

**International mobility – opportunity and problem.  
Proper preparation for studying at a foreign university.**

# Manual for the university

How to prepare for the reception  
of foreign students?





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## How to prepare for the reception of foreign students?

*This publication was created with a view to preparing universities for better reception of foreign students. An equally important aim was also to indicate the key areas within which universities should equip their students leaving for partner universities with the necessary knowledge and skills. The development of this manual was preceded by extensive primary qualitative (individual in-depth interviews) and quantitative (questionnaire studies) research conducted at universities in Poland, Hungary, Greece and Ukraine, as well as secondary research, mainly in the form of a review of good solutions from different European universities. Based on the results of this research, we strived to create a simple manual with universal character that can be used by most universities in Europe. We selected substantive information and supported it with a graphic message, thanks to which the described situations became more expressive.*

*We hope that you find the information included in this manual both interesting and useful.*

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The information given to foreign students before arriving in a foreign country should include details on what to expect upon arrival.

# 1. Before arriving

## 1.1. Information on the website

All the information, which foreign students may need before their arrival, should be available on the university website, and should be written in a simple, clear, concise and comprehensive way. It should be easily accessible and gathered all together in a specific section devoted to the programme of exchange.

The information given before arriving in a foreign country should include details on what to expect upon arrival, that is, 'meet and greet' events, the process of registration, required documentation, a list of modules offered along with credits, assessment methods, language requirements and dates of enrolment, information on accommodation as well as contact details of student ambassadors or other people assigned to assist foreign students during their first days in a new environment at the host university. The information posted on the website should also include details needed in case of emergency e.g. names of health insurance companies (addresses, phone numbers, fees, student discounts/available packages etc.) or the Immigration Department (a visa application process, fees, required documentation, an address of the department). A map of the host university and information on public transport connections (including ticket prices) to and from the university campus can also be very helpful.

Possessing such information is crucial for students preparing for a stay in a foreign country and can make them feel more secure upon their arrival.

## 1.2. Contact units/persons

Contact units or persons help foreign students solve problems which may arise during their stay at the host university. They also answer their questions and provide them with information on academic programmes as well as other services provided by the university. The presence of contact units or persons is useful for foreign students and help them integrate into a new environment.



It is important to stay courteous and composed at all times, especially when dealing with students who become nervous or frustrated due to problems they encounter during their stay.



When dealing with students' questions, objections or problems, it is important that contact persons do that in English, using various communication channels. They should always be courteous, calm and composed, especially when dealing with students who become nervous or frustrated due to problems they encounter during their stay.



### **Duties and responsibilities of contact units/persons:**

- maintaining a positive, empathetic and professional attitude toward students at all times;
- responding promptly and politely to students' inquiries;
- communicating with students through various channels;
- acknowledging and handling students' complaints;
- providing information on university programmes and services inside and outside the university;
- processing forms, applications and requests;
- keeping records of students' interactions, matters, comments and complaints;
- providing feedback on students' service process;
- ensuring students' satisfaction and providing professional support;
- providing students with information on other services (e.g. an address of an insurance office, a dormitory etc.).

## **1.3. Didactic offer**

### **It is important that students know and understand the curriculum offered by the university, with emphasis on practical information:**

- An academic calendar – a yearly schedule with information about holidays, working days, important events, examination sessions, semester breaks and other days off;
- A study plan and obligatory courses – information on the syllabus of offered majors and mandatory courses;
- Elective courses;
- Foreign language courses;
- A communication platform – a place where lecturers can post information about courses (syllabus, projects, assignments, exams etc.).

## 1.4. Didactic information

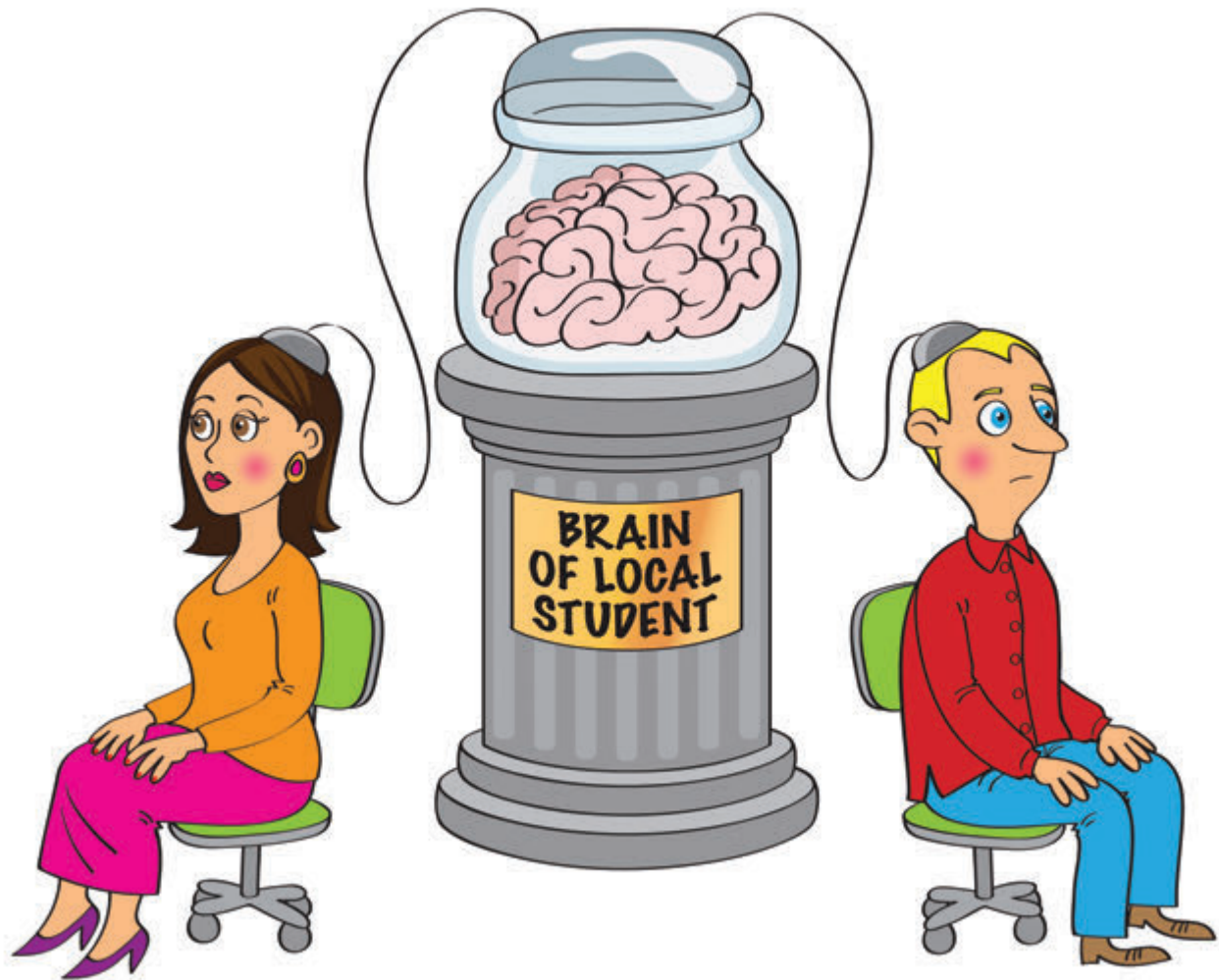
### The university should prepare and provide the following information to foreign students:

- information on communication channels which students can use, e.g., phone, e-mail, instant messenger on the university website, a contact form, social media and videos;
- information about studying at a given university in social media;
- information about the most important regulations of a given university, matriculation, rights and obligations, as well as health and safety regulations (available in English);
- information about navigation at the campus and in the city – maps, virtual tours, guides etc.;
- an academic calendar;
- the rules and dates of class/course enrolment (online or, if not possible, how to ask university staff for help);
- information on what the recruitment process is based on (the order of applications/average grade);
- how to check one's group;
- the rules of participation in classes and minimum attendance to obtain a credit;
- the applicable scale of grades/points and ways of converting the points into the final grade;
- methods of working in class, e.g. individually, in pairs or in groups;
- the rules for making up for absence, determining if being late is acceptable;
- a formula of classes for specific subjects (core curriculum, optional courses, curriculum differences), e.g. lectures, classes, seminars, workshops, e-learning, field classes, laboratory classes, language classes (indicate which of those are conducted in English);
- information (online) about the current university credit system and language(s) in which classes and lectures are conducted;
- methods of obtaining credits (e.g. orally, in writing, online) and procedures in the event of failure necessary to follow in order to complete a course or extend the course of studies;
- platforms with educational materials (together with logins and passwords);
- E-learning and distribution of educational materials (via e-mail, the Moodle platform, groups on Facebook, printouts, a library etc.);
- course/subject fees, indicating when students have to pay them, amount of fees, a deadline and method of payment, how to enrol in paid classes;
- a daily class plan (names of subjects in English, location and room numbers, information on postponed/cancelled classes etc.);
- an online university service system (if the university has one), kind of information available there, the possibility of submitting applications and sending documents through it);
- detailed information on the principles of BA and MA studies;

- information on seminars (working with a thesis supervisor, evaluation of progress in writing a thesis, necessary documents and important deadlines);
- information about whether the university requires from students independence in the process of studying or aims to provide them with more extensive support;
- information about the educational process (fields of study, specialisations, curricula, subjects, degrees and academic titles);
- information on acceptable forms of exams (early exam dates, written, oral or online forms, 1st and 2nd exam dates, retakes);
- information about the extent to which the university puts emphasis on discipline and participation in class;
- information about available programmes for improving students' competences (communication, learning, professional) as well as opportunities to participate in sports activities;
- information about the dean's office (working hours, contact during weekends, the scope of duties, the forms of support for foreign students, important documents);
- the method of contact with academic teachers (duty hours, contact by e-mail, by e-learning platform etc.);
- e-library – an online library with a wide range of useful books for students;
- internships – job opportunities offered by the university to students in order to obtain professional experience;
- clear information about the possibilities of obtaining scholarships, their amounts, periods of scholarships, necessary documents, application conditions, as well as a contact person to answer necessary questions;
- short interviews with foreign students talking about studying at the university (forums for students).



The university should prepare and provide students with information on postponed or cancelled classes.



Before foreign students start their education, they should participate in an adaptation programme which might help them integrate in a new environment.

## 2. Accepting foreign students

### 2.1. First days and an adaptation programme

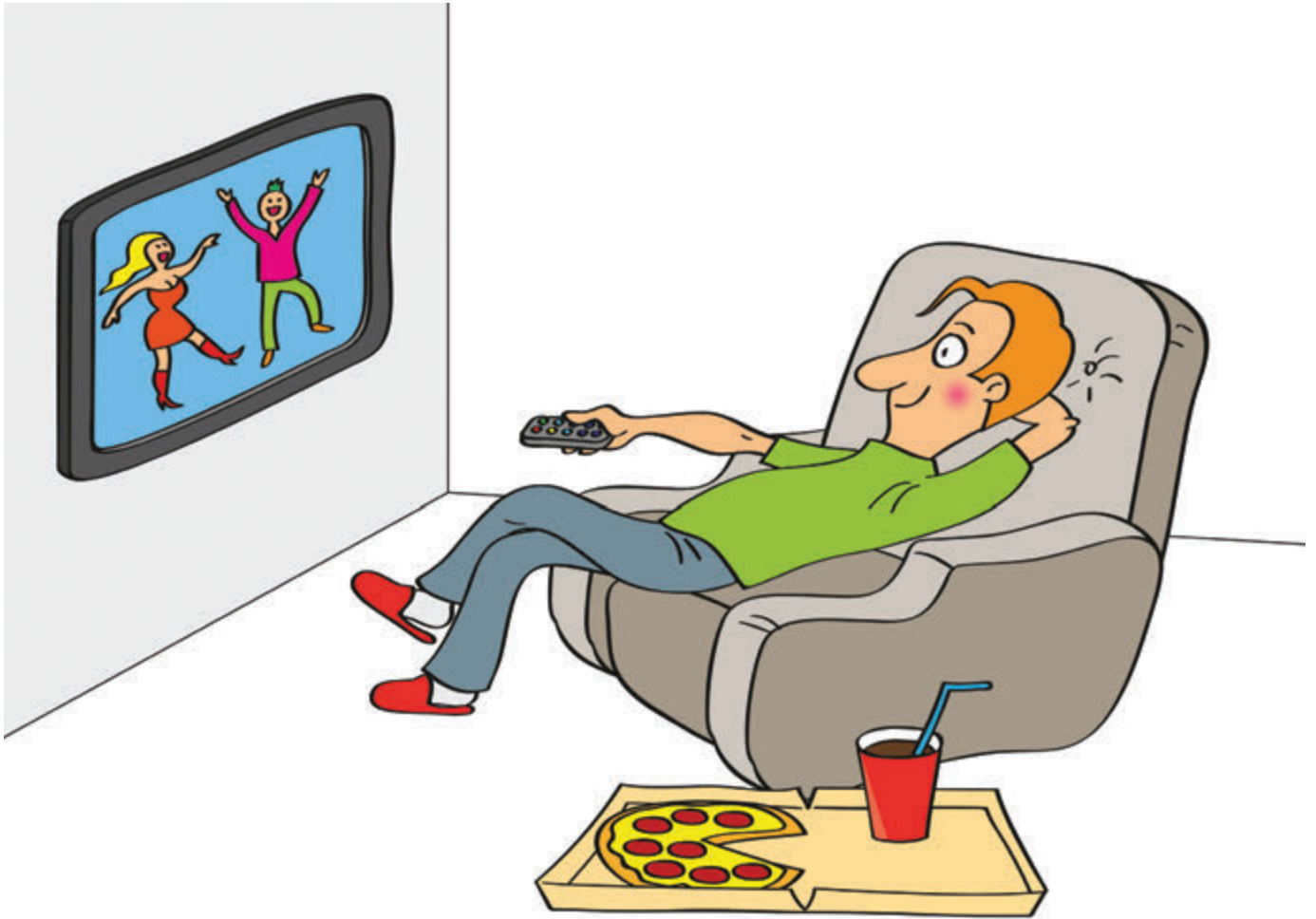
Before students start their education, they should participate in an adaptation programme. This programme should take place the week before the semester begins. During this time, students should familiarize themselves with the university, its strengths and accomplishments. They should explore the campus and the library, meet other foreign as well as local students (especially those with previous experience in exchange programmes or studying abroad), and receive all the information important for successful completion of their studies at the host university.

In the first days, the host university should help students become familiar with it, and with various procedures that are to be followed. Together with the International Students Office, it should organise several activities to acquaint students with university and campus life e.g. meetings with university authorities, introductory events and social gatherings.

### 2.2. Practical information

**Foreign students should also be provided with information on other services available at a given university, for example:**

- the process of registration (necessary documents, time and place of registration, etc.);
- choosing modules and receiving timetables (syllabus, information on modules, credits etc.);
- a student card (an application process, documentation, usage, etc.);
- a university library and borrowing books (a library card, return deadlines, fines, charges, etc.);
- the possibility of meeting an academic advisor (in order to discuss academic affairs, study path or difficulties occurring in the course of studies etc.);
- registration of temporary residence (if required: a process, necessary documentation, etc.);
- opening a bank account (an application process, documentation needed, etc.);
- registering at a local clinic (an application process, necessary documentation, location of the clinic, making appointments etc.).



Campus life is different  
from what happens in class.

## 3. Language adaptation within the university


### 3.1. Translation of documents

**If any of the documents which a student delivers is not in English, ask them to submit its original together with a translation performed by a sworn translator. These documents should contain the following information:**

- a legal status and type of the institution issuing documents;
- evaluation of one's suitability for participation in the programme depending on their qualifications;
- duration of the study programme, number of classes and/or credits which students must obtain in order to complete the programme successfully;
- value of qualifications in the system/country where they were obtained e.g. for academic and/or professional purposes;
- degrees already obtained (even if only high school);
- references;
- transcripts;
- bank statements and bank letters.

**The translation of these documents must include:**

- information on translator's qualifications,
- translator's contact details,
- attestation of the conformity of the transcript with the original,
- the date of performing the translation,
- translator's full name and signature.

 **If a student does not know where to find a sworn translator, you may recommend visiting the following website <https://www.ititranslates.com>.**

### 3.2. Necessary information in English

**A university which accepts foreign students must provide them with the following information in English:**

- **ARRIVING AT THE CAMPUS** – foreign students should be informed about public transport in the area of the campus, especially if they live in a place away from their university. If there is a possibility of using free shuttle transport in the vicinity of the campus, this information should also be passed on to them;
- **ACCOMMODATION** – every university which accepts foreign students should provide them with sufficient information on available forms of accommodation and its cost, and help them choose best options depending on their needs and possibilities;
- **INFORMATION ABOUT CAMPUS LIFE** – campus life is different from what happens in class. Students should take the opportunity to learn about the culture they temporarily exist in as this may facilitate the process of studying and living in a foreign country. The university should provide information on culture events and programmes offered at the campus;
- **STUDY PATH** – the university should provide students with information on necessary qualifications which they must possess when applying for a place in a given department. They should also be informed about the syllabus and structure of the major of their choice;
- **REQUIREMENTS FOR A GIVEN MAJOR** – all majors have their requirements which must be fulfilled so that a candidate is accepted. Such information should be displayed in the section devoted to majors on the university website;
- **ENGLISH LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS** – all students planning to participate in the exchange programme must know English on a certain level in order to live and study in a foreign country. There are many international exams confirming the level of English e.g. IELTS, TOFFEL. If a candidate does not have a command of English on the level required by the university, they can attend English courses if they are offered there;
- **STUDENT FEES** – the section of the university website devoted to the costs of studying at a foreign university should contain information about fees which students must pay for each academic year. It is also a good idea to include information on other fees which students might be required to pay e.g. for books, printing materials etc.;
- **FINANCIAL SUPPORT** – many governments offer their citizens student loans; foreign students should be informed whether the university they apply to can ensure scholarships for foreigners;
- **ENTERTAINMENT AND SOCIALISING** – it is worth informing students about cultural and entertainment events held during the academic year e.g. concerts, festivals etc. This will help them organise their free time and socialise with other students;





The university should inform foreign students about existing communities in which they could make new friends and spend their free time with people who share their interests.

- **UNIVERSITY CLUBS AND COMMUNITIES** – a university should inform foreign students about available clubs or communities where they could do something for body and soul, learn new things, practise their leadership skills, build friendships and spend their free time with people who share their interests. It is also necessary to inform them about possible fees and membership cards which they might need;
- **SPORT AND FITNESS** – foreign students should be informed about the possibility of using sporting facilities e.g. swimming pools, dance schools, gyms etc., which may be helpful in integration in a new environment;
- **HEALTH AND WELL-BEING** – staying healthy and in good shape is crucial for all students, including foreign ones. Studying can be hard and challenging, whereas doing sports and performing physical exercise can help people recharge and achieve better results. Therefore, it is a good idea to inform students about health programmes which they can benefit from;
- **SHOPS, BARS AND RESTAURANTS** – it is worth informing students about locations of these places and their prices;
- **EMERGENCY AND SAFETY** – these are very important, especially for students who arrive in a given country for the first time. The university should inform students what they are supposed to do when they witness an accident or a crime, in or away from the area of the campus.




To make sure that foreign students integrate in a new environment, it is necessary to introduce different teaching styles and learning methods to suit all students' needs.

## 4. Integration in a new environment

### 4.1. Cultural differences

**It is essential that a university strives to overcome any cultural barriers and promote openness and appreciation of cultural differences. First and foremost, it must acknowledge that foreign students come from different backgrounds, they communicate in different ways and have various needs. In order to make sure that they integrate into a new environment, it is necessary to:**

- create a diversity-friendly environment (e.g. provide places of prayer, take into account different eating habits when creating menus in cafés or bars);
- show no tolerance to social or cultural exclusion;
- introduce a strict non-discrimination policy;
- provide equal opportunities to all university students;
- encourage looking at different matters from different perspectives;
- introduce different teaching styles and learning methods to suit all students' needs;
- shape intercultural competence (among students and university staff);
- promote attitudes characterised by openness, flexibility and tolerance (among students and university staff).

 **It is important that cultural differences be perceived as a positive aspect of university life rather than a barrier or a cause of social exclusion.**

### 4.2. Openness of the academic community

**Openness of the academic community is key to the integration of foreign students into a new environment.** All the university staff, regardless of their level or function, should be encouraged to stay open, accept cultural differences and deal with foreign students in an efficient manner.

Academic teachers should be aware of different cultural backgrounds of their students, check the level of their knowledge, show examples of effective learning methods and conduct classes based on a clear grading system. They should also encourage students to contact their academic advisors so that they can better meet university requirements and get an equal opportunity to obtain their degree.

### 4.3. Joint activities in a multicultural environment

Multiculturalism is a significant aspect of university life. To embrace it, universities should organise joint activities where people could be exposed to different languages and cultures, exchange their views and broaden their horizons about other ethnic backgrounds. Raising awareness of multiculturalism is essential as it helps to build respect between students and staff, and fosters cooperative behaviours (e.g. listening to others, tolerance). It also improves the academic environment, evokes appreciation of diversity, eliminates discrimination and decreases stereotyping.

Examples of such joint events include cultural festivals or food festivals (where students can prepare and taste dishes from around the world), sporting events, trips to different places in the neighbourhood or even movie nights (with films or documentaries about other countries, with English subtitles or dubbing).

### 4.4. Preparation of the academic staff for work in a multicultural environment

**A university should prepare its academic staff for work in a multicultural environment.**

**This can be done by:**

- obtaining information on education, teaching systems and cultural conditions of the countries where foreign students come from (with emphasis on specific differences), and creating concise manuals for academic teachers which can be sent by e-mail;
- organising workshops improving didactic competences in a multicultural environment conducted by practitioners from various countries once a year or, if possible, more often;
- organising trips for academic teaching staff to universities in partner countries in order to exchange experiences – weekly trips, financed from university funds, with the recommendation to share information with other educators;
- taking into account foreign students' needs e.g. increasing the number of duty hours, dedicating some lectures only to them (e.g. revising and explaining things patiently), arranging online duty hours (e.g. via Skype, Google Hangouts);
- informing academic staff about possible cultural differences during online courses (e.g. webinars, video blogs) or in articles sent by e-mail;

- raising the awareness of problematic stereotypes, discrimination and racism through online training (webinars, video blogs) and conducting courses concerning preventive measures;
- involving student and scientific associations in taking care of foreign students;
- creating an offer for foreign students including mentoring and support from a psychologist or a coach;
- organising internships in different locations, student talent shows, international conferences and exchange of experiences and points of view about society, life and future;
- preparing students for working and studying in an international environment through meetings with industry/business experts working in such conditions.



A good example of such joint events is a food festival, during which students can prepare and taste dishes from around the world.



Dormitory staff should have a mini-glossary with questions and answers which are often used in communication with students.

## 5. Organization of the student service process

### 5.1. Administrative staff

**University administrative staff plan, create and manage different programmes and services provided to students. They may also be responsible for various tasks e.g. financial help or student activities. An example of a university administrative structure may be as follows:**

- A chancellor manages all campus activities and operations, and supervises the administrative staff.
- Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Teaching and Learning takes care of the curriculum, including educational plans, library, research and staff matters.
- Director of Studies oversees the process of accepting students and enrolment activities. They make decisions on the acceptance of candidates, evaluate students' applications and store their documents. Dean's offices deal with student loan programmes, as well as grants and award programmes which can help out those in a more difficult financial situation.
- University administrative staff take care of class syllabuses and enrolment, manage costs and expenses, and store students' transcripts.
- Deputy Dean of Studies supervises administrative staff of dean's offices and oversees more unusual tasks, ensuring students proper conditions for learning.
- Many universities have additional administrative positions e.g. a public relations manager or a manager dealing with university graduates' issues.



**Understanding the structure of the host university helps students integrate into their new environment.**

### 5.2. The use of modern technologies

Technology has become an important part of every student's education and life, particularly when it comes to obtaining access to various information. A good example of modern technological solutions is a mobile application. The University Mobile App can help both staff and students perform their duties on a day-to-day basis in three main areas:

### 1. CONTACT:

- emergency numbers e.g. police, campus security guards etc.
- important numbers – private phone numbers, e-mail addresses, links to maps etc.;
- academic consultancy;
- health, safety and security – services connected with students' health, safety and security, and off-campus services such as Problem Gambling Helpline;
- services for students – car parks, student award and financial programmes, IT support centre etc.

### 2. UNIVERSITY LIFE:

- an online bookstore – a useful function of a mobile app, thanks to which students can purchase, swap or sell their used textbooks to other students;
- a class timetable – an important function allowing students to check their classes, dates & time and their locations;
- grades – the possibility of seeing one's grades on a mobile phone can be very useful;
- an online library.

### 3. CAMPUS LIFE:

#### **Campus life abounds in lots of important information which students can check using their mobile app:**

- public transport – checking on buses, bus routes etc.;
- careers office – information on job fairs, tips on how to write a resume, prepare for a job interview etc.;
- events – events taking place at the campus, choosing between different event categories from athletics to public lectures;
- Facebook – the possibility of visiting the university profile and sharing different information with other users;
- bars, restaurants and cafés – menus, location at the campus etc.;
- maps – students should be able to find a given building on a map together with photos and description of what is inside.
- the news – being up-to-date with the campus and off-campus news, stories from the university website and news releases.

## 5.3. Dormitory services

**Thinking about dormitories and their services, it is worth preparing a guide for students (in a pdf file) which could be posted on the university and dormitory website, with the possibility of downloading it. The guide should be available in different language versions and should contain the following:**



- photos related to described issues;
- contact details (an address, a phone number, how to get there from the station/airport), dates of checking in and out, monthly rent and payment terms, procedures related to faults and damages, access to Wi-Fi, the use of electricity, receiving guests, sorting rubbish, the use of a laundry, staying in peace/relaxation/entertainment rooms and a place for storing bicycles;
- the rules for obtaining an inhabitant card and procedures in case it is lost;
- advice on where to live temporarily before obtaining accommodation in a dormitory;
- the description of situations requiring first aid – what procedures apply, how to report an event, what phone numbers one needs to have at hand;
- information on how to communicate easily with the dormitory staff and whom to contact for specific matters;
- information on behaviours and objects not accepted in a dormitory;
- phone numbers useful for dormitory residents (a university administration office, a taxi company).

It is a good idea to prepare information leaflets with the most important tips on how to obtain accommodation in the dormitory, and distribute them in places where students may easily find them e.g. on the Internet, in various offices etc. It can also be useful to have a mini-glossary with questions and answers frequently used in communication with dormitory staff in the local language, and to train the dormitory staff to do the same in English. It is worth hanging such a mini-glossary on an information board in a visible place, creating short videos showing everyday life in the dormitory and posting them on the university and dormitory website. And last but not least, do not forget to remind students (on Facebook) about information materials which they can browse/download.



Off-campus services e.g.  
Problem Gambling Helpline



ESN is a volunteer student organisation which helps to understand cultural differences and improves social and practical integration of foreign students in a new environment.

## 6. Information for students leaving for a partner university

### 6.1. Integration in a new socio-cultural environment

**For successful integration of students in a new socio-cultural environment of the host university, one recommends:**

- organizing a seminar with the help of the International Office in order to discuss intercultural differences. One should mention the following issues: how to behave at a university (in corridors, in class, during exams, ways of greeting and eating meals), how to address lecturers and other students and what dress-code to follow. Students who have studied at the respective universities in the past should also be involved in such seminars;
- informing foreign students about the possibility of receiving assistance from their mentor (Erasmus Student Network (ESN) at the host university). ESN is a volunteer student organisation which helps to understand cultural differences and improves social and practical integration of foreign students in a new environment;
- informing foreign students about the possibility of obtaining mentor's assistance for a certain period of time (a month or two) before their arrival at the university by submitting an online request;
- informing foreign students about public transport in the city where their host university is located, especially about the following: prices and types of single tickets, daily and monthly tickets, the possibility of obtaining discounts for students, operating hours, the possibility of using mobile applications for public transport and the rules of etiquette when travelling – how to behave when getting on a bus (tram, underground or train), when to give a seat to another passenger or how to travel with big luggage.

### 6.2. Information on formal and organizational issues

#### 6.2.1. International Office

The International Office handles matters such as the admission of exchange students from partner universities, whereas its coordinators assist them in the choice of courses and respond to questions concerning their study plan. If a student needs a signature or a specific certificate allowing them to continue studying, he or she should be able to contact

International Office coordinators at a given department of university. The university and the International Office should provide students with necessary information e.g. concerning scholarships or healthcare system in the country where they are going to study.

### 6.2.2. Student Affairs Office

Each university department should have a Student Affairs Office where a secretary could provide students with necessary information, help them, answer their questions concerning exam sessions and registration for courses, or make changes in their documentation.

### 6.2.3. Employment opportunities

Foreign students are permitted to work during their study period e.g. by participating in projects which allow them to enter the labour market. It might be a good idea to arrange meetings with lecturers from commercial and industrial sectors, or to organise job fairs where students could meet potential employers.

Host universities should organise traineeships (work placement, internships etc.) for students of BA, MA and PhD studies, including those taking place abroad.

### 6.2.4. Support for students with disabilities

**If a student with a disability needs assistance during their studies, he or she has the right for additional support. They should be informed about assistance possibilities, conditions, procedures and the scope granted support. The support may take the following forms:**

- help with taking notes,
- text recording,
- mentor's support,
- personal assistant,
- a room with special equipment and resources,
- technical equipment/teaching aids,
- sign language interpreter,

- special arrangements concerning participation in classes, learning and taking exams, depending on the type and level of recognised disability. For example:
  - students with vision impairment should be allowed to take tests and exams orally, while others take them in written form;
  - students with hearing impairment should obtain additional support if they use audio-visual aids during classes/exams;
  - students with recognised dyscalculia, dysorthographia or dysgraphia should be given more time to complete their tasks.
- adjustment of rooms,
- other forms of support.



Foreign students can take up work during their studies.



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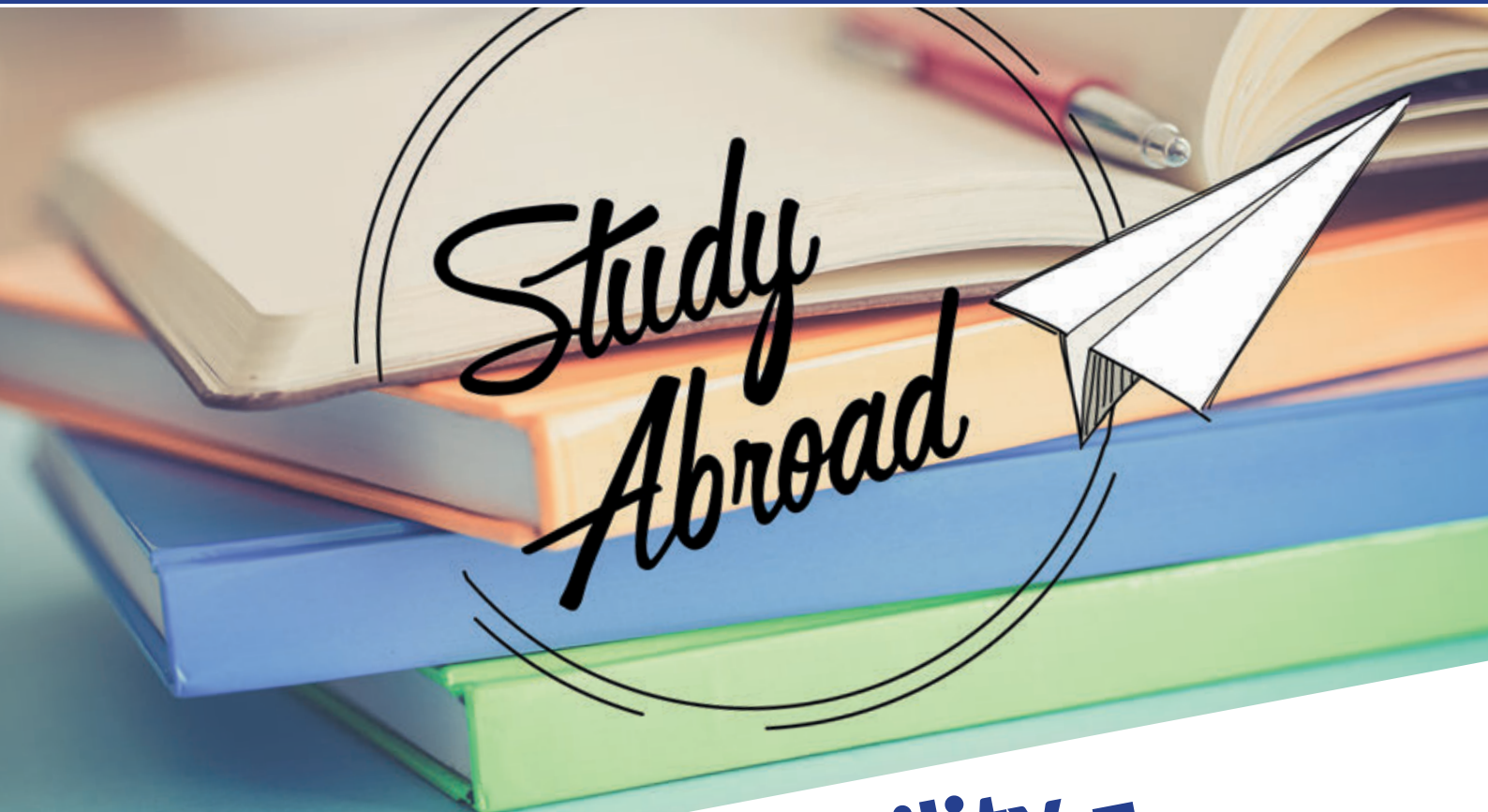
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Study  
Abroad

**International mobility -  
opportunity and problem.**  
Proper preparation for studying at a foreign university.