

# **Problems of the academic mobility in the Russian universities**

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Several years ago the Russian Federation joined the Bologna agreement and began an intensive integration into the European educational field. One of the principles of the Bologna agreement is to develop and support academic mobility. Academic mobility as a form of international cooperation of universities has a long history and fruitful practice. Leading world universities invite world-renowned professors and lecturers, thereby raising these universities' rating and attracting students from all over the world. The global scientific and educational community is well aware that knowledge will be the decisive factor in the future. People in Russia understand that as well. Many Russian universities intensify their academic mobility. But just the declaration of basic principles of the European educational field does not mean its practical and legal support from national state institutions. There are a number of administrative and economic problems, disagreements and gaps in the effective algorithm of academic mobility in Russian universities.

In this article the authors make an attempt to discuss the challenges encountered in their practice.

The academic mobility between partner universities from different countries is being practicing in the framework of interuniversity cooperation according to the interuniversity agreements, certificates and working programs as well.

The main goals concerning the academic mobility are:

- The integration into the European university education field as one of the main directions of the people's mobility;
- The possibility for the students and the professors to receive a new academic knowledge in the fields they are mostly interested in, as well as in the social and cultural spheres; the academic mobility also gives the best foreign language education and training.
- The creation of the international social and cultural atmosphere necessary for the mutual understanding, stimulation of the intercultural activities and cooperation;
- The raising of the universities' role in the development of the mutual European values.

In the Russian Federation the academic mobility is practicing according to the government university regulation documents, the university rules and some other instructions concerning the development of the academic mobility of the students and the teachers.

The academic mobility is being realized:

- As short-term educational programs;
- Inclusive education;
- Exchange of the students and the professors;
- Receiving grants for the academic exchange programs: educational and investigational;

- Summer schools, etc.

In the Russian universities the academic mobility process is usually run by the International Affairs Department. The Department gives consultations concerning international exchange programs, makes agreements, helps searching for grants and gives advises how to appeal for a grant, monitors the academic mobility, etc. The adaptation of the foreign students and teachers is also in the competence of the Department. The university internet site has all the information about grants and the exchange programs as well as other information about academic mobility.

The students, the postgraduate students, the professors and the administrative staff of the university are taking part in the academic mobility.

### **Types of the academic mobility**

#### **The students` exchange**

The students` exchange is one of the main forms of the academic mobility being realized in the framework of the university international agreements with foreign educational institutions.

The students` exchange does not mean getting the diploma of the foreign university. The students` exchange is just a possibility of the outlook widening, getting a new experience, chance to raise the academic level and the foreign language speaking.

The duration of the students` exchange programs is usually from 1 to 2 semesters. A student has to apply for the program according to the special form. It is also necessary to coordinate the individual academic program and fix the desired disciplines. The participants of the student exchange program are still considered to be the students of the university at home.

As to the financial questions – they are the matter of a special agreement and the financial situation in the particular university and may vary.

The requirements to the applicants are the following:

- The first year students don`t participate in the students` exchange;
- The applicants are those who are getting well in all the disciplines;
- The applicants have to speak English language fluently, or the language of the country they suppose to go for education.

#### **The inclusive education of the foreign students**

The inclusive education of the foreign students lasts for 1 or 2 semesters according to the special agreements with partner universities. The students have to discuss their individual program. The educational standards for the foreign students are quite the same as for all other students.

The foreign students are admitted to the university by the International Affairs Department.

#### **Summer practice, sabbaticals**

The student practice is an important part of the main academic program. It is carried out according to the special academic programs, giving the students practical skills and deepening their knowledge in certain disciplines.

The summer practice abroad is necessary for the training of the qualified professionals according to the international standards. The student sabbaticals may be organized as a part of their regular professional practice. The university chairs have their own instructions how to organize the practice and sabbaticals according to the requirements of the certain qualification.

The duration of a summer practice or a sabbatical is usually from 2 weeks up to 3 months. The financial aspects depend on the certain international agreements and financial position of the universities.

### **Post gradual sabbaticals**

The post graduate sabbaticals are necessary for:

- Learning and practically using the new technologies, the new methodic in education and production;
- Getting the new information for academic research;
- Foreign language training;
- Studying the international standards in management;
- Developing of the productive contacts with the colleges and partners in the foreign universities and companies.

### **The professor`s exchange**

The leading professors of the partner universities are usually invited to teach the particular disciplines. The university hires the professors according to the temporarily agreement. The particular details (the salary, the transfer, accommodations) are stated in the agreement.

### **The organizational problems of the academic mobility**

The academic mobility means that a student for a certain period of time is studying in a country where he is not a resident. Usually it takes a lot of time to launch a student exchange program, and the qualified personnel are needed for that purpose. Sometimes it is rather difficult to choose a proper partner. A program for the foreign students` and professors` adaptation in the university also requires a period of approbation.

### **Selection of the partners**

When choosing partners it is necessary to remember that the academic rating of a particular university as well as its academic programs are not the guarantee of the successful academic exchange. It is important to make sure that:

- The academic programs of the partner universities are corresponding with each other;
- The language, speaking in the country of the partner university, is being teaching in the university at home;
- The adaptation program is available;
- The partner university has its own hostel with fixed prices.

If all the conditions are observed the students` exchange agreement may be signed. The agreement has to state the terms, the quotas, the financial details of the exchange and the

academic requirements in both universities, as well as the language in which the education will be delivered.

### **The main conditions of the exchange**

As usual the education during the exchange programs is free. But the students have to pay for the passport and visas, the transfer to the university and back, the insurance, food, the textbooks. The main problem for the students is paying for their accommodation. That is why it is recommended that the students should have free accommodation in the hostels of the partner universities. If one of the universities has no free hostel his students should also pay during their staying abroad. To foster the student exchange it is also recommended that those students who can pay for their education themselves should have the sabbatical beyond any quotas.

### **Responsibility**

The quality of academic exchange depends on the proper cooperation between the partner universities, well information about the culture, the traditions, political and economic situation in both countries. It is important that the partner universities should deliver their curriculums to each other, as well as the detailed information about the methodic, tests, exams and other academic requirements. The partners have to coordinate their tests and exams system and the conversion of the academic results to ECTS credits.

### **Personnel**

Each university has its own model of the students` exchange management. In some universities it is the professors or the chiefs of the departments themselves who are in charge of the students` exchange. When the exchange starts the professor`s initiative is very important, but in the long run the centralized management of the process is necessary: the students of all specializations may take part in the exchange beyond possible bias on the part of the professor. That is why a special employee - the exchange coordinator - not a professor, has to be in charge of the exchange. He supervises the students` staying in the partner university, being absolutely sure that the academic process, students` accommodation, everyday needs are properly organized by the employees of the partner university. It is recommended that the coordinators of the students` exchange should visit the partner university and have permanent contacts with its personnel.

### **The student selection**

The students – of the 3-d and 4-th year usually – who are supposed to take part in the exchange program have to meet the certain criteria:

- Academic success ( marks 4 and 5 only);
- Good foreign language speaking (English, German, etc.);
- Academic, social, sport activity.

Each university has its own rules for the students` selection. It is also necessary to be aware of the students` motivation and be sure of their adaptation ability. A meeting should be held for the students going abroad so that they may get all the information concerning their education and accommodation in the partner university.

### **Certain problems concerning the students` exchange.**

The first one is insufficient motivation of the students. The exchange program requires additional expenses, so a student has to get all the information about his future expenses as well as the possibility to receive grants. In case when the students don't consider the education abroad desirable the best way to draw their attention to the exchange programs is the "the student marketing". It means getting information from those who have already taken part in the exchange program. The graduate's opinion about their academic experience in the partner universities is very important. The students who hesitate need having the proper information about the exchange programs, the disciplines and the perspectives of the future employment.

The second problem deals with the poor foreign language speaking of the students. The majority of the Russian universities don't have disciplines taught in foreign languages.

The third problem- there is no distinct academic correspondence between the partner universities. Sometimes retesting is rather difficult, though ECTS credit system helps to solve the problem.

The realization of the academic mobility programs requires the permanent control. If the students constantly encounter the living conditions problems or the academic ones it is better to stop contacts with this particular university.

The main document concerning the academic mobility is the **Learning agreement**, giving the information about an individual academic curriculum. The second document is the **Transcript of records** – this is the final certificate.