

## CREDIT TRANSFER ARRANGEMENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT EXCHANGES

### Scope of these guidelines

These guidelines apply to undergraduate students who undertake an approved period of study abroad as an integral part of their academic programme at Royal Holloway. They describe how the credits and marks which students gain abroad can be used by the College to assess their academic progress and to determine their final award classification. The regulations on extramural study and credit transfer are contained in the **Undergraduate Regulations** (at <http://www.rhul.ac.uk/forstudents/studying/academicregulations/home.aspx>).

### Before departure

Each student's Study Plan, which is a record of the courses to be taken abroad, together with their credit values, must be approved in writing by his/her academic department before departure, in order to ensure that it meets academic requirements, in particular that the student has registered for sufficient credits. For any student going to a university where second semester courses are not publicised before departure, the Study Plan for the second semester must be approved in writing before registration for these courses. Some students in the School of Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures (SMLLC), such as those studying in German speaking countries, will only choose courses after their arrival at the host university so approval will only be given at that point.

In the case of programmes which have a **compulsory period of residence abroad**, the requirements will be set out in the programme documentation (e.g. programme specifications and relevant handbooks). Such students should check these requirements and ensure that they register for courses that are equivalent to the required ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) or UK credits.

In the case of an **optional exchange**, however, the Study Plan must be equivalent to that portion of the academic programme at Royal Holloway which the student will miss by virtue of being abroad. Therefore the Study Plan needs to be considered in reference to:

- a. the structure of the academic programme at Royal Holloway, so that the courses are appropriate and sufficient in terms of the credit rating, academic level and topics covered;
- b. the regulations on academic progression, so that on successful completion of the exchange the student can proceed with his/her studies at Royal Holloway.

It is important to indicate on the Study Plan if any individual courses must be taken in order to meet core requirements on the programme at Royal Holloway, or must be passed in order for the student to progress or to qualify for a particular award. Any implications in terms of pre-requisites for courses in the following year should also be discussed.

It is the student's responsibility to research the courses which will be available at the host university, and any rules and expectations which the host university may have about the combination of courses. The department should not approve the Study Plan unless it has sufficient, authoritative information on which to base its decision. It is unlikely that there will be an exact match between courses at Royal Holloway and the host university; therefore an appropriate compromise may need to be found. Particular care is needed to verify

that, given his/her point of arrival in the host university's academic calendar, the student will be able to follow all the courses in the proposed order.

Students on an optional exchange are responsible for ensuring that they register for the equivalent of 120 UK credits. At Royal Holloway the credit rating of courses is described in terms of the number of course units. The system at the host university will probably be different, but as a general rule, 1 full course unit at Royal Holloway is equivalent to 30 UK credits, 15 ECTS (credits, 12 Australian credits, or 7.5 US or Canadian credits. Students need to be aware that courses at other institutions may not necessarily all carry the same credit weighting and it is their responsibility to ensure that they register for sufficient credits.

### **During the exchange**

Students must follow the approved Study Plan during the exchange, otherwise they may find on their return to Royal Holloway that they cannot progress in their studies, or that there is an adverse effect on their final award. However, it is understood that occasional difficulties may arise which are outside the student's control and which prevent him/her from following the original Study Plan. The host university may also suggest changes in line with local practices or expectations. If these situations arise, it is essential that the student contacts the academic department and the Administrative Officer (Visiting Students) in Royal Holloway International without delay or in the case of SMLLC students the relevant Period of Residence Abroad (PRA) tutor in the School.

Any amendments to the Study Plan must be approved in writing by the department before the student commits him-/herself to the changes. There is no guarantee that the department will approve changes retrospectively or resulting from difficulties which the student could reasonably have avoided.

Students should avoid registering for courses which are assessed on a Pass/Fail only basis as they will not receive credit for such courses unless this is a syllabus requirement of the host university and they have prior approval from their Study Abroad Advisor at the College or from their PRA tutor.

### **Before returning to Royal Holloway**

SMLLC students returning from a compulsory period of residence abroad are assessed using the scheme which is set out in the programme documentation (e.g. programme specifications and relevant handbooks). Those students who, instead, are returning from an optional exchange are subject to the normal requirements for academic progression set out in the [Undergraduate Regulations](#) (i.e. to pass courses which are equivalent in value to at least three units, and any courses denoted as compulsory for progression in the programme regulations).

It is the student's responsibility to provide the College with an official transcript of marks from the host university as soon as possible, and no later than 1 September, so that the College can determine his/her eligibility to progress and enrol for the next year of study or in the case of SMLLC to award final outcomes for the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> units. Note that many universities withhold transcripts from students who have outstanding debts.

If by the beginning of the next academic session the student has been unable to obtain a transcript through no fault of his/her own, or the marks are currently the subject of an appeal (see below), the College may consider allowing the student to re-enrol on a provisional basis. Otherwise the student may be prevented from re-enrolling with the College until the matter is resolved.

## **Credit transfer and the conversion of marks**

Decisions on credit transfer and the conversion of marks are made by the chair of the examination board in the student's academic department at Royal Holloway, or an appropriate nominee.

Students returning from a compulsory period of residence abroad are awarded credit using the scheme which is set out in the programme documentation. Students need to be aware that courses at other institutions may not necessarily all carry the same credit weighting and it is their responsibility to ensure that they register for sufficient credits.

Students who, instead, are returning from an optional exchange are awarded credit on the basis of the proportion of a full academic year's work at the appropriate academic level which has been passed at the host university. Students cannot be given credit for any courses which they fail or do not complete or those which are assessed on a Pass/Fail basis unless this is a syllabus requirement and prior approval has been obtained from their Study Abroad Advisor or PRA tutor. Also, they will not receive credit for courses which are not listed in the Study Plan, unless the department agrees retrospectively that this would be appropriate. Students need to be aware that courses at other institutions may not necessarily all carry the same credit weighting and it is their responsibility to ensure that they register for sufficient credits.

As universities in different countries often use different marking scales, it is necessary to convert the marks which students gain abroad into equivalent Royal Holloway marks. For example, the pass mark at another institution may be 50%, whereas at Royal Holloway it is 40%; and 'excellent' or 'first-class' work elsewhere may be given a mark of 80%, whereas at Royal Holloway it might receive 70%. The aim of converting the marks is to give an appropriate and fair representation of what the same work might have received had it been marked at Royal Holloway. This means that the marks may be scaled upwards or downwards.

The College has approved mark conversion schemes for each of the host universities with which it has an exchange agreement. Students are provided with a copy of the appropriate scheme and can use it to compare their academic performance abroad with their previous performance at Royal Holloway. However, the final decision on credit transfer and how marks are converted within the scheme lies with the examination board. The scheme shows the average Royal Holloway mark and a discretionary range within which the examination board may move the mark up or down. For example, if a mark of 55% translates into an average Royal Holloway mark of 48% with a discretionary range of +/- 2%, the final Royal Holloway mark would be in the range 46–50% inclusive. The purpose of the discretionary range is to allow the examination board to ensure that, overall, the conversion of marks is appropriate and that students are not unduly advantaged or disadvantaged when the marks are used later on to determine their award classification.

## **Award classification**

The credits and marks awarded by the College will be recorded either as marks in individual course units, or as an average across a number of course units. If an average is used, this will be a weighted average which takes account of both the credit rating and the converted percentage mark in each course. The course unit marks or average are used to determine the final award classification in accordance with the College's

**Undergraduate Regulations** (at <http://www.rhul.ac.uk/forstudents/studying/academicregulations/home.aspx>).

## **Confirmation of credit transfer and appeals**

Each student will be issued with written confirmation of the credits and marks awarded by the College for their studies abroad. If the student was abroad for a full academic year, this will include a statement on whether the criteria for progression to the next stage of the programme have been met. For SMLLC students the final course outcomes for the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> units will be posted on notice boards in the School in November of the students' final year.

Students who are unhappy with the marks which they have received from the host university must take the matter up with the host university directly, before their marks are converted into College equivalents and must inform the College that are doing so; they cannot appeal to Royal Holloway about marks awarded by the host institution. It is important that students who are in this position inform themselves about the host university's procedures for considering representations against course results and any deadlines which apply. If this process results in the host university making changes to the marks, it is the student's responsibility to obtain a revised transcript so that the College can review its decision on the credit transfer and the conversion of marks as soon as possible.

If, however, a student feels that an error has been made in awarding credits or marks, s/he has the right to appeal to Royal Holloway. In the first instance it is best to query the credits or marks informally with the academic department. However, if the student is dissatisfied with the department's explanation and feels there are grounds for appeal, s/he may decide to submit a formal appeal. Full details of the appeal process and the process of requesting an appeal pack are published on the **Appeals website** (at <http://www.rhul.ac.uk/forstudents/studying/academicappeals/home.aspx>). The student may also contact the Academic Development Services Office, Royal Holloway University of London, Egham, Surrey TW20 0EX (tel. 01784 276250; e-mail [appeals@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:appeals@rhul.ac.uk)) for further information. The appeal must be submitted within one month of the date on which the student was formally notified of the outcome of the credit transfer.

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