation of the Bologna Process to enhance the European Higher Education Area through the successful 'bottom-up' approach to decision making. This is the key to a large and successful education area characterised by a diverse range of autonomous higher education institutions.

Over the next 10 years of the Bologna Process, the UK higher education sector is particularly keen to ensure that the further development of the European Higher Education Area progresses on the principles of student-centred learning with a focus on improving the whole 'student experience', securing sustainable funding for higher education, increasing links with employers and business, and developing greater synergies with the European Research Area. The UK will continue to share good practice and learn from its European partners as the Bologna Process works to consolidate the European Higher Education Area between now and 2020.

The sharing of cutting-edge research, innovation and technology transfers across the wider-Europe promises a future in which staff and students will move freely between countries, graduates will have qualifications valued by employers worldwide, and access to lifelong learning across Europe will be a reality.



About the Europe Unit

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