

Working Document WG on I&M – Note on Terminology – Draft 2.2 December 1st 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

Internationalisation at Home (IaH) is a concept where all students, not just those who study abroad, get the chance to gain international and intercultural learning experiences within their own country or institution. It focuses on integrating international and intercultural perspectives into the curriculum; creating a campus environment where diverse cultures interact; and connecting local and global issues in teaching and activities (WG I&M Draft 2025).

3. Virtual exchange²

Acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences through the use of digital 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. (Based on 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 (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 across borders. This mobility is often undertaken for purposes such as teaching, training, research collaboration, or professional development and upskilling. (WG I&M Draft 2025)

8. Intercultural competences

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. (Based on Nuffic 2020 – International Competence report)

9. Joint degree

A single document awarded by higher education institutions offering the joint programme attesting the successful completion of this programme and nationally acknowledged as the recognised award of the joint programme. (EQAR Glossary)

10. Joint programme

A joint programme is a higher education (study or research) programme 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). (Based on 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 certificate 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)

12. Transnational Education (TNE)

A subset of cross-border education where study programmes, or sets of courses, or educational services borrow or transfer elements of one country's higher education system (or non-country specific education systems) from or to another country. It may involve the movement of faculty, learners, knowledge, programmes, providers and curricula across jurisdictional borders. It may encompass a wide range of mode of delivery (including distance and blended learning) and may or may not require learners mobility. The programme(s) and qualification(s) awarded may belong to the domestic education system of reference of the providing institution, to the education system of a State different from the State in which the providing institution operates, or may be independent of any national education system (UNESCO and CoE 2025)

II. Learning Mobility

13. Student learning mobility

Student learning mobility refers to the physical movement to a country other than the country of residence for part (credit mobility) or all (degree mobility) of a programme. 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)

14. 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 physical cross-border mobility. 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 programmes 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)

15. Green mobility

Green mobility refers to physical cross-border mobility in higher education that is designed and implemented in the most environmentally sustainable and responsible way possible, minimising environmental footprint 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)

16. Balanced mobility³

Balanced mobility in higher education refers to relatively even and mutually beneficial movement of students between countries or institutions. 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)

17. Inward (incoming) mobility

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

18. Outward (outgoing) mobility

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

³ Including all forms of mobility, including credit and degree mobility.

19. Degree mobility

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

20. 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. (Based on Erasmus+ Glossary)

21. Blended mobility

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

22. 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. Institutions, faculties, departments or specific study programmes may make agreements which guarantee automatic recognition and transfer of credits (Based on European Commission, 2015 included in BPIR).

23. Recognition of credits

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

24. 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)

25. 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 credits gained abroad will be recognised by the home institution. (WG I&M draft 2025)

26. 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*)

27. 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)