

Erasmus Charter Higher Education (ECHE) European Policy Statement (EPS)

Introduction:

Northern Regional College is the main provider of further education in the northeast region of Northern Ireland, covering a population of over 560,000. We offer a comprehensive range of technical, vocational and professional qualifications for school leavers and adults including, full-time and part-time courses, apprenticeships, Higher Level apprenticeships and university accredited courses.

The college also provides a range of business support services including:

- Knowledge Transfer
- Technology Transfer
- Skills Transfer

Annually the college enrolls 16,000+ learners – 4,000 further education, 2,000 higher education, 1,200 apprentices with the remainder on part-time short courses. Many of our lecturers continue to work as industry professionals and offer extensive knowledge and experience of their specialist area helping to equip our students with the knowledge and skills they need to prepare them for the world of work. The College has extensive well-equipped workshops and classrooms with the latest equipment and facilities to meet industry standards.

The College offers courses through the following four academic departments and continually reviews and develops curriculum to ensure that all courses meet the needs of global industry and economy demands.

1. Engineering and Built Environment
2. Business, Computing and Creative Industries
3. Science and Service Industries
4. Care and Access

Context:

Further Education Means Success, the '*Northern Ireland Strategy for Further Education*' was launched by Minister Farry on 12 January 2016. The strategy provides the future direction for further education in Northern Ireland and sets out the new policy commitments to ensure their delivery. A Programme for Implementation of the strategy which sets out the key milestones and associated timescales was launched on 15 March 2016.

Policy Commitment 20 states '*Operating Internationally Colleges will enhance the learner experience, and the professional development and industrial knowledge of*

their staff, through placements and exchanges with similar institutions in other countries.'

In this context the College recognises that participation in Erasmus programmes derives benefits for participants and stakeholders as follows:

Students benefit from:

- Greater awareness and comprehension of global issues
- Greater understanding and appreciation of different countries, their cultures, and working methods and therefore better equipped to live and work in a global economy and multicultural society
- Access to study/work placements abroad, which will increase their future opportunities for mobility

College staff benefit from:

- Increased staff development opportunities via international placements, exchanges and project assignments
- New and creative ideas through collaboration and sharing of experience and best practice with overseas partners
- Opportunities to create new strategic partnerships with local, national and international businesses

Employers benefit from:

- Access to a workforce which is better equipped with the appropriate skills for a global economy and which will help to increase UK competitiveness

Local communities benefit from:

- Improved cohesion through the development of globally aware citizens with increased understanding and tolerance of others

College International Strategy:

Within our International strategy the College has set out the following aims for international activity:

1. to be recognised as a valued partner in all strands of international activity
2. for each department to be involved in international activity
3. to enhance student and staff international experience

The College's International Strategy has four strategic targets, these relate to:

- Student and staff mobility
- International students
- International projects
- Overseas training and consultancy

In support of these targets, programmes developed through ECHE enable the College to deliver focused international activities leading to increased student and staff mobility. Widening access and participation in Higher Education is a central aspect of ECHE partnerships by engaging with increasing numbers from other European countries. ECHE activities will also allow students to experience an enriched

educational experience both in language development and culturally by attending third level institutions across Europe.

Visibility to Erasmus Activities

To develop and market courses that allow for the broadening of a student's knowledge and to develop networks within the existing partner colleges.

Erasmus Charter Higher Education (ECHE) & European Policy Statement (EPS)

The ECHE and the EPS will be published on our web, notice boards, emailed to students & staff and College Newsletter.

1.1 Strategy and Objectives

NRC's ECHE Strategy in the context of the Lifelong Learning Programme (2014-20) will be to strengthen our European links and broaden the range of Erasmus activities available to our staff and students.

Student mobility will remain as the College's priority. With the development of new programmes which promote a training work placement, the College aims to increase the numbers of students participating.

Staff Mobility will continue to underpin our bi-lateral relationships and serve as a starting point for the further development of multi-lateral projects as outlined below. The opportunities offered in the Lifelong Learning Programme will provide for overseas training work placements for students and enable students from Partner Institutions to undertake training work placements in Northern Ireland.

NRC will form new partnerships at Short Cycle degree.

A further strategy will be to form partnerships with the objective of developing and exchanging information and professional experience on teaching and learning systems.

1.2 Publicising the ECHE and the EPS

Information concerning Erasmus activities will continue to be publicised on the College website, in the Student Handbook, Admissions Handbook, newsletter and local media. The ECHE and EPS will be published on the College website. Students will receive a copy of the Erasmus Charter and pre-departure preparation will include references to the content of the charter. Erasmus activities will be promoted among students and staff by email and presentations.

1.3 Compliance with College non-discrimination objectives

Compliance with the College Equality Policy is ensured through the work of the Equality and Careers Unit. College strategy for the next five years includes guarantees of Equality of Access to all short cycle and undergraduate programmes irrespective of age, gender, race, disability or social background. The College has a national profile as a location which caters for a high proportion of learners drawn from backgrounds traditionally under-represented in third-level education. The Careers Unit provides support for these groups, facilities for students with special needs, and develops quality initiatives for different groups of students.

2.0 Quality of Academic Mobility Activities.

The International Office operates within the College's Quality Management System in executing all its academic mobility activities. This sets down norms and procedures to ensure compliance on the use of European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) to facilitate academic recognition of all credits earned by both incoming and outgoing students. ECTS will be used to facilitate academic recognition for both incoming and outgoing students.

The information regarding programmes currently published on the College website will be reviewed and updated to include full programme details, including module descriptors.

Outgoing students are informed and counselled by means of presentations and regular meetings, in preparation for mobility.

An orientation week will be organised for incoming students, including campus tours, introduction to student services, clubs and societies and social functions. English language classes are provided for all incoming students on a semester long basis.

Outgoing students undertaking training work placements abroad have access to the On-line Language Support (OLS) programme.

The College provides a comprehensive range of services, including a health unit, counselling and careers services, sport and recreation, clubs and societies.

Accommodation is organised for incoming students off campus as appropriate.

Staff and Student mobility is promoted and supported through the International Office.

3.0 Quality of Student Placement Activities

A number of programmes incorporate a period of work placement, varying from short study visit (4 days) to a 2-12 month placement. Work placement constitutes an integral part of the HE programme. It is recognised as a central learning experience and credits are awarded for successful completion of the placement.

Through the International Office College, academic staff act as a point of liaison for the student and the workplace supervisor prior to and during placement. Management of placement will involve:

1. Orientation of the student towards the workplace.

2. Management of the student during placement.
3. A system of liaison with the employer.
4. Evaluation of the student.

While it is not College policy to place barriers in the way of incoming students, involvement in placement will be limited by available resources and strict reciprocal arrangements will have to apply.

1. Ensuring a **quality** higher education system
2. Promoting the **mobility** of students and academic and administrative staff
3. Introducing a **credit system** (ECTS) for the assessment of study performance
4. **The Recognition of levels:** adopting a system of easily identifiable and comparable levels
5. **The Active involvement** of higher education institutions, teachers and students in the Bologna Process and student participation in the management of higher education
6. Promoting a **European dimension** in higher education
7. Promoting the attractiveness of the European higher education area **Lifelong learning**
8. A European higher education area and a European research area – **two pillars of a society based on knowledge**