

Working Document WG on I&M – Note on Terminology – Draft 2.1 October 15th 2025

This note on terminology serves as a reference tool to support a clear and consistent understanding of key terms used throughout the Action Plan on Internationalisation and Mobility. Its primary purpose is to promote conceptual clarity, encourage the use of shared language, and minimise the risk of misinterpretation in the implementation and discussion of the action plan. Where relevant, definitions have been drawn from existing literature and policy documents¹. In cases where multiple definitions exist, the Working Group has selected—and, where appropriate, revised—the version best suited to the context and objectives of the action plan. In instances where no widely accepted definitions were available, the Working Group has developed original formulations in an effort to provide conceptual precision and practical relevance.

I. Internationalisation

1. *Internationalisation*

Internationalisation of higher education is the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society. (De Wit, Hunter and Howard 2015)

2. *Internationalisation at home*

A set of instruments and activities ‘at home’ that aim to develop international and intercultural competences of students and staff, especially providing inclusive access for non-mobile students. A variety of instruments can be used to internationalise teaching and learning, including guest lectures, international case studies or, increasingly, digital learning and online collaboration (Based on Beelen and Jones 2015).

3. *Virtual exchange*²

Acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences through the use of information and communication technology tools that allow participants to have a meaningful transnational or international learning experience, fully online without any physical component. (Based on Erasmus+ Glossary)

¹ Sources include: Erasmus+ Glossary, ECTS Users Guide, the Bologna Process Implementation Report (BPIR) and the EQAR Glossary.

² In this Note on Terminology, a clear distinction has been made between virtual exchange and physical mobility. The term virtual mobility has been avoided, as it was considered misleading. Instead, the following terminology is applied: Learning and/or blended mobility is used when a physical component is involved. Virtual exchange is used when no physical component is involved.

4. *Hybrid learning*

Hybrid learning and teaching implies physical classroom learning in combination with online attendance: whereas some students attend in the classroom, others attend at the same time remotely online, out of choice, or a condition preventing them from physical attendance.

Hybrid learning is increasingly used as a more sophisticated and complex approach combining different learning approaches, as a flexible combination of different learning modes to enhance the learning experience, to better serve students and give them choice (EUA 2021).

5. *Internationalisation of the curricula*

Internationalisation of the curricula is the incorporation of international, intercultural and/or global dimensions into the content of the curriculum, as well as the learning outcomes, assessment tasks, teaching methods, and support services of a program of study (Prof. Betty Leask, 2015).

6. *International classroom*

An international classroom is composed of a group of students from diverse backgrounds (in culture, education, experience, etc.); working effectively with student and staff diversity; including the overall learning environment (formal, informal and hidden curriculum); with appropriate support for staff and students in a multicultural and multilingual environment (Based on Rijksuniversiteit Groningen - International Classroom Project)

7. *Staff mobility*

Staff mobility in higher education refers to the temporary movement of academic or administrative staff between institutions, either within a country or internationally. This mobility is often undertaken for purposes such as teaching, training, research collaboration, or professional development. It can occur through structured programs like Erasmus+, institutional agreements, or individual initiatives. The main goals of staff mobility include enhancing skills and knowledge, promoting intercultural exchange, strengthening cooperation between institutions, and improving the overall quality of higher education. It plays a key role in the internationalisation of higher education, supporting global engagement and institutional development, and contributing to institutional capacity-building and innovation. (WG I&M Draft 2025)

8. *Intercultural competences³*

Intercultural competences are the knowledge, attitudes and skills that enable students and staff to interact successfully with people from diverse (linguistic and cultural) backgrounds through sociocultural openness. An international experience can further contribute to personal development and growth, such as becoming more independent, self-aware, flexible and adaptable. (Based on Nuffic 2020 – International Competence report)

³ Sometimes used interchangeably with international competences

9. *Joint degree*

A joint degree is a single degree certificate awarded to a student upon successful completion of a joint programme. The joint degree must be signed by the competent authorities of two or more of the participating institutions jointly and recognised officially in the countries where those participating institutions are located. (Erasmus+ Glossary)

10. *Joint programme*

Higher education (study or research) programmes jointly designed, delivered and fully recognised by two or more higher education institutions. Joint programmes can be implemented at any higher education cycle, i.e. bachelor, master or doctorate or even short cycle. Joint programmes can be national (i.e. when all universities involved are from the same country) or transnational/international (i.e. when at least two different countries are represented among the higher education institutions involved). (Erasmus+ Glossary)

11. *Double/multiple degree*

At least two separate degree certificates awarded to a student upon successful completion of a joint programme. A double degree is a specific type of multiple degree. Each degree must be signed by the competent authority of the institution concerned, and recognised officially in the countries where the different awarding institutions are located. (Erasmus+ Glossary)

II. **Mobility**

12. *Learning mobility*⁴

Learning mobility refers to the physical movement to a country other than the country of residence for part or all of a programme of study. It may also take the form of traineeships, apprenticeships or youth exchanges as long as they are embedded in higher education programmes. The majority of such mobility takes place in the context of planned and organised programmes, however there is also a considerable amount of 'free mover' mobility where a student participates in (credit) mobility outside an organized student mobility program. (WG I&M draft 2025)

13. *Inclusive mobility*

Inclusive international mobility means creating fair, supportive, and adaptable conditions that enable individuals from disadvantaged, vulnerable, or underrepresented groups to fully and effectively participate in higher education mobility abroad. This includes people who face barriers due to economic, social, cultural, geographic, or health-related reasons; disability; educational difficulties; migrant background; or any other factor that may lead to discrimination. Inclusive mobility programs address the diverse needs of these individuals, ensuring supporting structures foster diversity, equity, and inclusion across all levels of learning in higher education abroad. (WG I&M draft 2025)

⁴ Including all forms of mobility, including credit and degree mobility.

14. *Green mobility*

Green mobility refers to physical cross-border mobility in higher education that is designed and implemented in an environmentally sustainable and responsible way across all stages of the mobility experience. While it includes the use of low-emission means of transport (e.g. train, bus, car-pooling), it also encompasses sustainable practices in accommodation, campus infrastructure, digitalisation, resource use, and daily living during the mobility period. (WG I&M draft 2025)

15. *Balanced mobility*⁵

Balanced mobility in higher education refers to relatively even and mutually beneficial movement of students between countries or institutions is. It considers both the numerical balance of inbound and outbound mobility and the broader societal impact—such as educational costs, sectoral or housing constraints, and societal gains. Achieving balanced mobility supports sustainable international cooperation and helps avoid negative effects like brain drain or strain on local resources. (WG I&M draft 3)

16. *Inward (incoming) mobility*

Incoming mobility refers to students that moved (i.e., crossed a national border) to a specified country to study. (BPIR)

17. *Outward (outgoing) mobility*

Outward mobility refers to students that left their country of residence (i.e., crossed a national border) to study elsewhere (in which they are counted as inwardly mobile students) (BPIR)

18. *Degree mobility*

A period of study abroad aimed at acquiring a full degree or certificate in the destination countries. (Erasmus+ Glossary)

19. *Credit mobility*

Credit mobility is a limited period of study or traineeship abroad set within on-going studies at a home institution - for the purpose of gaining credits (with the aim of having achieved learning outcomes recognized). After the mobility phase, students return to their home institution to complete their studies. (Erasmus+ Glossary)

20. *Blended mobility*

A mobility activity that combines physical mobility and a virtual component, facilitating collaborative online learning exchange/teamwork. (Erasmus+ Glossary)

⁵ Including all forms of mobility, including credit and degree mobility.

III. Mobility Requirements

21. Credit transfer/Transfer of credits

Is the process of having credits awarded in one context (programme, institution) recognised in another formal context for the purpose of obtaining a qualification. Credits awarded to students in one programme are transferred from an institution to be accumulated in another programme offered by the same or another institution. Credit transfer is the key to successful study mobility. Institutions, faculties, departments may make agreements which guarantee automatic recognition and transfer of credits (European Commission, 2015 included in BPIR).

22. Recognition of credits

The process through which an institution certifies that learning outcomes achieved and assessed in another institution satisfy (some or all) requirements of a particular programme, its component or qualification. (*ECTS Users Guide*)

23. Recognition

A formal acknowledgment by a competent recognition authority of the validity and academic level of a foreign education qualification, of partial studies, or of prior learning for the purpose of providing an applicant with outcomes including, but not limited to: the right to apply for admission to higher education; and/or the possibility to seek employment opportunities. (Global Recognition Convention)

24. Mobility/Learning agreement

A Learning Agreement is a formal agreement between the student, the sending institution, and the receiving institution or organisation. It defines the goals, content, and expected learning outcomes of the mobility period to ensure its quality and relevance. Signed by all three parties before the start of the mobility, the agreement also serves as a guarantee that successfully completed credits abroad will be recognised by the home institution. (WG I&M draft 2025)

25. Mobility window

A mobility window is a period of time reserved for international student mobility that is embedded into the curriculum of a study programme (*ECTS Users Guide*)

26. Portability of student support, grants and/or loans

The portability of support, grants and/or loans is a system which assures students the possibility of taking similar support, grants and/or loans that are available for studying in the home country with them, while going abroad for studies. (BFUG Working Group Portability of Grants and Loans)