



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE  
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

**College of Arts, Social Sciences & Celtic Studies**

**2023/24 Study Abroad**

**Course Selection and Learning Agreements:  
a study abroad guide  
for non-language students**

Author:

Mary Lyons

Mobility Officer, CASSCS

Version 3, 10/10/2023

## Table of Contents

|   |   |
|---|---|
| How many credits should I take at the Host University?.....                 | 3 |
| Universities outside of the EU and their credit systems.....                | 3 |
| How should I choose modules, and how do I get them approved? .....          | 4 |
| Selection of modules.....   | 4 |
| Approval of modules by University of Galway.....                            | 4 |
| Approval of modules by the host university .....                            | 4 |
| Who is/are my Year Abroad Coordinator(s)? .....                             | 4 |
| The Learning Agreement.....   | 5 |
| Various learning agreement options .....                                    | 5 |
| The Online Learning Agreement (Erasmus students only) .....                 | 6 |
| Can't find your host university in the drop-down list? .....                | 6 |
| "Responsible persons" / Academic Coordinators and the OLA .....             | 6 |
| Link to course catalogue .....  | 6 |
| Who should sign my Learning Agreement?.....                                 | 6 |
| Learning Agreement - General Tips and Troubleshooting.....                  | 7 |
| Completing Table B (Erasmus only) .....                                     | 7 |
| Storing and accessing the learning agreement.....                           | 7 |
| Signing and editing of the OLA.....   | 7 |
| List of Year Abroad Academic Coordinators at the University of Galway ..... | 8 |

## How many credits should I take at the Host University?

The University of Galway's usual credit requirement for non-language BA students on the Year Abroad is **40 ECTS** or, if you are going to study outside of the EU, it's the equivalent number of credits at your particular host university (see next section).

If you are a **BA Global Experience** or **BA Joint Honours** student, this will mean, in most cases, achieving **20 ECTS** (or equivalent) in pre-approved modules related to **each of your two degree subjects**, to give 40 ECTS in total. You are free to take an additional module or two if you so wish. However, some partner universities will require that students take more credits: KU Leuven, for instance, specifies that all its incoming exchange students must take 24 ECTS per semester, or 48 for the year. Your host university will advise on any special requirements that may apply, so please read carefully all the information that is sent to you.

**BA Government** students taking a year abroad will generally need a total of 40 ECTS (or equivalent) in pre-approved modules, broken down between their 3 subjects in agreement with the relevant Year Abroad coordinator(s). However, some partner universities will require that students take more credits: KU Leuven, for instance, specifies that all incoming exchange students must take 24 ECTS per semester, or 48 for the year. The majority of your credits in any case would be from the subject area in which you're majoring (whether Soc. & Pol. or Law). Your host university will advise on any special requirements that may apply, so please read carefully all the information that is sent to you.

Students on the **BSc Psychology, BA English & Creative Writing, and BA Global Media** must identify suitable modules to fulfil the "study abroad" academic requirements of their programmes. This will usually mean 20 ECTS per semester (or equivalent) in pre-approved modules: students should consult their Year Abroad Coordinators.

## Universities outside of the EU and their credit systems

The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), is used very widely in European Higher Education and is one way of measuring the learning outcomes and the associated workload of a particular course (module). At the University of Galway, and some of our Erasmus partner universities, most courses carry 5 ECTS. At partner universities outside of Europe, different systems apply.

For instance, 3 **North American credits** are considered equivalent to 5 ECTS. Students going to institutions like **Boston College** or the **University of Richmond** are expected to register for 12 North American credits per semester, and in many cases this will mean 4 modules per semester.

At **Hong Kong Baptist University**, courses are worth either 3 units or 2 units. In general, a single unit corresponds to 45 notional learning hours, and 1 HKBU unit equates to 2 ECTS approximately. In order to be considered a full-time student at HKBU and therefore comply with Hong Kong's immigration laws, students going there must register for at least 12 HKBU credits (4 courses) per semester; however incoming exchange students are encouraged to enrol on 5 or 6 courses per semester.

## How should I choose modules, and how do I get them approved?

### Selection of modules

You should aim to take modules (courses) that will complement, and enhance your understanding of, your degree subjects. Avoid duplicating what you've already studied, and avoid significant overlap with material you'll cover in Final Year back in Galway. Try to pick courses involving subject matter or perspectives that you wouldn't otherwise be exposed to here at the University of Galway, and ideally try to find topics that relate in some way to the society or culture of your host country.

Self-study modules, where there is no class attendance or interaction, are not a good idea for exchange students, because integration into a class group is a valuable part of the overall learning experience.

In cases where a university has multiple campuses, make sure you take account of the location of teaching when considering modules and timetabling.

### Approval of modules by University of Galway

In all cases, the modules to be taken abroad must be agreed with the relevant subject coordinators ("Year Abroad Coordinators") at the University of Galway in advance of travelling abroad to study. For Erasmus students, this approval will be recorded formally by means of the Erasmus Learning Agreement; for students going to other destinations, there is a similar document, the International Exchange Learning Agreement. If an actual learning agreement is not required by the host university as part of your application, you can simply send your Galway coordinator(s) a list of your proposed courses in the interim and ask for their approval, and complete a learning agreement later when you know that you can be admitted to those courses.

### Approval of modules by the host university

If you are going to an Erasmus destination, you may be required to complete a **Learning Agreement** at the time of application to the host university, OR you may simply be required to complete a form where you list your desired modules. The course selection is then reviewed by the host university, which will contact you in due course to advise whether you are accepted into these modules or whether you need to amend your course choices.

## Who is/are my Year Abroad Coordinator(s)?

For each subject, there is a designated member of academic staff at the University of Galway whose role is to guide and advise students on their course selection in that subject at the host university abroad, and to provide academic support, should they need it, during their studies abroad. This person will also evaluate students' performance in that subject during the period of study abroad, based on the results shown in the final transcript of records from the host university.

Students taking two subjects while abroad will have two academic coordinators, but sometimes only one of them will need to sign the learning agreement. However, it is really important that you obtain written approval from both coordinators for your chosen courses: if only one signs the learning

agreement, then you must get an e-mail from the other approving your course selection in that subject.

You will find a list of all Year Abroad coordinators at the end of this document.

## The Learning Agreement

This very important document is a core requirement for study abroad, and if you are an Erasmus student, *it should be completed in full and signed by all parties by the time you start your studies abroad*, unless your host university specifically indicates that it will be signed there during the two- or three-week course registration period at the start of the semester. Students going to non-EU destinations have 3 weeks from the start of teaching to return their signed learning agreement to the College Mobility Officer. If a learning agreement is not signed off by all parties at the start of the relevant study period, this may jeopardise the recognition of your study abroad.

The learning agreement will set out the courses that you'll take at the host university and, when fully signed, it will indicate that both the University of Galway and the host university have approved these courses. As such, it provides a guarantee that as long as you complete those courses successfully, you will receive full recognition from the University of Galway for your studies abroad. For instance, for 40 ECTS' worth of pre-approved courses as described on page 1, and a pass in all these courses, the University of Galway will award you 60 ECTS, or a Pass in the Year Abroad.

It's important to remember that if you make any changes to the courses originally approved (i.e. if you add or drop courses during the study abroad period), you *must* record these in the second section of the learning agreement and obtain the relevant coordinator signatures as soon as possible after you've made those changes. In some cases, the course catalogue for the second semester may not be available at the start of the academic year, so the second semester courses may be added in this way as soon as the relevant course list is published.

Keep in mind that the transcript of records you receive from your host university at the end of your studies there (i.e. your official examination/assessment results) must reflect the modules that were approved in your learning agreement. Recognition cannot be guaranteed for modules that were not approved in advance by the University of Galway, regardless of the results you might obtain in them.

### Various learning agreement options

- If your host university has sent you a document entitled "Learning Agreement" then you are free to continue using this template and there will be no need for an additional document as long as this one is completed and signed in full.
- If your host university only sent you a form where you list your courses, then you will need to complete a formal Learning Agreement later on, but you should only do this after your courses have been approved by the host university; otherwise you may end up having to amend it and have it signed a number of times.

There are a few different types of learning agreement:

- Online Learning Agreement (OLA) (Erasmus students only)
- Erasmus learning agreement – Word document, for cases where the OLA cannot be used
- International exchange learning agreement (if you are going to the USA or Hong Kong)

### The Online Learning Agreement (Erasmus students only)

If you are going on Erasmus, you *may* be able to use the Online Learning Agreement (OLA), which will simplify the process somewhat and make it easier to make any subsequent changes. Please refer to the documents “Online learning agreement - Creating your Account” and “Online Learning Agreement – How to complete”. Each person who signs the OLA will be able to access a copy online.

#### Can't find your host university in the drop-down list?

A few of our Erasmus partners are not using the OLA. If, when you begin to complete an OLA, you do not find your host university in the dropdown list, then this is a possible reason. Bear in mind, though, that the university names in the dropdown list come from the European Commission's Erasmus database and are the official titles, often in the national language. If you're having trouble locating the name of your host university, you should check its website to find its official title on the home page. If you still can't find it, then you won't be able to use the OLA and you will need to use the alternative Word document.

#### “Responsible persons” / Academic Coordinators and the OLA

Accuracy is very important when completing this document, in particular where e-mail addresses are concerned. It's crucial that you (i) identify the correct academic coordinators, also known as “responsible persons”, both at University of Galway and the host university, and (ii) provide the correct e-mail address for each of these coordinators. Errors in e-mail addresses will mean that your OLA won't reach the people who are meant to sign it.

#### Link to course catalogue

You'll notice that the fields in the OLA marked with an asterisk are mandatory, and there are some details that can be omitted. The link to the host university's course catalogue is not marked as mandatory, but it's strongly recommended that you fill this in.

### Who should sign my Learning Agreement?

In the majority of cases, this will be the Year Abroad coordinator for the particular exchange link you are travelling under. If you are unsure about this, please consult the CASSCS Mobility Officer. If you are using the Word version of the learning agreement, it's possible (but not compulsory) to obtain both academic coordinator signatures on the document. The OLA, on the other hand, only allows for one signature.

Our exchanges with **Lund, Malta, Utrecht and Uppsala\*** are College-wide links, i.e. not “owned” by any particular Discipline or School, so if you are a BA Joint Honours student or a BA Global Experience

student going to one of these universities, you should obtain your two academic coordinators' written approval (by e-mail) for your course choices and forward these e-mails to Mary Lyons, the College Mobility Officer, who will then sign your learning agreement on behalf of University of Galway.

*\*the only exception to this is the Gaelige/Celtic Civilisation exchange with Uppsala, where the relevant academic coordinator should sign the learning agreement.*

## Learning Agreement - General Tips and Troubleshooting

### Completing Table B (Erasmus only)

Table B refers to how the courses that you take abroad will fit into your University of Galway degree programme. In your case, the period abroad will be an integral but independent element of your degree programme, with no equivalent courses at the University of Galway. This means that you can simply write "Mobility Window" for the "component title", and put down the number of credits that the University of Galway will award for a Pass in the Year Abroad, i.e. 60 ECTS (or 30 ECTS for a single semester). You don't need to provide a course code in Table B.

### Storing and accessing the learning agreement

The learning agreement is an extremely important document and must be kept safe. The OLA has the advantage that there is only ever one version which you can log into at any time, and each person who signs it is able to access it online. If you're using the Word template instead, you should keep just one version (with all signatures) and ensure you know where you've saved it, as well as making sure your University of Galway academic coordinator has a copy. Don't ever split the Word version into multiple documents or use screenshots of it to obtain signatures: the final version must be one continuous document clearly showing that your courses were approved and by whom.

### Signing and editing of the OLA

If you are using the OLA, remember that once you've submitted it, it goes straightaway by e-mail to the University of Galway coordinator you've named in it. When they sign it, it's automatically forwarded to the host university coordinator. From the moment you've hit submit, you will only be able to view a pdf version of it until both coordinators have approved or one has declined it: you won't be able to edit it again until it has been seen and dealt with by the home and host coordinators. If you provided an invalid coordinator address, the OLA will be effectively lost, and you will most likely have to recreate the entire document from scratch. It's therefore very important that you enter the correct coordinator details.

## List of Study Abroad Academic Coordinators at the University of Galway

| <b>SUBJECT</b>                 | <b>UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY ACADEMIC COORDINATOR</b>                  | <b>Coordinator e-mail address</b>  |
|--------------------------------|---|--|
| Archaeology                    | Dr Kieran O’Conor   | <a href="mailto:kieran.d.oconor@universityofgalway.ie">kieran.d.oconor@universityofgalway.ie</a>   |
| Celtic Civilisation & Gaeilge  | An tOllamh Tadhg Ó hIfearnáin                                     | <a href="mailto:tadhg.ohifearnain@oegaillimh.ie">tadhg.ohifearnain@oegaillimh.ie</a>   |
| Classics                       | Dr Grace Attwood (23/24, Dr P. Moran on research leave)           | <a href="mailto:g.attwood1@universityofgalway.ie">g.attwood1@universityofgalway.ie</a>   |
| Creative Writing               | Dr John Kenny   | <a href="mailto:john.kenny@universityofgalway.ie">john.kenny@universityofgalway.ie</a>   |
| Economics                      | Dr Aidan Kane   | <a href="mailto:aidan.kane@universityofgalway.ie">aidan.kane@universityofgalway.ie</a>   |
| English                        | Dearbhla Mooney   | <a href="mailto:dearbhla.mooney@universityofgalway.ie">dearbhla.mooney@universityofgalway.ie</a>   |
| Gaeilge                        | An tOllamh Tadhg Ó hIfearnáin                                     | <a href="mailto:tadhg.ohifearnain@oegaillimh.ie">tadhg.ohifearnain@oegaillimh.ie</a>   |
| Geography                      | Professor Ulf Strohmayer  | <a href="mailto:ulf.strohmayer@universityofgalway.ie">ulf.strohmayer@universityofgalway.ie</a>   |
| Global Media                   | Dr Jonathan Albright  | <a href="mailto:Jonathan.albright@universityofgalway.ie">Jonathan.albright@universityofgalway.ie</a>   |
| Government, BA                 | Soc. & Pol. major: Dr Evans Fanoulis<br>Law major: Dr Edel Hughes | <a href="mailto:evans.fanoulis@universityofgalway.ie">evans.fanoulis@universityofgalway.ie</a><br><a href="mailto:edel.hughes@universityofgalway.ie">edel.hughes@universityofgalway.ie</a> |
| History                        | Dr Róisín Healy   | <a href="mailto:roisin.healy@universityofgalway.ie">roisin.healy@universityofgalway.ie</a>   |
| IT                             | Dr Enda Howley  | <a href="mailto:enda.howley@universityofgalway.ie">enda.howley@universityofgalway.ie</a>   |
| Journalism                     | Uinsíonn Mac Dubhghaill   | <a href="mailto:uinsionn.macdubhghaill@universityofgalway.ie">uinsionn.macdubhghaill@universityofgalway.ie</a>   |
| Law                            | Dr Edel Hughes (Erasmus)<br>Dr Anita Ferrara (non-EU)             | <a href="mailto:edel.hughes@universityofgalway.ie">edel.hughes@universityofgalway.ie</a><br><a href="mailto:anita.ferrara@universityofgalway.ie">anita.ferrara@universityofgalway.ie</a>   |
| Maths                          | Dr Emil Sköldberg   | <a href="mailto:emil.skoldberg@universityofgalway.ie">emil.skoldberg@universityofgalway.ie</a>   |
| Philosophy                     | Dr Tsarina Doyle  | <a href="mailto:tsarina.doyle@universityofgalway.ie">tsarina.doyle@universityofgalway.ie</a>   |
| Political Science & Sociology  | Dr Evans Fanoulis   | <a href="mailto:evans.fanoulis@universityofgalway.ie">evans.fanoulis@universityofgalway.ie</a>   |
| Psychology (Joint Hons/Global) | Dr Aoife McTiernan  | <a href="mailto:aofemaria.mctiernan@universityofgalway.ie">aofemaria.mctiernan@universityofgalway.ie</a>   |
| Psychology (Denominated)       | Dr Mark Elliott   | <a href="mailto:mark.elliott@universityofgalway.ie">mark.elliott@universityofgalway.ie</a>   |
| College-wide exchanges         | Mary Lyons (Mobility Officer)                                     | <a href="mailto:mary.lyons@universityofgalway.ie">mary.lyons@universityofgalway.ie</a>   |



