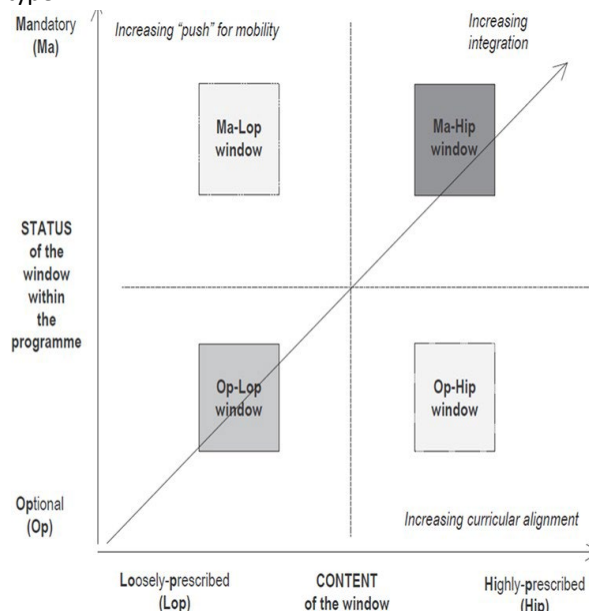# STEP BY STEP RECOMMENDATIONS FOR
DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING MOBILITY WINDOW (MW)

I BACKGROUND, DEFINITIONS AND GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- Step by step recommendations for designing and implementing mobility windows are part of ARQUS network guidelines for credit accumulation and student progression. They intend to assist academics and/or study administrators in the process of internationalization of study programs by developing a MW and embedding it into the curriculum.

- The recommendations are based on best practices and experiences gathered by network partners. Furthermore, learnings gained by working on pilot projects within the Arqus Alliance are considered. The terms that are used in these recommendations are in accordance with ARQUS glossary.

- Definition of the traditional Mobility Window:
  ○ "A mobility window is a period of time reserved for international student mobility that is embedded into the curriculum of a study program (Ferencz et al. 2013, 12) and the duration of the MW is traditionally one or two semesters.

  ○ Types of MW according to Ferencz et al. 2013, page 13
    a) optional windows with loosely-prescribed content (Op-Lop) – the most flexible type;
    b) mandatory windows with loosely-prescribed content (Ma-Lop) – more rigid in terms of the mobility experience and more flexible in terms of content;
    c) optional windows with highly-prescribed content (Op-Hip) – more flexible in terms of the mobility experience and more rigid in terms of content;
    d) mandatory mobility windows with highly- prescribed content (Ma-Hip) – the most structured type.

(Source: ACA "Mobility Windows" Ferencz et al, 2013, p.41)

- Why Mobility Windows?
  Mobility windows represent one of the means to achieve goals of internationalization of study programmes, with clearly defined objectives and outcomes that count towards or supplement academic qualifications. The mobility window is an explicit and integrated part of the home curriculum and study plan. Study achievements at the partner university as well as international experience gained by students during the mobility window must be fully recognized by the home institution, if the learning outcomes defined by the curriculum are achieved.

  Mobility windows represent a unique opportunity for students, as they can:
  - improve the quality of the study programmes;
  - provide students with various and flexible learning paths;
  - strengthen the international character of a subject field;
  - enhance students' employability.

  Mobility windows are a potential opportunity for the institution:
  - to reflect and enhance internationalization;
  - to implement institutional policies;
  - to develop closer cooperation with partners;
  - to increase student mobility numbers.

- Possible alternatives
  In addition to the traditional MW described above, there are alternative ways of implementing student mobility and internationalization to the curriculum of the study programmes. Within the frames of the Erasmus+ programme, also the following activities are supported:
  - A **study period** abroad at a higher education institution
  - A **traineeship** (work placement, internship) abroad in an enterprise, a research institute, a laboratory, an organization, a higher education institution or any other relevant workplace.
  - **Blended mobility**: a combination of physical mobility and a virtual component, facilitating collaborative online learning exchange/teamwork.
  - **Combination of traineeship and study period**

- Internationalisation at home
  There should be equal opportunities created for students who cannot be physically mobile to develop their international competences.

  "Internationalisation at Home is the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments." (Beelen/Jones 2015, 69)

  It could be achieved through:

  - Virtual mobility and/or virtual exchange within an international classroom;
  - Domestic practical training with an intercultural focus;
  - Theories on Inter- and Transculturality and Mobile Cultural Studies;
  - Module(s) covering Globality/Culturality (historical dimensions, linguistic dimension etc.);
  - Training of international and cross-cultural skills in general;
  - Foreign language courses;

- ECTS credit points within free electives for "buddy activities" like mentoring activities/language tandems for incoming students;
- Summer schools and lectures covering international/transnational/global topics;
- Interactivity (group work, discussions, etc.) between ""national" and "international" students during lectures.

● Who should be involved in the process?
Decisions and discussion during the process of developing mobility windows should include all stakeholders (academics, administration staff, social partners and students) in order to attain best results.

II STEPS FOR DESIGNING MOBILITY WINDOWS

Step 1: **Set a clear goal for MW**
- ● Review aims and learning outcomes set for the study programme. Evaluate attainment of study outcomes and which ones may need to be adjusted to better fit the internationalization goal. Decide on a goal and learning outcome you want to reach by introducing a MW into your programme.
- ● Define learning outcomes of MW and match them with the learning outcomes of the study programme.
- ● Map the MW subjects/courses to the included MW learning outcome.
- ● Involve the faculty and/or the institute, to make sure that implementation of the MW is supported.

Step 2: **Decide which MW type best suits the goal**
- ● Type: Based on the set goal for MW and its learning outcomes choose the type of MW (Op-Lpc; Op-Hpc; Ma-Lpc; Ma-Hpc).
- ● Type/Content: Decide if the time spent abroad should be a physical study stay abroad only - this will correspond to the classical type of a mobility window. The MW could also include a traineeship, virtual components or research phases.
- ● Traffic flow: consider whether the window should be focused on sending students abroad (one-way) or also receiving students (two-way), and also if the flow should go in the same semester of subsequent semesters. Debate if the inbound and outbound flow need to be synchronized in the same semester. A flow that allows for inbound and outbound mobility in subsequent semesters could give advantages in the form of interaction between "national" and "international" students.
- ● What duration should the MW have and when should the students go abroad.
- ● Workload: How many ECTS credit points should be achieved/ how many hours of workload should be absolved during the MW? Is there a range between a min. and a max. number of credit points?

Step 3: **Choose partner(s) accordingly**
- ● Language: Language barriers can be overcome by teachers and students; communication flow can be guaranteed.
- ● Profile of study courses: Level and profile of the study courses offered by the partner(s) are suitable regarding the requirements. This enables a smooth recognition of academic achievements.

- Capacities: Partners have sufficient study offers as well as sufficient places for incoming students in courses, events, laboratories etc.
- Tuition fees: Tuition fees are waived for exchange students as part of the cooperation agreement/ARQUS open mobility agreement.
- Choosing partners can be accomplished in various ways. Could partners be selected in the existing portfolio or is there a need to look for new partnerships?
- A letter of inquiry could be sent out to the ARQUS members by inviting the relevant and interested parties to join. Or specific member(s) could be approached grounded on the relevance of their study programme.
- Step 1 and 2 could be completed after the partners are identified.

Step 4: Coordinating person
Choose a coordinating person from the participating partners, who will be coordinating the process of the MW design.

Step 5: Implementation plan
Agree on the roles and responsibilities and document the distribution of it. Please also define the timeline, including the main goals and intended results. Identify the risks that may occur and plan how to deal with them.

Step 6: Adjust study plan
According to decisions made before, adjust study plan so that the chosen semester and credits allocated for MW would be clearly visible in curricula and all major subject-specific course units (modules) which are essential for the academic degree would not be missed.

Enrolled students must know from the start of their study at which point in time during the programme they have to, should or can go abroad, and for how long.

Step 7: Services
Discuss and agree upon services (e.g. housing) provided to students.

Step 8: Recognition of MW terms
Decide on recognition steps mobile students will have to follow after returning home in order for their MW to be recognized and create a grade conversion system. Set up a policy to deal with potential cases where students fail to fulfil study requirements.

Step 9: Assure funding for outgoing students
In most cases the Erasmus grant is the relevant funding. If not, other funding possibilities should be elaborated and clearly communicated to students.

Step 10: Agreement between partners
Check if an agreement exists, or sign a new one. In the case of Erasmus mobility, the inter institutional agreement of the Erasmus+ programme must be used. If necessary, annexes can be made.

Step 11: Design content for students staying at home university
If the chosen MW type is optional, there is a need to design study content for students who are not mobile to reach the same goal and learning outcomes.

Step 12: **If needed, decide on the student selection for MW process**
Set the selection criteria. The criteria might be composed of a mix of foreign language requirements, academic standing and student's motivation. Describe the selection process and define the commission/designate a person responsible that undertakes it.

III STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTING MOBILITY WINDOW

Step 1: **Advertise and disseminate information**
- Use previous exchange students' experiences to advertise MW from home and partner universities;
- Diversify advertisement and information dissemination sources (webpages, social networks, specific meetings, newsletters, e-mails, etc.);
- Use MW as distinguishing feature of your study programme, while advertising it for the admission purposes;
- Inform students about opportunities and obligations resulting from the participation in mobility window, in case of optional MW - deadlines for selection registration and selection criteria;
- Present a list of partners/agreements specifically recommended within the certain study programme;
- Have a contact list published and disseminated (people, students can address with the questions).

Step 2: **Motivate students**
- Discuss with potentially mobile students the benefits which MW will offer them (competence development, entering the labor market and gaining experience wise) and offer financial support for the costs (it could be done in the form of webinars, focus groups, competition (game), etc).

Step 3: **Select students**
- Based on the decided selection process and criteria, select students if a MW is optional and there is a limited number of students who can participate in MW.

Step 4: **Help to prepare for MW**
- Inform selected students about deadlines, application and recognition procedures, and practical issues (accommodation, financing, culture awareness etc.) in a selected form (online meeting, video lecture, form of a handbook, etc.);
- Provide selected students with contact information at home university in case they will face problems at partner institution and won't be able to solve them independently;
- Sign a mobility/academic agreement.

Step 5: **In case of reciprocal MW - prepare to welcome incoming students**

- Prepare and offer an introductory time for incoming students to get acquainted with the host university, faculty, study programme, surroundings;
- Fulfill terms agreed upon with the partner university;
- Be ready to offer academic or personal help if needed (have a contact list for directing students where they can find consultations/help needed).

Step 6: **Recognize MW**
- Recognize credits received during the mobility window on the terms which were set during designing MW and information given to students before their mobility. Use the grading tables set up for this purpose.

Step 7: **Collect feedback**
- Collect feedback from exchange students about their MW experience, study quality, organization of MW, etc. for MW QA and advertising/motivating students;
- In case of loosely prescribed content MW, collect information on course units (modules) students choose to study at partner university to track patterns and evaluate if experience made during the mobility window counts towards or supplements the degree.

Step 8: **Certificate**
- Students that have been on exchange to Arqus Alliance partners can be awarded with a certificate of MW completion with the Arqus logo and with the participating partners mentioned.

Step 9: Evaluate
- Establish a timeline together with the partner(s) for the evaluation of the MW. Take the feedback from former exchange students into account and set up an evaluation questionnaire for recent students regarding the quality of administrative service offers, the offer of study courses, the preparation for the stay abroad etc.

IV   **LITERATURE**

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