

GUIDELINES FOR THE APPROVAL AND REVIEW OF EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

January, 1998

This document is intended for use in the approval and review process for exchange programs. In these times of limited resources, it is important that our international efforts are directed in an efficient and effective manner, and that the creation of innovative proposals is not stifled. Therefore, the University should review carefully all proposals for new or exchange programs, or requests for the continuation of these programs. The attached criteria will be applied to such requests.

Exchange Programs are an integral component of the University of Guelph's Study Abroad programs. The programs provide students with an opportunity to study in another country, with some guarantees about the quality of the educational experience, and issues of duty of care. Exchange Programs involve University to University contracts between the University of Guelph and accredited institutions in the host country. Students take courses offered at the host institution and are not accompanied by a faculty member (although a coordinator is assigned at each institution to deal with problems). The establishment of the contracts implies that the University takes some responsibility for the program, and the students participating in the program (both our students going overseas, and students coming to Guelph).

Exchange Programs are costly to the University. Examples of activities involved in each exchange program include: Coordinators must be found to provide academic counselling and support to the students; the programs must be advertised; special procedures must be put in place to ensure courses are found and credits and transcripts transferred; and students must be helped in finding accommodation, obtaining visas, acquiring appropriate medical insurance and participating in orientation sessions. In addition there are direct costs such as phone calls and faxes to the other institutions, and periodic reviews of the academic institution and location to ensure the ongoing appropriateness of the exchange program.

Given these costs, both financial, and in terms of duty of care to students, it is important that the University not enter into exchange agreements lightly. They should only be established if they form an integral part of our academic programs. To this end, it is recommended that all proposals for exchange programs, and all requests to renew programs, must be considered and approved by at least one appropriate program committee prior to being submitted to the Centre for International Programs. The Centre for International Programs has the authority to approve new exchanges on behalf of the Senate International Committee. However, an exchange will be brought to SIC for approval if:

- i. it does not comply with the University's generic exchange agreement;
- ii. program approval was not received, or
- iii. there are concerns on the part of CIP about the ability to balance the exchange over time.

CRITERIA FOR THE APPROVAL AND REVIEW OF EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

Academic Rationale

Exchange Programs must:

- be in keeping with the mission and objectives of the University
- have the support of at least one program committee
- be evaluated on a regular basis to ensure that academic goals are being achieved

Accessibility

The program should:

- be accommodating of as many program requirements as possible so that students from across various programs and disciplines would be able to participate without severely restricting their ability to graduate in a timely fashion
- provide evidence that there would be a reasonably successful and balanced exchange. This would require an adequate student demand for the program, both at Guelph and at the host institution, including students from both institutions having financial support and sufficient language skills.

Suitability of Location

- The program should be designed keeping in mind the University's commitment for a reasonable spread of offerings across geographic locations and between locations, traditionally categorized as developed and less developed countries.
- The exchange program must illustrate how the location of the program contributes to its academic goals

Suitability of the Host Institution

The standards of the host institution must be appropriate for University of Guelph students. The Institution must:

- be internationally recognized and accredited
- offer courses that are appropriate for the disciplines involved (i.e., will be accepted for credit at Guelph)
- offer courses in a language that will ensure a sufficient pool of applicants from Guelph
- provide adequate and appropriate facilities for students including classrooms and library facilities

- have clearly identified admission processes and academic criteria
- provide transcripts or equivalent so that the coordinator can determine the student's level of performance while on exchange.

Duty of Care

All Exchange Programs must be designed to:

- demonstrably minimize risks to students if political, cultural or economic conditions impact on student safety
- ensure that there is adequate and appropriate food, accommodation and medical facilities
- include an orientation program for students prior to their departure, and a debriefing session upon their return.

Administration

While many of the administrative details are handled by the Centre for International Programs, exchange programs require ongoing and active support at the College or Program level. There must be:

- sufficient faculty and departmental support to ensure a viable exchange
- official coordinators identified at both institutions
- appropriate resource support for faculty at both institutions
- provision for at least one visit by a representative from each university at least once over the life of the contract, and at least once before a new exchange is proposed.

The Agreement

- A Letter of Agreement, normally for five years, must be developed using the template provided by CIP
- The agreement must be submitted to CIP accompanied by a letter of support from at least one program committee
- The agreement must be approved by CIP or SIC (see above) prior to being signed by the appropriate authorities.

Evaluation

After the first year of a new exchange program, a report will be submitted to the program committee. The report will include information on student assessment of the exchange, and any suggestions for improvement. This report will also be filed

with the Senate International Committee. In each subsequent year of the term of the exchange, coordinators will meet with students for feedback. A short summary document will be prepared for the program committee and for SIC.

After five years, the coordinator will prepare a formal report for the program committee, which outlines the success of the program in meeting the above noted criteria and includes a recommendation as to whether or not the program should continue. The recommendation will be forwarded to the Centre for International Programs.

Balance

- On an annual basis, the CIP will review the number of students participating on exchange programs to address issues of balance and level of activity