



## Virtual Mobility Before and After Student Exchanges

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## SUMMARY

The overall objective of this study is to present an overview of state-of-the-art in virtual exchange support measures for incoming and outgoing (Erasmus) students. The report focuses on following themes: information available for exchange students, selection of students, flexible assessment methods, language and cultural preparation, e-coaching as well as evaluation and feedback of the exchange. The study methodology includes a literature search and information gathered through a questionnaire at the VM-BASE partner institutions.

The study indicates that both support of and services for incoming and outgoing exchange students vary substantially. In general, the incoming students are paid a lot more attention to than the outgoing students. However, there are also differences between the partner institutions.

Both the size and the structure of the organization as well as the number of exchange students, among other things, affect how the students can be supported. Smaller institutions with fewer students are generally better able to support their students as well as to try new activities than bigger institutions with more exchange students. As far as organization structure is concerned, non-universities generally seem to be more flexible with their activities and better able to offer personal support and guidance to their students than universities. On the other hand, the exchange programs are also more fixed.

Institutional websites are the integral tool for disseminating key institutional information and for promoting institutional identities to the general public. The provision of timely and adequate information is, however, often considered somewhat insufficient, especially among the students. In some cases, there is no information available in English, only in the local language. This is also a major deficiency.

The selection of students is usually done by the sending institution. The most important selection criteria include academic background, study results, personality and motivation. However, in some cases, the selection criteria purely base on study results. This is considered somewhat problematic, since it can exclude highly motivated students, who have had less success in their studies, from the study abroad experience.

The level of cultural and linguistic support as well as the availability of e-coaching also varies notably among the partner institutions. Language testing, in turn, is considered almost non-existent. Only one partner institution reported that it requires an official statement from the student that documents that he/she has sufficient skills in English.

The lack of post-exchange support and virtual tools are also a common problem. Students are often forgotten after the physical exchange, even though, in most cases, support and guidance are also needed in this final stage. Recognition of studies, support with the homecoming and so-called reverse culture shock as well as collecting feedback on the exchange are procedures that clearly require improvement. Also, the use of alternative assessment methods is something that could be utilized more.