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“RESEARCH COLLABORATION AND LINKAGES WAS KEY AREA IN USM’S SELECTION AS OUR ERASMUS+ COUNTRY PARTNER INSTITUTION” – MIDDLESEX UNIVERSITY’S ERASMUS AND INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE MANAGER



LONDON, February, 2016 - Middlesex University’s ERASMUS and international Exchange Manager Dr. Nosheen Rachel Naseem revealed that USM was included as a country partner institution in its grant application for Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility funding on the basis of existing linkage between the two institutions in research collaboration.

“Middlesex University has been involved in Erasmus exchanges since 1987. Last year for the new Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020) there was a new opportunity for the programme countries to apply for International Credit Mobility, a strand whereby not only students and staff from European universities but also from universities outside Europe can participate in mobility activities and receive funding, as the Erasmus mobility programme is funded by the European Commission,” said Nosheen.

“Middlesex applied to the country’s National Agency in the UK (which is the British Council in partnership with Ecorys UK) for funding in Credit Mobility for different countries. Selection of partner institutions was made through internal collaboration and consultation, and the Research and Knowledge Transfer Office indicated that they have been working closely with USM on various projects and specifically research projects and on that basis, USM was added to our application.

Only universities from programme countries can apply for funding for both the programme and the partner countries. Now we have received the funding not only to send our students out but also to receive students and staff from USM, and to pay for them. There is very limited funding available because of the way the programme is structured but we are happy to inform you that we can receive one or two doctorate students from USM in this academic year,” Nosheen added.

Elaborating on the scope of collaboration which can be availed from this funding, Nosheen explained that collaboration can take place on various levels, not only for staff and students but also as an opportunity for institutions to look at their internationalisation strategies to discover, within the geographic distribution area of that particular country partner, what sort of academic links can be developed.

“It allows for more focused academic mobility which will allow Middlesex to gauge how the collaboration feeds into the European Commission’s and EU’s overall strategy for mobility. For example for us, Horizon 2020 (a move from the EU as well) sees mobility as a very key aspect to academic studies. By 2020 each university should be able to send at least 20% of their students on exchange, 20% of students have to be mobile. These are some of the benchmarks we have to satisfy to stay in the UK University League Tables,” she stated.

Elaborating on the scope for international mobility between USM and Middlesex, Nosheen stated, “We are hoping to be able to send doctorate students to USM for a minimum of three months and to be able to receive students from you for three months as well on research programmes. We are open to all different types of fields of study. We are not restricting it to one specific subject area as we want to allow the flexibility for both universities to see what can work.

“In the first year of the programme there will be challenges, not many students or staff might be able to come. We are very pleased that we have been able to receive one USM member of staff for the International Credit Mobility Staff Week (Dr. Muhizam),” she added.

Staff exchanges are not as lengthy as student exchanges however, as staff can come for only five days for teaching or for training under this funding. “Teaching has to involve eight hours of teaching during the week. And training can be a planned training project like what we have here for five days, in addition to the two days allocated for travelling (due to the distance between UK and Malaysia). The amount of funding available for staff mobility contributes towards travel and living expenses for one week – 160 euros per day while travel assistance depends on the particular bandwidth from which the participant comes.”

As the institution has to apply for funding every year, Nosheen cautioned that it might be different for subsequent years: “This year we have more funding but next year we might not have funding.

Staff are always welcome whether or not there is funding available. There might not be funding available but if this turns out to be a precious and useful link for the university, the university will find ways to fund the visit,” she stressed.

For the PhD students’ funding, details will be made available at USM’s International Office.

Nosheen explained that there are a few criteria for selection, namely, “Students especially from disadvantaged backgrounds, students who are academically sound, and students who have special needs/disabilities should be given preference because there are more funds available for them. Students with special needs have to apply in advance, and if the university has the resources we will be happy to look into their applications.”

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