

International Academic Student Exchange policy

Version	Update and Reason	Author and Title	Date of Academic Board Approval	Effective Date	Review date
1.1	Formatting changes for publication on RVC website. Changed name to " <i>International Academic Student Exchange policy</i> "	Richard Sherry (Head of Collaborative Programmes)	Not applicable. Formatting changes only.	21 August 2023	March 2026
1.0	" <i>RVC International Academic Student Exchange policy</i> " written to replace " <i>Academic Exchange in BSc Bioveterinary Sciences</i> " document approved and published in early 2012.	Richard Sherry Charlotte Lawson Nina Davies	22 March 2023 (Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee)	22 March 2023	March 2026

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1. Institutional Duties

- 1.1 Allowing our students to undertake part of their level 6 study outside of the UK means that we will accept the value of Study Abroad for credits towards an RVC/University of London degree, in accordance with the Quality Assurance Agency's Higher Education Credit Framework for England (2021).
- 1.2 This brings with it responsibilities associated with operating collaborative provision. The essence of assuring quality in these circumstances is to take a risk-based approach; otherwise the burden of assurance requirement will become overwhelming compared to the size of the offering. So if we minimise the risk at the outset through very careful choice of Study Abroad partner then the following bureaucracy can be commensurate with the size of the operation.

2. Choice of Partner Institution

- 2.1 The Director of International and Strategic Engagement, working with the Study Abroad Director and/or any other individual as directed by the Global Strategy Group (GSG), is responsible for proactively identifying potential partner institutions and for initial consideration of potential partners identified by other RVC colleagues.
- 2.2 At the current time we will focus on developing partnerships with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) recognised by NARIC (National Academic Recognition Information Centre) as having qualifications equivalent to those available in the United Kingdom. Furthermore we will, where possible, seek partnerships with HEIs who already have well-established links to internationally renowned HEIs.
- 2.3 We must be assured that the partner HEI delivers and assesses its courses to the standards we expect for a UK honours degree (including security of assessment). Furthermore, we must be assured of its financial soundness and any potential for legal liabilities. The suitability of the learning environment and infrastructure including student support services and provisions for students with additional support requirements must also be checked.
- 2.4 No agreement will be made with a Study Abroad partner as a destination for RVC students until it has been visited by a member of academic staff, appointed by the Director of International and Strategic Engagement in consultation with the Study Abroad Director and/or relevant colleagues as determined by the GSG. Outputs from the visit to the intending Study Abroad partner will include a report to the GSG or a properly convened sub-committee, based on a pro-forma template approved by the GSG from time to time. The GSG (or nominated sub-committee) will also consider outputs from desk-based research on other non-academic matters (including e.g. immigration, insurance and health and safety requirements), to be coordinated by colleagues within the International and Strategic Engagement team.
- 2.5 The Global Strategy Group will, having reviewed the visit and desk-based review outputs and having considered the appropriate contractual terms, make a recommendation to the authorised signatory, under the RVC's delegation of authority policy, to proceed to contract signature.

2.6 Although what follows provides for study not in the medium of English, the expectation is that most agreements will be made with providers whose courses are taught, in whole or the majority, in the English language. Opportunities arising with institutions where the medium of instruction is not English may be considered by the GSG on a case-by-case basis.

3. A model for export of Study Abroad students: guidance/expectations on what RVC students will be permitted to study, using BSc/MSci Biological/Bioveterinary Sciences as an example.

NB where Study Abroad opportunities are developed for other RVC courses, the model will likely be similar to the below but may be varied based on the regulations applicable to those courses.

- I. Third year BSc/MSci Biological/Bioveterinary Sciences students (or fourth year BSc/MSci Biological/ Bioveterinary Sciences with Placement Year students) will be able to take a minimum of 30 and a maximum of 90 FHEQ (Framework for Higher Education Qualifications) level 6 (or equivalent) credits from another HEI outside of the UK. This will depend on the degree pathway and must be discussed and approved with the Pathway Leader, Year Leader and Course Director.
- II. Students will undertake their research project under the guidance of an RVC supervisor (or supervisory team). This could involve a remote desk-based project alongside taught modules whilst the student is on the Study Abroad scheme or could involve students being abroad for one term / semester and at the RVC for a lab/field-based project for one term/semester.
- III. The subjects of study will be confined to those suitable as part of the BSc/MSci Biological/ Bioveterinary Sciences programme.
- IV. In order for students to undertake any part of their research project with the Study Abroad partner, a specific agreement will need to be reached with the partner and with approval from the Year Leader, Pathway Leader and Course Director.

4. Academic Governance (pre-approval)

- 4.1 There will be a Memorandum of Agreement made with each Study Abroad partner covering all student and academic matters including fees arrangements and arrangements for review and approval of publicly available information about the partnership activities. The agreement will be approved in line with the RVC's procedures for approval of Collaborative Provision, for signature according to the appropriate schedule of delegation.
- 4.2 A Course Management Committee (CMC)-approved document setting out the translation of grades awarded by the Study Abroad partner will be attached as an appendix to the agreement. This document will have been proposed to the CMC by the Course Director and RVC Registrar and will follow international guidance from NARIC/Fulbright/WES as appropriate.
- 4.3 Credit equivalence between the RVC's credit system and the Study Abroad partner's credit system will be jointly determined by the Registrar and Course Director and reported for note at the CMC and shared with the RVC's International and Strategic Engagement team.

- 4.4 Where study at the Study Abroad partner is not in the English language it will be for the partner to stipulate their language entry requirements, including any means by which intending students may demonstrate proof of proficiency. The Global Strategy Group will be responsible for the process by which the RVC is assured that stated language entry requirements are appropriate and comply with any applicable immigration requirements.

5. Student Management

- 5.1 Each student's proposed programme will be approved by the Course Director (in consultation with the Year Leader and Pathway Leader), acting on behalf of the CMC. A brief report on the programme approval will be shared with the Mobility and Strategic Partnerships Officer and will be submitted to the next available CMC meeting for note (standing agenda item to be added to CMC terms of reference). Matters for consideration to include:
- I. Subject suitability of the modules taken and that the modules at the Study Abroad partner are not overly similar to those undertaken at RVC, so avoiding the possibility of double-counting of work for academic credit.
 - II. Any prerequisites / corequisites / ineligible modules.
 - III. Any selection criteria, e.g. whether student grades and behavioural history apply.
 - IV. Deadlines for confirmation of module choices.
 - V. Timing for transfer of results, to ensure timely incorporation of credit into the students' results.
 - VI. Any Immigration matters (flagging of visa nationals) – to be reported to Student Records and Planning & Head of Admissions.
 - VII. Any other pre-approval non-academic checks.
- 5.2 All students to have a '*Global Mobility agreement*' for their Study Abroad programme, agreed with RVC and the Study Abroad partner. The Global Mobility agreement to include a learning agreement and pre-departure advice including an undertaking by the student that they are aware of local customs and immigration rules and of the applicable regulations, policies, and procedures of the Study Abroad partner. Form of the Global Mobility agreement to be approved by GSG or a nominated sub-group or working group.
- 5.3 Where a student has Specific Learning Differences or other additional needs, including special exams arrangements, checks will be made by the course management team (Year Leader, Pathway Leader and Course Director, Exams Office, Disability Officer), liaising with the Mobility and Strategic Partnerships Officer, to ensure that there is appropriate provision for learning and assessment in the Study Abroad partner. The student will be asked to sign an undertaking within their Global Mobility agreement that they understand the nature of the provision offered before they take up study.
- 5.4 RVC students on a Study Abroad/Exchange programme will be subject to the academic, disciplinary, and other regulations and procedures of the Study Abroad partner during their programme, unless specific alternative arrangements are made between the parties. Students would be entitled to address complaints about programme to the partner in accordance with the partner's student complaints procedure, and to the RVC in accordance with the Student Complaints and Resolution Procedure.

- 5.5 RVC student appeals would normally be expected to be the responsibility of the RVC in any agreements made. As such, if a student is required to re-study following an unfortunate or inadequate partnership experience this study will be an RVC module.
- 5.6 An overall mark/grade for the credits achieved during the student's Study Abroad programme will be imported into the student's classification calculation, according to the 'translation of grades' document approved as set out in the *Academic Governance (pre-approval)* section of this policy.

6. Quality Assurance and Enhancement

- 6.1 The RVC will, in support of continued compliance with the Office for Students (OfS) Conditions of registration, regularly monitor quality assurance outputs relating to its Study Abroad partnerships, via any or all of the GSG (or nominated sub-committee), the CMC and the Academic Quality Improvement Group as appropriate. Such monitoring to include scrutiny of module results and pass rates compared to RVC modules; and review of any applicable annual course monitoring reports, external examiner reports, student module evaluation, and qualitative feedback from students on their partnership experiences.

7. Financial Matters

- 7.1 The Memorandum of Agreement between the RVC and the Study Abroad partner will detail the financial expectations around the collaboration, which will vary according to the arrangements under consideration.
- 7.2 Where a partnership is based on Student Exchange the expectation will normally be that the student numbers (FTE) for incoming and outgoing students will broadly match over time, and that no transfer of funds will therefore be expected (such partnerships normally include an expectation of a mutual waiver of tuition fees). Where (whether by design or otherwise) more students are going in one direction, it would be expected that the institution sending more students sends a pro rata amount of its student income to the receiving institution. However the balance of cost between RVC and the students' contribution needs to be considered. Also the overall flow of students in each direction needs to be considered so that income to the course as a whole does contribute to supporting the critical mass of academic staff. The numbers of students participating in Student Exchange at the RVC (both outgoing and incoming) will therefore be reviewed as a standing agenda item by the Global Strategy Group.
- 7.3 Approval of financial arrangements should be separate from approval of academic arrangements and is ultimately the responsibility of the RVC Finance Director, with guidance provided by the GSG and other individuals as appropriate.

8. GLOSSARY

Student Exchange

The reciprocal exchange of students by two institutions, with each institution acting as both home institution and Study Abroad partner. This involves Study Abroad (incoming) and Study Abroad (outgoing) and because there is normally an expectation of a mutual waiver of tuition fees the numbers of incoming and outgoing students should broadly balance across the life of the programme. The Erasmus+ programme, which is not now accessible to UK HEIs because of the UK's departure from the EU, is an example of a programme that supports Student Exchange.

Study Abroad

A programme of study, normally of between three months and one academic year, undertaken by a student at an external overseas higher education provider (Study Abroad partner). Students pay tuition fees to the home institution, not to the Study Abroad partner. The study programme for each student is agreed between the institutions and the student in the form of a Learning Agreement.

Credit is awarded by the Study Abroad partner for successful achievement by the student of the learning outcomes specified for the educational components (normally modules) included in the Learning Agreement; this credit is recognised by the home institution, transferred into the student's home programme and used to satisfy the qualification requirements for their award. Grades are converted as applicable.

The Study Abroad partner is normally responsible for the design, delivery and assessment of the Study Abroad provision and must demonstrate adherence to the appropriate quality requirements and academic standards of the awarding body (the home institution).

Study Abroad (outgoing)

For RVC purposes, a Study Abroad programme undertaken by an RVC student at an overseas higher education provider (RVC is the home institution; the overseas higher education provider is the Study Abroad partner).

Study Abroad (outgoing) falls under the UK Quality Assurance Agency description of collaborative provision. The Turing Scheme, the UK's replacement for the Erasmus+ Scheme, is an example of a programme that facilitates Study Abroad (outgoing).

Study Abroad (incoming)

For RVC purposes, a Study Abroad programme undertaken at RVC by a student of an overseas higher education provider (the overseas higher education provider is the home institution; RVC is the Study Abroad partner).

Study Abroad (incoming) does not fall under the UK Quality Assurance Agency description of collaborative provision.