

EDUCATION, AUDIOVISUAL AND CULTURE EXECUTIVE AGENCY

ERASMUS MUNDUS PROGRAMME

ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL HANDBOOK

ACTION 1: ERASMUS MUNDUS MASTERS COURSES

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PURPOSE OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL HANDBOOK

The purpose of this handbook is twofold; on the one hand it shall serve as a useful tool providing guidelines for the successful implementation of the Erasmus Mundus Masters Course (EMMC); on the other hand it outlines the rules applicable to EMMC grants under the Erasmus Mundus Joint Programme. The Handbook forms annex V to the specific grant agreement; consequently, the rules contained in it are contractually enforceable.

The Handbook is also intended to serve both as an aid for Beneficiaries and as a management tool. It is intended to:

- help Beneficiaries to run the Masters Courses and the scholarship scheme efficiently;
- clarify various matters arising from the framework partnership agreement and the specific grant agreement and its annexes;
- provide practical information to which Beneficiaries may refer at the various stages of the Masters Courses and the scholarship scheme;
- provide guidance for Beneficiaries on handling the financial side of Masters Courses and the scholarship scheme in such a way that financial statements can be readily drawn up;
- ensure the smoothest possible relations between the parties involved by setting out an operational framework for the Masters Course and the scholarship scheme.

Sound financial management is essential to ensuring that the best results are produced at a moderate cost.

I. DEFINITIONS

Associated Members: Any organisation that can contribute to the promotion, implementation, evaluation and sustainable development of the EMMC can be considered as an associated member of the consortium. These organisations are expected to contribute to the strategies developed by the EMMC in particular as regards the course sustainability (supporting the consortium in the implementation, organisation and promotion of the course, providing additional revenues/resources such as additional scholarships for future students, etc.) and the students' employability (ensuring that the academic content of the courses meets the relevant professional needs, contributing to the transfer of knowledge and skills, offering complementary skills courses and/or secondment/placement possibilities, etc.).

Beneficiary: the beneficiary (also referred to as “main beneficiary” or “coordinating organisation”) is the organisation that, on behalf of the consortium / partnership / network of participating organisations, has signed an agreement with the Agency; the Beneficiary has the primary legal responsibility towards the Agency for the proper execution of the agreement; it is also responsible for the day-to-day coordination and management of the project and for the usage of the Union funds allocated to the project.

Co-ordinator: the person responsible for the necessary co-ordination and day-to-day management tasks at the implementation stage. The co-ordinator is also the focal point for the Agency on any matters related to the project implementation.

Country Windows: Additional scholarships earmarked for nationals from specific countries or group of countries (e.g. Western Balkans).

Erasmus Mundus Masters Consortium (EMMC): is the group of higher education institutions which offers an Erasmus Mundus Masters Course. The consortium consists of a minimum of three institutions one of which plays the role of co-ordinator

EMMC Agreement: an agreement obligatory to all EMMC's and signed by a legally authorised body of each of the consortium partners (and, if applicable, associated members) clearly laying down the joint masters course academic, administrative and financial rules and procedures in adherence with the rules and requirements as set out in the Erasmus Mundus Programme

Erasmus Mundus Programme Guide: applies to the entire duration of the Programme and gives guidelines for the implementation of joint cooperation activities or receiving individual scholarships within the Erasmus Mundus Programme (2009-2013). It provides explanations to help understand the objectives and the different programme actions, the types of activities that can (or cannot) be supported as well as the conditions under which this support can be granted and the grant awarded used. The guide and all its revisions (apart from exceptional and duly justified cases and accepted by the Agency) is a contractually binding document.

Financial Regulation: Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) N° 1995/2006 of 13 December 2006 amending Regulation N° 1605/2002 on the Financial regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities (OJ L 390/2006 of 30 December 2006); Commission Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 478/2007 of 23 April 2007 amending Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2342/2002 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Union.

Framework Partnership Agreement: The Agency concludes a five-year framework partnership agreement with the beneficiary of each Erasmus Mundus Masters Consortium. It establishes an ongoing, formalised relationship of co-operation between the Agency and the beneficiary on the basis of common objectives in order to contribute to the aims of the Erasmus Mundus programme. The framework partnership agreement is not a grant agreement, but identifies the beneficiary of the Erasmus Mundus Masters Consortium as a privileged partner of the Agency. The beneficiary of the Erasmus Mundus Masters Consortium has the primary legal responsibility towards the Agency for the proper execution of the framework partnership agreement.

Irregularity: means an infringement of a provision of Union law or a breach of a contractual obligation resulting from an act or omission which has or would have the effect of prejudicing the general budget of the European Union or budgets managed by it through unjustified expenditure.

Legal Representative: the person authorised to enter into legal and financial commitments on behalf of the Applicant / Beneficiary organisation.

Master Student: The Erasmus Mundus programme awards scholarships for 2 master student categories; Category A master students (Category A scholarships) and Category B master students (Category B scholarships):

- Category A scholarships are awarded to students who come from a country other than an eligible applicant country and who are not residents nor have carried out their main activity (studies, work, etc.) for more than a total of 12 months over the last five years in one of these countries.
- Category B scholarships are awarded to students who do not fulfil the Category A criteria defined above.

Partner within the consortium: Any HEI recognised as such by the relevant authorities of the country in which it is located can act as a full partner of the consortium implementing an EMMC. While the award of an Erasmus University Charter under the Lifelong Learning Programme constitutes a valid proof of recognition for European HEIs, the Agency will ask European Commission Delegations to liaise with the relevant authorities of the country concerned in order to ensure that the Third-Country HEIs included in the consortium correspond to the definition of an HEI given in Article 2 of the Programme Decision.

Specific Grant Agreement: On the basis of the framework partnership agreement, the Agency concludes annually specific grant agreements with the Applicant of each Erasmus Mundus Masters Consortium selected under Action 1 of the Joint Programme. The duration of the agreement corresponds to the length of the Masters Course.

Student Agreement: an agreement, obligatory to all EM Masters courses, signed between the Consortium and each student enrolled in the joint masters course explicitly indicating any academic, financial and administrative modalities related to the student's participation in the joint course and, if applicable, the award and usage of the scholarship;

II. MODIFICATION OF THE AGREEMENT

If the smooth running of the Masters Course and the scholarship scheme so requires, the Beneficiary has the possibility to introduce certain modifications. Some of these will require an official amendment of the framework partnership and/or specific grant agreements, others the formal approval by the Agency after an exchange of written information and certain minor modifications only need notification to the Agency. The formalities of the procedures for modification are described below.

Where modifications need an official amendment of the framework partnership and/or specific grant agreements the Beneficiary must send the Agency a written request for such amendments, dated and signed by its legal representative or the co-ordinator. In order to be considered by the Agency, amendment requests must be submitted at least 30 calendar days before the end of the period of eligibility detailed in the specific grant agreement concerned, except in cases duly substantiated by the partner and accepted by the Agency. Please note that any request for an amendment must be supported by a detailed justification and full details of the changes sought. Failure to provide such supporting documentation may considerably delay the review process and could lead to a refusal of the request. It should also be noted that if no request for an amendment is submitted, this will cause serious difficulties at the stage of assessing the Progress and Final Report and in certain circumstances can result in a reduction of the final grant.

The Agency will examine, in each case, whether or not to approve the requested amendment and will inform the Beneficiary of its decision. Approval of requests for an amendment is not automatic and Beneficiaries should try to limit, as far as possible, the number of amendments requested during the duration of the specific grant agreement. The amendment may not have as its purpose or effect to modify fundamentally the content of the specific grant agreement.

The amendment, unless otherwise specified, will enter into force once the legal representatives of the Beneficiary and of the Agency have signed the amended agreement.

The purpose of the list of examples below is to inform the Beneficiary which modifications to an Erasmus Mundus Masters Course need to be supported by an official amendment, which modifications require formal approval by the Agency without amending the agreement(s) and which modifications need to be notified to the Agency without the latter's approval being necessary.

A. MODIFICATIONS REQUIRING AN OFFICIAL AMENDMENT

A.1 Change in the composition of the Consortium

The Masters Course was approved on the basis of the Consortium proposed by the applicant in the application. The Consortium is a decisive factor for the quality of the Masters Course. Any change in the Consortium is therefore a substantial change to the Masters Course.

A change in the Consortium may involve one of the partners or the Beneficiary / coordinating institution. The latter case is dealt with separately (see point A.2 below) since it also implies a change in the legal responsibility under the agreement.

As a general rule, a change in Consortium may result either from the arrival of an additional partner (which may under no circumstances lead to an increase in the grant awarded), the departure of a partner, the replacement of one partner by another, or the change of status from associated member to partner and vice versa.

These events will necessarily have an impact on the content and, maybe, the quality of the Masters Course, since the departure of one of the partners or the arrival of a new partner changes the structure of the Masters Course and will affect its teaching/course content. A change in Consortium will also impact on mobility arrangements. It can also have consequences in financial terms, in particular as regards the distribution of the grant and the scholarships among partners as well as payment modalities.

If a change in Consortium is envisaged a new and full description of the Masters Course and the role of each partner institution must be submitted.

This description will be assessed against the eligibility, selection and quality criteria used at application stage, if necessary with the help of external academic experts.

Should the new Consortium be judged ineligible or insufficient in quality, the 5-year framework agreement will be terminated.

It should be stressed that should a partner leave the Masters Course during the period of eligibility, the use of the flat rate and the payment of scholarships by that partner remains an eligible expenditure of the Consortium, provided this expenditure has happened before the partner's departure and that the Beneficiary

is able to supply the relevant supporting documents regarding the payment of scholarships.

Although changes of associated members are not considered to be official amendments it must be noted though that the associated member(s) in a Consortium was (were) considered and evaluated as part of the consortia selection criteria. Thus, any change of associated members shall take the form of a formal approval further explained in Chapter II Article B.4

A.2 Change of the Beneficiary/Coordinating institution

A change of the Beneficiary/Coordinating institution (i.e. replacement by another institution partner within the Consortium) requires an official amendment. Such changes involve a change in the legal responsibility under the framework and running specific grant agreements and are always subject to an official amendment procedure. It should be noted that the new Beneficiary will be responsible for all obligations under the remaining duration of the framework partnership agreement and the entire duration of any specific grant agreement still valid at the time of the amendment (i.e. from the start of the specific grant agreement until its end). Please note that responsibility on closed specific grant agreements remains with the Beneficiary organisation at the time of closure. A change of Beneficiary should always be endorsed by both organisations concerned (endorsement signed by their Legal Representatives): the former Beneficiary who renounces to all its rights and obligations in the context of the framework and specific grant agreement(s) concerned and the new one who agrees to take over the full responsibility of running agreements from the start until the end.

If the change of the Beneficiary has an impact on the content or the quality of the Masters Course, a new and full description of the Masters Course and the role of each partner institution must be submitted. This description will be assessed against the eligibility, selection and quality criteria used at application stage, if necessary with the help of external academic experts. Should the new Consortium be judged ineligible or insufficient in quality, the 5-year framework partnership agreement will be terminated.

A.3 Change in the period of eligibility

Amendments concerning a change in the period of eligibility should be rare as the period of eligibility is linked to the academic year(s) in which the scholarships have to be paid out. Requests to extend the period of eligibility will only be accepted if, after careful scrutiny, the Agency deems that the extension will benefit the ongoing Masters Course and/or scholarship participants. Changing the end of the period of eligibility may also result in the change of the Final Report submission deadline (i.e. should the requested extension be for a period of more than 2 months the reporting deadline may be postponed by the same period by which the period of eligibility has been extended). The extension of the eligibility period cannot exceed 12 months and cannot give rise to additional funding for the consortium or the candidate.

Extension to the eligibility period will **not be** granted if a scholarship holder requires an additional period to catch-up on research activities and/or missed modules due to:

- poor performance,
- prolonged and unjustified absence
- a late start of their activities which necessitates an additional period to catch-up on research activities and/or missed modules.

B. MODIFICATIONS REQUIRING A FORMAL APPROVAL BY THE AGENCY

B.1 Change in the Masters Course

This type of modification include also major changes concerning the mobility arrangements, linguistic aspects, facilities offered to Masters Course participants, and participation costs or similar aspects of the Masters Course.

It should be noted that the Erasmus Mundus Programme Guide points out that selected Erasmus Mundus Masters consortia commit themselves to maintaining the Course substantially in the form approved over the five-year period. The Agency will therefore not approve substantial changes to the content of the Masters Course (e.g. change of discipline or subject of the Course); as such changes would undermine the basis on which the selection decision has been taken.

However, a selected Masters Course must remain of the highest academic quality. Therefore, it is logical and desirable that the content of a Masters Course be adapted to recent developments in the field on a regular basis. Erasmus Mundus Masters consortia are invited to submit these adaptations for approval to the Agency who will send an acknowledgement of receipt. The Agency reserves the right to have the requested changes assessed by external academic experts, if this appears to be appropriate. If the proposed changes undermine the quality of the Masters Course or the basis on which the selection decision has been taken,

the Agency is free to reject them. In the event that the Agency receives a request to increase the participation costs thereby resulting in an overall increase of more than 10% from the originally accepted proposal the Agency reserves the right to request a detailed justification as to the need of the increase and possible implications this will have on the scholarship holders. Further, should the increase exceed the maximum ceiling (indicated in the Programme Guide) a mandatory justification on how the excess amount will be funded must be submitted. In any case any change of the participation costs shall be applicable as of the next edition of the course and may not be applied retro-actively. All such changes need to be reported on in the Progress Reports (see Chapter IV Section C)).

B.2 Change in the budget

As the grant consists of a flat-rate amount for the consortium and an amount based on unit costs for scholarships these cannot be increased nor can a scholarship be awarded to a student for an additional month in order for him / her to “catch up” with his / her studies. However, in the eventuality that the Consortium is left with unused fellowships (full or partial) following drop-outs or no-shows either in Category A or B, an exceptional transfer of a maximum 20% can be requested to compensate for a possible over-demand in the other Category (either A or B). The 20% ceiling is based on the Category A budget.

B.3 Changes in the deadlines for submission of reports

A prolongation of a one month (30 days) of the deadline for submitting reports may be requested. The prolongation request needs to be duly justified. Without any reaction by the Agency within 15 working days after receipt of the request, the change of the deadline for submission of the Final Report is deemed to be approved.

B.4 Change of an associated member within the Consortium

A change of associated member within the existing Consortium is not an official amendment as such and can be handled with an exchange of letters between the beneficiary and the Agency. However since the associated member may play an important role in the promotion, implementation, evaluation and sustainable development of the EMMC and the Consortium as such, such a change must be endorsed by all the partners in the consortium which should also accompany the letter notifying the change to the Agency.

The Agency will acknowledge receipt of the notification by the Beneficiary and if necessary request further information (e.g. in case of a lacking proof of endorsement by the partners). Once approved the Agency shall inform the Beneficiary accordingly via a letter of notification.

C. MODIFICATIONS REQUIRING NOTIFICATION TO THE AGENCY

C.1 Change of Legal Representative within the Beneficiary organisation

A change of Legal Representative within the existing Beneficiary organisation is not an official amendment as such and can be handled with an exchange of letters.

The letter notifying the change to the Agency should be accompanied by an official original document confirming the capacity of the new Legal representative to enter into legal / financial commitments on behalf of the beneficiary organisation. The Agency will acknowledge receipt of the notification letter by the Beneficiary, confirming the change or, if necessary, requesting further information.

C.2 Change of the Co-ordinator of the Beneficiary organisation

A change of Co-ordinator within the existing Beneficiary organisation is not an official amendment as such and can be handled with an exchange of letters between the beneficiary and the Agency. However since the co-ordinator plays a vital role in the management and monitoring of the consortia such change must be endorsed by all the partners in the consortium and this endorsement should accompany the letter notifying the change to the Agency.

The Agency will acknowledge receipt of the notification by the Beneficiary and if necessary request further information (e.g. in case of a lacking proof of endorsement by the partners). Once approved the Agency shall inform the Beneficiary accordingly via a notification letter or e-mail.

C.3 Change of banking information

Change of banking information must be notified to and formally approved by the Agency. Once approved the Agency shall inform the Beneficiary accordingly via a notification letter or e-mail.

This concerns changes which are not covered under point A or B here above and which requires only a notification to Unit P4 for monitoring purposes.

However, Erasmus Mundus Masters Consortia should nevertheless be very careful to ensure that such changes are not in conflict with the basic requirements or the quality criteria for Masters Courses as outlined in the Erasmus Mundus Calls for Proposals and that they do not upset the smooth functioning of the Course.

C.4 Other

All other aspects that are not covered under points A or B above and that necessitate a modification to the agreement. Erasmus Mundus Masters Course Consortia should nevertheless be very careful to ensure that such changes are not in conflict with the basic requirements or the quality criteria for Masters Course as outlined in the Erasmus Mundus Calls for Proposals and that they do not upset the smooth functioning of the Course.

All changes must also be reported to the Agency via the reports (see Chapter IV).

D. SUMMARY TABLE OF MODIFICATION OF AN AGREEMENT

	A Official Amendment (OA)	B Formal Approval (FA)	C Notification (NT)
Type of change	Composition of the Consortia Beneficiary institution Period of eligibility	Masters Course content Budget Deadlines for Reports' submission Associated Member	Legal Representative Co-ordinator Banking information All other modifications not included under OA or FA types of amendments
Special conditions	Acknowledgement of receipt to be sent by the Agency within 15 working days without indicating the Agency's decision on the request. Requests submitted at least 30 days before the end of the period of eligibility detailed in the agreement	Without any reaction by the Agency within 15 working days after the sending of the acknowledgement of receipt, the modifications are deemed to be approved.	The Agency could reject the changes in writing within 15 working days after receipt of the notification
Procedural aspects	Submission of the amendment request form signed by the LR or Coordinator. Amendment in force after signature by the LR and the Agency signatures	Submission of the amendment request form signed by the LR or Co-ordinator. Approved in form of - Exchange of letters - Exchange of e-mails	Submission of the amendment request form signed by the LR or Co-ordinator. Acknowledged in form of - Exchange of letters - Exchange of e-mails

III. FINANCIAL INFORMATION ON AND MANAGEMENT OF THE GRANT

A. FRAMEWORK PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

The Agency concludes a five-year framework partnership agreement with each selected Erasmus Mundus Masters consortium. This framework partnership agreement is not a grant agreement, but it is used to define the minimal requirements and contractual conditions under which the successive specific grant agreements will be signed by both parties.

B. ANNUAL SPECIFIC GRANT AGREEMENTS

On the basis of the framework partnership agreement mentioned above, specific grant agreements are concluded between the Beneficiary and the Agency every year throughout the five-year period covered by the framework partnership agreement. The duration of each specific grant agreement corresponds to the length of the Masters Course offered. The specific grant agreement contains the funding for the scholarships and for the flat rate payment.

Once an Erasmus Mundus Masters Course has been selected, the Agency examines the consortiums grant application for scholarships submitted on a yearly basis (and for 5 consecutive years) by the co-ordinating institution. The grant application includes the list of students and the number of scholars proposed for scholarships in the next Masters Course as well as the budget proposal for the corresponding scholarship funds.

Thereafter, the Agency determines the Union grant in accordance with the rules set out in the Programme Guide, the Erasmus Mundus Call for Proposals and the application form. The Union grant constitutes annex II to the specific grant agreement and thereby becomes a reference point for the assessment of the various Reports to be submitted (see Chapter IV).

The grant will be broken down into:

- A flat rate of € 30.000 for the consortium offering the Masters Course;
- Scholarship funds for Category A students
- Scholarship funds for Category B students
- Scholarship funds for Third Country scholars
- Scholarship funds for European scholars (only applicable if the Masters Course includes mobility tracks toward non-European partners (/associated members))

The scholarship funds are further divided as follows:

Category A students:

- A fixed contribution to travel, installation and other types of costs. These contributions amount to € 4.000 per student (for a one year EMMC) or € 8.000 per student for courses longer than one year. The term "longer than one year" refers to courses that, in their application, propose a duration longer than 2 semesters.
- Participation costs (including insurance coverage). The Agency contributes up to € 4.000 per student per semester to any participation and insurance costs of the EMMC. If the semestrial costs are lower the Agency's contribution is adjusted accordingly. Any amount exceeding this amount should be contributed through other funding options than the Erasmus Mundus scholarship. In these cases, a mandatory justification on how the excess amount will be funded must be submitted.
- Monthly allowance for costs of living: € 1.000 for the real duration of the course in months on the basis of the submitted application this duration also includes any academic breaks. The maximum contribution shall be €24.000 per student. The maximum contribution may not be exceeded even in the event that the duration of the Masters Course exceeds 24 months (i.e. from the beginning of the Masters Course activities up to graduation).

Category B students:

- A fixed contribution to travel, installation and other types of costs. These contributions amount to € 3.000 per student and are ONLY eligible if the EMMC includes a mobility to a Third Country partner/associated member.
- Participation costs (including insurance coverage). The Agency contributes up to € 2.000 per

student per semester to any participation and insurance costs of the EMMC. If the semestrial costs are lower the Agency's' contribution is adjusted accordingly. Any amount exceeding this amount should be contributed through other funding options than the Erasmus Mundus scholarship. In the event of no other funding a mandatory justification on how the excess amount will be funded must be submitted.

- Monthly allowance for costs of living: € 500 for the real duration of the course in months on the basis of the submitted application this duration also includes academic breaks. The maximum contribution shall be €12.000 per student. The maximum contribution may not be exceeded even in the event that the duration of the Masters Course exceeds 24 months (i.e. from the beginning of the Masters Course activities up to graduation).

Scholarships for Third Country scholars and European scholars (the latter if the course includes a mobility track to Third Country partners / associated members):

- € 1.200 per week (a week shall be counted as 4 - 7 consecutive calendar days) for each scholar (the minimum duration is 2 weeks, corresponding to 2 x 1.200 (= 2.400) and the maximum duration is 3 months, corresponding to 12 x 1.200 (= 14,400)

The specific grant agreement is concluded annually throughout the five-year period subject to:

- whether the course has been delivered in accordance with the proposal and the Erasmus Mundus programme rules
- whether Erasmus Mundus grantees have followed the course
- whether high standards of quality have been maintained
- approval by the Agency of the annual grant application for scholarships submitted by the co-ordinating institution of the consortium which includes a list of (category A and category B) students proposed to participate in the next Masters Course as well as the budget proposal for the corresponding scholarship funds. The details of the selected students have to be submitted through the Online Mobility Database. The Agency will provide all consortia each year concrete instructions on the database and concerning the grant application, in line with the Programme Guide and the Call for Proposals.

C. MANAGEMENT OF THE FLAT RATE

The Agency pays the flat rate of € 30.000 to the co-ordinating institution in two instalments, in accordance with the payment arrangements laid down in Article 4 of the specific grant agreement. The co-ordinating institution is responsible for distributing this flat rate within the Consortium in accordance with its Consortium Agreement. Although the Agency does not request financial justifications for the payment of the flat rate it needs nevertheless, through the final report, to be informed how the flat rate was used (/distributed between the partners).

D. MANAGEMENT OF THE SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS

D.1 General Principles

The Agency pays the scholarships funds to the co-ordinating institution in two instalments in accordance with the payment arrangements laid down in Article 4 of the specific grant agreement. The Erasmus Mundus consortium pays the scholarships funds to the grantees in accordance with the arrangements agreed within the consortium and the following principles:

- Grantees are free to use their scholarships as they wish;
- Scholarships are intended for full-time study (students) and work (scholars); The programme however does not foresee any restrictions for re-numerated work outside the scholarship activities providing:
 - It is in line with the national legislation of the country(ies) concerned (i.e. the visa or residence permit allows it and that the terms of their student agreement allows it,
 - The scholarship holder can still dedicate the necessary efforts to the Masters Course's mandatory activities in order to complete it successfully within the agreed period.

- A scholarship holder may receive additional funding for their study/research activities providing these are not from other European Commission sources/programmes
- The regular scholarship payments to the student can only be stopped if the grantee is expelled or released from course, or leaves on their own demand. The scholarship payments can not be used by the consortium as a “conditionality” mechanism i.e. to improve performance, ensure presence/participation etc.
- The Consortium shall be held responsible for any amount paid to ineligible students/scholars. Ineligible are those students/scholars that neither comply with the Programmes eligibility criteria nor with the Consortium specific eligibility/selection criteria. Any such unduly paid amounts may be recovered by the Agency.
- The Consortium shall be held responsible for any amount overpaid to the students/scholars. Overpaid amounts are considered to be payments made to candidates for a period in which they were not actively participating in the programme i.e. A student/scholar having received an instalment for month “n” whereas they have left the programme in month “n - 1”.

Specific to students:

- The fixed contribution to travel, installation and other types of costs for Category A students (€ 4.000 per student for a one year EMMC or € 8.000 per student for courses that last longer than one academic year) must be paid in full to the students in a minimum of two instalments. The term "longer than one academic year" refers to courses that, in their application, propose a duration longer than 2 semesters.
- Participation costs can be charged directly by the Consortia to the individual student scholarship amount on a semestrial basis. The amount of participation costs charged to the student must be clearly specified in the Student Agreement which is to be signed between the student and the consortium.
- The monthly allowance for living costs (i.e. € 1.000/month for Category A students and 500/month for Category B students) must be paid in full to the students concerned and must be paid to these on a monthly basis. In duly justified cases and if approved by the Agency in accordance with Chapter II Article B.1 of this handbook, the payment periodicity can cover up to a maximum of three months;
- The monthly allowance can only be paid as from the month of arrival. This is especially pertinent to late arrivals of students to the Course.
- It is not allowed to split the payments into more than 24 instalments
- The payment arrangements to the grantees must be in line with the provisions detailed in the relevant student agreements.

Specific to scholars:

- The weekly allowance for scholars i.e.1.200/week including travel costs. The minimum period of stay for scholars is two weeks. There are no deviations possible from the weekly amount. In case a scholar stays for a period of 2 weeks and 3 days, the amount paid should be 2.400; in cases where a scholar stays 3 weeks and 4 days the amount paid should be 4.800. The amounts for scholars cannot be altered;

D.2 Management of the scholarship funds in case of dropout/rejection from the Masters Course

If a student grantee decides to withdraw their application before or during their study period or if they are excluded from the Masters Course due to lack of (/insufficient) performance, the Consortium has the possibility to reallocate the remaining monthly allowance, participation costs and fixed contribution costs to another student. Such replacements must be notified to and approved in advance by the Agency in accordance with Chapter II Section B of this Handbook. Additionally the consortium should bear the following in mind:

- The grantee **must have been included in the reserve list** of the same cohort which was presented to and approved by the Agency in the context of the scholarship candidates selection procedure
- The **geographical balance criteria** should be respected
- The new scholarship recipient **must be capable to complete the Masters Course** within the same period as all other participants from the same cohort
- The reallocation of scholarships **is only possible in the first few months** of the cohorts

activities unless the potential grantee is included in the reserve list and is **already enrolled** in the same EMMC on a self-paying basis.

At the time of the candidate withdrawal (/consortium decision to stop the scholarship payment), the consortium must inform the Agency of the unspent amount (i.e. the remaining parts of the student's monthly allowance, participation costs and fixed contribution costs) and, if applicable, its proposal to reallocate it either to another scholarship candidate or to request a budgetary transfer between Category A and B in accordance with Section II Article B.2. Further details on the withdrawal/cancellation of a scholarship will have to be provided in the progress report and/or request for further pre-financing but in any case with the final report.

In this context, and prior to the students receiving any payment, the Consortia should ask them to sign a declaration whereby they bind themselves, in the eventual case of termination of the course (e.g. student did not reach the minimum requirements to continue, lack of active participation, due to personal reasons/choices etc), to reimburse the portion of the amount received which exceeds their actual insofar incurred expenditure (i.e. based on the number of months they attended/completed, and/or a copy of their "return ticket"). This should be further elaborated in the student agreement.

D.3 Management of the scholarship funds in case of course interruption

A scholarship can be put on hold if the student has to temporarily leave the Masters Course following duly justified and well documented reasons. In such a case the scholarship payment must be interrupted until the candidate is physically present again at their host institution and can actively participate in the course activities.

If despite the temporary absence the candidate can catch up on their modules/research activities without needing to extend the originally agreed eligibility period, the monthly allowances corresponding to the period of interruption could be paid to the candidate after seeking authorisation from the Agency.

If on the contrary, the absence is too long and requires an extension of the originally agreed eligibility period, the consortium must send the Agency a duly substantiated request to extend this eligibility period for the specific agreement in question. Such an extension will be granted after the reception and approval of the relevant documents (justification of the candidate's absence), and will lead to an amendment of the specific agreement (see Chapter II Article A3 above). The extension cannot exceed 12 months and cannot give rise to additional funding for the consortium or the candidate.

E. PAYMENT OF THE GRANT

As stated under Article 4 of the specific grant agreement, the first pre-financing payment shall be made to the Beneficiary within 45 days of the date when the last of the two parties signs the agreement.

This first pre-financing payment for an Erasmus Mundus Masters Course (EMMC) will represent:

80% of the Grant amount for an EMMC lasting one academic year;

or

70% of the Grant amount for an EMMC lasting more than one academic year.

The further pre-financing payment corresponding to the remaining part of the grant will be paid after the reception by the Agency of a formal payment request submitted by the beneficiary and confirming that at least 70% of the first pre-financing amount has been used. Such justification shall be made using the "Further Pre-financing Request" form in annex III to the specific grant agreement.

The Agency shall have 90 days to both approve the report and execute the further pre-financing payment or to reject the report/request and ask for additional supporting documents or information. In case of the latter the partner shall have 15 days to submit the additional information requested or to submit a new report.

The beneficiary i.e. coordinating institution has the responsibility to distribute the lump sum and scholarship payments to the consortium partners in line with the provisions foreseen in the signed consortium agreement.

F. BANK ACCOUNT

The account or sub-account specified in the specific grant agreement and to which the Erasmus Mundus grant will be paid should be:

- in the name of the Beneficiary institution (personal accounts are not acceptable under any circumstances);
- denominated in Euro;
- must be able to identify the payments made by the Agency as well as any interest generated on

this account;

- in one of the 27 Member States of the EU or an EFTA-EEA state.

Cash withdrawals from the account must be substantiated by receipts.

Interests gained on pre-financing payments must be declared at Final Report stage and will be either deducted from the final payment (in the event that no further pre-financing request was submitted) or recovered in accordance to the corresponding article of the Framework Partnership Agreement.

In the eventuality that the nominated account or sub-account is not denominated in € the beneficiary, for reporting purposes shall use the monthly exchange rate applicable at the time when the last of the two parties signed the specific grant agreement.

The payment of the scholarship to the students/scholars in a currency different to the Euro shall be made using the daily exchange rate on which the grant recipient is paid and ensuring that they always receive the Euro counter equivalent – any exchange rate gain/loss is to be managed by the Beneficiary/coordinating institution.

G. ACCOUNTING SYSTEM / INTERNAL CONTROL

The Beneficiary must set up an adequate accounting system, which must make it possible to easily identify the payment of scholarships to participating students and scholars at anytime throughout the period of implementation of the specific grant agreements until their balances are paid and for a period of five years from the date of payment of the balance for the corresponding action.

All transactions relating to the scholarship scheme must be recorded using a numbering system in which the scholarship scheme is given a specific identifiable number.

As far as possible, the persons responsible for managing the daily activities of the scholarship scheme should not be the same as those responsible for its financial management.

H. MANAGEMENT OF THE CONSORTIUM

Any partner organisation whose name does not appear in the original application submitted by the Beneficiary or whose participation in the Masters Course has not been approved in advance in writing by the Agency, will not be recognised as such in the framework of the specific grant agreement, and as a result, all costs relating to such a partner will be considered ineligible.

The Beneficiary is solely responsible for the relations between partners, in particular including the dividing up of the grant between the Beneficiary and its partners.

IV. TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL REPORTS

A. GENERAL REMARK

Monitoring of the Masters Course implementation is ensured by the reports, by follow-up visits organised by the Agency, and by the consultation of the data recorded by the EMMC in the EM mobility database (<https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-mundus/index.cfm>).

Reporting is a crucial phase of the Masters Course since it allows a review and an assessment of:

- the maintained quality of the Masters Course;
- the participation of the selected students and scholars in the Masters Course as well as the payment of scholarships to these students and scholars;
- the correct handling of the scholarship funds disbursed by the Masters Course Consortium to student and scholar grant holders.

In order to ensure an efficient monitoring of the EMMC, different type of reports will have to be submitted throughout the Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) and Specific Grant Agreement (**SGA**) duration. For both 1 and 2 year EMMCs (and in accordance with Article 5 of the SGAs):

- Progress Report (**PR**) Annex III to the specific grant agreement) only for the very first SGA issued under the framework partnership agreement.
- Further Pre-financing Request (**PF**) Annex III to the specific grant agreement) to be submitted for every SGA when at least 70% of the first instalment has been spent.
- Final Report (**FR**) (annex IV to the specific grant agreement) shall be submitted after the end of the SGA's eligibility period;

The shaded columns below represent the "overlapping" reporting phases throughout the lifetime of a FPA. Specifically this means that each submitted report must refer to any activities implemented in each and all ongoing editions of the EMMC (including the preparatory activities for the next edition).

Although the dates for the progress report (PR) and final report (FR) are contractually stipulated, the submission of the further pre-financing request (PF) is indicative and dependant on when the consortium has disbursed at least 70% of its first pre-financing payment. However for the sake of efficiency (and simplification) it is highly recommended that the request for the further pre-financing for the ongoing edition is submitted with the Final report of the previous edition thus allowing the submission (and processing) of one single combined report rather than two separate reports.

The less than 2 year Masters Course follows this reporting pattern:

Year N	N+1			N+2			N+3			N+4			N+5			
Jun Dec	Mar	Jun	Nov	Dec	Jun	Nov	Dec	Jun	Nov	Dec	Jun	Nov	Dec	Jun	Nov	Dec
SGA	PR		FR													
	SGA	PF			FR											
				SGA	PF			FR								
							SGA	PF				FR				
										SGA	PF				FR	

The reporting pattern of a 2 year EMMC (in essence the same as above with the exception of the final report due 1 year later):

Year N	N+1			N+2			N+3			N+4			N+5		
Jun Dec	Mar Jun Nov Dec	Jun Nov Dec	Jun Nov Dec	Jun Nov Dec	Jun Nov Dec	Jun Nov Dec	Jun Nov Dec	Jun Nov Dec	Jun Nov Dec	Jun Nov Dec	Jun Nov Dec	Jun Nov Dec	Jun Nov Dec		
SGA	PR		PF		FR										
	SGA			PF		FR									
			SGA		PF		FR								
					SGA		PF		FR						
							SGA		PF		FR				
								SGA		PF		FR	Etc...		

As the Reports are the main monitoring and evaluation tools, they must provide as complete and accurate a picture of the state of play of the Masters Course and the scholarship scheme as possible. Beneficiaries are therefore advised to read the Report forms carefully so that they are familiar with the content and aware of the accounting information required for their completion. Special attention should be paid to the instructions on the report forms.

B. FORMAL REQUIREMENTS FOR REPORTS

For the Agency to be able to assess the reports the forms in the annex to the specific grant agreement (Annex III for the Progress Report and Further Pre-financing Request, and annex IV for the Final Report) must be used. The Agency will provide the beneficiaries with the electronic format of the form approximately one calendar month before the submission deadline of the report. If a report is not presented in its correct form or is presented in an incomplete way, the Agency may decide not to analyse it until its formal presentation is correct. If the Agency is not able to obtain the report in the correct format, the grant may be revoked, the Masters Course cancelled and the Beneficiary required to reimburse the Agency the grant already paid.

All submitted reports must be accompanied by endorsed print-outs from the online database guaranteeing the accuracy and completeness of the data contained therein.

C. PROGRESS REPORT

A "Progress Report" (Annex III of the specific grant agreement) is to be submitted on 15 March following the year of signature of the first Specific Grant Agreements. The report must cover the reporting period from the start of the specific grant agreement to the submission date of the Progress Report. For all remaining editions of the five-year framework partnership agreement reporting on ongoing editions of the EMMC will be provided both in the request for further pre-financing and in the final report of the recently concluded edition (see Section D and E for more information).

The purpose of the "Progress Report" is:

- to ensure that the Masters Course (and Consortium) gets off to a successful start at the beginning of the framework partnership agreement
- to ensure that the Masters Course is being delivered in line with the approved and accepted application,
- to address immediately any unexpected problems which arise during the first phase of the Masters Course implementation
- to ensure that any conditional eligibility criteria have been respected and fulfilled (e.g. signing of a consortium agreement etc.)
- to ensure that all necessary evaluation and quality assurance mechanisms are in place ensuring not only a smooth running of the Masters Course but also the regular evaluation of students/scholars and the qualitative content of the course.

In case of patent non-compliance with such high quality standards the Agency may cancel the Masters Course and ask for the reimbursement of the grant.

D. REQUEST FOR FURTHER PRE-FINANCING

Once 70% of the first instalment has been used up the Beneficiary is entitled to request the payment of the remaining part of the grant.

In order to do so, they need to fill in and submit the "further pre-financing request form" (Annex III of the specific grant agreement). This payment request must include:

- an overview of the financial implementation of the students' and scholars' scholarship scheme in order for the Agency to check the level of consumption of the first instalment;
- a summary of the activities undertaken since the submission of the last report for all ongoing editions of the EMMC

Upon approval of this financial statement, the next pre-financing payment can be paid to the Beneficiary. The Agency reserves the right not to pay the full amount of the further pre-financing payments if it is clear that the consortium will not be able to pay the full amount of scholarships specified in the specific grant agreement due to dropouts who will not be replaced by students or scholars from the reserve list.

E. FINAL REPORT

E.1 General Principles

The purpose of the Final Report is to evaluate both the implementation of the scholarship scheme and the implementation of the Masters Course for the corresponding student cohort. Its further purpose is to financially close the specific grant agreement. Therefore, all expenditures must have been incurred and all scholarships paid to grantees before the Final Report is submitted (see Article 5 of the specific agreement).

The reporting period of the Final Report covers the period of eligibility of the specific grant agreement. However due to the overlapping nature of the Final Report with ongoing Masters Courses all final reports are expected, in an annex, to report on the development and progress of the ongoing Masters Courses in terms of Course content and administration.

Approval of the Final Report by the Agency does not imply that the Agency recognises the regularity or correctness of the Report's content. A consortium can always be subject to an audit (see Chapter V of this Handbook).

E.2 Description of the Masters Course and the scholarship scheme for the already concluded academic year(s)

This part of the Final Report is intended to provide a detailed picture of how the scholarship scheme was implemented, possible problems encountered and what measures the consortium has taken (/will take) to avoid these problems in the successive cohorts. It also provides a summary description of the implementation of the ongoing rounds of the Masters Course.

When answering the questions relating to the technical part of the Final Report, the Beneficiary should go back and duly up-date what has been written in previous reports taking into account the feedback received by the Agency on the report(s) concerned.

E.3 Financial part: declaration of expenditure under the scholarship scheme

This part of the Final Report consists of a detailed declaration of the scholarships paid out under the Erasmus Mundus scholarship scheme during the whole duration of the specific grant agreement. This declaration is based on unit costs per grantee as described in annex II to the specific grant agreement and the Final Report form. The amounts to be declared concern only the Erasmus Mundus funding and not any other co-funding amounts that the consortium may have used. Interests gained on pre-financing payments must also be declared in the Final Report. In the eventuality that no interest was earned it must be clearly mentioned with an explanation as to why not.

Copies of supporting documents (payment slips, receipts, bank statements, etc.) need not be supplied with the Final Report. However, in carrying out a review and analysis of the figures declared in the declaration of expenditure, the Agency may ask the Beneficiary for further details and copies of the supporting documents. Such a request may also occur as a result of a sampling exercise carried out every year on a number of Final Reports. The Beneficiary must supply the information requested within 15 days. Failure to do so may result in a reduction or even the cancellation of the grant.

E.4 Possible reimbursement of part of the grant

The Agency will analyse the declaration of expenditure in order to arrive at the final Union grant. This analysis may lead to a request for reimbursement of a certain amount (e.g. interests gained on pre-financing or reimbursement of unpaid scholarships due to dropout of students), as the totality of the grant has been paid to the Beneficiary in advance. If the Beneficiary has to reimburse a certain amount a recovery order will be issued by the Agency for the agreement in question. The financial analysis of the Final Report will be explained to the Beneficiary in a settlement letter.

E.5 Appeals

If the Beneficiary does not agree with the final grant awarded or the reimbursement claimed by the Agency, then it may submit an appeal to the Agency. In order to be valid, the appeal must be in writing, signed and dated by the legal representative of the coordinating institution, and sent to the Agency within 60 days of the date of the settlement letter. The Beneficiary should set out fully the grounds upon which it disputes the decision of the Agency, together with copies of any relevant supporting documents or justifications upon which it relies. The grounds of the appeal must be based on new elements or facts which were not taken into consideration when the Final Report was originally analysed. It should be noted that the Agency may reject an appeal which is not submitted within the 60 day period or which does not contain the necessary justifications or documentation.

F. ADDITIONAL PROGRESS REPORTS

In addition to the reports detailed in this chapter, the Agency may, at any time, request the Beneficiary to produce an additional report on the progress of the Masters Course and the scholarships scheme to date, covering both its technical and financial aspects. The purpose of such an additional report is to verify that high standards of quality are maintained for the Masters Course and that the scholarship scheme is being managed and implemented in accordance with the rules set out in the framework partnership agreement, the specific grant agreement and their annexes.

G. FINAL SUMMARY REPORT AT THE END OF THE FIVE YEAR PERIOD

At the end of the framework partnership period for which a Masters Course has been selected, the coordinating institution of the consortium shall submit a Final Summary Report on the experience of running the Masters Course and the scholarship scheme. This Final Summary Report will cover the entire eligibility period and will be a summary of the findings of the annual Final Reports. A report form for this Final Summary Report will be made available by the Agency at the time of the last renewal of the Masters Course.

V. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS & AUDITS

A. GENERAL REMARK

As set out in the framework partnership agreement, an operational and / or financial audit can be carried out on-the-spot by the Agency or by any other outside body authorised by the Agency at any time. The European Commission, the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) and the European Court of Auditors may also carry out on-the-spot checks and inspections. Such audits may be carried out throughout the period of implementation of the specific grant agreements until their balances are paid and for a period of five years from the date of payment of the balance for the corresponding action.. In such cases, the Beneficiary will be notified that an inspection visit will be made.

On receipt of this notification, the Beneficiary is advised to ensure that all the original documentation likely to be examined by the auditors is available and, if necessary, contact the partner institutions of the consortium in order to collect any documents that may be missing. The audit will cover the management of the scholarship scheme not only by the Beneficiary, but also by the partner institutions. The audit will not cover the flat rate granted under Action 1.

The purpose of these audits is twofold:

- firstly, to check that the consortium's financial Reports presented for payment are consistent with the Beneficiary's basic accounts and to ensure that Union funds are being / have been spent in accordance with the framework partnership agreement, the specific grant agreement and its annexes and that the scholarships scheme is being / has been implemented;
- secondly, audits provide a good opportunity for contact and dialogue between the auditors and the Beneficiary. If any management problems are found, the auditors will work with the Beneficiary to seek a solution and, if necessary, improve existing internal procedures in order to make the best possible use of Union funds. The auditors will be open to any comments and / or suggestions that the Beneficiary and the partners may wish to make.

The main assessment criterion is transparency. It is essential for the auditors to have access to full, accurate and properly documented information. To this effect all original invoices or accounting documents of an equivalent value relating to the Action must be kept for a period of five years from the closure date of the framework partnership agreement / specific grant agreement.

B. DOCUMENTS REQUIRED

In principle, supporting documents must satisfy the following conditions:

- documents from the Beneficiary must be original and dated;
- documents from the partners must be certified copies of the original. However, the Agency reserves the right to have originals made available to it at any time.

The supporting documents required must prove that the scholarships have been paid out to the selected students and scholars and can take the form of payment slips, receipts, invoices, proofs of stays, bank statements, etc. Supporting documents for the spending of the annual flat rate need not be provided.

As a general rule, the Beneficiary must provide the auditors with all bank documents. The Beneficiary and partner institutions' accounting records, analytical accounts and annual statements must also be available.

If the Beneficiary cannot provide adequate supporting documents or if the supporting documents available do not satisfy the requirements set out in this chapter, the auditors reserve the right to deduct the costs in question from the Union grant.

C. FINDINGS AND OUTCOME

Audit Reports are internal documents and are confidential. However, the Beneficiary will be informed in writing of the audit findings within a period of four months from the date of when the audit was carried out.

The audit will lead to one of the following results:

- The audit is entirely satisfactory: the auditors have found no significant shortcomings in the financial management or other aspects of the management of the scholarship scheme;
- Expenses not covered by supporting documents have been found: these will entail a demand for reimbursement to the Agency.

VI. EMMC MONITORING

A. MONITORING VISIT

During the life of the framework partnership agreement the Agency (with a possible participation of the National Structures) will visit the Consortium at least once in the context of a monitoring visit.

The monitoring visit should help to ensure that serious problems are avoided through the very early identification of any difficulties inhibiting the project's successful implementation. A monitoring visit gives both applicants and the Agency the opportunity to improve the quality of projects as a whole.

This should in no way be seen as an Audit. The financial monitoring will consist in identifying what arrangements are there to control and monitor project implementation and to detail any problems.

Occasions for monitoring visits:

- visit by Agency representative(s) to a partnership meeting (during the student selection exercise);
- visit by Agency representative(s) to the premises of the coordinator/partner organisation (during one of the annual consortium meetings);
- Additional project monitoring methods may be developed in response to new needs that arise. If the monitoring requires a visit to coordinators premises, the Agency will confirm in advance and in writing the purpose of the visit, the issues to be addressed and, where appropriate, the list of documents that should be made available or submitted in advance.

The Agency will provide feedback to the coordinator after any meeting has taken place.

The Agency's visit to the coordinating and/or partner institution can take place at any time during the lifetime of the project. The objectives of the visit are: to verify the status of the project's implementation, organisation and implementation of the mobility; to obtain a clear picture of how well the project is being managed; to see how well partners are cooperating; and to provide the project with support and guidance. At a more detailed level, the visit will focus on the follow-up of the mobility implementation, communication between the partners, administrative practices, project documents as well as on general questions relating to the financial management of the project. The Agency shall also require meeting with EMMC student scholarship holders.

During this visit the Agency representatives may wish to use the opportunity to cover specific areas related to project implementation as well as to cover management issues with the coordinator and other project representatives.

B. MEETINGS ORGANISED BY THE AGENCY

Representatives of the consortium must participate in meetings organised by the Agency up to two meetings per SGA. Expenditure related to this participation must be financed by the consortium out of the flat rate referred to in Article I.4.1 of the Framework Partnership Agreement.