POLICY ON INTERNATIONAL STUDENT EXCHANGE

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POLICY ON INTERNATIONAL STUDENT EXCHANGE

This document applies to the international student exchange of outgoing exchange students of the Aalto University School of Business who are studying for a Bachelor of Science (Economics and Business Administration) or Master of Science (Economics and Business Administration) on the Töölö or Otaniemi campuses of Aalto University under the degree regulations of 2013. The key contents of the document are the application process for student exchange, the studies to be completed during the exchange, transferring the credits for them towards the Aalto degree, and the scholarships available for outgoing exchange students.

1. POLICY ON INTERNATIONAL STUDENT EXCHANGE

The Aalto University School of Business encourages its students to include exchange studies in their bachelor's and master's degrees. All degree students of the School of Business who are planning or considering a student exchange should aspire to as good academic performance as possible from the very start of their studies and to gaining a solid language proficiency that allows them to study abroad.

Students pursuing a Bachelor of Science (BSc) or a Master of Science (MSc) in Economics and Business Administration at the School of Business can apply for

1) the official student places offered at the partner universities of the School of Business or
2) a free mover scholarship for studying at a host university they have found independently.

The exchange period may be completed by studying at either an official exchange partner university of the School of Business or in another degree programme abroad meeting the requirements of the official international exchange programme of the School of Business.

Students can apply for either a term at a partner university funded by the student exchange programme of the School of Business or for a free mover scholarship. The exchange duration is limited to one term at a time; students may include one exchange period in the bachelor's degree and another in the master's degree. To be eligible for applying to the exchange programme or for the scholarship, the student must be enrolled as attending at the school at the time of application. Non-attending students may, however, apply for the exchange programme or for a free mover scholarship if their non-attendance is due to: (1) serving under the Conscript Act (1438/2007), the Non-Military Service Act (1446/2007) or the act on voluntary military service for women (194/1995); (2) being on maternity, paternity or parental leave; or (3) being unable to study due to a medical condition. In such cases, applicants are required to provide documentary evidence of the reason for non-attendance in their application documents.

All outgoing exchange students, including free movers, must be enrolled as attending students at the School of Business during the exchange term. Outgoing bachelor's students must have completed at least one academic year worth of studies (as a rule, 60 credits) before the exchange.

Exchange studies are always counted towards the student’s degree. As a rule, credits for the studies completed during the exchange are transferred towards the degree in the form of the International Study Module. Courses taken during an exchange period may also be used to substitute for equivalent studies in the Aalto degree or they may be included in the degree in accordance with the current degree requirements. The minimum scope of the International Study Module is 30 credits in the bachelor's degree and 24 credits in the master’s degree. The credits for exchange studies are transferred towards the Aalto degree by the Learning Services of the School of Business.

Students are informed of matters related to student exchanges through various channels, such as info sessions and online materials. Informing and advising students is the responsibility of International Student Services.

2. APPLICATION PROCESS FOR THE EXCHANGE PROGRAMME

2.1 Steps of the application process

The deadlines for applying for student exchange are approved annually according to the following approximate timelines:
• Application procedure for the bachelor’s and master’s student exchange programme: in weeks 2–4
• Printing the study attainments (completed courses) relevant to the selection decisions from the student information system: week 5
• Publishing the admission results: week 8–9
• The student must confirm his or her acceptance of the offered place by the deadline given (about one week after the results have been published).
• Supplementary application round: week 10–11
• Printing the study attainments relevant to the selection decisions from the student information system: week 11–12
• Publishing the results of the supplementary application round: week 12–13
• The student must confirm acceptance of the offered place by the deadline given (about one week after the results have been published).

2.2 Partner universities

Once the application period starts, all the confirmed student places offered based on exchange agreements of the School of Business are opened for application. When possible, any places unused on the first round or rejected by students are opened for application during the supplementary application round. For scheduling reasons, the supplementary application round offers more places for the spring term than for the autumn term.

Students apply for student exchange through the MoveOn online mobility system, where students can list up to ten options in the order of preference. Each academic term of choice is marked as a separate option. If the student does not get offered a place in any of his or her universities of choice, he or she may be offered a place in any partner university with unused student places, if he or she has given his or her consent for it on the application form.

The places agreed upon with the partner universities are defined either as bachelor’s-level (undergraduate) or master’s-level (graduate) places; BSc students should apply for the undergraduate and MSc students for the graduate ones. The partner universities are in charge of determining whether a programme is of undergraduate or graduate level. When the level is unclear due to differences in degree structures, International Student Services determines the programme level by comparing it to equivalent studies at the School of Business. In some specified universities, master’s students of the School of Business go an exchange in an undergraduate-level programme (to pursue third- or fourth-year studies).

2.3 Selection criteria

Students are admitted to the places offered at partner universities upon application at the end of the application period. The applicants are allocated a place based on their study index, provided that the applicant satisfy the language requirements and any other requirements set by the partner university, such as the applicants’ level of degree, academic performance, age, mathematical skills or work experience. Applicants to the exchange programme may be interviewed (Teaching and Research Committee, (opetus- ja koulutusneuvosto) 12 December 2008).

Students going on a master’s-level exchange are required to have earned the Bachelor of Science (Economics and Business Administration) before the exchange, because a bachelor’s degree is required by the partner universities offering places in master’s programmes. Knowing which master’s-level programme the student has been selected and what School of Business studies the student has included in his or her personal study plan is important for planning the contents of the exchange studies.

Students who are pursuing a bachelor’s degree and plan to continue directly to a master’s degree, may apply for a master’s student exchange period in the autumn term once they have completed 150 credits towards the bachelor’s degree, and for an exchange period in the spring term once they have completed 138 credits towards the bachelor’s degree by the deadline specified in the application timeline. In such cases, the exchange studies are completed during the first year of the Master of Science (Economics and Business Administration) degree. Students who are applying for a master’s-level exchange while pursuing their bachelor’s degree must provide, along with their exchange application, a scheduled study plan (with all studies yet to be completed and their anticipated date of completion) and the anticipated date of completion of their bachelor’s degree. The admission of such students is conditional until they have completed the bachelor’s degree, and completion of the degree will be checked before the start of the exchange period. However, many partner universities require that applicants to master’s level programmes include a bachelor’s degree certificate in their application documents, in which case the bachelor’s degree must be completed before the application deadline of the partner university. Students completing a master’s degree are recommended to apply for a
student exchange during the first year of master's degree studies, in which case the exchange period takes place during the second year of studies.

The School of Business only selects applicants whose studies during the exchange may be included in the degree.

The remaining right to study towards the School of Business degree of the student is a factor when applying for the exchange programme or for the free mover scholarship: students whose right to study will end before the start of the planned exchange period or during it may be given conditional admission to the programme provided they have a realistic possibility to be granted an extension to their right to study. The student’s situation is assessed by the school manager of academic affairs.

2.3.1 Study index

The key admissions criteria is the student's academic performance as indicated by the study index. The index is calculated based on the total amount of credits required for the degree and the credit-weighted grade point average in relation to the time spent on studies. The study index is calculated as follows: number of credits * credit-weighted grade point average/number of academic terms enrolled as an attending. Eligible applicants to the exchange programme must have a credit-weighted average grade of at least 3 / Hyvät tiedot (good knowledge) (6 November 2009). The average grade is based on the studies included in the HOPS for the degree pursued.

The study index is based on the studies that are counted towards the degree and have been completed within the period of validity of the student's right to study at the School of Business. The studies that may be counted towards the degree are defined on the basis of the personal study plan (HOPS) prepared by the student and approved by the School of Business. The calculation includes the study attainments that have been entered into the student register of the School of Business by the deadline specified for the application period of the year of application. The student is responsible for ensuring the accuracy of the study plan. For students pursuing a bachelor's degree, only studies that count towards the bachelor's degree are included in the calculation. For students pursuing a master's degree, the calculation is based on the completed bachelor's studies as well as the progress of master's-level studies as follows: (180 * credit-weighted grade point average of the bachelor's degree + (studies included in the master's degree * credit-weighted grade point average of the master's degree)) divided by the total number of terms in which the student has enrolled as attending.

The study index is based only on the studies completed within the period of validity of the student's official right to study at the School of Business.

To calculate the progress of studies, the number of earned credits is divided by the number of academic terms in which the student has enrolled as attending. Enrolling as non-attending in any previous years of study does not put the student at a disadvantage in the selection process. Upon application of the student and on reasonable grounds, an exceptional number of terms enrolled as attending may be considered at the discretion of the university, if the student has been enrolled as an attending student but has not been able to complete studies due to (1) serving under the Conscription Act (1438/2007), the Non-Military Service Act (1446/2007) or the act on voluntary military service for women (194/1995); (2) being on maternity, paternity or parental leave; or (3) having a medical condition. In such cases, applicants are required to provide documentary evidence of their reason for non-attendance.

2.3.2 Student language proficiency

Students are to have a sufficient language proficiency to attend teaching suitable to a degree in economics and business administration and to pass the requisite courses. The student's language proficiency is evaluated based on the Common European Framework of Reference, which identifies the following skill levels: A1-A2-B1-B2-C1-C2, where A1 is the lowest and C2 is the highest level of proficiency. The levels above are used to describe the starting levels of foreign language studies, and for each language, a list is provided of the courses that need to be passed to attain a specific level of proficiency.

The minimum proficiency requirement for the language of the host university is B2, although some universities may require a higher proficiency level of the language needed in studying. Students who do not have the requisite language proficiency when they submit the application may in some cases gain conditional admission to the programme provided they have a realistic chance to achieve the required level of proficiency before the exchange.
Students who have not studied the language of instruction of the potential host university at the School of Business are required to submit reliable documentation of having taken language courses elsewhere or otherwise gained the requisite language proficiency, to allow their proficiency level to be assessed by the school. As necessary, a report may requested from a relevant language teacher.

If there are more applicants to a given partner university than places available, and several students are ranked equally high in the application process, knowledge of the language of the host country is considered an advantage.

English-language partner universities may require an official language test (TOEFL, IELTS etc.). In such cases, the student must submit the required test results to the partner university by the date specified in its application instructions. If the test results are not available when selection decisions are made, the student is made a conditional offer.

2.3.3 Requirements set by partner universities (relevance)

Partner universities may set special requirements for their incoming students. If the partner programme is an MBA programme, work experience and maturity (a certain age) may be required. In addition, some partner universities may require, on top of the general admissions criteria of the School of Business exchange programme, that the applicant demonstrate above-average academic performance, mathematics skills or language proficiency in the language of the host country.

2.3.4 Allocation of places

When possible, each applicant is allocated a place at one of the partner universities they have listed on their application form. The options are checked in the order of priority specified by the student. For the purpose of place allocation, applicants are ranked based on their study index. After this initial ranking, the school evaluates whether the student satisfies the language proficiency and any other special requirements set by the partner university. If the student does not have sufficient language proficiency or satisfy the requirements of the partner university of choice, his or her suitability for the next choice is assessed until all options have been examined. If the student does not get offered a place in any of his or her universities of choice, he or she may be offered a place in any partner university with unused student places, if he or she has given his or her consent for it on the application form. Otherwise, the student can reapply during the supplementary application round.

Where two or more applicants have the same study index and choice of partner university but the university does not have places for all those interested, the decision is made based on the applicant's overall situation taking into consideration, for instance, the average grade and number of credits earned towards the degree, and the applicant’s proficiency in the language of the host country; for master’s-level applications: the share of bachelor’s degree completed; the relevance of prior studies for the studies at the partner university; the average grade for all studies and the total number of credits earned. If no differences, the decision is made by lottery.

2.3.5 Selection decisions

Selected for the programme: Students selected for the exchange programme are offered a place and requested to confirm their acceptance or rejection of the offered place by the deadline given. International Student Services will notify the relevant partner university of the student being nominated for a place at the university. Once the student has been selected for the School of Business exchange programme, he or she must send an application to the partner university, who will then make the final decision about the student’s approval and confirm it by sending him or her an official acceptance letter.

Not selected for the programme: Students who cannot be offered a place in any of the universities of their choice are not admitted into the exchange programme.

Rejected: Students who have applied to the School of Business exchange programme or for a free mover scholarship will have their application rejected if they do not meet the selection criteria or have failed to fill in any requisite parts of the application form or to turn in the requested additional materials by the deadline.
despite being requested to do so. The application is also rejected if it arrives after the deadline without the
student giving a very good and documented reason for it. Applications for the exchange programme of the
School of Business or for a free mover scholarship will be rejected also if the student has previously applied
for and accepted a place of equivalent level (bachelor’s or master’s level) in the exchange programme but
cancelled his or her participation after the deadline without a justifiable reason, such as an illness or other
force majeure event.

Losing your place in the exchange programme: Students who have been selected for the exchange
programme, will lose the offered place if they:
• fail to submit the required acceptance notification;
• otherwise neglect any responsibilities related to accepting the offered place
• fail the requisite language test or do not submit the test results to the partner university by the deadline.
• give false information about themselves or about their studies.

Students who have been selected for the School of Business exchange programme lose their place at the
partner university if the partner university rejects the student after receiving his or her application.

2.3.6 Supplementary application round

Student places that were not filled during the official exchange application period are re-opened for application
during the supplementary application round, which takes place immediately after all the students selected for
the programme have either accepted or rejected the place they were offered. The supplementary round follows
the same principles as the primary application round. Students who have accepted a place offered during the
primary round are not eligible to apply in the supplementary round.

3. FREE MOVER PLACES

3.1 Schedule

Free mover scholarship applications are processed twice a year according to the approximate timeline
presented below.

For exchange periods in the summer and autumn
• Deadline for application submission: week 14–16
• Scholarship award decisions published: week 17–19

For exchange periods in the spring
• Deadline for application submission: week 45–46
• Scholarship award decisions published: week 47–49

The application must always be submitted early enough for the official decision to be made before the start of
the exchange period. The free mover applications must include a confirmation of admission by the partner
university, a transcript of records by the School of Business, a plan of studies to be completed during the
exchange with their course descriptions, and a credit transfer application. The student must also have a valid
and approved personal study plan (HOPS).

3.2 Criteria for scholarship award

For the student to be eligible for the free mover scholarship, his or her host university must meet the quality
criteria set by the School of Business, and the courses taken during the exchange must be part of the
university’s normal degree education rather than a module intended only for exchange students. The free
mover scholarship is not awarded for studies offered by commercial organisations. The free mover studies
must correspond to the level of the student’s School of Business degree, be relevant for a degree in economics
and business administration and transferable towards the student’s School of Business degree. As a rule,
studies during a bachelor’s-level exchange period must be bachelor’s level, while those during a master’s-level
exchange must be master’s-level. The minimum scope of the free mover exchange period for a bachelor’s
degree is 30 credits and for a master’s degree 24 credits.
The free mover scholarship award criteria are the same as the selection criteria for the School of Business exchange programme. Students who do not qualify for the free mover scholarship cannot include an International Study Module in his or her degree.

The free mover scholarship is not awarded for an exchange at a university with which the School of Business has a valid exchange agreement. Students who are on an exchange period at a partner university of the School of Business and independently decide to continue for a second term as a free mover do not receive funding from the School of Business, and their second term is not considered to be part of the official student exchange period.

As regards the studies to be completed during the exchange and their transfer to the Aalto degree, the guidelines given to the students on an exchange at the official partner universities of the School of Business apply also to free movers.

4. STUDIES TO BE COMPLETED DURING THE EXCHANGE

4.1 Learning Agreement

Students taking part in an exchange must incorporate the studies to be completed during it into their degree by including them in their personal study plan (HOPS) for the School of Business degree and leaving a slot for them in their degree. Once the student has secured a place at a partner university, he or she must plan the studies abroad at the level of courses to ensure that the completed courses may be counted towards the School of Business degree. Before the start of the exchange period, students must have their course-level study plan (Learning Agreement) and their credit transfer plan approved by International Student Services.

Before the exchange, students prepare a course-level plan of studies to be completed during the exchange, indicating the course codes and names (and their English translations as necessary), levels and scopes in ECTS credits and/or local credits if the partner university does not use ECTS credits. Students submit their plans to International Student Services well in advance of the exchange period. Once the plan has been approved by the School of Business, it becomes a binding Learning Agreement, where details of all the courses to be taken during the exchange are marked based on the information available before the exchange.

International Student Services checks the total scope of the studies to be completed and, in the case of studies to be included in the International Study Module, the relevance of their contents. If studies during the exchange are used to substitute for courses in the student’s Aalto degree programme, their relevance for the degree is checked by the teacher-in-charge of the given Aalto course. Should any changes be made to an approved Learning Agreement, either as courses are selected or during the term, the student must obtain approval for them by emailing outgoing-biz@aalto.fi immediately. Students who are taking part in an exchange in the Erasmus student exchange programme must, in addition, update the changes to their Learning Agreement (Changes to Learning Agreement) before their return to Finland and ask the coordinator of the partner university to approve both the changes and the original Learning Agreement by signing both documents (= the final Learning Agreement). Students who fail to notify the school of any changes to the exchange study plan and to obtain approval for them and as a result, fail to earn the requisite number of credits during the exchange or to transfer them towards their degree, are liable for any financial or other consequences resulting from their negligence (e.g. losing the scholarship or the Kela financial aid for students).

4.2 Scope of studies during the exchange

Exchange students are expected to earn a number of credits equivalent to a full-time workload of a single term at the partner university. For a BSc exchange, the requisite minimum workload is 30 ECTS credits. For an MSc exchange, the requisite minimum workload is 24 ECTS credits (6 November 2009). In specified partner universities where the academic year is divided into three terms (trimesters), the requisite scope is 20 ECTS credits during a trimester or the equivalent in local credits. The trimester exchange is only applicable to master’s-level exchanges.

The exchange periods of the School of Business students have to meet not only any minimum credit requirements set by the partner university or the immigration authority of the partner country, but also the minimum credit requirements set by the School of Business specified above. Upon submitting their application for the exchange programme of the School of Business or the free mover scholarship, students agree to meet the School of Business requirements for the scope of the studies to be completed during the exchange.
Students have a responsibility to find out about the course requirements (e.g. attendance requirements) of the partner university as soon as the term starts. Students who fail to meet any requirements despite their sincere efforts to do so (e.g. failing a course due to illness) or for reasons beyond their control (e.g. a course being cancelled) must be able to produce a written document of the reasons for it upon request (e.g. a certificate from the teacher or a medical certificate of illness).

4.3 Quality of studies during the exchange

The courses taken during the exchange must be:

- university-level courses which do not include a thesis (or report, seminar, maturity essay) or work placement
- courses specified in the Learning Agreement and/or included in the course offering defined by the partner university
- studies in the field of economics and business administration or, for good reasons, studies in other fields that are relevant to a degree in the field of business
- studies whose contents are new for the student and differ from the studies he or she has pursued at the School of Business
- as a rule, on a bachelor's-level exchange period, bachelor's level studies, and on a master's-level exchange, master's level studies. On reasonable grounds, the International Study Module of a master's student may include a bachelor's-level exchange period (for instance, a module in an area in which the student has no prior courses).
- On reasonable grounds, the International Study Module may also include studies related to the student's field of study, provided their contents are different from the courses already included in their Aalto degree programme studies.
- Of the studies during the exchange, max 8 ECTS credits (Teaching and Research Committee, 12 December 2008) may be earned for studies in the language and culture of the host country. An exception to this are exchange periods at universities with trimesters, in which case a minimum of 16 credits has to be earned for other courses than language and culture courses.

5. TRANSFER OF CREDITS EARNED DURING THE EXCHANGE

Credits for courses taken during an exchange abroad are usually transferred towards the Aalto degree in the form of an International Study Module. They can, however, also be used to substitute for equivalent Aalto degree studies or included in the degree in accordance with the current degree requirements.

The minimum scope of the International Study Module is 30 credits in the bachelor's degree and 24 credits in the master's degree. The studies completed during the exchange may be used towards the International Study Module if the student has earned a minimum of 18 credits for studies that may be included in it.

The student must submit, along with the Learning Agreement, a plan of how the credits earned during the exchange will be transferred towards his or her School of Business degree. The transfer of credits is based on an official transcript of records issued by the partner university, which is the only official certificate of the studies completed during the exchange.

6. SCHOLARSHIPS FOR STUDENT EXCHANGE

6.1 Scholarship payment

The exchange scholarships are paid in accordance with the current scholarship payment practices of Aalto. The scholarships are paid in two instalments, the exact amounts of which are communicated to the student separately. As a rule, the first instalment is made before the exchange, while the second instalment is made after the exchange period once the student has submitted the required documents to International Student Services. The payment of the second instalment also requires that the studies completed during the exchange meet the requirements set for them and credits for them have been earned. In addition, the studies must be transferable towards the degree. If the is a need to supplement the International Study Module, a study plan approved by the Learning Services of the School of Business is required for the scholarship payment. The scholarship may be awarded no more than once per degree.
6.2 Losing the scholarship

Students who cancel or interrupt their exchange period or fail to submit the required documents are liable to reimburse the scholarship in full or in part. Students who fail to meet the minimum requirements despite their sincere efforts or for reasons beyond their control must be able to produce a written document of the reasons for it. All cases of failing to meet the minimum requirements during the exchange are processed individually by International Student Services. If the number of credits earned or the quality of the studies fails to meet the requirements without reasonable grounds, the second instalment of the scholarship may be cancelled or the student may be required to reimburse the scholarship in full or in part.

7. SELECTING STUDENTS FOR THE EXCHANGE PROGRAMME AND SELECTION DECISIONS

The international student exchange policy and its criteria are decided by the Academic Committee for Business. International Student Services processes the student exchange applications, allocates the places at partner universities to students and prepares a proposal on student selection. The final decision on selecting students for the exchange programme is made by the vice dean for education based on the proposal.

8. INCOMING EXCHANGE STUDENTS

8.1 Official exchange students of the School of Business

The School of Business receives international exchange students from its exchange partner universities under valid exchange agreements, in accordance with annually decided numbers of student places available. The School of Business does not host ‘free movers’. The sending university is responsible for ensuring that the language proficiency of the incoming students meets the requirements of the English-medium studies at the School of Business.

The application periods for international exchange students are decided annually (in the academic year 2018–19, the deadlines are 30 April and October 1). The vice dean for education approves the incoming exchange students under the exchange agreements currently in force and grants them a fixed-term right to study at the proposal of International Student Services.

International Student Services is in charge of the incoming exchange students, gives them practical advice and organises the orientation sessions and tutoring together with the student association for Aalto University business students, KY. Furthermore, International Student Services is in charge of producing the materials sent to the partner universities and their students, such as information on the school’s English-medium courses, information about the school, as well as about Helsinki and Finland. International Student Services gives international exchange students advice on studies in collaboration with programmes and departments. The School of Business also informs exchange students of the available forms of accommodation.

8.2 Visiting students at departments

The School of Business does not host ‘free movers’. A visiting student at a department means an incoming student who is not covered under the official student exchange programme of the School of Business, but who the department or those responsible for an individual subject at the department are ready to host for the purpose of doing a thesis or doctoral dissertation under the supervision of a professor of the department.

Upon application, such students may be assigned a student number and granted a fixed-term right to study. The application is signed by the professor in charge of the study program, and it must state the visiting student’s complete name, date of birth, home university, duration of right to study and purpose of studies (e.g. doing a thesis or doctoral dissertation). It must also include the name of the thesis advisor. The applications are addressed to the vice dean for education and submitted to the Learning Services of the School of Business.

If visiting students complete courses once they have been given the right to study, the Aalto study program is liable to pay a fee based on the credits earned as well as a separate registration fee. The fees are equal to those associated with student mobility under the flexible study right scheme (JOO). The School of Business is not responsible for arranging accommodation for a visiting student. The receiving Aalto study program and the thesis advisor of the student are responsible for finding a workspace for the student.