

Teaching and learning agreement – Tips on how to complete the sample form

Introduction

In order to internationalise the courses of studies offered at the University of Rostock, this agreement aims at developing the students' intercultural competence. Two activities which should support this process are the internationalisation of curricula and the increase of the students' mobility¹. These objectives can be achieved in different ways, e.g. through offering foreign language courses, by teaching staff mobility, by improving the recognition of academic achievements obtained abroad, by developing programmes with joint degrees (e.g. joint- and double-degree programmes) or by integrating compulsory or optional mobility activities into the curricula.

The equivalence of stays abroad integrated into the curriculum can be provided by general or subject-related agreements with partner institutions abroad and in addition to that or as an alternative by individual teaching and learning agreements. For this reason, a sample of an individual teaching and learning agreement has been developed. It can also be applied to further teaching and learning situations. A teaching and learning agreement could, for example, specify the type, structure and content of a stay abroad, i.e. help to structure and document it. If the stay abroad is a compulsory component of the course of study, in addition to the teaching and learning agreement, there should also be an alternative for those students who are not able to go abroad. There might be compelling reasons why students cannot study abroad, e.g. maternity leave, paid leave given to a mother or father, or illness. Therefore, an alternative should be included in the regulation for the course and its examinations because these students should also be able to complete their studies by fulfilling tasks which are comparable to a stay abroad.

¹ HRK-Audit Internationalisierung der Hochschulen, Selbstbericht der Universität Rostock, 2011, S. 11.

General information on the teaching and learning agreement

In the teaching and learning agreement, the students and teaching staff agree on and specify the objectives, the content and activities to support the students. This should support the students in taking responsibility for their studies and controlling themselves by considering their individual interests. Another aim of this document is to achieve a higher accuracy in defining the objectives, transparency and individualisation of the activities both sides agreed on. Furthermore, the teaching and learning agreement provides certainty and serves to support the academic acceptance of the tasks defined and the practical training, in particular completed abroad.

In the individual teaching and learning agreement, only the relevant aspects of the sample should be included. The agreement should be concluded, and, if appropriate, be brought into agreement with other learning agreements needed for scholarship programmes such as ERASMUS. Before the teaching and learning agreement is signed the student and advisor should have discussed it at length. The compulsory components of the teaching and learning agreement to be concluded should also be defined in the examination and study regulations. The same is true for the manner and type of completion of the degree requirements². Coordination with the examination board ensures the academic acceptance.

To 1. Contracting parties

- personal data of the student
- Faculty/Institute, represented by the person who is appointed by the faculty and responsible for concluding the teaching and learning agreements (e.g. the dean who is in charge of the curricula, the head of the institute, persons appointed responsible for a course of studies.); a substitute should be provided

To 2. Objective of the teaching and learning agreement

- If the stay abroad is compulsory, the teaching and learning agreement aims to acquire specific competences and as a result of this the acquisition of one or more certificates/records of achievement which are precisely defined (The competences and records of achievement to be acquired are described in detail under point 3. They arise from the study and examination regulations and the description of the modules.) If the stay abroad is optional, the teaching and learning agreement should determine competences and certificates/records of achievement which are equivalent and comparable with the curriculum.

² See the current regulation in each of the General Examination Regulations and the pattern for the subject-specific study and examination regulations.

To 3. Content of the teaching and learning agreement

- The content of the teaching and learning agreement describes the particular competences to be acquired, in general in a specific field
- This description should include the following aspects:
 - the individual objective the student wants to achieve
 - a specified field of study
 - the records of achievements to be obtained by the student - description of achievements (e.g. completing special courses including the examinations to be taken at the university abroad, obtaining a number of credits, agreement on a portfolio /description and reflection of the learning process/, presentation of data/ material collected for the thesis/ assignment, developing a concept for a Master`s thesis, writing a report about an internship)

To 4. Time schedule

- The time schedule can provide information regarding a realistic timetable and the records of achievement to be obtained during the study abroad or, respectively, during periods of work in an internship abroad.

To 5. Tasks to be completed by the student

- This point defines (partial) tasks and obligations. The students can agree, for example, to the following tasks:
 - to achieve the defined learning objective (see: Subject of the teaching and learning agreement) to the agreed deadline
 - to take the required examination (e.g. the compilation of a portfolio or a report on the internship) by the agreed deadline
 - to do the study abroad or the internship abroad according to the time schedule (if agreed on)
 - to attend specific modules and courses
 - if necessary, to acquire further information on their own – before they leave
 - to use the possibility of consultations
 - to compile and develop a curriculum based on the information about courses offered at the university abroad with the help of an advisor

To 6. Tasks to be performed by the teaching staff

- The teaching staff supports the students in achieving their objectives by e.g.:
 - offering advice regarding preparing for the stay abroad,
 - offering advice during the stay abroad,

- offering advice concerning the tasks to be fulfilled and information on how to structure and organize their work, how to proceed methodologically, how to find useful resources,
- making an agreement with the examination board concerning the academic recognition/ acceptance of the tasks to be performed abroad,
- if desired, by monitoring the time schedule,
- giving written or oral feedback on the tasks completed to date

To 7. Assessment criteria

- This point covers criteria for assessing the tasks to be solved and the examinations to be taken during a course of studies or an internship abroad, e.g.
 - rules for ensuring good academic practice
 - concerning the content, e.g.
 - ~ connection to theory and practice,
 - ~ presentation of own positions,
 - ~ presentation of possible results and consequences,
 - ~ requirements to a report on an internship (e.g. objectives and tasks, description of the institution offering the internship, own activities [methods of working, integration into the institution, own “products”], scientific background of own activities [connection to theory], self-reflection [practical experience and connection to the course of studies])
 - formalities to be considered, e.g.
 - ~ with written tasks (assignments, reports on internships etc), standards regarding word processing, length, font size, resources, reference list
 - ~ if necessary, special instructions about the requirements an assignment at the faculty/ institute must meet.

To 8. Ways to obtain records of academic achievement

- In general, a reference to the corresponding paragraph in the study and examination regulations should suffice. However, for clarification, the procedure can be described again explicitly.

To 9. Deadlines

- In general, a reference to the corresponding paragraph in the study and examination regulations should suffice. However, for clarification, the deadlines can be outlined again in detail.
- Additional deadlines, e.g. when to submit an intermediate report, can be specified.

To 10. Cooperation and contact possibilities

- Further contacts inside and outside the university, e.g. members of staff of the examination board or contact persons in the university abroad, may be added.

To 11. Changes to the teaching and learning agreement

- It is possible to change the teaching and learning agreement by mutual agreement. The changes should be written down.

To 12. Miscellaneous

- This paragraph can refer to additional agreements or general regulations to be considered (e.g. reference to assignments which are true for more than one faculty).
- Another point which might be specified is the procedure to be followed if the assignment or task is not completed on time. What will happen if the student fails an exam? Should the study abroad be extended by the time needed for retaking the exam abroad or is there a possibility to retake the examination after returning to the University of Rostock? Is there an alternative examination which could be taken at the University of Rostock?

Signatures

- As the agreement with the examination board ensures the academic acceptance, the teaching and learning agreement should also be verified and signed by the examination board.