



# Guidelines for international partnership agreements

## 1. General information

Södertörn University has extensive partnerships with higher education institutions (HEIs) and organisations in other countries. These can be divided into the following areas:

- Mobility for students, lecturers and other staff
- Recruitment of programme students from other countries
- Internationalisation at home (IaH)
- International networks and research partnerships

Many of these partnerships require the university to enter a written agreement to regulate liability and ensure mutual support. The majority of the university's agreements on international partnerships are signed university-wide, but there are also agreements that are signed by academic schools. This document provides a description of the university's various forms of agreement, what the university or school commits to, and a checklist for preparing and following up agreements, primarily mobility agreements.

## 2. What is an agreement?

A written agreement is a mutual declaration in which the parties commit to something, i.e. a mutual commitment to perform certain actions that are carefully regulated in the agreement. The agreement establishes what the parties want to achieve and their rights and obligations.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is a declaration of intent, a framework for future cooperation; an expression of a desire to cooperate within specified areas but without regulating the terms of such cooperation. These terms are subsequently regulated in a specific agreement.

## 3. Exchange agreements

Exchange agreements allow students to study for a semester or an academic year at a foreign partner university without paying any tuition fees. Exchange agreements can also include mobility for lecturers, doctoral students and administrative staff. Student exchange agreements are reciprocal, i.e. it is only possible for the university to send students abroad if we also accept incoming students. Reciprocity should therefore be considered both when signing new agreements and when following up existing agreements. Many exchange programmes also demand that full credit transfers for foreign studies at the home HEI, that the rate of study is full-time or covers a particular minimum period. Agreements that include student exchange therefore need to be prepared particularly well and carefully followed up. A guide for this is available in the "Checklist for exchange agreements", p. 3-5.

#### 4. Forms of financing

Södertörn University participates in both national and international programmes that facilitate external financing for various partnership activities. University administration is responsible for applications and the administration of central exchange programmes, while each school has primary responsibility for decentralised programmes and individual applications for travel grants, for example. For EU framework programmes, university administration is responsible only for projects in which the university is the coordinating partner. Note that all applications for EU funding always require the Vice-Chancellor's signature and that some applications require co-financing by the school; this must be approved by the Head of School before funding applications are signed by the Vice-Chancellor.

#### 5. Support for agreements

Before entering into an exchange agreement, it should be apparent what the partnership should result in, the obligations, costs, and administration it entails and how and when it should be evaluated. The partnership should have broad internal support, e.g. at the relevant school and relevant administrative units. Agreements should be fixed-term and termination should be possible.

#### 6. Preparation of exchange agreements

Agreements that relate to mobility need to be prepared by both a person with subject expertise and the International Coordinator. The schools have primary responsibility for obtaining collegial support, while the International Coordinator is responsible for ensuring the agreement does not contravene guidelines from external financiers, that the scope of the agreement is realistic and that is compatible with the university's objectives and strategies, quality requirements and internationalisation policy. Signing an agreement is therefore a multi-stage process that spans several units at the university and which may take varying amounts of time, depending on the amount of preparation that is required.

*Example process for signing a new central exchange agreement:*

- ✓ **Initiation** – an agreement enquiry is initiated by a teacher/researcher, university management or the International Coordinator, or one of the equivalent at a foreign HEI.
- ✓ **Selection** – an initial selection is made: are the subject and the region at all relevant to Södertörn? Could the agreement supplement existing partnerships? Does there appear to be practical potential for starting a partnership and, if so, at what levels and in which subjects? Is there interest among the relevant staff for exploring a partnership?
- ✓ **Assessment** – an academic contact person is appointed to begin an academic assessment, primarily of the academic quality and relevance of a partnership.
- ✓ **Support** – the proposed agreement is discussed in the subject and/or programme council. Documentation in the form of a checklist is sent to the contact person for international exchange agreements.
- ✓ **Negotiation** – the exact content of the agreement is negotiated between the relevant HEIs.
- ✓ **Planning** – a timetable is drawn up for the agreement's completion and follow-up, with the help of the academic contact person.
- ✓ **Signing** – International Coordinator takes the agreement to a Vice-Chancellor's executive meeting. University administration is responsible for registration and listing in the mobility database.
- ✓ **Follow-up** – the agreement is followed up at least once a year in accordance with the decided timetable.

## Checklist for exchange agreements

### Section A: Answered by the academic contact person

#### *Purpose and profile*

I. Describe the purpose of the agreement and the way in which it is expected to contribute to the university's objectives and visions for internationalisation within education and/or research.

II. Describe the HEI's profile as regards strong areas of education and/or research, as well as any specialisations and an assessment of quality and reputation.

#### *Demand and breadth*

III. Demand – which factors indicate that students/teachers/researchers consider this to be an attractive partner with regards to education and location?

IV. What is the potential for including more areas of cooperation (educational levels, subjects, research, etc.) in the agreement? Has this been communicated with other schools/subjects?

#### *Support and long-term thinking*

V. The proposed agreement has the support of the subject and/or programme council<sup>1</sup> or the Advisory Board for Internationalisation<sup>2</sup>. Describe how and when this was obtained and any comments from the council/board:

VI. Is there an idea regarding the partnership's progression/continued development?

---

1 Applies to subject-specific agreements

2 Applies to university-wide agreements

*Limitations and feasibility*

VII. Describe the direct target group for the agreement in as much detail as possible, e.g.:

- a) For which student and/or staff category at Södertörn is the agreement intended?<sup>3</sup>
- b) For which student and/or staff category at the partner HEI is the agreement intended?<sup>4</sup>

VIII. Specific issues vis-à-vis student exchanges at first and second-cycle levels:

- a) *Outgoing students*: Does the HEI offer courses in English in relevant subjects? Provide a link to the prospectus. Is full credit transfer possible? Are there mobility windows when programme students are recommended to go on exchanges?
- b) *Incoming students*: Which courses does Södertörn University offer incoming students on the basis of this agreement? Has it been checked that incoming students will fulfil the admission requirements and that the subject has enough places to be able to accept the students?

**Section B. Answered by the International Coordinator**

I. How many existing exchange agreements are there in the country/region, and in the subject/field?

II. State the main and supplementary languages of instruction. Which language levels are recommended for the agreement? Are there language testing requirements for outgoing/incoming students? Are language courses offered at the host university?

III. The proposed agreement, including the course offering and levels, application and semester dates are checked with international officers at Student Support Services. State whether specific information should be provided to outgoing/incoming students.

IV. State when the first mobility period is planned and, for student exchanges, when the exchange places for outgoing students will be announced.

V. Risk analysis and ethical considerations. Describe any risks in the region of which to be particularly aware, as well as any ethical considerations that should be taken into account.

---

<sup>3</sup> State subject area, study level and available languages of instruction

<sup>4</sup> State subject area, prerequisites and language skills

**Section C: Answered by the academic contact person and International Coordinator**

I. The academic coordinator for the agreement is (state name and position):

---

II. The administrator for student exchanges is:

---

III. State a preliminary timetable for how and when students and/or staff will be informed about the new agreement and whether it is an ongoing agreement; proposals for dates for annual information campaigns:

IV. Will the agreement be signed as part of an exchange programme? If yes, has the academic coordinator seen the rules that apply for participation in the exchange programme?

V. For which time period is the agreement intended, what period of notice is proposed and when can the first mobility period start?

VI. State the position and perhaps name of the person with subject knowledge who is responsible for signing outgoing students' Learning Agreements<sup>5</sup> prior to the exchange and making decisions regarding credit transfer after the exchange:

---

VII. The agreement must be followed up by the university administration and the academic school. Describe below how and when the subject/programme plans to follow up the agreement.

---

<sup>5</sup> A signed Learning Agreement that covers full-time study is obligatory for exchanges within Erasmus+