



# BOLOGNA PROCESS

Excellence through engagement

department for  
education and skills

Creating Opportunity  
Releasing Potential  
Achieving Excellence

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# FOREWORD

The Bologna Process continues to deliver a number of positive benefits in both UK higher education and across Europe.

To ensure our higher education institutions are truly world-class and remain attractive to both UK and international students, we all must actively participate in the Bologna process of reform. Action at institutional, sector and governmental levels is vital, if the UK is to make the most of the opportunities that Bologna can deliver.

This booklet presents just some of the many positive activities that individuals and institutions are already involved in throughout the UK. These examples demonstrate the very real difference Bologna is making, and that increasing numbers of students, universities and colleges are reaping the rewards that Bologna has to offer. Students and staff are benefiting from a greater range of educational programmes and exchanges, with opportunities to gain a host of cultural, linguistic and inter-personal experiences through periods of mobility. Faculties and institutions are benefiting from greater collaboration with partner universities in a range of European countries, with effective sharing of knowledge and expertise. And higher education benefits as a whole from being engaged proactively in a project to create a Europe-wide higher education area.

But we need to do more. Everyone involved with higher education should work together to tap into more of the potential that we have in UK higher education, and share more examples of good practice. Ultimately, this is about ensuring that we are flexible and responsive to the challenges of the global education market. Our competitors in Europe and beyond are using the Bologna Process to strengthen what they offer to students, staff and employers. We must do the same to grasp the tangible benefits of mobility and lifelong learning – better skills to excel in the global market place. We need to act today to ensure our continued success tomorrow.



**Bill Rammell MP**

Minister of State for Lifelong Learning,  
Further and Higher Education

# INTRODUCTION

The UK higher education sector supports the ambitions of the Bologna Process and the actions proposed to modernise European higher education. We are therefore pleased that this booklet has been produced, highlighting a range of some of the current initiatives and activities in UK higher education. It paints a positive picture of the UK's work with the Bologna Process, on which we will continue to build as we progress towards 2010.

The sector – whether through the UK HE Europe Unit, representative bodies, institutions and organisations, Bologna Promoters, or individual experts – currently participates in all Bologna events. This is an encouraging sign of increasing awareness and engagement in the sector. Representatives from the sector have engaged positively in a range of Bologna seminars and working groups, such as those on qualifications frameworks and doctoral qualifications, which has allowed us to help to shape the debate and promote UK interests as the Bologna Process moves forward. The London conference gives us a key opportunity to continue this process of engagement, but it is important that higher education institutions and stakeholder organisations increase the momentum and ensure the sector remains a central player in this agenda.

The UK HE Europe Unit is also working to enhance UK engagement with the Process through its publications, website, events and coordinating activities. As the sector's focus shifts to the penultimate stage of the Process ahead of the next Ministerial conference, to be held in Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve in 2009, we will continue to engage proactively. We will work to ensure that our higher education providers maximise the gains from the evolving European Higher Education Area, address the challenges that remain, and make certain that the EHEA is truly fit for the challenges of the 21st Century.



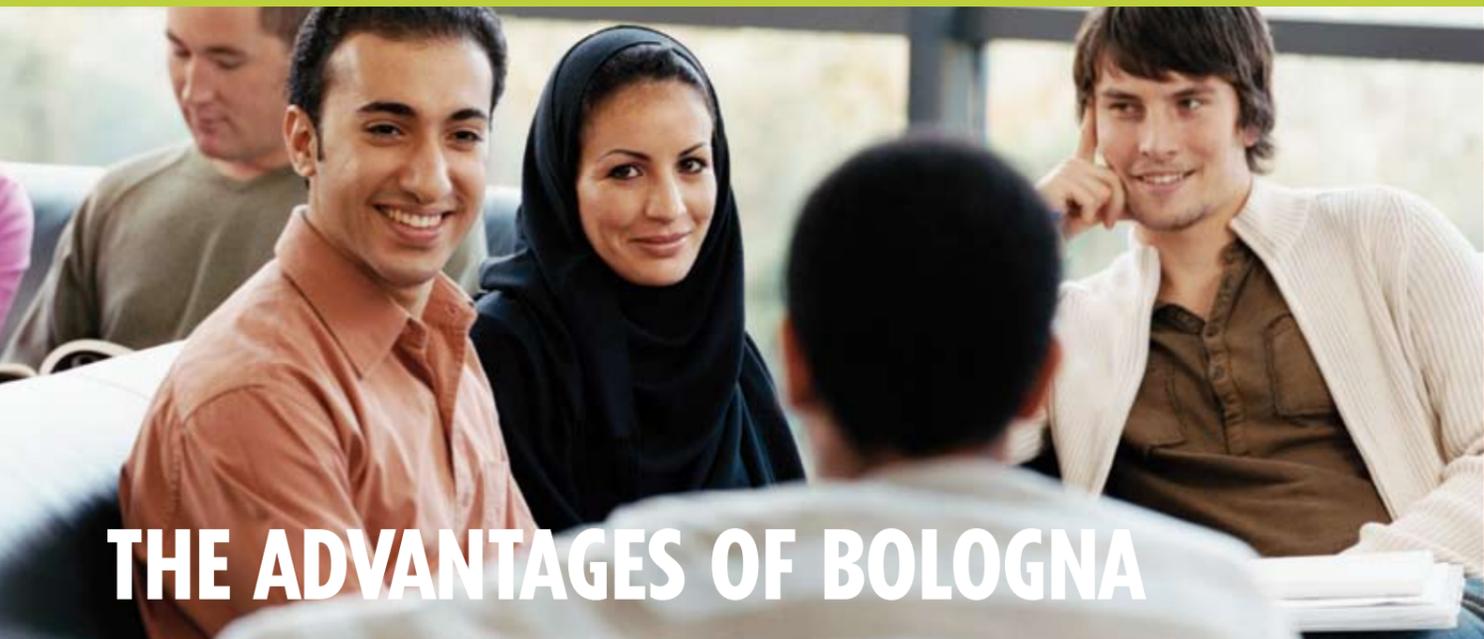
**Professor J Drummond Bone**

President, Universities UK and  
Vice-Chancellor, University of Liverpool



**Pamela Taylor**

Chair, GuildHE and Principal, Newman College  
of Higher Education, Birmingham



## THE ADVANTAGES OF BOLOGNA

The Bologna Process clearly brings some challenges to everyone involved in UK higher education, but the advantages of engagement are numerous.

The primary benefits arise from the opportunities for a wider range of educational exchange for students and graduates, researchers and staff. Increased mobility across Europe broadens the scope for personal and professional development, including the acquisition of new cultural, linguistic and inter-personal experiences and skills. These can provide a real advantage to individuals seeking employment in a global labour market, whether in the UK or abroad.

The opportunity to introduce an international dimension to curricula enables higher education institutions (HEIs) to develop stronger links with other sectors and providers, and to collaborate and compete better internationally. Collaboration adds value by connecting people, enabling the sharing of resources and expertise, and creating an environment conducive to innovation and mutual learning.

Employers will have a better understanding of what qualifications represent in terms of learning outcomes, and will have access to a larger pool of human resources. Graduate mobility across Europe will increase, and the reputational benefit of this will ultimately be substantial.

The creation of a transparent and accessible European Higher Education Area (EHEA) will also make both the UK and other European HE sectors more attractive and competitive in the global market. The contribution of Bologna to the EU Lisbon Agenda is critical, notably in widening opportunities for personal and professional development and facilitating the modernisation of HE. The growth that Lisbon brings will in turn result in tangible benefits for the whole EHEA.

There are also a number of areas of complementarity between the Bologna reforms and the EU's modernisation agenda for higher education. While both initiatives act independently of each other, the Bologna Process acts as a catalyst for the wider modernisation of higher education in the EU, and vice versa, and enables the sector to tackle more effectively the economic and social challenges posed by the progress of global change.

These are just some of the advantages that Bologna can bring. More benefits are presented in the examples that follow. Nevertheless, any advantages that the Bologna Process can bring will only be enjoyed if we all engage with it and make the most of the opportunities it presents.

## MYTH AND REALITY

The examples in this booklet illustrate how Bologna works in practice, though it is clear that four myths exist that act as barriers to engagement.

### **Myth: Bologna seeks to harmonise higher education across Europe**

Bologna is designed to facilitate greater comparability and compatibility between the diverse systems and institutions across Europe, in turn making them more attractive in the global market place. Diversity, flexibility and autonomy are key principles, and while some alignments between practices are taking place – such as the development of a three-cycle degree system – institutions will not be required to adopt common curricula, governance or funding structures.

### **Myth: Bologna will force HEIs to adopt a 3+2 degree cycle model**

As the Bologna Process has adopted an approach based on learning outcomes alongside workload, there is scope for a range of flexible delivery of qualifications at all levels. There is no further definition of course length other than that of a first cycle degree of not less than three years. The Government therefore firmly believes that one year Taught Masters and four year Integrated Masters programmes are compatible with the Bologna framework. The self-certification process recently completed in Scotland and started in England, Wales and Northern Ireland has shown and will show that UK qualifications are compatible with the Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA.

### **Myth: UK higher education institutions are not engaged enough in Bologna**

There is a perception that the sector is not engaged and believes that Bologna is an 'optional extra'. As this booklet demonstrates, there are many positive examples of engagement, and the sector continues to participate in Bologna events and debates. However, we can and should do more. The benefits of embracing the Bologna reforms are clear, and the UK HE sector should look to Bologna as a great opportunity to make UK higher education even more competitive in the global education market.

### **Myth: The European Commission is trying to take over the Bologna Process**

This has been a claim in the media following the publication of the recent Education and Skills Committee inquiry report on Bologna. The idea that the European Commission is trying to take over the Bologna Process is inaccurate. The Bologna Process is an independent intergovernmental process outside the framework of the EU, and the Commission's competence in education is limited to supporting the actions of Member States. However, the Commission's role is still important if we are to address some of the issues that are essential if we are to make higher education across Europe more flexible and more responsive to the needs of society.

# DIVERSITY AND AUTONOMY IN WHOLE-INSTITUTIONAL ENGAGEMENT

A growing number of UK institutions are developing cross-institutional strategies to respond to the opportunities and challenges that Bologna brings. Here, four institutions discuss how they are engaging with Bologna across campus.

The **University of Southampton's** Corporate Strategy sets out an aspiration to be among the top ten UK universities in education, research and enterprise by 2010. Intrinsic to that is the continuing internationalisation of the University's work, with two key strands: the creation of a learning community where students can interact with staff and peers from diverse cultures and backgrounds; and the development of curricula appropriate to life and work in an increasingly global economy and society.

Southampton is therefore working to ensure that degree programmes in all disciplines are Bologna-compatible, thus facilitating mobility, and has pledged to ensure delivery of the Diploma Supplement to all graduating Bachelor students from 2008. For Dr Bill Brooks, the University's Director of Education, the advantages of Bologna are clear:

- greater clarity of the value of UK awards throughout Europe;
- clear reference points for the interpretation of learning outcomes within and between national systems and the European framework;
- the removal of barriers to greater mobility;

- the potential ability for the UK to attract the best talent in Europe; and
- membership of a greater club.

Southampton has extensive experience of engagement with European partners. Notable examples include: a new Bologna-compatible MSc programme in the School of Ocean and Earth Sciences with the University of Bordeaux I and the University of the Basque Country; an Integrated Masters in Marine Science and French where students spend year three in France; an Erasmus Mundus programme in Geo-Information Science with the Universities of Lund, Warsaw, and the International Institute for Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation; and over 180 Erasmus agreements across 17 countries. As a result, in 2006/07 around a hundred Southampton-based students are benefiting from an Erasmus period of mobility, and the University welcomed over 250 incoming students on exchange.

Dr Howard Davies sees **London Metropolitan University** as an exceptional case. The Head of European Development, and one of the UK's fourteen Bologna Promoters, believes that what makes London Met special is that it is a microcosm of the Bologna Process and its growing global reach.

One hundred and sixty nationalities study at London Met, including some 5,000 students from Bologna participating countries. For many years it has addressed the needs of London's indigenous communities and migrant students. It has franchises, validations and progression routes in Greece, Russia and Ukraine. It welcomes students from throughout the EU-27 countries and from the USA, while maintaining offices in Bangladesh, China, India, Nigeria and Pakistan.

As a result of its position and diverse community, London Met is proactively harnessing the various actions, and incorporating the templates, instruments and values of the Bologna Process.

It is the only English HEI to have successfully undergone the institutional evaluation programme run by the European University Association (EUA), and has applied for accreditation by the US Middle States Commission on Higher Education. London Met has also set up an office in Brussels, charged with policy monitoring and advocacy in areas covered by the Bologna Process and by EU and national legislation.

For London Met, Bologna also means a real opportunity to network, symbolised by London Met's partnership with the newly formed EU Women Inventors and Innovators Network (see photo). This will allow London Met to facilitate a range of enterprising activities for women across Europe, using their range of experience to build appropriate curricula and partnerships in the creative industry sector. This is one of a number of initiatives that London Met are engaged with as it continues to develop its position as an effective and versatile cross-border institution.

**Swansea University** is one of the most proactive UK universities participating in the Bologna agenda, and Swansea's Academic Registrar, Huw Morris, is also a UK Bologna Promoter.

Huw Morris believes that, "Students are rightly the main focus and beneficiaries of Bologna. Swansea approaches the Process with a view to enhancing a student's employability prospects. It soon becomes evident that all the components of the Process are inter-linked, and the overall educational benefits to be gained from a holistic approach to Bologna are greater than the sum of its parts."

Mobility is a central theme, and students at all levels are encouraged to broaden their educational and employment prospects through periods of mobility. Reference is made to credit in documentation across the University, and Swansea was one of the first universities in the UK to issue Diploma Supplements to all undergraduate and Taught Masters students. Swansea has already responded to opportunities at the doctoral level by leading a consortium of universities in formulating a joint research programme on Regional Industrial History, and it is also examining the possibility of developing joint postgraduate degrees with its European partners, in the belief that Swansea and other Welsh HEIs will benefit.



**left to right:** cutting the ribbon at the launch of EU Women Inventors and Innovators Network in the European Parliament: Bola Olabisi, director of EU Women Inventors and Innovators Network, Baroness Sarah Ludford MEP, Chris Topley, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, London Metropolitan University

Swansea's ambition in collaborating with other European partners is most notably reflected in the recent appointment of an Associate Dean (Bologna) for its Postgraduate Research Faculty. A fast-developing international agenda demands close attention to new opportunities, and the specific remit of the Associate Dean is to promote the Bologna agenda across the university at postgraduate level. Through this work, the University's ten schools of study are fully aware of the opportunities being offered and of ongoing discussion on Bologna-related matters across Europe.

**“Taken together, the Bologna Process is an unprecedented international movement whose strengths lie in its ‘bottom-up’, rather than ‘top-down’ approach. Never before in educational history have educational institutions in so many countries freely elected to embrace and implement a common agenda.”**

**Professor Maurice Whitehead**  
Associate Dean (Bologna), Swansea University

Bologna also presents **University College London** (UCL) with a number of significant opportunities, particularly in relation to its own International Strategy. UCL's corporate identity is ‘London's Global University’, a phrase which encapsulates the overarching aim of all of its activities. As part of that, UCL's goals have become closely aligned with the objectives of the Bologna Process.

UCL has consistently championed Bologna within and across the institution's faculties and departments. Professor Wendy Davies FBA, Pro-Provost for Europe, has been working to help departments embrace the changes that Bologna necessitates, also acting since 2002 as a Bologna Promoter for the EUA and since 2004 as a UK Bologna Promoter.

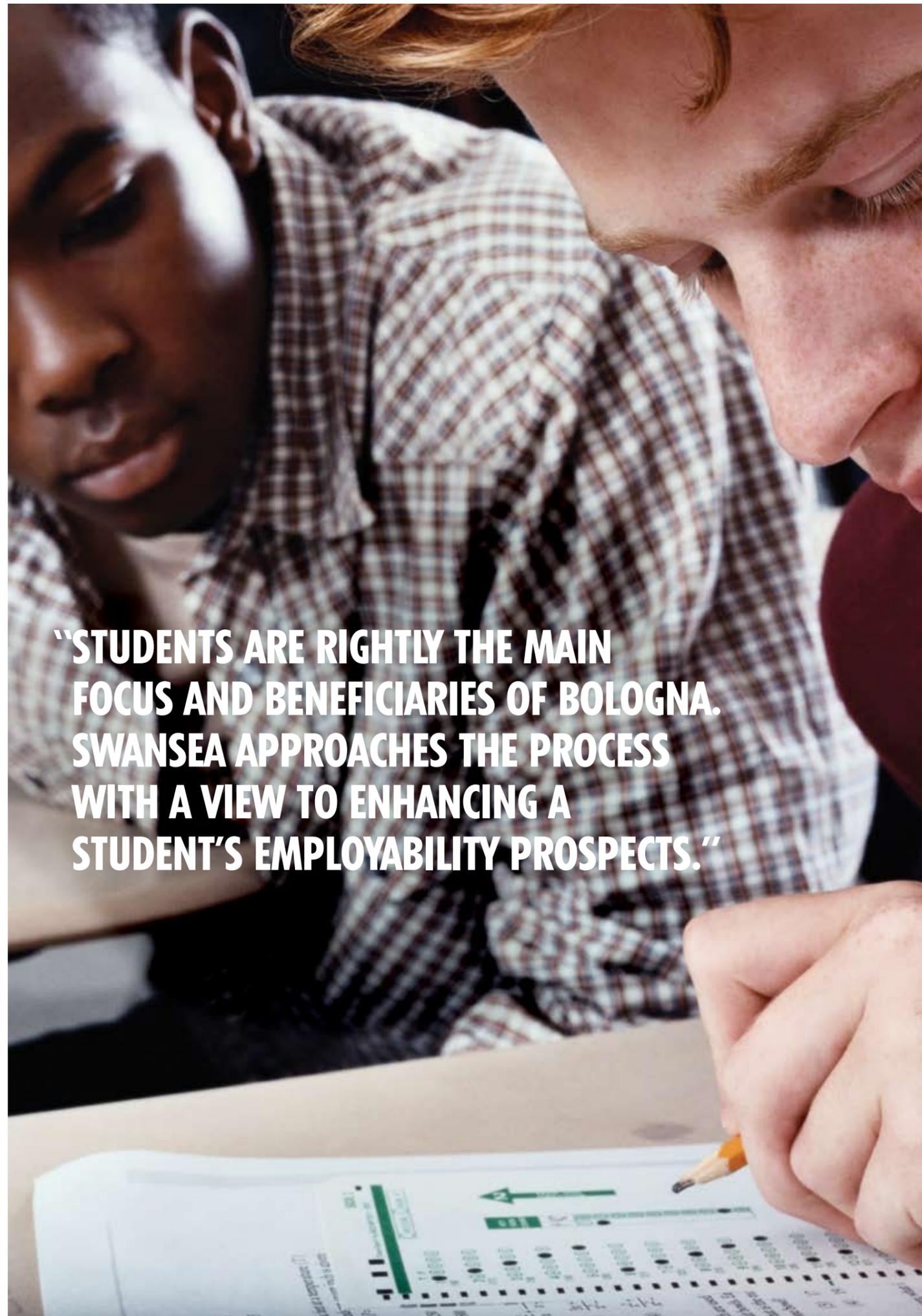
A centrepiece of UCL's approach to Bologna so far has been the 2004 publication of UCL's Bologna Strategy, the first strategy of its kind to be produced in the UK. The Strategy embedded Bologna into UCL's culture, and also produced an implementation plan to reinforce this dynamic. As a result, UCL has made significant progress, including:

- a successful institutional pilot scheme for the European Credit Transfer System;
- near-parity between the numbers of exchange students visiting UCL and the numbers from UCL travelling abroad to study;
- effective monitoring of international developments in quality assurance in academia and industry, including the development of dialogue with professional associations such as the Engineering Council.

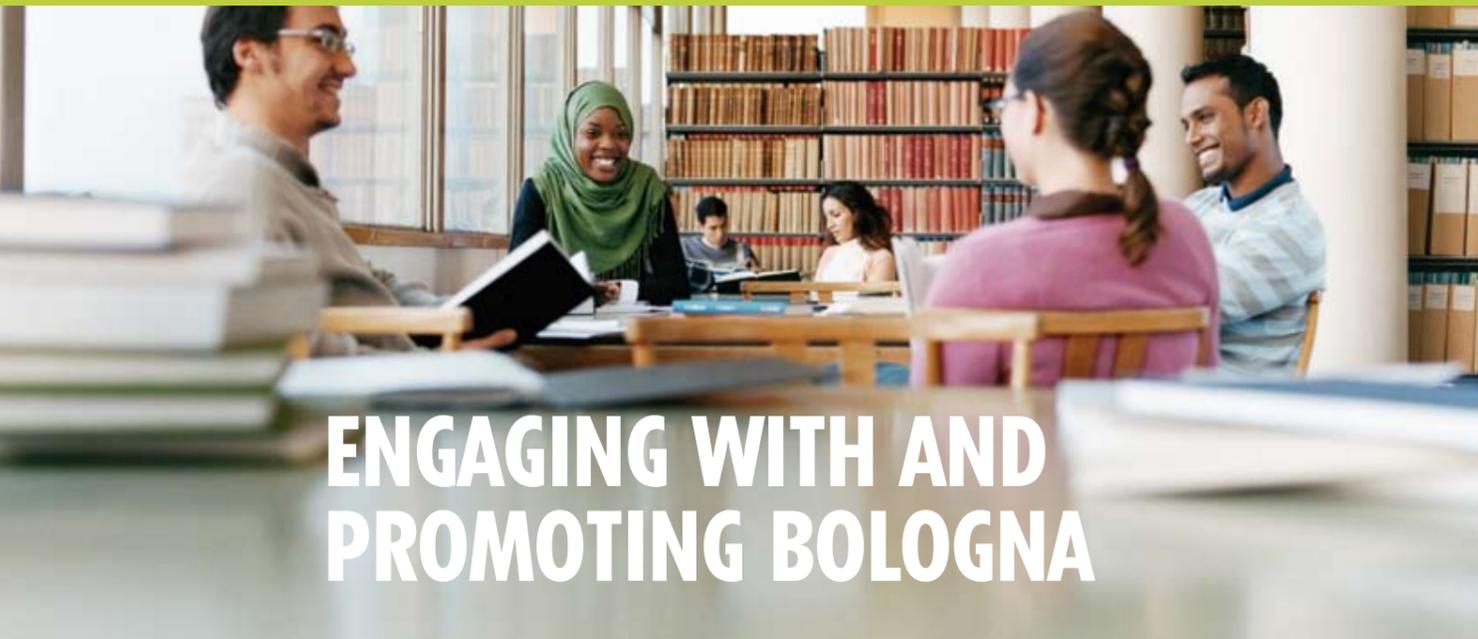
Broader strategies to internationalise all degree curricula are in place, and a Global Citizenship programme has been initiated. UCL is also currently engaged with a drive to raise the importance of the study of languages, exemplified by the work of the School of Slavonic & East European Studies.

Professor Davies concludes, “UCL's size and complexity means that moving unanimously in the direction of the Bologna Declaration is a huge organisational challenge. In this sense, UCL is like many other leading multi-faculty universities. However, good progress has been and continues to be made.

**From a starting point of a strong international outlook, which UCL believes is vital to its long-term development as a leading research-led university, UCL has taken Bologna and made it part of the institutional culture.”**



**“STUDENTS ARE RIGHTLY THE MAIN FOCUS AND BENEFICIARIES OF BOLOGNA. SWANSEA APPROACHES THE PROCESS WITH A VIEW TO ENHANCING A STUDENT'S EMPLOYABILITY PROSPECTS.”**



# ENGAGING WITH AND PROMOTING BOLOGNA

Funded by the European Commission, a team of fourteen Bologna Promoters has been appointed in the UK to assist the sector with:

- the promotion and development of student and staff mobility;
- implementation of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS);
- implementation of the Diploma Supplement; and
- more general information about the Bologna Process.

Anne Davies of the School of Management and Economics, Queen's University Belfast, presents her view of the work of the Bologna Promoters.

"We come from a broad range of academic and administrative backgrounds. Some have a long track record in areas such as ECTS, while others are seasoned Erasmus co-ordinators. What we share is a passion for the promotion of student and staff mobility and knowledge of the benefits this brings to individuals and institutions. For me, it is a big advantage that we have a student representative as a Promoter. The student representative has been the most powerful advocate of the added value of mobility.

We work with HEIs across the UK by giving presentations, advising working groups, participating in regional networks and answering queries. We hold regular meetings with stakeholder groups and representatives from the UK HE Europe Unit, DfES, the Devolved Administrations and the Quality Assurance Agency, and we work to ensure a positive dialogue and transfer of knowledge.

Through personal experiences and knowledge, we share the reality of this process. Simply put, Bologna is about enhancing the mobility and employability of all of our students studying in the EHEA.

**"WE ALL SEE HOW IMPORTANT THE PROCESS IS, FOR OUR STUDENTS IN TERMS OF MOBILITY AND FUTURE EMPLOYMENT, AND FOR OUR STAFF IN TERMS OF KNOWLEDGE AWARENESS AND COLLABORATIVE LINKS."**

Professor Malcolm Cook  
University of Exeter

We are often asked what exactly institutions have to do. Essentially, Bologna means having the relevant instruments in place, such as the Diploma Supplement and a credit transfer system. At national level, we already have many of the mechanisms, notably a national Quality Assurance Agency and a three cycle system, and many others are in train.

**I see colleagues in other countries fluent in three or more European languages, eager to adapt and change, and with EHEA principles embedded in national practice. Unless we too share this quest for change, we risk being left behind. What began as an agreement for reforming higher education throughout Europe is becoming increasingly an agenda for transformation."**

Another of the Bologna Promoters, Professor Malcolm Cook of the University of Exeter, set up the **South West Bologna Forum** in January 2004. The Forum brings together representatives from the region to consider issues arising, share information from attendance at events and from official papers, discuss best practice and examine ways in which institutions could mutually support each other in a collaborative environment.

All HEIs in the South West of England and the University of Southampton are represented. The Forum has worked together on the

preparation and delivery of the Diploma Supplement, on quality assurance, credit and ECTS, and on student and staff mobility.

Professor Cook: "We can learn a lot from each other. We raise many issues relating to the Bologna Process because, fundamentally, we all see how important the process is, for our students in terms of mobility and future employment, and for our staff in terms of knowledge awareness and collaborative links."



# QUALITY ASSURANCE: DELIVERING ON INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Quality assurance forms one of the key action lines of the Bologna Process, contributing to the competitiveness and attractiveness of European higher education.

Work is ongoing to develop common understanding of quality assurance across the EHEA. In the UK, the **Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)** has carried out an extensive internal mapping exercise of its current audit and review processes and the UK national external reference points for quality and academic standards. These were mapped against the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG), which were adopted at the 2005 Bergen conference. **No gaps in respect of internal and external quality assurance were found; a key achievement for the UK.**

The Berlin Communiqué underlined the principle of institutional autonomy, stating that ‘the primary responsibility for quality assurance in higher education lies with each institution itself and this provides the basis for real accountability of the academic system’. The focus of external quality review in the UK is at institutional level when the effectiveness of internal quality assurance and enhancement is monitored. Public information from HEIs’ internal quality systems is subsequently available through mechanisms such as the **Teaching Quality Information (TQi) website.**

Effective student participation is also a prominent feature of quality assurance in the UK, and is underlined by the ESG. Students are central both to the principal elements of review and to the review processes themselves. All review methods include auditors and reviewers meeting with student groups and student representative bodies. Institutional information on quality and standards provided on the TQi website is complemented by results from the **National Student Survey**, which was introduced in 2005 and allows final year students another opportunity to provide feedback on the quality of their courses.

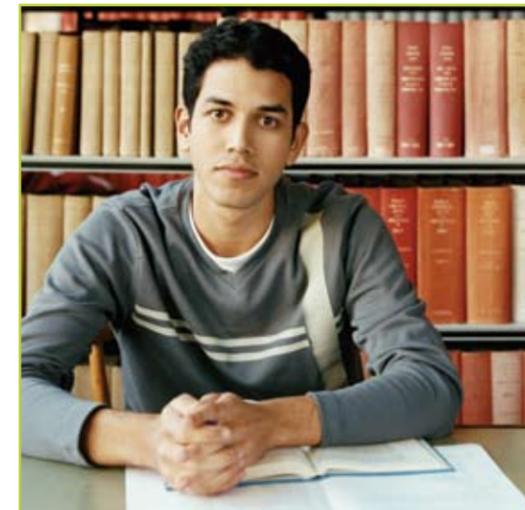
In Scotland, there is a student representative in each external review team in the Enhancement-led Institutional Review process. Student representatives are also supported and trained in their role as a class or course representative through the **Student Participation in Quality Scotland (sparqs) initiative**, run by the National Union of Students (NUS) in Scotland on behalf of HE stakeholders. QAA Scotland supports sparqs to assist students, students’ associations and institutions to improve effectiveness and engagement in quality assurance and enhancement.

**“PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE LIES WITH EACH INSTITUTION ITSELF AND THIS PROVIDES THE BASIS FOR REAL ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE ACADEMIC SYSTEM.”**

Extract from the Communiqué of the Bologna Ministerial Conference  
Berlin, 19 September 2003

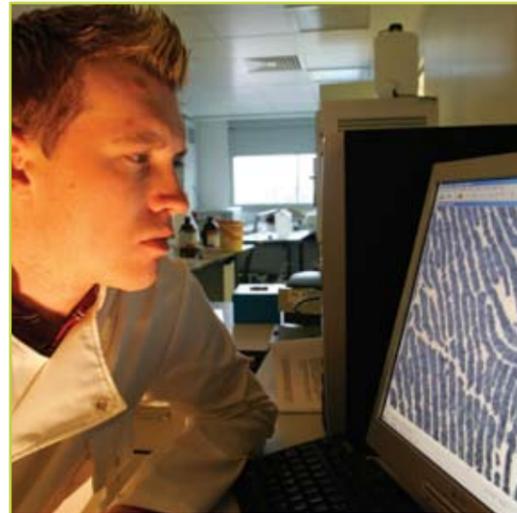
In England and Northern Ireland, the **Student Written Submission (SWS)** has been developed, allowing students to express their views of the quality of the education they are receiving. The QAA has a web portal for students to help them access information on the SWS and the student role in audit and reviews. The NUS also manages the **Quality Takes Time** project with support from partners, including QAA and the National Postgraduate Committee, and supports a website of materials for student unions on quality assurance and enhancement. In Wales, there have been events run with NUS Wales aimed at supporting student representatives in preparing for institutional review.

As a result of these developments, student participation has become embedded within national quality assurance and enhancement frameworks in the UK, within the context of institutional autonomy for maintaining and building on quality.



# CREDIT ACCUMULATION AND TRANSFER

A key action line in the recognition and comparability of HE qualifications and the promotion of mobility is the establishment of a system of credit for the EHEA.



The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) has played a role from the start of the Bologna Process to facilitate mobility, and a majority of countries use ECTS as their main credit system. However, while the use of academic credit is required, there is no absolute requirement to use ECTS provided that any credit scheme used is compatible with ECTS.

The UK has already achieved a number of objectives that credit systems are designed to achieve, such as the facilitation of flexible learning paths. However, while many English institutions have been using credit for many years, there has not been a HE credit framework in England along the lines of those in Wales and Scotland. The December 2006 report of the Measuring and Recording Student Achievement Group, chaired by Professor Bob Burgess, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Leicester, has subsequently moved this agenda forward, recommending a credit framework for England by October 2008. This is welcome progress. The sector will now work towards implementing a national credit framework for England, compatible with other credit systems in the UK such as the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework and the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales, and compatible with ECTS.

The principal benefit will be greater consistency of practice by institutions and greater transparency for learners, who should have a clearer picture of requirements for a particular institution or course. The Burgess Report underlines the notion of institutional autonomy and is clear that the credit framework is not compulsory, while pointing to evidence suggesting that most HEIs will find a national approach helpful.

In addition to the report, Universities UK, GuildHE and the QAA have recently published an explanatory guide to academic credit in England, and English HEIs are being encouraged to credit rate their programmes as soon as possible. Institutions in Scotland and Wales are also in the course of completing this process according to their respective systems.

**Imperial College London** values its strong links with universities in other European countries, from student exchange to research collaboration and firmly believes that Bologna is particularly important in promoting collaboration, exchange and mobility. Imperial College has conducted a detailed analysis of all courses in the first and second cycles, and has assigned ECTS credits to them. All are now compatible, or can be readily modified to achieve compatibility, with the Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA. Bachelor degree courses are assigned 180 ECTS credits, Masters courses 90 credits, and Integrated Masters courses 270 credits.

Imperial is clear that a key factor in any credit transfer system must be ensuring the compatibility of learning outcomes. This should make it possible for students to choose where in Europe they want to start, finish or continue their education. Imperial has ensured that all courses match the relevant cycle descriptors, and from their long experience with highly-selective twelve month intensive Masters courses, which include a high research content, Imperial is confident that these courses provide excellent education and qualify students to move on to relevant jobs in industry or to further research.

Furthermore, educating future researchers at the highest standard is especially important for Imperial College as a research-intensive

**“Achieving compatibility through Bologna does not mean making courses identical across Europe. Rather, we see it as an excellent vehicle not only for offering the widest possible options for mobility and employability to our students, but also for exchanging best practice and assuring high standards in European higher education.”**

**Professor Mary Ritter**

Pro Rector (Postgraduate and International Affairs),  
Imperial College London

university. The College has developed two graduate schools, one for Life Sciences and Medicine and one for Engineering and Physical Sciences. These provide an excellent learning environment, promoting interdisciplinarity, intercultural understanding and delivering transferable skills training, an achievement that was recognised by the Times Higher Education Awards 2006. Graduate schools like these will be important in implementing the wider goals for postgraduate training formulated in the Bergen Communiqué and the EUA Nice recommendations.

In the **MOVE East of England Lifelong Learning Network**, significant development has taken place on progression accords, both establishing firm progression links between further and higher education based on programme to programme alignment of qualifications, and developing work-based accords with accreditation processes to quantify work-based learning such as in-company training.

It will provide robust equivalence expressed as volumes of credit, to enable progression to HE through non-standard or non-qualification routes, and supported by a regional credit agreement, informed by both the Burgess Report and the work of the Joint Forum for Higher Levels. The development of progression accords made on the basis of credit-based qualifications and work-based equivalent learning will contribute significantly to the comparability of qualifications and work-based learning across the EHEA.

# RECOGNISING QUALIFICATIONS IN THE EHEA

The establishment of easily readable and comparable degrees across the EHEA is a key plank of many of the Bologna reforms.

Easily readable and comparable degrees enable students and academics to have qualifications recognised more widely and facilitate greater freedom of movement around the EHEA. This in turn enhances the attractiveness and competitiveness of European HE across the world.

Ministers adopted the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA) at the 2005 Bergen conference. The framework consists of three main cycles (Bachelor, Masters and Doctoral), with cycle descriptors in the form of generic qualification descriptors, used as reference points for the development of national qualifications frameworks. The FQ-EHEA is based on learning outcomes, and enables HEIs to focus on results of learning and move away from indicators that focus on formal procedures. The three cycle system is essentially the system that the UK HE sector already employs, and so the UK finds itself in a strong position in the field of comparability of qualifications.

The Bologna Process requires all participating countries to ratify the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region, the 'Lisbon Recognition Convention', which the UK ratified in May 2003. The Code of Practice of the **UK National Academic Recognition Information Centre** (UK NARIC) provides for the implementation of the principles of the Convention, including: an applicant's right to fair assessment; recognition if no substantial differences can be proven; and demonstration of substantial differences where recognition is not granted; and provision of information about the country's HE programmes and institutions.

UK NARIC is a fully operational representative agency in the wider European Network of Information Centres, and in recent years has developed an integrated model for recognition, designed to recognise both formal educational achievement and non-formal learning experiences. Institutions continue rightly to exercise significant autonomy in the awarding of their own recognised qualifications.

**Our HEIs recognise a range of credits and qualifications from around the world, and continue to demonstrate that the sector is proactive in terms of academic recognition, a key strength in maintaining the attractiveness of UK higher education.**

The development of national qualifications frameworks is a key element in Bologna. Agreed criteria and arrangements will be used by each country to verify that its HE framework is compatible with the FQ-EHEA. **Along with Ireland, Scotland was one of the first to complete the self-certification process to verify that its HE qualifications framework is compatible with the Bologna Framework.**

Scotland's Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions (see table below) was implemented by the sector in 2003-04 and is now referenced in Diploma Supplements. The framework descriptors set out the credit value and the characteristic knowledge, understanding, skills and abilities that holders of the qualification will be able to demonstrate at each of the six levels. Led by the QAA in Scotland, the Framework was developed through a committee of experts and after extensive consultation with the sector, students, employers and professional bodies.

The Framework assists employers, schools, students and others to understand the achievements represented by the main qualifications, clarifying routes for progression and credit transfer, and maintaining and reviewing international comparability of standards and quality. Verifying compatibility allows each country to demonstrate both the links between national frameworks and the EHEA qualification cycles, and the robustness of quality assurance systems.

Aligning the Scottish framework with the Framework of the EHEA is an important landmark in Scotland's commitment to implementing the goals of the Bologna Process. The QAA has recently begun work on the self-certification of HE qualifications frameworks for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, with a view to completion by November 2008. The Scottish example demonstrates clearly that UK higher education qualifications are compatible with the Bologna framework, and both the Government and the QAA are confident that the self-certification process in England, Wales and Northern Ireland will highlight similar compatibility.

FQ-EHEA qualification cycles	Qualifications within FQ-Scotland
First cycle qualifications	Scottish Bachelor degree with honours Scottish Bachelor degree
Short cycle qualifications within or linked to the first cycle	Diploma of Higher Education
Intermediate awards within the first cycle	Certificate of Higher Education Graduate Certificate Graduate Diploma
Second cycle qualifications	Masters degree Integrated Masters degree MPhil degree
Intermediate awards within the second cycle	Postgraduate Diploma Postgraduate Certificate
Third cycle qualifications	Doctoral degrees including doctorates by research

# DIPLOMA SUPPLEMENT



The Diploma Supplement (DS) underpins the Bologna principle of easily readable and comparable degrees. The target set at the 2003 Berlin conference called for every student graduating from 2005 to receive a DS automatically, free of charge and in a widely spoken European language.



Students working on the Crowd and Safety Management Programme, Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College (page 22)

The full implementation of the DS is essential to facilitate the recognition of qualifications gained in the UK, for future study and employment elsewhere in Europe. It is important that students graduating in the UK are able to benefit from the enhanced recognition and mobility that the DS can bring.

The **UK HE Europe Unit** conducted a survey of UK HEIs in July 2005, and while nearly all respondents were aware of the commitment to issue the DS from 2005, less than a third of respondents were issuing the DS to students graduating from their institutions. Although almost half had plans to do so in the next couple of years, universities and colleges still need to do more to ensure comprehensive coverage of the DS across the UK.

One example of a HEI already using the DS to great effect is the **University of Leeds**. The University's approach centres

around the appreciation that education, innovation and human understanding and development are not best served by rigid, detailed specifications or complex system requirements. Catering for the needs of all academic and professional disciplines requires simple frameworks based on principles to which all disciplines can 'sign up'.

The DS enabled the University to present complex grading and classification arrangements in a manner which would be understood not only across Europe but across the world. The University used the DS template as a basis for satisfying both the principles of the FQ-EHEA and the QAA's recommendations concerning Records of Achievement. They developed a combined Diploma Supplement and Transcript, which has been issued to all students who started in or after September 2003. Since its introduction, over 12,000 Diploma Supplements and Transcripts have been awarded to graduating students. In addition, Leeds piloted a Diploma Supplement and Statement for Research Students in the second and third cycles last autumn.

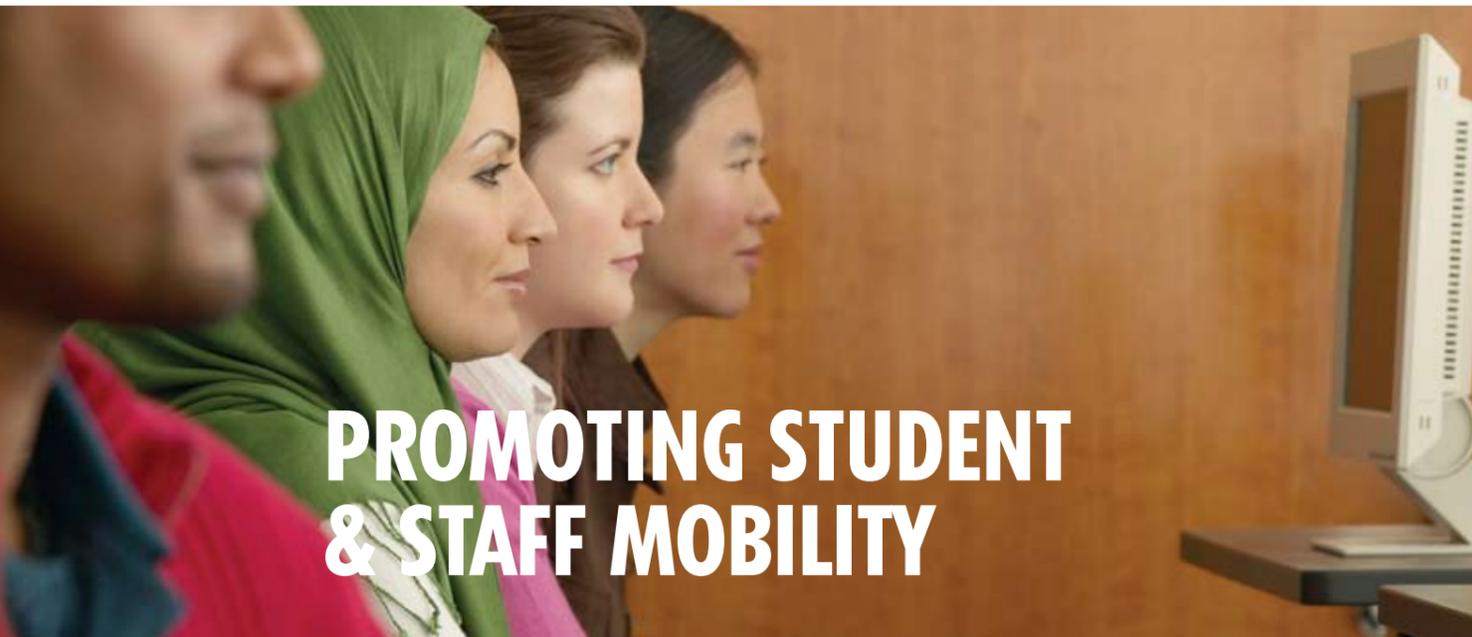
The University concluded that the comparative simplicity of this documentation is likely to better serve the needs of Leeds graduates, prospective employers and other institutions, with the option of more detailed programme and module information available online for those that require it.

**"The motivation has been and must remain doing the best we can for our students and alumni as global citizens. Having a reliable, final, centrally held record for each graduate, which the graduates can themselves check at the point of graduation, increases transparency while reducing the amount of work in producing individual custom made transcripts and statements and maintaining long term individual records. We believe that simple administrative devices such as the DS are crucial in providing transparency without excessive prescription or work."**

Janet Jurica

Senior Assistant Registrar, University of Leeds

The **UK HE Europe Unit** has produced a Guide to the Diploma Supplement, which addresses effectively the challenge of introducing the DS, and is set to repeat the survey of institutions this summer to assess progress since 2005.



# PROMOTING STUDENT & STAFF MOBILITY

**“SIMPLY PUT, BOLOGNA IS ABOUT ENHANCING THE MOBILITY AND EMPLOYABILITY OF ALL OF OUR STUDENTS STUDYING IN THE EHEA.”**

Anne Davies  
Bologna Promoter, Queen’s University Belfast

The Bologna Process aims to facilitate and promote greater mobility so that students acquire the skills employers need in today’s global workplace – skills such as cultural maturity, increased self-confidence and competence in languages.

Many HE providers already offer opportunities for international mobility for students and staff, but it is clear that we need to do more. The Erasmus programme, for example, offers the chance for students to embark on periods of study abroad, yet while over 7,100 UK-based students and over 1,400 UK-based teachers undertook an Erasmus placement in 2004/05, the UK compares less favourably to other states with similar populations: France (over 21,000 students), Spain (over 20,000 students) and Italy (over 17,000 students).

The **UK Socrates-Erasmus Council** (UKSEC) has co-ordinated the UK’s participation in the Erasmus programme in recent years, and has recognised the achievements of Erasmus students every year. This year, UKSEC’s Erasmus Student Prize recognised the experiences of Christopher Lee, an undergraduate studying Physics with Atmospheric Physics at Aberystwyth, who undertook an Erasmus placement in the Arctic at the University of Tromsø, Norway. There, Christopher worked at one of the

world’s leading science facilities for the study of atmospheric physics, an experience which will prove invaluable in his personal and professional development.

The co-ordination of the Erasmus programme in the UK is now being taken forward by the British Council, which will work with the sector and representative organisations to build on the work of UKSEC and help to develop student and staff participation in Erasmus exchanges further.

Incoming student mobility also has a positive impact, as can be seen in the Crowd & Safety Management degree programme at **Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College**. Using a virtual learning environment (VLE), students from the Netherlands participate remotely in the course through workshops and coursework posted online. The development of a range of ICT learning resources was an essential part of embracing the advantages of Bologna and, in an industrial environment such as that

covered by this course, the key is to widen participation by reducing the time away from work for the individual. This successful programme is expected to be rolled out in the future, with recent approaches from Denmark, Switzerland, Germany, Norway and Finland to participate in future programmes.

Mobility can also be beneficial at institutional level. This was the experience of the **School of Nursing Midwifery and Social Care at Napier University Edinburgh**, when it decided in 2005 to develop a strategy towards Europe to make better use of its relationships with European partner universities. A lecturer from Hanze University, Groningen, was invited to work with the School for a year on exchange, sending a clear message that the institution was developing a comprehensive approach to the European dimension. Unlocking student mobility was pivotal to this, and the promotion of staff mobility was seen as a key lever to achieve further student mobility. The School focused on embedding mobility in the core curriculum, viewing it as an essential component rather than an ‘add on’ experience. In addition, the release of endowment funds provided around 40 students an opportunity to embark on a period of study with European partners. A ‘preferred partners network’ was also developed, focusing on staff mobility.

This doubled the number of staff taking part in exchange visits year-on-year, and the institution is now considering how facilitating lecturer exchange can be incorporated into its staff induction programme. This experience of lecturer exchange was therefore a truly positive one, creating a focal point for the development of activities, enriching the curricula, challenging existing practices, stimulating interest for both staff and students, and unlocking a range of learning experiences.



Student conducting sediment sampling, University of Tromsø, Norway

# JOINT DEGREES: COLLABORATING TO ACHIEVE



Within the Bologna Process, the development of joint degrees between institutions from more than one participating country is encouraged as concrete evidence of the European dimension.



Closer collaboration between HEIs is key to the achievement of greater mobility of both students and staff. Several other Bologna action lines, notably those related to qualifications frameworks, the three cycles and quality assurance are supporting the development of joint degrees. This is being achieved by enhancing transparency of qualifications and providing a common language of quality assurance to help institutions engage with, and discuss, different standards and approaches.

Working in partnerships or consortia to deliver programmes and awards is of course not new to UK institutions – many links existed before Bologna, with institutions in Europe as well as across the world. However, developments such as the European Union's Erasmus Mundus programme have prompted a new wave of links and partnerships with universities in other European countries to deliver dual and joint awards. Institutions from all parts of the UK sector are increasingly taking part in a range of consortia.

The **University of Strathclyde** has been heavily involved in Europe over a number of years, and is currently embedding the Bologna action lines into its policies and procedures. Strathclyde's Academic Strategy states that 'as part of this, we will seek to develop European Joint Masters Programmes in key areas'. With the proactive support of the senior management team of the University, a number of joint or articulated degrees at both undergraduate and Masters level have been developed with institutions in Europe, some going back several years. Strathclyde is also a member of the European Consortium of Innovation Universities. Using the Bologna Process as a key facilitator, consortia evolve with a common understanding of the various standards and systems that are employed in the participating countries, and an understanding of the joint quality assurance and enhancement processes for the degree programme. In Strathclyde's experience, reaching consensus on these areas requires as much if not more careful detailed discussion than the academic issues in developing a joint degree programme, such as the programme specification, the curriculum, and assessment methods.

**Newman College of Higher Education, Birmingham** is currently working with the University of Lodz in Poland to develop a joint Postgraduate Certificate in Education. This has been developed in response to a clear need identified in Birmingham schools for teachers offering Polish as a Modern Foreign Language. These teachers will enable better assessment of, and support for, Polish children arriving in the UK. Students on the programme experience a school placement in both countries, and will be able to work in either country once qualified. Graduates from the programme will therefore meet the need for teachers of English in Poland or teachers with Polish in England, and the programme will be fully compliant with standards set by the Training and Development Agency in Schools in England. Staff from both higher education institutions will be involved in assessing competence in English and Polish and staff and student mobility will form a central focus of the initiative.

# USEFUL WEBSITE LINKS

Bologna Secretariat

[www.dfes.gov.uk/bologna](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/bologna)

British Council

[www.britishcouncil.org](http://www.britishcouncil.org)

Burgess Group: final report

[http://bookshop.universitiesuk.ac.uk/downloads/Burgess\\_credit\\_report.pdf](http://bookshop.universitiesuk.ac.uk/downloads/Burgess_credit_report.pdf)

Council of Europe

[www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int)

Credit and Qualifications Framework  
for Wales

[www.learning.wales.gov.uk](http://www.learning.wales.gov.uk)

European Association for Quality Assurance in  
Higher Education

[www.enqa.eu](http://www.enqa.eu)

European Association of Institutions in HE

[www.eurashe.be](http://www.eurashe.be)

European Credit Transfer System

[www.europa.eu/comm/education/programmes/socrates/ects\\_en.html](http://www.europa.eu/comm/education/programmes/socrates/ects_en.html)

European University Association

[www.eua.be](http://www.eua.be)

GuildHE

[www.guildhe.ac.uk](http://www.guildhe.ac.uk)

Higher Education Wales

[www.hew.ac.uk](http://www.hew.ac.uk)

MOVE East of England Lifelong  
Learning Network

[www.move.ac.uk](http://www.move.ac.uk)

National Student Survey

[www.thestudentsurvey.com](http://www.thestudentsurvey.com)

National Union of Students

[www.nusonline.co.uk](http://www.nusonline.co.uk)

The National Unions of Students in Europe

[www.esib.org](http://www.esib.org)

Northern Ireland Department for Employment  
and Learning

[www.delni.gov.uk](http://www.delni.gov.uk)

Quality Assurance Agency for HE

[www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)

Scottish Executive

[www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk)

Scottish self-certification pilot

[www.enic-naric.net/documents/QF-Scotland\\_en.pdf](http://www.enic-naric.net/documents/QF-Scotland_en.pdf)

[www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ/SCQF/](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ/SCQF/)

Student Participation in Quality Scotland

[www.sparqs.org.uk](http://www.sparqs.org.uk)

Teaching Quality Information website

[www.tqi.ac.uk](http://www.tqi.ac.uk)

UK HE Europe Unit

[www.europeunit.ac.uk](http://www.europeunit.ac.uk)

UK HE Europe Unit Guide to the  
Diploma Supplement

[www.europeunit.ac.uk/resources/Guide%20to%20the%20Diploma%20Supplement.pdf](http://www.europeunit.ac.uk/resources/Guide%20to%20the%20Diploma%20Supplement.pdf)

UK National Recognition Information Centre

[www.naric.org.uk](http://www.naric.org.uk)

Universities Scotland

[www.universities-scotland.ac.uk](http://www.universities-scotland.ac.uk)

Universities UK

[www.universitiesuk.ac.uk](http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk)

Welsh Assembly Government

<http://new.wales.gov.uk>

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