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TRANSFORM4EUROPE: THE EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY FOR KNOWLEDGE ENTREPRENEURS

Step-by-step manual for teaching staff
and programme directors for designing
and implementing mobility windows

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1. Introduction and general principles

The step-by-step manual for designing and implementing mobility windows (hereinafter referred to as "MW") is part of the Transform4Europe (hereinafter referred to as "T4EU") guidelines for seamless mobility. It is intended to support study coordinators and teaching staff in the internationalization of study programs by developing MWs and embedding them into curricula. This manual is based on information and best practices provided by partner universities and relevant departments during exchange sessions and discussions. It will be regularly updated based on new information gathered from partners during the design and implementation of mobility windows within the alliance.

2. Definition of MW

The T4EU Alliance understands mobility window as defined by Ferencz et al. (2013):

*“A MW is a period of time reserved for international student mobility that is embedded into the curriculum of a study program”*¹

Types of MW²:

Type 1: Optional with loosely-prescribed content (Op-Lop)	Type 3: Optional with highly-prescribed content (Op-Hip)
<p>The most flexible type of mobility windows (e.g., Erasmus);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Optimal part of the curriculum (“mobility path”) - Study content is open/flexible 	<p>More flexible in terms of the mobility experience and more rigid in terms of content.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Optimal part of the curriculum - Study content is fixed
Type 2: Mandatory with loosely-prescribed content (Ma-Lop)	Type 4: Mandatory with highly-prescribed content (Ma-Hip)
<p>More rigid in terms of the mobility experience and more flexible in terms of content;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mandatory part of the curriculum - Study content is open/flexible 	<p>The most structured type of mobility windows;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mandatory part of the curriculum - Study content is fixed

¹ Ferencz et al. 2013, 12

² Ferencz et al. 2013, 41

3. Steps for designing mobility windows

Step 1: Set a clear goal for MW

- Review aims and learning outcomes set for the study programme. Evaluate attainment of study outcomes and which ones may need to be adjusted to better fit the internationalisation goal. Decide on a goal and learning outcome you want to reach by introducing a MW into your programme.
- Define learning outcomes of MW and match them with the learning outcomes of the study programme.
- Map the MW subjects/courses to the included MW learning outcome.
- Involve the faculty and/or the institute, to make sure that implementation of the MW is supported.

Step 2: Decide which MW type best suits your goal

- Type: Based on the set goal for MW and its learning outcomes, choose the type of MW (Op-Lop; Op-Hip; Ma-Lop; Ma-Hip).
- Duration: Determine the duration of the MW and decide when the students should go abroad.
- Type/Content: Decide if the time spent abroad should be a physical study stay abroad or include digital elements. The MW could also include a traineeship, virtual components, or research phases.
- Traffic Flow: Consider whether the MW should focus on sending students abroad (one-way) or also receiving students (two-way), and if the inbound and outbound flow should occur in the same semester or in subsequent semesters. A flow that allows for inbound and outbound mobility in subsequent semesters could provide advantages through interaction between "national" and "international" students.
- Workload: Determine how many ECTS credit points should be achieved and how many hours of workload should be completed during the MW. Is there a range between a minimum and maximum number of credit points? Check aspects like this with the relevant departments if necessary.

Step 3: Choose partner(s) accordingly

- Choosing partners can be accomplished in various ways:
- Fill out the "MW offer template" and contact your local T4EU coordinator. The responsible person will then send out the offer to partner universities.
- Approach specific member(s) based on the relevance of their study programme.

- Profile of study courses: Level and profile of the study courses offered by the partner(s) are suitable regarding the requirements. This enables a smooth recognition of academic achievements.
- Capacities: Partners have sufficient study offers as well as sufficient places for incoming students in courses, events, laboratories etc.

Step 4: Coordinating person

- Choose a coordinating person from the participating partners, who will be coordinating the process of the MW design.
- Decide who will be responsible for informing and counselling students. Stays abroad need a lot of individual assistance.

Step 5: Implementation plan

- Agree on the roles, the responsibilities and document the distribution of it. Define the timeline, including the main goals and intended results. Identify the risks that may occur and plan how to deal with them.

Step 6: Adjust study regulations and study plan

- Check if you need to adapt study regulations, examination regulations and if you have to respect deadlines for these procedures.
- According to decisions made before, adjust study plan so that the chosen semester and credits allocated for MW would be clearly visible in curricula and all major subject-specific course units (modules) which are essential for the academic degree would not be missed. Enrolled students must know from the start of their study at which point in time during the programme they have to, should or can go abroad, and for how long.

Step 7: Services

- Discuss and agree upon services (e.g. housing, travel, living costs abroad, document on cultural differences, etc..) provided to students and document them.

Step 8: Recognition of MW terms

- Decide on recognition steps mobile students will have to follow after returning home in order for their MW to be recognized and create a grade conversion system between all involved HEIs. Recognition as ungraded CP avoids a lot of problems.

- Set up a policy to deal with potential cases where students fail to fulfil study requirements.

Step 9: Tuition fees

- Tuition fees are waived for exchange students as part of the Erasmus+ Mobility Agreement. They will only be paid at the Home University, and the Host University will waive them. Other costs may apply (administrative costs, public transportation, health insurance, etc ...).

Step 10: Assure funding for outgoing students

- In most cases the Erasmus grant is the relevant funding. If not, other funding possibilities could be elaborated and clearly communicated to students.

Step 11: Agreement between partners

- Check if an agreement exists or sign a new one. In the case of Erasmus mobility, the inter institutional agreement of the Erasmus+ programme must be used. If necessary, annexes can be made.
- Fill in and sign the bilateral agreement (reach out to your local coordinator or the task coordinator).

Step 12: Design content for students staying at home university

- If the chosen MW type is optional, there is a need to design study content for students who are not mobile to reach the same goal and learning outcomes.

Step 13: Selection criteria for MW and number of students

- If needed, set the selection criteria. The criteria might be composed of a mix of foreign language requirements, academic standing and student's motivation. Consider also activities in student initiatives and in voluntary service. Describe the selection process and define the commission that undertakes it and documents the selection process and results.
- If necessary, establish a maximum number of students who can participate in the mobility window. If an Erasmus+ Agreement already exists, check if a maximum number of students is already set.

4. Steps for implementing mobility windows

Step 1: Advertise and disseminate information

- Use previous exchange students' experiences to advertise MW from home and partner universities. Students' experiences could be illustrated in textual or visual format (articles, posts on social media, posters, etc.) or they could also be integrated into (in)formal events (for example, discussions on the topic of mobility);
- Diversify advertisement and information dissemination sources (university webpages, T4EU website, social networks, specific meetings, newsletters, e-mails, etc.);
- Use MW as distinguishing feature of your study programme, while advertising it for the admission purposes;
- Inform students about opportunities and obligations resulting from the participation in MW. In case of optional MW – deadlines for selection registration and selection criteria;
- Present a list of partners/agreements specifically recommended within the certain study programme;
- Keep a contact list of consulting staff published and disseminated for students. Students, who had mobility experience could also be made into mentors who may provide consultations for their peers.

Step 2: Motivate students

- Discuss with potentially mobile students the benefits which MW will offer them (competence development, entering the labour market and gaining experience wise) and offer financial support for the costs. It could be done in the form of webinars, focus groups, competition (game), etc.

Step 3: Select students

- Based on the decided selection process and criteria, select students if a MW is optional and there is a limited number of students who can participate in MW.

Step 4: Help to prepare for MW

- Inform selected students about deadlines, application and recognition procedures, and practical issues (accommodation, financing, culture awareness etc.) in a selected form (online meeting, video lecture, form of a handbook, etc.);
- Provide selected students with contact information at home university in case they will face problems at partner institution and won't be able to solve them independently.

Step 5: In case of reciprocal MW – prepare to welcome incoming students

- Prepare and offer an introductory and welcoming time for incoming students to get acquainted with the host university, faculty, study programme, surroundings. If possible, include former exchange students or student's representation bodies at your institution, presentation from relevant departments (welcome center, international student association, etc.).
- Fulfil terms agreed upon with the partner university;
- Be ready to offer academic or personal help if needed (have a contact list for directing students where they can find consultations/help needed).

Step 6: Recognize MW

- Recognize credits received during the mobility window on the terms which were set during designing MW and information given to students before their mobility. Use the grading tables set up for this purpose.

Step 7: Collect feedback

- Collect feedback from exchange students about their MW experience, study quality, organisation of MW, etc. for MW quality assurance and advertising/motivating students;
- In case of loosely prescribed content MW, collect information on course units (modules) students choose to study at partner university to track patterns and evaluate if experience made during the mobility window counts towards or supplements the degree.

Step 8: Evaluate

- Establish a timeline together with the partner(s) for the evaluation of the MW. Take the feedback from former exchange students into account and set up an evaluation questionnaire for recent students regarding the quality of administrative service offers, the offer of study courses, the preparation for the stay abroad etc.

5. Literature

European Commission. (2023). Erasmus+ Programme Guide. https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-11/2024-Erasmus%2BProgramme-Guide_EN.pdf

Ferencz, Irina/Hauschildt, Kristina/Garam, Irma (Hrsg.) (2013): Mobility Windows: From Concept to Practice, Bonn: Lemmens Medien. [ACA_2013_Mobility_windows.pdf \(aca-secretariat.be\)](#)