
Free Movers

If you are thinking about a study period abroad, you can also choose to become a **free mover**, i.e. to arrange your stay independently, outside the framework of existing exchange/scholarship programmes.

This type of mobility has one principal advantage: you can choose virtually any foreign university you consider interesting. You are not limited by a predefined range of options, and you can go and study at the university of your choice. The main disadvantage is the amount of paperwork: you will have to do almost everything yourself and the whole process of arranging your mobility will therefore be more time-consuming than if you went under one of the well-established exchange/scholarship programmes.

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How long in advance should I start making arrangements for my stay abroad?

You should start planning approximately 12 to 18 months before the envisaged beginning of your study period abroad.

Eighteen months before the planned beginning of your studies abroad:

Around this time you should start choosing your university (or universities) abroad – see the section [How to choose a university abroad](#).

Make sure your “favourites” send you as much information as possible about their degree programmes, financial support available to students, accommodation options etc. Go to the website of your chosen university and look up all available information about how and when to apply.

Twelve months before the planned beginning of your studies abroad:

Host universities may require a proof of your language skills; it is therefore important to find out what language examinations you are expected to pass or what certificate to submit to satisfy the requirements. Then send your application/s to your chosen university/universities. If you lack sufficient funds for the study period abroad (to cover your tuition, living and travel costs, etc.) and if you have not started looking for alternative funding sources yet, do so now. Also, make sure you have all the documents your prospective host university requires in addition to the application form. For more information on the documents, see the next section.

Nine months before your planned date of departure:

Ask the study department at your faculty for a certified transcript of your examination grades and credits (i.e. Transcript of Records). Some universities may even require an authenticated (notarized) translation of the graduation examination certificate from your secondary school. Send your application form and all the required documents to the university abroad (keep all the deadlines, including the deadline for applying for a financial support).

After you have been notified of your admission to the university/universities:

If you have contacted more than one university, choose one, and notify all the other universities you have applied to of your decision. Send all the required documents to the university of your choice and enclose proof of payment of the admission fee. Contact the university about your accommodation and find out about health insurance requirements for international students in your host country. Book or purchase your travel ticket.

Three months before departure:

Apply for an entry visa (if a visa is required) and take out a travel insurance policy. If you don't yet have enough money to embark on your study period abroad, some universities will allow you to postpone your enrolment (usually by a maximum of two semesters).

How to choose a university abroad?

Do not take your decision lightly: take your choice after a careful **consideration of all available information**.

Find out in advance as much as possible about the foreign university's degree programme and check whether the **credits obtained** there will be recognized in your studies at home.

What documents shall I need?

Application

Find the application form on the website of your chosen university; keep the application deadline. Universities may run on-line application procedures, or may require the application to be sent by post. Your application must include an accompanying letter listing all required documentation attached (if incomplete, state what documents will be provided later). Most universities also make sure you have paid the application fee and require a proof of payment.

Letters of recommendation

As a rule, the application must be accompanied by two or three letters of recommendation from your teachers. The teachers should assess your academic performance, personal qualities, motivation to studies and ability to pursue the study in the respective foreign language.

[More information on letters of recommendation](#)

Letter of motivation/ Statement of purpose

Universities place different emphasis on this part of the application. The motivation letter normally combines parts of the applicant's CV with a description of professional plans for the future.

[How to write a statement of purpose](#)

Transcript of records from your university, a copy of diploma and secondary school certificate

The foreign university will request an official record of your study results to date (often known as a transcript of records), which can be obtained at the study department of your faculty, or a copy of your diploma and diploma supplement, or possibly also a certificate of your participation in an Erasmus study period abroad. It may also request an officially authenticated translation of your secondary school graduation examination certificate.

Proof of financial security

Universities often require applicants from abroad to provide evidence that they (or their sponsors) have enough money in their bank account to cover the cost of studying and living in the given country.

Funding options

Do not let yourself be intimidated by the cost of **tuition**: foreign universities often offer financial support from various sources, scholarships, subsidies or grants.

If you can provide knowledge and skills in your field, why not apply for a direct financial support. At some universities you can also earn some extra money by doing temporary jobs on the campus.

Mobility outside the framework of exchange/scholarship programmes is more costly because the programmes offer advantages for which free movers do not qualify, such as waiving tuition fees or providing scholarships and grants. However, some universities do offer foreign students financial support, so make sure that you check this possibility. You can also apply for support from your faculty or university sources or take advantage of the offer of various foundations, grant agencies and other institutionssupporting student mobility.