Guidelines on how to use the Erasmus+ Online Learning Agreement for Studies

The purpose of the Learning Agreement is to provide a transparent and efficient preparation of the study period abroad and to ensure that the student will receive recognition in his/her degree for the educational components successfully completed abroad.

This template is applicable to Erasmus+ mobility for studies between EU Member States and third countries associated to the programme (KA1). Under the Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027, **higher Education Institutions must ensure the usage of digital learning agreements.** Higher education institutions have three options to implement the Online Learning Agreement:

- Higher education institutions that **already have an IT system in place to produce the Learning Agreement** can continue using it, provided all the minimum requirements listed in this document and in the Erasmus Without Paper technical documentation are met and that their IT system has been connected to the Erasmus Without Paper Network. Further fields can be added if needed for internal administrative purposes but only the data indicated in the template will be transferred through the Erasmus Without Paper Network.
- Higher education institutions that **use an IT system provided or purchased from a third party provider to produce the Learning Agreement** can continue using it provided all the minimum requirements listed in this document and in the Erasmus Without Paper technical documentation are met and that their IT system has been connected to the Erasmus Without Paper Network. Further fields can be added for clients for internal administrative purposes but only the data indicated in the template will be transferred through the Erasmus Without Paper Network.
- Higher education institutions **that do not have an IT system in place to produce the Learning Agreement** can use the Online Learning Agreement developed for users of the Erasmus Without Paper Dashboard. This allows higher education institutions to implement the online learning agreement free of charge and to exchange data with their partners using their own IT system or an IT system provided or purchased from a third-party provider through the Erasmus Without Paper Network.

BEFORE THE MOBILITY

Administrative data

Before the mobility, it is necessary to fill in the general information data fields with information on the student, the Sending and the Receiving Institutions. The three parties have to agree on this section to be completed before the mobility. In case some administrative data is already available to the three parties the once-only principle can be applied, meaning there is no need to re-enter the data.

Following this, the student must select the type of mobility they plan to undertake and the estimated duration of their planned mobility. The student can select one the following mobility types:

- **Semester(s):** The student should select this mobility type if they are applying to undertake a traditional long-term study mobility abroad with a duration from 2 months (or one academic term or trimester) to 12 months. The student also has the option to add a virtual component

to their study mobility before, during or after. If the student plans to add a virtual component to the mobility period, they must also select the optional virtual component as part of their mobility type.

- **Blended mobility with short-term physical mobility:** The student should select this mobility type if they are applying to undertake a short-term physical mobility abroad. When a traditional long-term study mobility abroad is not an option for a student for example, due to their study field or because they have fewer opportunities for participation, they can carry out a short-term physical mobility of 5-30 days by combining it with a compulsory virtual component.
- **Short-term doctoral mobility:** Doctoral Candidates should select this mobility type when they are applying to undertake a short-term physical mobility of 5-30 days. If the doctoral candidate plans to add a virtual component to the mobility period, they must also select the optional virtual component as part of their mobility type.

In addition to selecting the mobility type, the learning agreement should also include the **indicative** start and end date of the agreed study programme that the student will carry out abroad. In the case of a study mobility abroad with a duration from 2 months-12 months, the indicative month/year is sufficient. Most of the general information data fields related to the student, Sending and Receiving Institutions and planned mobility will have to be reported in the Beneficiary Module by the mobility coordinator once the higher education institution has completed their internal selection procedures and awarded the mobility grants.

Based on the selection made by the student regarding the above mobility types, the relevant tables will be generated and included in the Online Learning Agreement to describe the study programme and recognition. This means **only applicable tables and fields** will be visible to the student, sending and receiving organisation.

Mobility type: Semester(s)

Educational components (Tables A and B)

The Learning Agreement must include all the educational components to be carried out by the student at the Receiving Institution (in Table A) and it must contain as well the group of educational components that will be replaced in his/her degree by the Sending Institution (in Table B) upon successful completion of the study programme abroad. It is necessary to fill in Tables A and B thoroughly before the mobility. Additional rows and columns can be added as needed. However, the two Tables A and B must be kept separated. The objective is to make clear that there is no need to have one-to-one correspondence between the components followed abroad and the ones replaced at the Sending Institution. The aim is rather that a group of learning outcomes achieved abroad replaces a group of learning outcomes at the Sending Institution.

In countries belonging to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) an academic year of full-time study is normally made up of educational components totalling 60 ECTS credits. It is recommended that for mobility periods shorter than a full academic year, the educational components selected should equate to a roughly proportionate number of credits (or equivalent units in countries outside the EHEA). In case the student follows additional educational components beyond those required for his/her degree programme, these additional credits (or equivalent) must also be listed in the study programme outlined in Table A.

In case of thesis research/doctoral work at the receiving institution, the component "Thesis research" or "Doctoral work" will be included in Table A. If no ECTS credits are provided by the receiving

institution, it is sufficient to write "not applicable" in that column. The thesis/doctoral work and the associated workload in ECTS credits will be included in Table B, if relevant for the sending institution.

The Sending Institution should indicate in Table B the group of educational components counting towards the student's degree that would normally be completed at the Sending Institution and which will be replaced by the Study Programme at the Receiving Institution. The total number of ECTS credits (or equivalent) in Table B should correspond to the total number of ECTS credits (or equivalent) contained in Table A. Any exception to this rule should be clearly stated in an annex of the Learning Agreement and agreed by all parties. Example of justification for a discrepancy in the total number of ECTS credits (or equivalent) between Table A and Table B: the student has already accumulated the number of credits required for his/her degree and does not need some of the credits gained abroad.

Mobility type: Semester(s) with an optional virtual component

Educational components (Table C)

If the student has chosen to add a virtual component offered by the receiving institution to their study mobility that will award ECTS credits (or equivalent), the simplified Table C should also be included in the Learning Agreement. The purpose is to give the student the possibility to enhance further the learning outcomes of the mobility period abroad by complementing the physical component with online learning, training or teamwork. When relevant, Table C must include a title or description of the educational component in addition to a short description of the nature of the virtual component e.g. online course, online cultural preparation with other exchange students or online training with a teacher. In the same table, the sending institution will indicate how the ECTS credits (or equivalent) of the added virtual component will be recognised i.e. either confirm automatic recognition or justify the reason for awarding an alternative recognition.

Mobility type: Blended mobility with short-term physical mobility

Educational components

If the student is taking part in a short-term physical mobility combined with a mandatory virtual component, the student and the sending and receiving institutions will describe the study programme and recognition of the learning outcomes using only the simplified mobility programme and recognition table which will appear when this mobility type is selected. This applies to both students organising their short-term mobilities individually and students taking part in Blended Intensive Programmes organised by groups of higher education institutions. The table will include the title of the Blended Intensive Programme or the title or description of the educational component organised for the individual student. In addition, a short description of the nature of the virtual component should be included e.g. online learning exchange and teamwork, online learning as part of a course offered in a blended learning format, online training or academic assignment with a supervisor in the receiving institution. In the same table, the sending institution will indicate how the ECTS credits (or equivalent) of the blended mobility with short-term physical component will be recognised i.e. either confirm automatic recognition or justify the reason for awarding an alternative recognition.

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Mobility type: Short-term doctoral mobility

Educational components

If the doctoral candidate is taking part in a short-term physical mobility, the doctoral candidate and the sending and receiving institutions will describe the study programme and recognition of the learning outcomes using only the simplified mobility programme and recognition table which will appear when this mobility type is selected. The table will include the title or description of the educational component organised for the doctoral candidate e.g. participation in a seminar, workshop, thesis work or intensive course. To enhance the synergies with Horizon Europe, doctoral mobilities can also take place in the context of Horizon Europe funded research projects. If the doctoral candidate decided to add a virtual component to their mobility, a short description of the nature of the virtual component should be included in Table C e.g. online learning exchange and teamwork, participation in an online seminar or webinar, online course etc.

Practical examples of how to fill in the tables provided in the Online Learning Agreement

In table A, the student must include all the educational components to be carried out at the Receiving Institution i.e. information about the selected courses or modules as indicated in the course catalogue or other educational components such as laboratory or thesis work. The group of components can then be included in Table B as follows:

Table B	Component code (if any)	Component title at the Sending Institution (as indicated in the course catalogue)	Semester [e.g. autumn/spring; term]	Number of ECTS credits (or equivalent) to be recognised by the Sending Institution	Automatic recognition
		Course X	Autumn	6	Yes ☒ No ☐
		Module Y	Spring	10	Yes ☒ No ☐
		Laboratory Work	…	8	Yes ☒ No ☐
		Thesis research/Doctoral work	…	10 / "not applicable"	Yes ☒ No ☐
				Total: …34	

In table B, the check box "Yes" for Automatic Recognition is selected by default. By maintaining this default selection, the sending institutions confirms that all credits gained abroad – as agreed in the Online Learning Agreement and confirmed by the Transcript of Records – will be transferred without delay and counted towards the students' degree without any additional work or assessment of the student. If the "No" check box is a clear justification needs to be provided and an indication on what other type of formal recognition will be applied e.g. registration in the students' diploma supplement or Europass Mobility Document.

The European Commission encourages institutions also to embed **mobility windows** in their curricula. Where all credits in Table A are automatically recognised as forming part of the programme at the

Sending Institution, typically in the case of **mobility windows**, Table B is **simplified** and reduced to one single line, as described below:

Table B	Component code (if any)	Component title at the Sending Institution (as indicated in the course catalogue)	Semester [e.g. autumn/spring; term]	Number of ECTS credits (or equivalent) to be recognised by the Sending Institution	Automatic recognition
		Mobility Window	Autumn	30	Yes ☒ No ☐
				Total: …30	

If the student has chosen to add an option virtual component to their mobility period, they will in addition need to fill in Table C. If the student is taking part in a short-term mobility (i.e. a blended mobility with a short term physical mobility, a Blended Intensive Programme, or a short-term doctoral mobility) **only Table C needs to be filled in** to describe the study programme at the receiving institution and recognition at the sending institution for example like this:

Table C	Component code (if any)	Component title or description of the Study programme at the Sending Institution	Short description of the virtual component (obligatory field):	Number of ECTS credits to be awarded	Automatic recognition
		Blended Intensive Programme X	Online workshop and presentation	5	Yes ☒ No ☐
		Doctoral work	Participation in webinar	"not applicable"	Yes ☒ No ☐
					Yes ☐ No ☐

The Sending Institution must foresee which provisions will apply if the student does not successfully complete some of the educational components from his study programme abroad, by providing a web link in the relevant data field.

<u>Language competence</u>

A recommended level in the main language of instruction has been agreed between the Sending and Receiving Institutions in their Digital Inter-Institutional Agreement. The Sending Institution is responsible for providing support to its selected candidates so that they can have the recommended language skills at the start of the study period.

The level of language competence in the main language of instruction, which the student already has or agrees to acquire by the start of the study period, has to be reported in the box provided for that purpose in the Learning Agreement for Studies or, alternatively, in the grant agreement.
In case the level of the selected student is below the recommended one when signing the Online Learning Agreement (or grant agreement), the Sending Institution and the student should agree that he/she will reach the recommended level by the start of the mobility. They should also discuss and decide the type of support to be provided to the student by the Sending or Receiving Institution. **The Erasmus+ Online Language Support (OLS)** has been designed to assist Erasmus+ students in improving their knowledge of the main language of instruction, before and during their stay abroad, to ensure a better quality of learning mobility.

For mobility of 14 days or more, the student must carry out an OLS language assessment in the language of mobility, if available on OLS, before the mobility, except for native speakers and in duly justified cases. The completion of the OLS assessment before departure is a pre-requisite for the mobility. This assessment will be taken after the student is selected, before signing the Learning Agreement or, alternatively, the grant agreement. All mobility participants have the opportunity to follow courses in the language(s) of their choice, available on the OLS platform.

Signing the Online Learning Agreement

All parties must digitally sign the Online Learning Agreement before the start of the mobility. The European Commission encourages higher education institutions to avoid printing copies or the Online Learning Agreement provided that the national legislation or institutional regulations allow for only retaining digital copies of the Online Learning Agreements.

CHANGES TO THE MOBILITY

Exceptional Changes to the Study Programme

In the case of semester(s) mobility, changes to the study programme should be exceptional, as the three parties have already agreed on a group of educational components that will be taken abroad, based on the course catalogue that the Receiving Institution has committed to publish well in advance of the mobility period and to update regularly. Any party can signal the need for changes to the study programme and the student can initiate the changes within five weeks after the start of each semester. These changes should be agreed by all parties as soon as possible, within two-weeks following the request.

All changes should be indicated in Tables A2, B2 and when applicable C2, while Tables A, B and C should not be modified. All Tables (A, B, C, A2, B2 and C2) will be stored together in the relevant server for full transparency as a new version of the LA; more information about the implementation of versioning can be found in the Erasmus Without Paper technical documentation. Please refer to the glossary provided in the Online Learning Agreement template and instructions on the Online Learning Agreement system to see the list of changes that can be encoded.

Note that in the case of changes to the learning agreement for blended mobility with a short-term physical mobility or short-term doctoral mobility, the student should create a new learning agreement.

AFTER THE MOBILITY

Transcript of Records at the Receiving Institution

After the mobility, the Receiving Institution should send a Transcript of Records to the student and to the Sending Institution within a period stipulated in the Digital Inter-Institutional Agreement (normally within five weeks after publication/proclamation of the student's results at the Receiving Institution). It can be provided electronically or through any other means accessible to the student and the Sending Institution. The Transcript of Records from the Receiving Institution should refer to the educational components agreed in Table A and where applicable C, as well as in Tables A2 and C2 where applicable. Grade distribution information should be included (web link or annex). In line with the objectives of the European Student Card Initiative, Transcript of Records should eventually be exchanged

exclusively in a digital format using a system connected to the Erasmus Without Paper Network or an option provided in the Erasmus Without Paper Dashboard when it becomes available.

The actual start and end dates of the study period should be included according to the following definitions:

The **start date** of the study period is the first day the student has been present at the Receiving Institution. For example, this could be the start date of the first course, a welcoming event organised by the Receiving Institution, an information session for students with fewer opportunities, a language and intercultural course organised either by the Receiving Institution or other organisations (if the Sending Institution considers it relevant for the mobility).

The **end date** of the study period is the last day the student had to be present at the Receiving Institution, not his actual date of departure. This is, for example, the end of exams period, courses or mandatory sitting period.

Recognition at the Sending Institution

Following the receipt of the Transcript of Records from the Receiving Institution, the Sending Institution should recognise automatically the student's academic outcomes successfully completed at the Receiving Institution. The Sending Institution should fully recognise the total number of ECTS credits (or equivalent) contained in Table B, and C when applicable, (and, if applicable, B2 and C2) or the simplified mobility programme and recognition table in case of short term mobility and count them towards the student's degree, without the need for the student to take any further courses or exams. The process should be in line with the principles of the Council Recommendation on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education diplomas and the outcomes of learning periods abroad.

Where applicable, the Sending Institution will convert the grades received by the student abroad, taking into account the grade distribution information from the Receiving Institution (see the methodology described in the ECTS Users' Guide). The European Commission encourages institutions to use the EGRACONS tool for this purpose.

The Sending Institution will provide a Transcript of Records to the student or record the results in a database or any other means accessible to the student, normally within five weeks after having received the transcript of the Receiving Institution. The student will be able to report on the recognition by the Sending Institution via the on-line EU survey or a complementary online survey.

Diploma Supplement: The information contained in the Transcript of Records from the Receiving Institution should also be included in the Diploma Supplement produced by the Sending Institution with the exact titles of the components that the student has followed abroad.