

## CREDIT TRANSFER ARRANGEMENTS FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT EXCHANGES 2020-21

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### 1. 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 course at Royal Holloway. They describe how the College uses the credits and marks gained abroad to assess academic progress and determine degree awards. For further reference please see the sections on progression, classification, extramural study and credit transfer of the [Undergraduate Regulations](#)

### 2. Before departure

#### ***Study Plan***

- 1.1 Students must complete a Study Plan, which records the modules to be taken abroad and their credit values, and have this approved in writing by his/her academic department before departure. This ensures that students register for sufficient credits and meet the academic requirements of their course. In cases where second semester module options are not publicised before the student departs, students must obtain written approval of their second semester Study Plan before registration for these modules. In some cases approval can only be granted once students have arrived at the host university and chosen their modules, for example students from Languages, Literatures and Cultures (LLC) visiting German speaking countries.
- 1.2 It is students' responsibility to research available modules at the host university and any rules or expectations which the host university has concerning combinations of modules. Departments should not approve a 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 modules at Royal Holloway and the host university; therefore an appropriate compromise may need to be found. Particular care is needed to verify that the student will be able to follow all the modules in the proposed order given his/her point of arrival in the host university's academic calendar.

#### ***Compulsory Year Abroad***

- 2.3 All courses with a compulsory period of residence abroad (e.g. single and joint honours modern foreign languages and Liberal Arts courses with a period of residence abroad) and courses 'with an international year', will have requirements set out in the relevant course specification and student handbooks. Students on these courses should check the requirements and ensure that they register

for modules that are equivalent to the required ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) or UK credits.

### ***Optional exchange***

- 2.4 Students taking an optional exchange (e.g. stage 2 abroad, or stage 3 of an integrated Master's course) must have an approved Study Plan equivalent to the stage of their degree course they will miss whilst abroad. The Study Plan needs to be considered in reference to:
- a. the structure of the academic course at Royal Holloway, so that the modules are appropriate and sufficient in terms of the credit weighting, 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.
- 2.5 It is important to indicate on the Study Plan if any individual modules must be taken in order to meet core requirements on the course 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 modules in the following year should also be discussed.
- 2.6 Students on an optional exchange are responsible for ensuring that they register for the equivalent of 120 UK credits, which may consist of module units worth 30 UK credits (full units) and/ or 15 UK credits (half units). The system at the host university will be different, but as a general rule, 30 UK credits is equivalent to 15 ECTS credits, 12 Australian credits, or 7.5 US or Canadian credits. Students need to be aware that modules at other institutions may not necessarily all carry the same credit weighting/ value and it is their responsibility to ensure that they register for the equivalent of 120 UK credits in total.

### ***Support for disabilities and specific learning difficulties***

- 2.7 Students should bear in mind that equivalent support to that available at the College for disabilities and/ or specific learning difficulties may not be available at institutions abroad. Compensation for lack of support or different support cannot be made when credits gained abroad are converted into RHUL equivalents. It is the student's responsibility to research support available at the host institution and to discuss any concerns with their department and/ or the College's Disability and Dyslexia Services prior to going abroad.

## **3. During the year abroad**

- 3.1 Students must follow the approved modules during the exchange to ensure that on their return to Royal Holloway they can progress in their studies and there is no adverse effect on their final award. However, it is understood that occasional difficulties or changes may arise at the host university which are outside the student's control and which prevent the Study Plan being followed. If these situations arise, it is essential that students contact their academic department and CeDAS [studyabroadstudents@royalholloway.ac.uk](mailto:studyabroadstudents@royalholloway.ac.uk) without delay. LLC students should contact the relevant Period of Residence Abroad (PRA) tutor.
- 3.2 Amendments must be approved in writing by the department before students commit to changes. There is no guarantee that the department will approve changes retrospectively or changes resulting from difficulties which the student could reasonably have avoided.
- 3.3 Students should avoid registering for modules which are assessed on a Pass/Fail only basis as they will not receive credit for such modules 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.
- 3.4 Whether all anticipated modules can be taken or changes have to be made, a formal Learning Agreement needs to be signed off within 30 days of the placement starting by both the student and

the relevant departmental advisor. This is in order to have a clear, agreed record of the modules that a student is permitted to take.

#### 4. Before returning

- 4.1 LLC students returning from a compulsory period of residence abroad are assessed using the scheme set out in the course specification. Students returning from an optional exchange are subject to the normal requirements for academic progression set out in the **Undergraduate Regulations** (i.e. to pass modules which are equivalent in value to at least 90 credits and any modules required for progression to the next stage or for the degree title as indicated in the course specification). Students should also be aware of the implications of an integral year on the number of credits that can be condoned over the first and second stages of study and also the implication of failure of a compulsory period of study abroad on degree title, as set out set out in the **Undergraduate Regulations** and, as relevant, in the course specification.

##### *Transcripts*

- 4.2 It is the student's responsibility to provide the College with an official transcript of marks issued by the relevant central administrative section of the host university as soon as possible, and no later than 1 September, so that the College can determine eligibility to progress and enrolment for the next year of study or in the case of LLC 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.
- 4.3 If by the beginning of the next academic session the student has been unable to obtain an official 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.

#### 5. Credit transfer

- 5.1 Decisions on credit transfer and the conversion of marks are made by the Chair of the Department Assessment Board, or an appropriate nominee, in the student's academic department at Royal Holloway.

##### *Compulsory Year Abroad - Modern foreign language courses*

- 5.2 LLC students returning from a compulsory Year Abroad studying at an overseas university are awarded credit using the scheme set out in the course specification. The Year Abroad will contribute an additional 60 credits to stage two of the degree: 30 credits based on two reports (one due in January, the other in June) written in the source language and 30 credits on an oral examination testing linguistic skills and intercultural awareness. If LLC students are taking a Fourth Year Abroad the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> units will be final-stage weighted.

##### *Compulsory Year Abroad - Courses 'with an international year'*

- 5.3 Student registered on a course 'with an international year' will have their marks converted into the Royal Holloway equivalent and counted as an additional 30 credits ('13<sup>th</sup> unit') forming 20% of the overall stage mark in the stage following the year abroad. For BA/BSc students this will be the final stage. For MSci students it will be either stage three or four depending on when the year abroad is taken. The remaining 80% is calculated using the marks for the 120 credits taken at Royal Holloway in the relevant stage, which comprises 150 credits in total.
- 5.4 The mark for the 13<sup>th</sup> unit is calculated by averaging the converted marks for all modules up to the full credit requirement of 120 credits using the approved grade conversion grids. In cases where students fail to take the equivalent of 120 credits the initial average mark will be scaled downwards by the percentage ratio of the missing credits. For example, if a full load is 6 modules (120 credits) but a student only takes five (100 credits, i.e. missing 20%) and receives an average mark of M, the final average mark =  $M \times 0.8$ .

### ***Optional exchanges (year abroad as replacement for a year at RHUL)***

- 5.5 Students 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.
- 5.6 Students cannot be given credit for any modules which are failed, not completed or assessed on a Pass/Fail basis unless the latter is a syllabus requirement and prior approval has been obtained. Students will not receive credit for modules not listed in the Study Plan unless the department agrees to this retrospectively. Students should be aware that modules at other institutions may not all carry the same credits value and must check that they register for sufficient credits. A mark of zero will be given for any outstanding credits.

### ***Award classification***

- 5.7 The credits and marks awarded by the College will be recorded either as marks in individual module units, or as an average across a number of module 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 module. The module unit marks or average are used to determine the final award classification in accordance with the College's [Undergraduate Regulations](#)

## **6. Conversion of marks**

- 6.1 As universities in different countries often use different marking scales, it is necessary to convert marks gained abroad into their Royal Holloway equivalent. For example, the pass mark at another institution may be 50% (at Royal Holloway it is 40% for undergraduate study); and 'excellent' or 'first-class' work may be given a mark of 80+% (at Royal Holloway it would be 70+%). Marks are converted 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.
- 6.2 The College has approved mark conversion schemes for each of the host universities with which it has an exchange agreement, which are used to convert marks achieved during a year abroad. 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 conversion of marks lies with the examination board.
- 6.3 The mark conversion schemes 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 the overall 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.
- 6.3 MSci students who go abroad for an optional exchange in stage three must return to the College for completion of their final year in order to qualify for a Royal Holloway award (MSci). A student who fails to return after completing stage three abroad will not be considered for the award of a Royal Holloway BSc but will need to approach the host institution abroad to establish if their College credits can be recognised and an award made by that institution.

## 7. Confirmation of credit transfer and appeals

- 7.1 Students will be issued with written confirmation of the credits and marks awarded by the College for their studies abroad. For students abroad for a full academic year this will include a statement on whether the criteria for progression to the next stage of the course have been met. For LLC the marks for the two ML2999 reports (which constitute the 13th unit) are available to students 3 weeks after the January and June deadlines for submission. The marks for the September oral (which constitutes the 14th unit) are only made available once the YA Sub-board has met in October to ratify all marks (students are then informed electronically).
- 7.2 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. Students cannot appeal to Royal Holloway concerning marks awarded by the host institution. Students in this position must inform themselves about the host university's procedures and deadlines for appealing against module results. If marks are changed by the host university following an appeal, students are responsible for obtaining a revised official transcript so that the College can review its decision on the credit transfer and the conversion of marks as soon as possible.
- 7.3 If, however, a student feels that an error has been made in the conversion or award of credits or marks at Royal Holloway, 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, the grounds for appeal and the process of submitting an appeal are published on the [Appeals](#) website. The student may also contact the Students' Union, the Student Services Centre or Student Administration (e-mail [appeals@royaholloway.ac.uk](mailto:appeals@royaholloway.ac.uk)) for further information. The appeal must be submitted within 15 working days of the date on which the student was formally notified of the outcome of the credit transfer.

*Academic Quality and Policy Office  
July 2020*