

University exchanges



Professor Tomáš Zima, Dr Sc, Rector of Charles University in Prague, outlines the current situation with exchange students in the UK to the BCSA Review. Prof Zima was recently re-elected to his post and will serve until 2022

Aim of your last trip to the UK?

In April 2017 a high-level delegation from Charles University visited four prestigious universities in the United Kingdom (Cambridge, Oxford, Edinburgh and St Andrews. Among the delegation were members of the executive board (rector, vice-rectors), vice-deans of several faculties and also academics from various fields of study/research – covering humanities and social sciences to medicine, science and mathematics and physics.

The aim was to discuss possibilities for strengthened co-operation between our institutions especially taking into account Brexit negotiations. Further discussion is foreseen with other universities with which we are already engaged in talks, particularly Imperial

College, London.

Charles University has many highly valued partners in the UK (at present, altogether 127 partnership agreements supporting Erasmus+ exchanges) and with many there is specifically targeted scientific co-operation at department/faculty level).

Effects of Brexit?

Brexit will have an impact on EU research projects as UK universities are highly active in many and contribute significantly to the successful outcomes of the projects.

Brexit will most certainly also have an impact on student mobility. For example, the UK is one of the most popular destinations for Charles University exchange students and on the other hand there are many UK students studying at Charles University through Erasmus+ (97 students in 2016/2017 academic year; 91 already for 2017/2018) while we have not yet finished the nomination and admission processes for the summer term of this year).

Results

During the very fruitful and effective meetings with the authorities and academics of the four universities mentioned, ideas and specific proposals were exchanged on how to establish or deepen the links between our institutions. In the following weeks after the visit several departments of our institutions agreed specific activities (eg exchange of researchers, PhD students, visiting professors and the participation of academics at conferences in the UK and Prague).

There is great mutual interest in co-operating within research projects, exchanging academics and organising joint workshops or other events.

On an institutional level, a memorandum of understanding has been jointly drafted and agreed with the University of Edinburgh and will be signed in the near future. The University of St Andrews also expressed an interest in formalising our

co-operation. Collaboration with Oxford and Cambridge is taking place already within specific departments.

The number of Czech students in the UK: their financial situation, and repayment of loans?

The majority of Charles University students at British universities are financed by the Erasmus+ programme. In the academic year 2016/2017, there are 144 students, in the academic year 2017/2018, there are 130 (the numbers for this year 2017/2018 are not yet complete).

Students are granted Erasmus+ scholarships for their stay in the UK – €500 per month (study period abroad), €600 per month (traineeship).

Charles University also supports UK study or research stays outside the Erasmus+ programme. Students of all fields can apply for financial support from the Charles University mobility fund for their stay abroad.

As for Czech students in the UK in the whole study programme, our university does not have complete statistics on the central level, nor their financial situation.

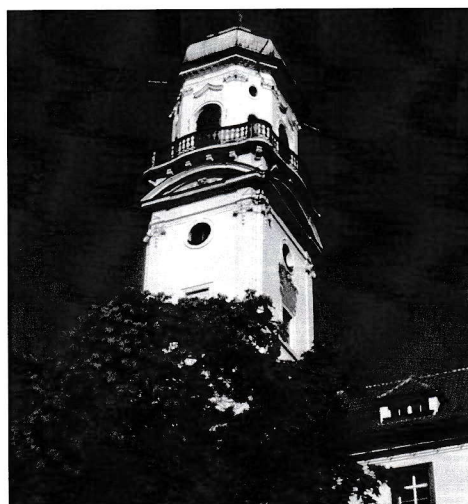
What changes will have to be made with relation to Brexit?

Charles University has strong research and academic links with universities in the UK and appreciates the partnerships and co-operation with them.

The negotiations between the EU and the United Kingdom are ongoing and at this stage it is difficult to predict the outcome and what changes it will bring to student mobility and research collaboration.

However, new ways of co-operation especially with regards to financing will have to be found on both sides. Charles University is already developing bilateral plans together with some British partners on how to proceed, irrespective of the outcomes from EU-UK negotiations.

Nevertheless, Charles University fully supports the continuous involvement of British universities in research projects and programmes on the EU level.



The Klementinum, the historical library of Charles University in Prague