Once in a lifetime experience!

Congratulations! You have been accepted to the Erasmus exchange programme and will soon embark on your semester or year abroad. The opportunity to study or work abroad as part of your degree programme is an exciting and ultimately rewarding one, but at times may feel a little challenging. Do not fear! We want you to feel supported during this time and so have created this guide, jam-packed with valuable information, printable checklists and top tips on how to prepare and what to expect during your Erasmus exchange.

Please read through this guide carefully to make sure you have understood everything. You will find an electronic version on the Erasmus website which you can consult as often as you need. If you’re unsure of anything covered in this guide, or have a question you feel we’ve missed, please get in touch erasmus@abdn.ac.uk.

Best wishes
Louisa, Jen and Bev
Your Erasmus Team

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Get prepared!

Preparation is key to a smooth and successful Erasmus experience. Treat yourself to a shiny new folder and some poly pockets, print off our end-of-chapter checklists and channel your inner Monica Geller and we promise, the whole process will be much, much simpler!

Travel arrangements
It is your responsibility to make travel arrangements to and from your destination and to meet travel costs. Websites like SkyScanner and Momondo are useful tools to search for cheap air fares, but bear in mind additional baggage costs as you’re likely to have a heavy suitcase or two!

Don’t forget to plan how to get from the airport to your new city/town/apartment. Most European countries offer discounted travel for young people and buying a pass as soon as you touch down (and still have money in your pocket!) will save you on your travels all year round!

If time abroad is a compulsory element of your course, and you are a Scottish domiciled student funded by SAAS, you may be eligible to claim the cost of one return trip abroad. Similarly, other funding bodies may offer reimbursements for travel abroad if it is a compulsory element of your degree programme. Please consult the relevant website for up-to-date information on travel claims and eligibility.

Accommodation
The accommodation offered by host institutions varies considerably. Some will offer places in university accommodation, others may link with a private provider of student accommodation or may offer a service to assist you in finding private accommodation. From experience we know that the standard of student accommodation across Europe can vary considerably so bear in mind that in general, you get what you pay for!

Use our Facebook groups to speak to Aberdeen students who have been on exchange to your destination before, or to students who have come from your host destination. Find out what areas students choose to live in and whether they tend to opt for University or private accommodation. If your host institution offers accommodation, read up on their application process for this (it will often be separate to your Erasmus application) and make sure you submit the application as soon as possible or by the given deadline.

If you prefer private accommodation, do your research! In some European cities it can be difficult to secure a private let as an exchange student. Private accommodation may be unfurnished and landlords may prefer you to take out a long lease or have a native financial guarantor. You should arrive prior to the beginning of semester or visit in summer in order to secure private accommodation.
Insurance
You will need to organise insurance for your time abroad prior to jetting off. Both the European Health Insurance Card and University insurance cover are free (so no excuses!), and there are many competitive deals offered by private insurance companies.

1. European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)
You can apply for an EHIC at the Post Office or online: www.ehic-uk.org/. The card entitles you to reduced cost, sometimes free, medical treatment in case of urgent medical necessity in any EU country. You should carry the EHIC with you at all times while abroad. Non-EU nationals should apply for the EHIC from their home country. Non-EU Nationals are not covered by the EHIC.

2. University insurance
For details of the scope of cover and to apply online, visit the University’s insurance pages: http://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/working-here/insurance-367.php. Once you have completed the online form you will receive a confirmation email of the cover which you should print off and keep with you abroad.

3. Private insurance
You should carefully read the scope of cover provided by the EHIC and University Insurance policy. For many students this may provide sufficient insurance coverage but if you have more adventurous escapades planned (Ice Diving in France or Snow Kiting in Austria for example!) you will most likely need to take out a supplementary private insurance policy. There are many companies that offer insurance specifically for students studying or working abroad so shop around for the best deal.

Erasmus+ Mobility Grant
If you are travelling abroad on an Erasmus exchange and have not received an Erasmus mobility grant previously, you will be eligible to receive funding.

The grant is intended to contribute towards the extra costs involved in studying/working abroad but will by no means cover your full expenditure.

The grant rates are set by the British Council annually and published on its website. For 2015/16 see here: http://www.erasmusplus.org.uk/file/947/download. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds going on study exchange may be eligible for an additional grant supplement and should contact the Erasmus Unit for more information.

Erasmus+ Paperwork
The Erasmus Team has to oversee the operation of the exchange programme within the charter regulations issued by the European Commission. While the paperwork you will be required to fill out may feel tedious, it is absolutely ESSENTIAL. Without it we cannot pay you the Erasmus Mobility Grant. The following paperwork must be completed fully and returned to the Erasmus Unit PRIOR to beginning your exchange. A scanned copy of all paperwork is acceptable, and we encourage you to keep original copies in your new folder, close at hand.

- **Section 1 - Learning Agreement (for study exchange only)**
Before your exchange, a personalised Learning Agreement will be issued to you via email. You must complete Section 1 in full, detailing your course choice by looking at the Course Catalogue of your host institution and discussing this with your Go Abroad Tutor(s) if necessary. You should then have Section 1 signed by your Go Abroad Tutor(s) and host institution before returning it to the Erasmus Unit.

- **Section 1 - Training Agreement (for placement only)**
Before your placement, a personalised Training Agreement will be issued to you via email. You must complete Section 1 in full, detailing the traineeship programme you will be undertaking at the host institution, discussing this with your placement supervisor if necessary. You should then have Section 1 signed by your Go Abroad Tutor(s) and host institution before returning it to the Erasmus Unit.

- **Mobility Agreement**
You will be asked to notify the Erasmus Unit of the start and end dates of your mobility period*, which will then be used to issue you a personalised Mobility Agreement. The Agreement will detail the maximum grant amounts you can expect to receive. You must read your Mobility Agreement thoroughly, completing your bank details and signing to confirm your understanding, before returning it to the Erasmus Unit.

You can find this information by looking at the Academic Calendar of your host institution on their website, or for placement students, this should be given in your contract.

Online Linguistic Support
As part of the Erasmus+ programme, online language testing and support has been introduced to assist students going abroad with language learning.

All students participating in Erasmus, whose main language of study/ work will be French, German, Spanish, Italian or Dutch must now sit a compulsory online language assessment before and after the mobility period. Students will receive a link to the online assessment and instructions from the European Commission, and will have one month to submit the assessment.
Optional online language courses in French, German, Spanish, or Dutch are now available to any student (not just those studying or working in the foreign language) who would like to access linguistic support and resources during their exchange. Please note however we only have a limited number of licences for the online courses.

**Finance**

Time abroad will inevitably involve some extra expense, particularly in the first few weeks. Over the course of your exchange you may find that the cost of living is higher or lower than what you are used to in Aberdeen, but to make the most of your experience, you may want to budget for lots of socialising and travelling with new friends!

Before going abroad you should contact your bank for information about the charges you may incur when using your debit or credit card abroad. It’s useful to have a credit card with you for any emergencies and don’t forget a little foreign currency for when you touch down!

- **Prepaid Currency Card**
  These are offered by a number of companies including Travelex UK, Post Office and FairFX and are a useful and secure way to take currency abroad. Cards can be pre-loaded with funds and used in the same way as a bank card, with a chip and pin for use at ATMs, shops and restaurants. Most cards can be ordered and reloaded with funds online or over the phone.

- **Tuition Fees**
  Erasmus students do NOT pay tuition fees to the host institution. Scottish, EU and international students continue to pay fees to the University of Aberdeen and should be entitled to support from public funds towards tuition fees and student loan. You should apply to your funding body as normal, stating that you will be studying or working abroad as appropriate on the application form. In some cases, RUK students will have their fee-free year switched to the year abroad, rather than the final year of studies, and so do not need to pay tuition fees. Check out the table below for an overview of tuition fees which apply when spending a semester/year abroad.

- **eRegistration**
  During your time abroad you must remain a registered student at the University of Aberdeen so it is very important that you complete eRegistration at the beginning of the academic year. This will ensure that your university email address and student record will remain ‘live’ throughout the year. You can complete eRegistration via the portal from August onwards: [www.abdn.ac.uk/ereg](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/ereg).

- **Health & disabilities**
  If you have a medical condition you should discuss how to manage this while abroad with your GP prior to your departure. It is helpful to obtain translated copies of any important documentation pertaining to your condition that will help medical staff abroad give you the support you require. Plan ahead if you take regular medication and ensure you have enough with you for at least the first month of your stay.

  A disability, medical condition or any other situation which requires additional support should not be a barrier to going abroad. The Disability Advisers in Student Support can assist with your planning to ensure a successful and problem-free experience. If you did not disclose your condition in your original application, you should make the Disability Advisers in Aberdeen and the Erasmus Unit aware in advance of your time abroad to ensure that your host institution can provide adequate support. Email student.support@abdn.ac.uk.

- **Academic Calendar**
  If you are only going abroad for one semester, you should check the academic calendar of the host institution and that of University of Aberdeen as soon as possible to ensure that the semester and exam dates are not going to overlap. Likewise, if you are going to two separate institutions over the course of an academic year abroad, you must check the academic calendars of both institutions to ensure there is no overlap. If it seems there may be a clash, please contact the Erasmus Office.

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<tr>
<th>SAAS (Scottish + EU students)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Full year abroad</strong></td>
<td>Study</td>
<td>SAAS cover full fee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Full year abroad</strong></td>
<td>Traineeship</td>
<td>SAAS cover 50%, remainder waived</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part year abroad</strong></td>
<td>Study</td>
<td>SAAS cover full fee</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Part year abroad</strong></td>
<td>Traineeship</td>
<td>SAAS cover full fee</td>
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<th>Student Finance England/Wales/N Ireland (RUK students)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Full year abroad</strong></td>
<td>Study/Traineeship</td>
<td>Fee waiver switched from final year to year abroad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part year abroad</strong></td>
<td>Study/Traineeship</td>
<td>Standard fee applies</td>
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<tr>
<th>International students</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Full year abroad</strong></td>
<td>Study/Traineeship</td>
<td>50% discount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part year abroad</strong></td>
<td>Study/Traineeship</td>
<td>Standard fee applies</td>
</tr>
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</table>
# Preparation Checklist

A handy printable checklist for you to print out and keep in your folder!

Make sure you check every box prior to your departure and you will be on track for an organised start to your time abroad!

## Accommodation
- [ ] Apply for accommodation at your host institution, or begin your search for private accommodation and set up viewings.

## Insurance
- [ ] Apply for your EHIC card from your home country (EU nationals only)
- [ ] Complete the online application for University Insurance and print off the confirmation email
- [ ] Take out a private insurance policy (optional)

## Erasmus+ Paperwork
- [ ] Complete and return Section 1 of your Learning Agreement (study exchange students)/Section 1 of your Training Agreement (placement students)
- [ ] Complete and return your Mobility Agreement

## Online Linguistic Support
- [ ] Sit your online language assessment (for those whose main language of study/work will be French, German, Spanish, Italian, Dutch ONLY)

## Organise Finances
- [ ] Contact your bank to make them aware you’ll be going abroad
- [ ] Organise a prepaid currency card, credit card or foreign currency
- [ ] Apply to your funding body for tuition fees/student loan as appropriate

## University of Aberdeen Administration
- [ ] Complete eRegistration
Hooray! You have made it to your new home and it’s time to unpack, settle in and let the adventures begin…

**Orientation & Registration**

Many host institutions organise orientation days or activities which are designed to help you meet other new visiting students and to get to know the local area and culture. These provide a really great introduction to your new institution and city so make sure this isn’t a date you miss!

The registration procedure at every host institution differs but, as it is Europe, it will likely be bureaucratic and involve a great deal of paperwork! Take plenty of passport photographs with you (you’ll be amazed at how many of these you require) and use your new folder to organise your paperwork and keep on top of everything.

Students on the British Council’s ELA programme will receive a summer pack with country-specific information relating to their placement and will attend an induction meeting in the host country which is a great opportunity to meet fellow Language Assistants in the area.

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**Erasmus+ Paperwork**

One of your first priorities on arrival should be your Erasmus paperwork! As soon as you can complete and return the following paperwork to us, we can process and pay your first grant allocation and then you can then get on with having a good time!

- **Confirmation of Arrival**
  Prior to your exchange placement this form will be emailed to you. Present the form to the Erasmus Co-ordinator/placement supervisor at your host institution for signature, complete the address section with your new details and return it to the Erasmus Unit.

- **Section 2 – Learning Agreement (for study exchange only)**
  Upon arrival you may have to change courses from those originally listed on Section 1 of your Learning Agreement due to timetable clashes, availability etc. You should contact your Go Abroad Tutor via email in the first instance to discuss the course changes you are making and obtain their approval. Then complete Section 2, detailing the courses you are adding and deleting, and their equivalent credits, from those listed originally. You should arrange to have the document signed at your host institution before returning it to the Erasmus Unit. Section 2 needs to be returned within 2 weeks of your arrival (please be aware that failure to obtain approval form your Go Abroad Tutor(s) for course changes may result in credit not being recognised when you return if deemed inappropriate for your degree programme).

Following receipt of this paperwork your first grant allocation, as detailed in your Mobility Agreement, will be paid in Pounds Sterling into your UK bank account. It is your responsibility to check on the safe arrival of any required documents and to replace any missing documents if necessary.

**Opening a Bank Account**

You may find it useful to open a bank account while abroad and at many host institutions, assisting you with this will be part of the Orientation or arrival process. To open a bank account you will most likely need lots of documentation, typically your passport, host university student card or placement contract, and proof of address. You may also need a small deposit. Many European banks will offer incentives for students opening a new account but beware of any monthly account fees or overdraft charges.
Arrival Checklist

A handy printable checklist for you to print out and keep in your folder!

Once you arrive, work through this checklist and then you can get on with enjoying your time abroad!

Registration

☐ Register as a student at your host institution attend orientation and sign-up for courses etc. (as required)

Erasmus+ Paperwork

☐ Submit your Confirmation of Arrival to your host Co-ordinator/Placement Supervisor for signature and return to the Erasmus Unit

☐ Complete and return Section 2 of your Learning Agreement (study students only required) if you are making changes to your original course choices

Bank Account

☐ Set up a bank account in your host country (optional)
**Academic requirements**

In many European universities you will find that you spend more time in class than you do at Aberdeen, as UK universities tend to value the importance of private study. The contact hours involved for each course may be more than you are used to, and assessment may take different forms that you haven’t experienced when studying in Aberdeen.

All students studying abroad as part of the Erasmus exchange programme are expected to:

- register for, and pass, 30 ECTS per semester
- attend classes and submit written work as required by the host institution
- participate in assessments for all courses for which registered, as required by the host institution

The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) is used throughout Europe to compare study attainment and performance across institutions. The conversion between ECTS and University of Aberdeen credits is as follows:

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<tr>
<th>ECTS Value</th>
<th>Aberdeen Credit Points</th>
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<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>7.5</td>
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<td>12.5</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>60</td>
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**Safety & Security**

As is always the case when travelling or living somewhere new, matters of safety and security are of utmost importance. By being aware of your surroundings, applying common sense and avoiding unnecessary risks you should be able to enjoy your time abroad safely.

Always leave a bank card at your accommodation so that you won’t find yourself without access to money. Take copies of your passport, leaving one in your accommodation and another with a family member or friend at home. It is a good idea to email a scanned copy of your passport to yourself so that you can access this from any computer if need be.

If you are a UK national it is advisable to register at your nearest British Embassy when you arrive in your host country, making them aware of your presence in the country and how long you intend to stay.

If you find yourself in serious difficulty during your stay, the Consulate has a mandate to help British citizens abroad. They will be able to offer advice and, if appropriate, refer you to the relevant authorities. The Consulate can issue an emergency passport or contact relatives or friends if you find yourself in a serious situation. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has a useful website: [https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-office](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-office).

**Keep in touch!**

While you are abroad, the Erasmus Unit and the University of Aberdeen will continue to use your university email address to contact you. You are reminded that as a condition of your Erasmus offer, you are required to check your email account regularly and respond to any correspondence from us in a timely manner.

We love to hear from you, whether you are having a blast or want to get in touch about any issues you might be experiencing, and we endeavour to respond to emails as soon as possible. You should contact the Erasmus Team if you have any administrative queries, or your Go Abroad Tutor(s) if your queries are academic-related.

Like our Erasmus Facebook page to keep up-to-date with news and events, and join our specific groups for outgoing exchange students to contact fellow Aberdeen students on exchange: [www.facebook.com/ErasmusABDN](http://www.facebook.com/ErasmusABDN)

We are also on Skype as erasmus.aberdeen and happy to chat to you during working hours Monday – Friday (drop us an email first so we can arrange a time).
After months of preparation, excitement and maybe even some nerves, you will be amazed at how quickly you settle into your new life and how many experiences, new friends and travel you can pack into a semester or year abroad! Before you know it, your return to Aberdeen will be looming and with it, a few final administrative steps and of course Erasmus+ paperwork to take care of!

**Exams**

*If you pass all assessments* at the host institution, the credits you gain will count towards your degree at the University of Aberdeen.

*If you have failed a course or courses* while abroad you should try and resit the assessment(s) or exam(s) at the host institution in the first instance. If you have failed a course in the first semester, you should try and make up these credits in the second semester (if abroad for the full year). If you do not gain the required credits from your time abroad, you may have to take additional course(s) when you resume your studies in Aberdeen. If you think you may be in this situation, please contact the Erasmus Unit as soon as possible.

In extreme cases, if you do not gain the necessary credits while abroad to progress into your next year of studies at Aberdeen you may have to repeat the academic year, potentially meeting the cost of tuition fees. If your lack of credits is due to non-attendance, you may be required to repay all, or a portion, of your Erasmus Mobility Grant. If the period of study abroad is a compulsory requirement of your degree programme and you do not fulfil the academic requirements you will need to meet with the relevant Registry Officer and discuss the options available to you.

**Erasmus+ Paperwork**

By now, you should be a dab hand at Erasmus+ paperwork! These are the final documents that you must return to the Erasmus Unit at the end of your time abroad.

- **Section 3 – Learning Agreement (for study exchange only)**
  The final section of your Learning Agreement should be completed by the Erasmus Co-ordinator at your host institution with your exact period of mobility and Table E signed off.

- **Section 3 – Training Agreement (for placement only)**
  The final section of the Training Agreement should be completed by your placement supervisor with your exact period of mobility and evaluation.

- **European Commission Online Feedback**
  The European Commission requires ALL students taking part in the Erasmus programme to complete an online feedback form at the end of their stay. This is compulsory and will be emailed directly to you by the EC at the end of your mobility period.

- **University of Aberdeen Feedback Report**
  We will provide you with a feedback report template which we ask you to complete with first-hand information and top tips about your personal experiences abroad. These reports are made available to future students, considering an Erasmus experience (and can be anonymised if you wish).

Following receipt of all the above paperwork, your final grant allocation will be paid in Pounds Sterling into your UK bank account. This will therefore be after you have returned from abroad. The final allocation may be adjusted if the total duration of your exchange was shorter than originally reported, as detailed in your Mobility Agreement. If you fail to return any of the required Erasmus paperwork, you will have to repay all of your Erasmus Mobility Grant.

**Academic Transcript (for study)**

All students who have undertaken an Erasmus study exchange(s) must submit a copy of their official Academic Transcript detailing the courses and grades achieved at the host institution(s) to the Erasmus Unit as soon as possible. Your Transcript will be reviewed by the university’s Admissions Selectors and passed to the Registry Team in order for the credits to be updated on your student record. Failure to submit a copy of your transcript will result in the credit being withheld, and you will be unable to progress to your next year of academic study at Aberdeen.

It’s a good idea to ask the Exchange Office at your host institution how and when you can expect to receive the Academic Transcript prior to departing.
“My year abroad on Erasmus has been brilliant so far. As a keen traveller, discovering more of Spain has provided me with amazing experiences and cherished memories. The chance to meet so many like-minded people, from various countries all across the world, has enriched me life as a student, and helped me learn more about different cultures, as well as making close friends.”

Rebecca Endersby
Hispanic Studies + Linguistics
Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain

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**Departure Checklist**

A handy printable checklist for you to print out and keep in your folder!

Make sure you complete the steps below at the end of your time abroad to ensure you receive your final grant payment and academic recognition for your exchange/placement.

**Erasmus+ Paperwork**

- □ Submit Section 3 of your Learning Agreement (for study students)/Section 3 of your Training Agreement (for placement students) to your host institution organisation for completion and signature and return to the Erasmus Unit
- □ Complete the European Commission’s Online Feedback
- □ Complete your Feedback Report for the University of Aberdeen and return to the Erasmus Unit

**Academic Transcript (for study students)**

- □ Confirm with your host institution when your Academic Transcript will be available and submit the original to the Erasmus Unit as soon as possible
The ‘Post-Erasmus Blues’

Returning to Aberdeen after a period of time abroad is relatively straightforward in terms of practicalities, but it can leave you suffering the ‘Post-Erasmus Blues’. Luckily there are a number of activities you can get involved with in Aberdeen upon your return to beat the symptoms!

Go Abroad Ambassador Team
As a returning student, you are the ‘guru’ of all things Erasmus and in an ideal position to promote the opportunity to other students and encourage them to get involved! Each year we recruit returning students to our team of Go Abroad Ambassadors to do just this, in an official capacity. Go Abroad Ambassador is a paid position with full training given, and responsibilities include running office hours in the International Centre, attending and assisting at promotional events, delivering presentations and undertaking project work. Vacant positions will be advertised at the end of the academic year with Skype interviews taking place over summer so that no time is wasted getting started in September!

International Centre
The University’s new International Centre opened in January 2015 and co-ordinates and promotes international activities and events across campus all year round. Pop in to the International Centre to find out more about what’s on, take back a postcard or two from your travels to add to the wall and leave details of your Erasmus experience on the interactive map to show others where you’ve been.

Exchange AB DN
Exchange AB DN is an AUSA society aimed at supporting exchange students to integrate into life in Aberdeen, as well as giving Aberdeen students an opportunity to mix with exchange students, practice their language skills and potentially meet someone from a partner institution they might study at one day! The group co-ordinate a Buddy Scheme and organise social events throughout semester. If you wish to get involved with Exchange AB DN upon your return to Aberdeen please contact them directly.

Go Abroad: Employability Workshop
Congratulations! Research suggests that your time abroad will boost your employability upon graduation. The Careers Service at Aberdeen offer an interactive Employability Workshop specifically designed for returning students, to help you identify the skills and attributes you have developed abroad and illustrate how you can showcase these qualities in your CV and at interview. More information about the session(s) will be emailed to you by the Erasmus Unit at the end of your mobility period.
This guide has been prepared by the Erasmus Unit with the support of the European Commission’s Erasmus+ Programme.