

PHD APPLICANTS GUIDE

What are the main steps in preparing an application for A4U Erasmus+ grant?



1. Read the call

Read the call carefully, and ensure you meet the eligibility requisites. B2 level of English is equivalent to score 72-94 in TOEFL iBT (after October 2016) and score 5,5-6,5 in IELTS. A table of equivalences of B2 level to other English certificates is available on www.alliance4universities.eu/en/mobility-scholarships/.

Be aware that if you get selected for the exchange program, you would need to have the financial means to pay all the initial costs such as insurance, visa application, flights and then have sufficient funds to cover living expenses for the first week or two upon arrival, since you will receive the grant only once in Spain and once you opened a bank account at a Spanish bank. A significant sum is necessary to prepare for this exchange as Erasmus+ funds only reach the student once he/she is in the country of mobility. You may check if your sending university can assist with a loan.

Those who receive the top-up grant for disadvantage participants will have their flight covered upfront.

Important: the Call is the base document for the mobility scheme, so in case of any doubt, consult it first.

2. Find the host supervisor

Discuss the mobility opportunities with your supervisor. Decide which university you would like to go to by checking their research offer through their website. Factsheets, published together with the call, can provide a snapshot of partner universities and contain useful links. Get an initial idea of departments/academics that might be able to host and supervise you during your mobility through the links below:

UAB PhD programmes <https://www.uab.cat/web/study/phds/all-phd-programmes-1345666995270.html>

Academic departments <https://www.uab.cat/web/research/itineraris/research/departments-1345667277389.html>

Research centres and institutes <https://www.uab.cat/web/research/itineraris/research/institutes-research-centres-1345667277372.html> please check only “UAB-approved research institutes”, and “Studies and Research institutes”.

If applying for UAB, PhD candidates should also provide an invitation letter from the host academic who signed their learning agreement.

UAM PhD programmes: [https://www.uam.es/EscuelaDoctorado/\(en_GB\)-Programas-de-Doctorado-de-UAM/1446711296967.htm?language=en_GB&nodepath=Doctoral%20Programmes&pid=1446711296967](https://www.uam.es/EscuelaDoctorado/(en_GB)-Programas-de-Doctorado-de-UAM/1446711296967.htm?language=en_GB&nodepath=Doctoral%20Programmes&pid=1446711296967)

Research groups: <https://www.uam.es/uam/en/investigacion/grupos-investigacion>

UC3M PhD programmes: <https://www.uc3m.es/phdprogram/home>

Research groups: <https://www.uc3m.es/research/research+groups>

Academic Departments: <https://www.uc3m.es/about-uc3m/departaments>

UPF research offer <https://www.upf.edu/recercaupf>

Doctoral programmes: <https://www.upf.edu/web/doctorats/programes-de-doctorat>

<https://www.upf.edu/web/universitat/presentacio-breu-de-la-upf> scroll to the bottom of the page to view factsheets by field of knowledge.

Approach your potential host academic at the receiving university with your research proposal and CV to check their availability/willingness to act as your host supervisor, and agree on the mobility dates. If necessary, the International Office at the host university (check factsheets for their contact details) might help establish contact or give guidance as to which department/Faculty might be appropriate, but it is not their responsibility to look for your host supervisor as such. This should be done by the applicants themselves.

Finding a host takes time so it is better to start as early as possible. It might turn out that there is no match at your chosen university, so you might need to check with another university. The match is not guaranteed and will depend on the availability of an academic researching in the same area and on the quality of your proposal. Finding this out takes time.

3. Fill in the Learning Agreement

Fill in the necessary information on p.1 of the Learning Agreement template. You don't have to fill in the "number of ECTS credits" column unless you are planning to take courses that you want to have recognized in credits at your home institution. "Web link to the course catalogue" and "Provisions applying if the student does not complete successfully some educational components" can be left blank.

Answer questions on page 2 (motivation statement, overall goals, planned activities and expected outcomes) in English or in Spanish, providing enough information for the evaluators to assess your application. The length of your answers is not limited, just keep it within reasonable limits.

4. Get your Learning Agreement signed

Get your Learning Agreement signed by the host academic at the receiving university (the one who will supervise you during mobility), your supervisor at the sending university, and sign it yourself. Scanned signatures are accepted.

5. Get a recommendation letter

Identify a referee who can provide a recommendation letter for you in English or in Spanish. It can be your supervisor or a course tutor or another member of staff who can provide extra information on your skills, experience and personal attributes. The referee should know you well enough to be able to write positively about you and they should also know you relatively recently to be able to comment on your present development. There is no pre-defined format for the recommendation letter but the referee might want to address questions like:

1. How long and in what capacity have you known the applicant?
2. What are the strengths of the applicant?
3. How will the applicant benefit from a stay abroad?

Ask the referee to send the recommendation letter to coordinacion@a-4u.eu with "Recommendation letter" in the subject field by the application deadline.

6. Have your CV ready

Make sure it is updated and helps the evaluator assess your research skills. There is no pre-determined format for the CV and it can be in English or in Spanish.

7. Participants from disadvantaged backgrounds

If applying for a top-up grant for disadvantaged participants, gather the official documentation that confirms your status as a disadvantaged participant.

8. Submit your application online

Fill in the online application form on <http://alliance4universities.eu/en/mobility-scholarships/>, attaching the signed Learning Agreement and CV. Your application will be checked to make sure everything is correct. It is highly recommended to submit the application well in advance of the deadline to make sure there is enough time for the check.

We often find that the applicant cannot get the learning agreement signed by the receiving institution in time for the deadline. If the applicant started the search one month before the deadline and two weeks down the line still did not have any result, s/he can contact the International Office of the receiving university for help, so that they are aware of the search in process and assist the applicant. However, if the applicant started preparing the application one week before the deadline, and 2-3 days before the deadline asks the International Office for urgent help, little can be done. The International Office is overloaded with similar requests before the deadline, and in any case can only inform academics of interested applicants, rather than make them sign a learning agreement.

Please note that in order for the application to be admitted for selection, we need to receive by a stipulated deadline:

- online application
- CV
- Learning agreement signed by the three parties, the applicant, the sending and the receiving university
- Recommendation letter

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

- **What is a cure period?**

The cure period is a time during which applicants can remedy any deficiencies in their application, such as adding missing information or documentation.

Let us go over the timeline published in the Call and clarify how applications will be processed:

Call opens	Upon publication on A4U website
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<p>Call closes.</p> <p>From 31 March to 17 April, all applications will be checked for completeness and eligibility.</p>	<p>31 March</p>
<p>Publication of provisionally admitted applications on A4U website.</p>	<p>17 April</p>
<p>Cure period: candidates can remedy their applications in case of any clerical errors or incomplete documentation.</p> <p>Only applications submitted by 31 March can be remedied during the cure period. It will not be possible to submit a new application after 31 March.</p>	<p>18-27 April</p>
<p>Publication of the final list of admitted applications.</p> <p>These applications will now undergo evaluation by A4U Selection Committee.</p>	<p>5 May</p>
<p>Publication of selection results</p>	<p>26 May 2023</p>