ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT

The mission statement of St Mary's University College, Belfast, includes a commitment to have a rich international dimension in the life of the institution. This supports the College's vision which is to protect and advance human dignity and cultural heritage through education as well as to make the campus a site for fruitful dialogue with people of different cultures.

The College has identified mobility target groups and its geographical scope.

- Student mobility with academic credit - at both the Bachelor and Master cycles - has been a priority for student formation at St Mary's. The College's aim is to further encourage, facilitate and enable student credit mobility in line with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) to and from both participating and non-participating countries.
- Enabling the mobility of academic staff to be involved in developments such as training, teaching and carrying out research in different partner countries.
- Administrative and support staff are encouraged to participate in mobility for training and developing their careers.
- The overall aim of Erasmus+ Programme mobility for the College community is to enhance the academic and professional development of all participants. This is achieved by providing opportunities for living, working and learning in an interdependent international context through participation in fully credited programmes for students and career enhancement training for staff.
- The College requires that all mobility activities are characterised by high quality learning and clear lines of accountability.
- The College will build on its already well-established network of successful partnerships (31) for student mobility, research and curriculum development with universities elsewhere on the island of Ireland, Great Britain and the rest of Europe (EU and non-EU) as well as in the wider world - particularly in the USA, the Gulf States, Canada, China and various African countries. A range of factors are considered in the selection of international partners. These include: contacts made by academics for course and research enhancement, subject specialisms, academic reputation and mutual interests. With our European partners, the Erasmus+ cooperative activities have in many cases been ongoing since the College first participated in the Programme in 1994.
- In all its international mobility activities St Mary's complies with non-discrimination objectives, inclusion, widening participation and diversity practices through its policies. There are policies related to gender equality, integration of disabled students and staff, enhancement of social and economic cohesion, and actions combating of xenophobia and racism. There is also an embedded culture of civic engagement both for students through accredited modular activities and staff outreach to community organisations.
- The pastoral care of all participants in mobility to and from the College is given special attention in an institution which values above all the dignity of the human person.

Student Support Services (SSS), health consultation and specialist counselling and wellbeing provision is available for all participants who require such services.

The College will continue to participate in cooperation projects for innovation and good practice.

- Special attention will be paid to knowledge alliances in Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND), bilingual education, interculturalism and entrepreneurship in education.
- The organisation and implementation of international (EU and non-EU) cooperation projects will conform to the regulations of the College in all aspects. Having been shaped by many years of participation in the Erasmus+ Programme, the College will continue to adhere to the principals' set out the Erasmus+ Charter.
- There shall be no involvements in projects without the express permission of the Senior Management Team which shall require the identification of clear objectives, a workplan and a budget.
- Staff shall be selected to lead projects or participate in them on their basis their competence and experience. They shall report on their work through the normal accountability channels.
- All income and expenditure shall be subject to the financial regulations of the institution as set out in its policy.

The College will assess and evaluate the impact of its participation in the Erasmus+ Programme based on outcomes pertinent to College internationalisation, as key aspects of the long-term development of the College.

- St Mary's as an institution is primarily concerned with its learning and teaching provision and thereby the formation of its students. It contributes to the wide diversity of higher education institutions in Europe. Emphasis will therefore be placed on the Key Action 1 for study and training mobility, while engaging when the opportunities arise with projects other than Key Action 1 that enhance the internationalisation of the College's academic potential.
- The overriding policy objective will be to have high quality learning mobility which impacts to a significant extent on the individual participants, the institutions involved and the regions. Learning mobility will seek to contribute to both social/cultural and economic development by facilitating prosperity, more entrepreneurial attitudes, skills development, a global view, an intercultural perspective and enhanced employability.

The Erasmus Policy of St Mary's University College will contribute to each of the key areas identified as in need of reform and set out the "agenda for the modernisation of Europe's higher education systems", the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE) principles, and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) of which the United Kingdom is a part, fostering collaboration among countries in the area of education, with the aim of building more resilient and inclusive national higher education and training systems. It is anticipated that the impact of involvement in the Erasmus+ Programme will ensure the College:

- Increases academic and professional attainment levels for undergraduates, post-graduates and graduates and staff.
- Attracts more students from non-traditional academic backgrounds to participate in international mobility. Over 45% of the institution's total student population come from low-

income backgrounds and the Erasmus+ programme enables them to participate in mobility.

- Participates in mobility to enhance motivation and self-reliance in students and thereby contributes to improving retention rates.
- Assists in dismantling the barriers still faced by women in reaching higher levels of career achievement. Currently, over 70% of student mobility at St Mary's University College is from women.
- Improves the quality and relevance of higher education as an active agency of change through civic engagement and participation in social and public service for the betterment of society.
- Promotes staff mobility to enable cross-institutional innovation in curriculum development.
- Enables innovative learning and delivery methods (especially in ICT) facilitated by staff and student mobility.
- Frames student mobility in a competence development model of learning.
- Strengthens quality academic provision through mobility and cross-border cooperation.
- Acknowledges evidence from past Erasmus+ Progamme mobilities which point to a significant increase in the professional, social and intercultural skills of students and staff.
- Enhances employment prospects in international labour markets by learning mobility.
- Makes the knowledge triangle work: linking higher education, research and business for excellence and regional development.
- Involves all students at St Mary's University College in placement learning upon their return from learning mobility. This provides a direct link between international experience and local/regional dissemination of new knowledge and understanding.
- Acknowledges international mobility as a component of the University College's approach to staff development.
- Facilities delivery of the eight high level strategic objectives of the College.[1]

[1] https://www.stmarys-belfast.ac.uk/about-us/our-identity/strategy/