

GUIDELINES FOR MOBILE STUDENTS



Main Difficulties

Before the mobility

- Recognise that emotional difficulties (stress, anxiety, tiredness, rumination, cognitive fatigue and loneliness) are normal responses to upcoming mobility.
- Recognise and understand that mental health difficulties before the mobility are common and may be higher than the actual difficulties during the mobility period. You should also expect difficulties upon returning (reverse culture shock).
- Prepare students psychologically for mobility: learn and practice stress and anxiety management techniques (e.g., breathing exercises, mindfulness, progressive muscle relaxation, etc.) and develop a personal stress management coping strategies toolkit. Also, prepare by creating realistic plans for budgeting, academic load, and social expectations.
- Contact former mobile students to normalise feelings about the upcoming change. Seek psychological help early if difficulties become overwhelming.
- Contact the International Office to clarify academic requirements, financial support, opportunities, etc.

During the mobility

- Be aware that low self-esteem is common during the mobility due to unfamiliar environments and cultural changes, among other aspects.
- Tiredness and cognitive fatigue are reported by many mobile students, therefore prioritise sleep and breaks. Establish daily routines that include anxiety and stress reduction activities.
- Meet up with friends/family regularly to overcome homesickness and/or join student groups or activities to reduce loneliness.
- Contact academic advisors for help when studying requirements become unclear or

difficult to manage.

- Recognise early signs of anxiety or stress and seek professional psychological help early if difficulties become overwhelming. Do not hesitate to contact counselling services, especially, if anxiety, rumination, or cognitive fatigue become persistent.

After the mobility

- Returning home can cause renewed academic and social pressure; therefore, it takes time to adjust.
- Loneliness after returning is common, you need to re-establish routines and keep in contact with friends from the mobility to ease the transition, especially for bachelor students, as the results revealed that this group experiences socio-cultural difficulties more intensely after mobility.
- Seek opportunities to integrate experiences (e.g., presentations, mentoring other students in/pre-mobility, etc.).

Main Triggers and Risk Factors

- Keep in mind that there are several triggers or risk factors that can affect your mental health. To reduce them make sure you participate in several activities, strengthen personal resources through personal development, and seek help and information.
- Make sure you balance your study periods with your leisure time. For that you should set clear boundaries between study and rest and take breaks while studying to reduce fatigue and stress.

Protective Factors and Coping Strategies

- Strengthen social support by actively maintaining contact with family and friends, especially at the beginning of the mobility period. Also, engage in joint activities and participate in buddy programmes and other integration activities to reduce loneliness and find new friends.
- Incorporate physical activity and sports into daily routine, as regular activities (walking, yoga, running, or other sports) to help reduce anxiety and improve sleep. Regular breathing exercises and mindfulness practices also support emotional stability.
- Use planning and self-reflection methods, such as to-do lists, weekly plans, and structured daily schedule tools, to maintain a sense of control. Journaling and creative activities are also effective.
- Seek help earlier, not only in a crisis: contact therapists, psychologists, doctors when emotional symptoms begin to interfere with daily life, do not wait until they become difficult to manage. Before the mobility, you should familiarise yourself with the university's psychological support system, especially if you receive such support before the mobility, too.
- Use cognitive reframing strategies. Practice gratitude and acceptance and focus on what you can control. Reduce perfectionism, low self-esteem and fear of missing out.
- Prepare for mobility realistically, i.e., get familiarised with the country's culture, administrative requirements, accommodation conditions, academic requirements of the host institution, and participate in pre-arrival or pre-mobility events organised by the university (host and/or sending).

