

**Mary Immaculate College  
University of Limerick**



**Off-Campus Programme**

**Student Handbook**

**2012 – 2013**

**Coláiste Mhuire gan Smál  
Ollscoil Luimnigh**

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## **Foreword**

This handbook provides important information to enable you to derive maximum benefit from and successfully complete your Off-Campus Programme. If you have any queries or if you need advice or assistance in relation to your Off-Campus Programme, please contact the Placement Office. The off-campus year should be both a learning opportunity and a rewarding experience and the Placement Office wishes you a very successful year on both counts!

Given the limited number of work and study abroad placements available, all students are obliged to meet all relevant notified off-campus programme deadlines. Should a student fail to meet any or all of the relevant notified off-campus deadlines, he/she may be excluded from consideration for work and/or study placements which arise through the Placement Office.

Should a student apply for a study abroad placement, he/she is committing him/herself to accepting the offered place once he/she formally confirms his/her acceptance via e-mail. A student who subsequently withdraws his/her acceptance may be excluded from consideration for any future work and/or study placements which arise through the Placement Office.

Should a student express an interest in an advertised work placement opportunity and agree to attend for interview, he/she is committing him/herself to following through all stages of the recruitment and selection process and to accepting the position, if offered. A student who refuses to accept such an offer may be excluded from consideration for any future work and/or study placements which arise through the Placement Office.

Should a student fail to secure a study and/or work placement through the Placement Office, he/she will be obliged to seek his/her own alternative placement which complies with all off-campus programme criteria and submit details of same for the approval of the Placement Programme Manager.

Should a student fail to finalise his/her off-campus placement by Summer 2012, his/her details will be passed to the Dean of Arts and the Vice-President for Academic Affairs for their consideration and the student may be unable to progress to the third year of the BA programme.

# Study Abroad Placements

## Study Abroad Objectives

- To complement and enrich the academic content of your BA degree;
- To enable you to experience different learning environments;
- To increase your socio-cultural awareness and understanding;
- To improve your foreign language skills, if applicable;
- To promote personal development, e.g. increased confidence, initiative, independence and interpersonal skills.

## Before Going Abroad – Checklist

1. Attend the Off-Campus Programme orientation sessions.
2. Revise information from off-campus presentations in 'Placement' Folder on Lecture Notes. Obtain a copy of the study abroad booklet, individual country booklet and learning agreement form for each semester of study [all available from [\\lecturenotes\Placement](#)].
3. Provide the Placement Office with the e-mail address and mobile number you will use during your off-campus year.
4. Collect letter confirming your study abroad status from the Placement Office.
5. Consult your host university's website for information.
6. If you have not obtained all of the information you need via the Internet [in particular application and accommodation documentation] or otherwise, please contact your host university directly.
7. Complete any application / registration forms and return these, together with any documentation required, to the appropriate office[s]. Most universities will require forms to be returned at least three months in advance. Application and accommodation forms should be sent by registered post. Retain copies of all documentation sent to the host university.
8. Meet with your MIC Academic Advisor for an academic briefing and to discuss your proposed programme of study abroad.
9. Obtain the contact details of your MIC Academic Advisor [telephone number and e-mail address] for future correspondence and give him/her the mobile phone number and e-mail address at which you can be contacted during your off-campus year.

10. Make all of your practical arrangements for study abroad in good time, e.g. booking travel and accommodation and obtaining your passport and visa if required. Refer to the individual country booklet for further advice and information.
11. Contact the Placement Office if you need additional help or advice.

## **During Study Abroad – Requirements**

Register officially as an international student and register for each of the courses you wish to take.

If studying in **Europe**, your academic programme must comprise a minimum of **24 ECTS per semester** [equivalent to four MIC BA course modules]. ECTS is the acronym for the European Credit Transfer System, which facilitates academic recognition between European institutes of higher education.

If studying in the **US**, your academic programme must comprise a minimum of **12 US credits per semester** [equivalent to four MIC BA course modules].

At the earliest opportunity, meet with your host university academic co-ordinator and seek initial help and advice regarding your academic programme.

Having registered for courses, complete your learning agreement and ask your host university academic co-ordinator to sign it.

Throughout your study abroad period, maintain contact with your host university academic co-ordinator, informing him/her of how you are getting on and seeking help and advice as required.

Please avoid any behaviour that may bring you or Mary Immaculate College into disrepute. Serious misconduct on your part could result in the termination and/or non-accreditation of your placement.

## Contact with Mary Immaculate College

Within the first fortnight of each semester of study abroad, return your completed learning agreement [duly signed by yourself and your host university co-ordinator] to the Placement Office. Your MIC Academic Advisor will sign the form and return it to you, as proof that your academic programme has been approved. Failure to return this form in a timely manner can result in retraction of the Erasmus LLP Grant.

Within the first fortnight of study abroad, provide **both** your MIC Academic Advisor and the Placement Office with the following:

- Your postal address abroad;
- Your e-mail address or, if e-mail communication is not convenient, a fax number to which correspondence for you can be sent;
- Your telephone number abroad.

For the remainder of your study abroad period, keep in contact with your MIC Academic Advisor approximately once a month, informing him/her of your progress and seeking advice and/or assistance as required.

In the event of any changes to your planned academic programme, for example, due to suspension of classes or course cancellations, inform your MIC Academic Advisor immediately. If you need to substitute courses on your academic programme, you will need to amend your learning agreement and have it endorsed by all signatories.

If, for personal or medical reasons, you miss part of your academic programme or you curtail your study abroad period, you must inform both your MIC Academic Advisor and the Placement Office immediately, and provide a medical certificate, if applicable.

Towards the end of your placement you will be issued with a study abroad questionnaire. Please complete this form and return it via e-mail to the Placement Office. The information you provide will be used to inform future study-abroad students.

## Assessment of Study Abroad

Most partner universities will forward your transcripts to your home address by mid-Summer. A small number will forward them directly to the Placement Office. It is highly recommended that you check with the International Office in your host university to see what their policy is. This will ensure that you know if you should expect your transcripts to be sent to your home address and can contact us if they do not arrive. Please forward original transcripts to the Placement Office by Friday of Week 1 of the MIC Autumn semester following your Off-Campus Programme.

Try to get your results before leaving the host university, if possible, rather than waiting for your transcripts to arrive. It is essential for students staying for two semesters to get their first semester's results as soon as possible.

Your MIC Academic Advisor will assess your study abroad transcript[s] on a Pass / Fail basis.

# Work Placements

## Work Placement Objectives

- To develop your personal and professional skills, such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, decision-making and initiative;
- To apply aspects of your pre-placement studies and to facilitate new learning of relevance to your degree;
- To enhance your awareness of a professional working environment, thereby improving your future employability;
- To improve your self-awareness and assist you in your career planning.

## Before Going on Work Placement – Checklist

1. Attend the Off-Campus Programme orientation sessions.
2. Revise information from off-campus presentations in 'Placement' Folder on Lecture Notes. Obtain a copy of the individual country booklet, if working abroad [available from [\\lecturenotes\Placement](#)].
3. Provide the Placement Office with the e-mail address and mobile number you will use during your off-campus year.
4. Write to or e-mail your employer to formally accept your work placement offer.
5. Contact your employer to discuss the following:
  - Your placement objectives and how these may be accommodated;
  - The tasks and responsibilities of your placement position;
  - Any advance preparation that may be required / helpful;
  - Your placement start and completion dates; please note that single-semester work placements must be a **minimum** of 15 weeks in duration and year-long work placements must be a **minimum** of 30 weeks in duration. Work placement start and finish dates are dependent on the individual requirements of the work placement provider.
  - Any relevant organisational policies / procedures of which you should be aware;
  - Any other queries you may have.
6. Be realistic in your expectations. Most employers will not give you significant responsibility until they are sure that you are capable of it. All jobs have routine aspects and these too are a source of learning.
7. Make any practical arrangements required, e.g. travel plans / finding accommodation / signing of employment contract if applicable.

8. To apply for Spring semester placements via the Placement Office, please contact the Student Placement Officer in mid-October and provide an updated Off-Campus Programme Curriculum Vitae [CV] via e-mail [[Patricia.Casserly@mic.ul.ie](mailto:Patricia.Casserly@mic.ul.ie)].

## **During Work Placement – Requirements**

After taking up a work placement / committing to an employer, it is **not** permitted to change to another off-campus study or work placement, no matter how beneficial.

On commencing your work placement acquaint yourself with your host organisation's policies and procedures, e.g. in relation to working hours, break times, leave-taking, health and safety and supervisory arrangements.

At all times, conduct yourself professionally and comply with the organisation's regulations. Avoid any behaviour that could bring you or the College into disrepute. Serious misconduct could result in termination and/or non-accreditation of your work placement.

Ensure full and punctual attendance at your host organisation throughout your work placement period.

If you have to absent yourself unexpectedly from your work, e.g. due to illness, inform your supervisor at the start of your first day of absence.

If you are absent for more than 2 consecutive days, provide a medical certificate to your employer [this also applies to absences on a Friday and the following Monday]. You may be required to compensate for absences by working additional hours or days by agreement with your employer. Please also notify the Placement Office of your absence and submit a copy of the medical certificate to the Placement Office.

Guidelines and regulations for the completion of your off-campus placement report will be issued to you via e-mail. Read these carefully and keep a placement journal in preparation for the completion of your off-campus placement report. Use your journal to monitor your own progress towards your personal learning objectives.

If, during your work placement, there are any changes in the terms of your employment or your job description, please inform the Placement Office.



## Supervision, Monitoring and Assessment of your Work Placement

### The Employer's Role

You will be assigned a supervisor in the workplace to instruct, guide and assist you, to monitor your progress and give you feedback. If you encounter problems or need assistance, your supervisor is normally the person to approach in the first instance. He/she and other co-workers may also be able to provide you with useful career-related information.

The College will request feedback on your work performance from your supervisor both during and at the end of your placement. You can obtain a copy of your employer's evaluation form following the meeting of the Off-Campus Exam Board in November 2012.

At the end of your work placement, it is generally a good idea to seek verbal feedback from your supervisor.

Your supervisor will be required to confirm that they have read your work placement report and to sign the cover page of the report before submission.

### The College's Role

You will be assigned an MIC Work Placement Contact from the College's academic staff. The role of the MIC Work Placement Contact is to monitor and assess your work placement, taking into account feedback from both yourself and your work supervisor.

Your MIC Work Placement Contact should contact you at least once per semester. If your work placement is located in Ireland, your MIC Work Placement Contact is likely to visit you at least once. Other contact may be via e-mail or telephone. If your placement is overseas, it may not be possible to arrange to visit you, in which case all contact would be via telephone or correspondence. **If you have not been contacted by your MIC Work Placement Contact by mid-semester, please notify the Placement Office.**

Your MIC Work Placement Contact will request feedback from both yourself and your work supervisor and, if appropriate, seek to have any issues addressed. The MIC Work Placement Contact is responsible for assessing your work placement on a Pass / Fail basis, taking into account your interim assessment[s], your work placement report and your employer's evaluation of your work performance.

Contact details for your MIC Work Placement Contact will be notified to you early in your work placement period.

## **Your Role**

Please contact your MIC Work Placement Contact via e-mail as soon as his/her contact details are notified to you by the Placement Office. During the course of your work placement, please contact your MIC Work Placement Contact and/or the Placement Office regarding any queries or concerns you may have.

During your work placement, you are an employee of the work placement organisation and as such, must abide by standard organisational regulations, policies and procedures.

Submit your work placement report[s] to the Placement Office by Friday of Week 1 of the MIC Autumn semester following your Off-Campus Programme. For further details, please refer to the Work Placement Report Instructions [available from: [\\lecturenotes\Placement](#)].

## Erasmus LLP Grants (Study Abroad & Work Placements in Europe)

Students who have been nominated to work or study in an eligible country under the Erasmus Lifelong Learning [LLP] programme benefit from financial aid in the form of an Erasmus LLP grant provided by the European Commission via the Higher Education Authority [HEA].

This funding is termed a 'student mobility grant' as it is intended primarily to assist with travel costs. The amount of each individual grant depends on the chosen destination and the length of stay. Grants are not means-tested and will be allocated to eligible students by the Student Placement Officer at the start of the academic year.

As soon as grant amounts are known, an Erasmus LLP contract [which indicates the grant amount] will be mailed to your home address for signing. Please return your signed contract, including your bank account details, immediately to the MIC Placement Office. If you are not available to sign the contract, your parent or next-of-kin may sign it on your behalf.

Your grant will then be paid as follows:

- For **one** semester of Erasmus LLP study, your grant will be paid to you in full before or at the start of your semester of study.
- For **two** semesters of Erasmus LLP study, your grant will be paid in two instalments before or at the start of each semester of study. You will receive 70% of your grant in the first instalment and the 30% grant balance in the second.
- Students undertaking Erasmus LLP work placements will receive 80% of their grant at the start of the semester/year abroad, upon receipt of their signed contracts and Training Agreements. The remaining 20% will be paid out at the end of the work placement upon receipt of the final report.

Payments will be made directly to your bank account, following which a receipt will be sent to your home address accompanied by an 'Acknowledgement of Grant Form' to be signed by you or a parent / next-of-kin and returned to the Placement Office immediately.

You will also be mailed an 'Erasmus LLP Report Form' which is to be completed towards the end of your Erasmus LLP study / work placement and returned to the Placement Office.

Completion and return of **all** documentation is a strict requirement of the Erasmus LLP programme. All queries regarding Erasmus LLP grants should be directed to: Patricia Casserly, Student Placement Officer [Tel: 061-204319; E-mail: [Patricia.Casserly@mic.ul.ie](mailto:Patricia.Casserly@mic.ul.ie)].

## **Project Semester**

The project semester is designed for students for whom an off-campus placement proves to be impossible. Students need the permission of the Dean of Arts as well as that of the Placement Programme Manager to undertake a project semester.

A Progress Report is required of all students who spend one semester of the third year of their programme working on their Final Year Project under supervision instead of on an off-campus academic or work placement. This report should be typewritten, in the range 900 - 1200 words in length and will be assessed on the same basis as off-campus placement reports i.e. Pass / Fail.

The student should submit two copies of this report to the supervisor by week 12 of the project semester. One copy, signed by the supervisor and indicating his / her mark, will then be submitted by the supervisor to the office of the Dean of Arts by Week 14 of the Project Semester.

For further details, please refer to the final year project handbook [available from: \\lecturenotes\Final Year Project].

## **After Your Off-Campus Programme**

### **Issuing of Results**

Placement results [Pass / Fail] will be notified in the Autumn semester [November / December 2013] following your Off-Campus Programme.

### **Repeat Placements**

Students seeking to repeat part or all of their Off-Campus Programme are asked to liaise with the Placement Office. Repeat fees apply.

#### **Repeat of Study Abroad Placements**

Any student who is deficient in study abroad credits must notify this to both their MIC Academic Advisor and the Placement Programme Manager and investigate with their host university if it is possible to rectify their situation by undertaking repeat examinations or assignments.

At the discretion of the student's MIC Academic Advisor and subject to University of Limerick regulations, it may be possible to rectify a study abroad credit deficiency of not more than 12 ECTS / 6 UL credits [per semester of study abroad] upon resumption of studies at Mary Immaculate College.

Students who do not obtain the requisite study abroad credits will need to satisfactorily complete another placement / placements prior to graduation.

#### **Repeat of Work Placements**

Students who fail a work placement must satisfactorily complete another placement / placements prior to graduation. Leaving a work placement early or failure to abide by employment regulations may result in a failed work placement.

### **Appeals Process**

A student may appeal a Fail result by completing an Off-Campus Programme appeal form and submitting it to the Placement Office within two weeks of the issuing of results. An appeal fee will apply. Following investigation of the appeal, the student will be informed in writing of the decision taken.

### **Review of your Off-Campus Programme / Progression to Fourth Year BA**

There will be an opportunity to review your placement experiences and provide feedback when you resume your studies at Mary Immaculate College. Only students who have completed their Off-Campus Programme may proceed to the fourth year of their degree.

## College Contact Details

### **Placement Office**

Mary Immaculate College

South Circular Road

Limerick

Tel: +353 [0]61 20 49 10

Fax: +353 [0]61 20 45 06

### **Patricia Casserly, Student Placement Officer**

Tel: +353 [0]61 20 43 19

E-mail: [Patricia.Casserly@mic.ul.ie](mailto:Patricia.Casserly@mic.ul.ie)

### **Maeve Sullivan, Placement Programme Manager**

Tel: +353 [0]61 20 43 07

E-mail: [Maeve.Sullivan@mic.ul.ie](mailto:Maeve.Sullivan@mic.ul.ie)

**College Switchboard:** +353 [0]61 31 45 88 / 20 43 00 / 20 49 91

**College Fax:** +353 [0]61 31 36 32

### **Contacting College Staff by E-mail:**

Staff addresses are composed as follows: [Firstname.Surname@mic.ul.ie](mailto:Firstname.Surname@mic.ul.ie)