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The Attractiveness of Curriculum-Embedded Mobility in Higher Education: Students' Perspective

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Abstract

Curriculum-embedded mobility places an international learning experience within the formal structure of a study programme and may make participation compulsory for programme completion. This study examined students' perceptions of a model involving mandatory physical mobility, which could be short-term or extend to one or two semesters, with particular attention to perceived benefits, barriers, programme attractiveness, and institutional support. A convergent mixed-methods online survey was completed by 134 higher education students originating from 20 countries and studying in 17 countries. Most respondents were aged 18-28 (89.5%), 64.9% were women, 52.2% were bachelor's students, and 42.5% had previous physical mobility experience. Quantitative analyses combined descriptive statistics, non-parametric group comparisons, reliability and exploratory dimensionality checks, and Spearman correlations. Open-ended responses were analysed thematically and integrated with the quantitative results. Students with previous mobility experience reported strong academic, intercultural, linguistic, and transversal-skill benefits. Across the full sample, 92.5% indicated that embedded mobility would increase programme attractiveness, although responses also displayed limited variability and possible ceiling effects. Costs and living expenses were the most widely endorsed barrier, followed by complex procedures, curricular compatibility, and insufficient guidance. Students with and without previous mobility did not differ in their general attitudes towards embedded mobility, but previously mobile students perceived fewer barriers and expressed greater interest in a concrete master's programme requiring a semester abroad. Among mobile students, perceived institutional support, mobility valuation, perceived impact, and embedded-mobility attitudes were positively associated. Qualitative responses clarified that favourable evaluations were conditional on predictable recognition, adequate funding, curricular fit, and flexibility for students unable to travel. Embedded mobility therefore appears attractive to many students, but its legitimacy as a curricular requirement depends on whether institutions make participation academically coherent, financially feasible, and administratively dependable.

Keywords: curriculum-embedded mobility; higher education internationalisation; student perceptions; academic recognition; equity; European Higher Education Area.

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1. Introduction

Internationalisation has become an integral dimension of higher education, extending beyond voluntary exchanges towards the systematic inclusion of international and intercultural learning in curricula. Within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), mobility windows, joint programmes, blended mobility, and European University Alliances have contributed to a gradual shift from mobility as an additional opportunity towards mobility as a planned component of educational provision (EHEA, 2009, 2012; European Commission et al., 2025; Ferencz et al., 2013). This shift is visible in programmes in which an international learning period is credit-bearing, aligned with programme learning outcomes, and required for successful completion.

In this article, *curriculum-embedded mobility* refers to physical international mobility formally integrated into a study programme or other educational activities. As presented to survey respondents, it could be short-term or extend to one or two semesters, and all students enrolled in the relevant programme would be expected to participate. This definition is narrower than broader forms of internationalisation at home or virtual exchange and more specific than optional mobility undertaken alongside a programme, placing particular responsibility on the programme consortium and participating institutions because students cannot be expected to absorb avoidable academic, administrative, or financial risks created by a curricular requirement.

The potential educational value of mobility is well established, as international experience may support intercultural learning, transversal skills, language development, academic engagement, and professional orientation (European Commission et al., 2014; Krzaklewska, 2008; Lesjak et al., 2015). Yet participation remains socially uneven since financial constraints, family and employment responsibilities, recognition uncertainty, curricular incompatibility, and administrative burden continue to restrict access (Brooks et al., 2024; Hovdhaugen & Wiers-Jenssen, 2021; Muja et al., 2024). Embedding mobility in a curriculum may reduce some of these uncertainties through prior planning and automatic recognition, but compulsion can also intensify them when funding, flexibility, and alternatives are inadequate.

Students' acceptance is therefore not a secondary implementation issue. A programme that formally guarantees international exposure may be attractive because it signals coherent academic design, predictable recognition, and equal access to an experience otherwise dependent on individual initiative. The same programme may be unattractive when the required mobility is unaffordable, poorly aligned with students' academic interests, or incompatible with health, work, disability, or caring responsibilities. This balance makes embedded mobility a useful test of how internationalisation distributes responsibility between students and institutions.

The present study examines how students evaluate a hypothetical programme model containing mandatory curriculum-embedded physical mobility, distinguishing between previous mobility experience, general attitudes towards embedded mobility, the perceived effect of mobility on programme attractiveness, and interest in a concrete

master's-programme scenario. This distinction is important because the study does not compare observed outcomes from equivalent optional and compulsory programmes. Instead, it combines respondents' reports of previous physical mobility with their evaluations of explicitly described embedded-mobility scenarios.

2. Literature review and conceptual framing

2.1. *Embedded mobility as curricular design*

The concept of *embedded mobility* is closely connected to the mobility window: a period reserved within a curriculum for study abroad and supported by prior curricular planning and recognition arrangements (Ferencz et al., 2013). The defining feature is not that mobility receives credit, but that it is anticipated in programme sequencing and connected to learning outcomes, assessment, and progression. Embedded mobility can therefore range from short, course-based mobility to a semester or year located within a joint or networked curriculum.

Internationalisation of the Curriculum provides a relevant pedagogical frame because it treats international and intercultural learning as part of curriculum design rather than an extracurricular addition (Beelen & Jones, 2015; Leask, 2015). From this perspective, mobility has educational legitimacy when its learning outcomes, teaching arrangements, assessment, and recognition are constructively aligned. *Transformative Learning theory* provides a complementary account of how encounters with unfamiliar cultural and academic contexts may prompt reflection and perspective change (Mezirow, 2000). Neither perspective, however, removes the practical question of whether students can participate on equitable terms.

European policy has increasingly promoted diversified and more integrated mobility formats. The Bologna mobility objective, Erasmus+, joint programmes, blended intensive programmes, and European University Alliances all seek to widen access while improving recognition and curricular coherence (EACEA, 2020; EHEA, 2012; European Commission, 2025; European Commission et al., 2025). Nevertheless, institutional implementation remains constrained by incompatible calendars, recognition practices, administrative workload, and uneven legal or quality-assurance arrangements (Colucci et al., 2012; Crăciun et al., 2023; López-Duarte et al., 2021). Embedded mobility is consequently better understood as an institutional design commitment than as a self-executing policy instrument.

2.2. *Student value, participation, and equity*

Students commonly associate international mobility with academic development, career prospects, personal growth, cultural exploration, and language acquisition (Bryntesson et al., 2018; Krzaklewska, 2008; Lesjak et al., 2015). Large-scale evaluations similarly report perceived gains in transversal skills and employability-related competences (European Commission et al., 2014). These benefits are not uniform, however, and retrospective evaluations may reflect self-selection: students who participate are often

already motivated, mobile, and comparatively well positioned to manage the costs and uncertainty involved.

Financial resources remain the most persistent participation barrier across European systems. Students may also be constrained by family responsibilities, paid work, disability or health needs, language, visa requirements, curricular incompatibility, and uncertainty regarding credit transfer (Hovdhaugen & Wiers-Jenssen, 2021; Muja et al., 2024). Such constraints are not just individual preferences, but they are shaped by programme rules, funding schedules, information quality, staff capacity, and institutional coordination. When mobility becomes compulsory, unresolved barriers may become progression barriers.

From an equity perspective, curricular integration has two opposing possibilities. On one side, it may widen participation by normalising mobility, planning it in advance, and guaranteeing recognition. On the other, it may also reproduce inequality if all students are subject to the same requirement but do not receive the resources or alternatives needed to fulfil it. The relevant question is therefore not whether compulsory mobility is inherently inclusive, but under what conditions it becomes feasible for students with different material circumstances and responsibilities (Brooks et al., 2024).

2.3. Institutional support and conditional attractiveness

Recognition and support are repeatedly identified as central to students' mobility decisions. Clear information, realistic funding, accessible guidance, and predictable credit transfer reduce perceived academic and administrative risk (De Moor & Henderikx, 2013; López-Duarte et al., 2021). Support must also cover the full mobility lifecycle: preparation, participation, academic problem-solving, return, reintegration, and recognition. Fragilities and shortcomings at any stage may reduce the value of otherwise positive learning experiences.

This suggests that the attractiveness of embedded mobility is likely to be conditional. Students may value international learning while remaining reluctant to enrol in a programme that imposes uncertain costs or limits their agency. Conversely, a compulsory mobility period may become attractive when it is presented transparently at admission, aligned with disciplinary interests, funded adequately, and supported by credible recognition procedures. Student attitudes can therefore illuminate the relationship between curriculum design and institutional responsibility.

2.4. Research gaps and contribution

Three gaps guide the study. First, much of the literature concerns self-selected participants in optional mobility and therefore provides limited evidence about how students evaluate mobility when it is presented as a programme requirement. Second, studies of mobility barriers often examine participation in general rather than the implications of converting mobility into a curricular expectation. Third, institutional support is widely recognised as important, but there is limited student-centred evidence

connecting experiences of support during previous mobility with attitudes towards future embedded-mobility provision.

The study addresses these gaps without assuming that hypothetical programme evaluations are equivalent to behaviour in an actual compulsory programme. Its contribution lies in examining the conditional attractiveness of an explicitly described embedded-mobility model, combining quantitative patterns with students' own explanations, and distinguishing general attitudes from interest in a concrete programme scenario.

2.5. Aim and research questions

The study aimed to examine students' perceptions of curriculum-embedded mobility and the academic, institutional, and equity-related conditions associated with its attractiveness. Four research questions were addressed:

RQ1. What academic, personal, intercultural, linguistic, and professional outcomes do students with previous physical mobility experience report, and how satisfied are they with institutional and host support?

RQ2. Which financial, administrative, academic, and personal barriers do students associate with participation in curriculum-embedded mobility?

RQ3. How attractive do students perceive programmes containing mandatory curriculum-embedded mobility to be, and are these perceptions related to previous mobility experience?

RQ4. Among students with previous physical mobility experience, how are perceived institutional support, mobility valuation, perceived impact, and attitudes towards curriculum-embedded mobility associated?

3. Methods

3.1. Research design

A convergent mixed-methods survey design was used (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Greene et al., 1989). Quantitative and qualitative data were collected in the same online questionnaire between August and November 2024. The strands were analysed separately and integrated through research-question-based interpretation and a joint display. Quantitative data described mobility experiences, barriers, programme attractiveness, group differences, and associations among focal constructs. Open-ended responses provided contextual evidence concerning recognition, financial feasibility, curricular fit, institutional support, agency, and perceived added value.

Table 1 maps each research question to the evidence used in the analysis.

Table 1. Research questions and data strands

Research question	Quantitative evidence	Qualitative evidence
RQ1	Six mobility-valuation items; seven impact items; eight support / satisfaction items; respondents with previous mobility only ($n = 57$)	Elaborations on how previous mobility was, or was not, integrated into the curriculum ($n = 40$ substantive responses)
RQ2	Thirteen perceived-barrier items; barrier-index comparison by previous mobility	Comments concerning costs, recognition, support, work / caring constraints, and alternatives
RQ3	Ten-item embedded-mobility attitude scale; single programme-attractiveness item; interest in Programme B; comparisons by previous mobility	Comparison of embedded and traditional mobility ($n = 65$ substantive responses); explanations of programme appeal ($n = 60$); perceived added value of Programme B ($n = 61$)
RQ4	Spearman correlations among support, valuation, impact, and embedded-mobility attitudes in the mobile subsample	Explanations concerning predictability, recognition, administrative support, and programme credibility

3.2. Participants and sampling

The survey link was accessed by 302 individuals. Responses were excluded when the questionnaire was incomplete or the respondent did not meet the target-population criterion of being a current higher education student. The final analytic sample comprised 134 complete and eligible responses. Convenience and snowball sampling were used through academic networks, institutional mailing lists, student groups, and social-media channels. The sample should therefore not be interpreted as representative of European higher education students.

Participants originated from 20 countries and were studying in 17 countries. Romania accounted for 62.7% of countries of origin and 64.2% of countries of study. Other recurrent countries of origin included Cyprus (6.0%), France (4.5%), Greece (4.5%), Germany (3.0%), Iran (3.0%), and Türkiye (3.0%). Countries of study after Romania included Cyprus (6.0%), France (4.5%), Greece (3.7%), Belgium (3.0%), and Türkiye (3.0%). The sample was therefore internationally distributed but strongly concentrated in Romania and Eastern Europe.

Most respondents were aged 18-28 (89.5%), 64.9% were women, and 52.2% were bachelor's students. Previous physical academic mobility was reported by 57 students (42.5%); 77 (57.5%) had not participated. Among mobile respondents, 57.9% reported semester-long mobility, 35.1% short-term mobility, and 7.0% year-long mobility. Table 2 summarises the principal characteristics. Field of study and institution name were not collected, preventing disciplinary or institution-level description and comparison.

Table 2. Participant characteristics (n = 134)

Variable	Category	N	%
Age	18-22	70	52.2
	23-28	50	37.3
	29-45	11	8.2
	46 or older	3	2.2
Gender	Female	87	64.9
	Male	43	32.1
	Other / prefer not to answer	4	2.9
Current study level	Bachelor's	70	52.2
	Master's	49	36.6
	Doctoral / postdoctoral	14	10.5
	Other postgraduate	1	0.7
Previous physical mobility	Yes	57	42.5
	No	77	57.5
Type of mobility (n = 57)	Semester	33	57.9
	Short-term	20	35.1
	Academic year	4	7.0
Programme financing	Tuition-free / scholarship	108	80.6
	Fee-paying	26	19.4
Paid work during studies	Yes	55	41.0
	No	79	59.0
Children	At least one child	9	6.7
	No children / prefer not to answer	125	93.3
Plans after graduation	Further study	45	33.6
	Employment	65	48.5
	Undecided	24	17.9

3.3. Questionnaire and measures

The questionnaire was developed specifically for this study. It was informed by literature on student mobility motivations, perceived outcomes, barriers, recognition, and curricular integration, but it was not a direct adaptation of a previously validated inventory. Items concerning previous mobility drew on established themes in international-mobility research, while the embedded-mobility section was constructed around a programme scenario developed for the study. The complete questionnaire is provided in the supplementary material.

Before answering the embedded-mobility items, participants were given a definition and example. Embedded mobility was described as physical mobility integrated into the curriculum, required for all students, potentially lasting from one week to two semesters, and supported administratively and academically. A master's-programme illustration required every student to spend at least one semester at a partner university. The attitudinal findings therefore concern this explicitly mandatory and curriculum-integrated model rather than virtual mobility or optional exchange in general.

Seven composite measures were calculated as item means, with higher scores indicating more of the focal construct. Programme-competence fit comprised three items ($\alpha = .76$). For respondents with previous mobility, mobility valuation comprised six items concerning outcomes and intention to participate again ($\alpha = .77$); institutional-support satisfaction comprised overall satisfaction and seven lifecycle or host-support items ($\alpha = .83$); and personal-professional impact comprised seven items ($\alpha = .86$). Embedded-mobility attitudes comprised ten positively worded items ($\alpha = .81$). The importance of programme-choice factors comprised 12 items ($\alpha = .82$). The broad barrier index comprised 13 items ($\alpha = .71$). McDonald's omega values closely resembled alpha values and are reported in the supplementary material.

Two single items were analysed separately. Programme-attractiveness effect asked whether embedded mobility would significantly increase, somewhat increase, have no effect on, somewhat decrease, or significantly decrease the attractiveness of a study programme. Programme B interest followed a vignette comparing an optional-mobility master's programme with a programme requiring one semester abroad and asked respondents to rate their interest in Programme B from 1 (*not interested at all*) to 5 (*extremely interested*).

Because the embedded-mobility items were newly constructed, exploratory checks were performed using principal-axis factoring, factorability statistics, and parallel analysis. For the ten-item embedded-mobility attitude scale, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .81 and Bartlett's test was significant, $\chi^2(45) = 369.45$, $p < .001$. Parallel analysis retained one factor. Loadings ranged from .39 to .69, supporting use of an overall attitude score while indicating that perceived ease of curricular integration was the weakest item.

For the 13 barrier items, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .65 and Bartlett's test was significant, $\chi^2(78) = 275.35$, $p < .001$. Parallel analysis suggested two factors. However, the two-factor oblique solution did not produce a sufficiently stable or conceptually balanced structure: one factor was dominated by adaptation to a new cultural environment, several items cross-loaded, and programme costs had low communality. The broad barrier index was retained for descriptive and exploratory group-comparison purposes rather than treated as a validated unidimensional scale. Item-level results remain primary in the interpretation of barriers. Full loadings, communalities, and retention information are included in the supplementary material. A confirmatory factor analysis was not undertaken because the sample was inadequate for a stable item-level multi-construct model.

3.4. Procedure and research ethics

The questionnaire was administered through QuestionPro and required approximately 30 minutes. Participants received information about the study purpose, voluntary participation, their right to omit questions or withdraw, confidentiality, future scholarly dissemination, and data processing under the General Data Protection Regulation.

Electronic informed consent and confirmation of being at least 18 years old were required before the survey opened. Responses were analysed in aggregate, and no direct personal identifiers were included in the analytic dataset.

Under the institutional procedures applicable at the authors' institution, formal ethics approval was not required for this type of anonymous, minimal-risk, non-interventional educational survey. The study nevertheless followed the institution's applicable research-integrity and data-protection requirements.

3.5. Data analysis

Quantitative analyses were conducted in jamovi 2.6 and independently checked from the archived dataset. Frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, medians, interquartile ranges, skewness, and item distributions were examined. Many ordinal items were strongly skewed towards favourable responses. Group comparisons by previous mobility therefore used Mann-Whitney U tests consistently, with rank-biserial correlations as effect sizes. Spearman correlations were used in the mobile subsample to examine associations among institutional support, mobility valuation, perceived impact, and attitudes towards embedded mobility.

The originally explored serial mediation specification was not retained in the revised analysis. The cross-sectional design does not establish temporal ordering, and estimating multiple support-item contrasts and mediating paths with only 57 mobile respondents would be statistically fragile. RQ4 was therefore addressed through transparent bivariate associations. This choice also reduces the risk that conceptual overlap among favourable-evaluation constructs is interpreted as a causal mechanism.

Qualitative analysis followed the six phases of thematic analysis: familiarisation, initial coding, candidate-theme development, theme review, definition and naming, and reporting (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Coding was undertaken by one author and was inductive: codes, themes, and relevant cases were generated from the collected responses rather than imposed through a predetermined coding framework. The analysis remained oriented towards the research questions and retained responses that challenged the dominant positive pattern as divergent cases. It focused principally on three embedded-mobility prompts concerning differences from traditional mobility, the effect on programme appeal, and the added value of Programme B. Short non-substantive responses were excluded from thematic interpretation. Quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated through a joint display. Because coding was conducted by a single author, no intercoder-agreement statistic was calculated.

4. Results

4.1. RQ1: Previous mobility experiences, outcomes, and support

Among the 57 students with previous physical mobility experience, evaluations were strongly favourable. Agreement that mobility contributed to transversal skills reached 94.8%; 93.0% reported a positive academic-pathway impact; 91.3% reported rich

intercultural exposure; and 84.2% reported improved foreign-language skills. Professional-pathway impact was more differentiated, although 68.4% still agreed or strongly agreed. A further 78.9% indicated that they would undertake another mobility if given the opportunity (Figure 1).

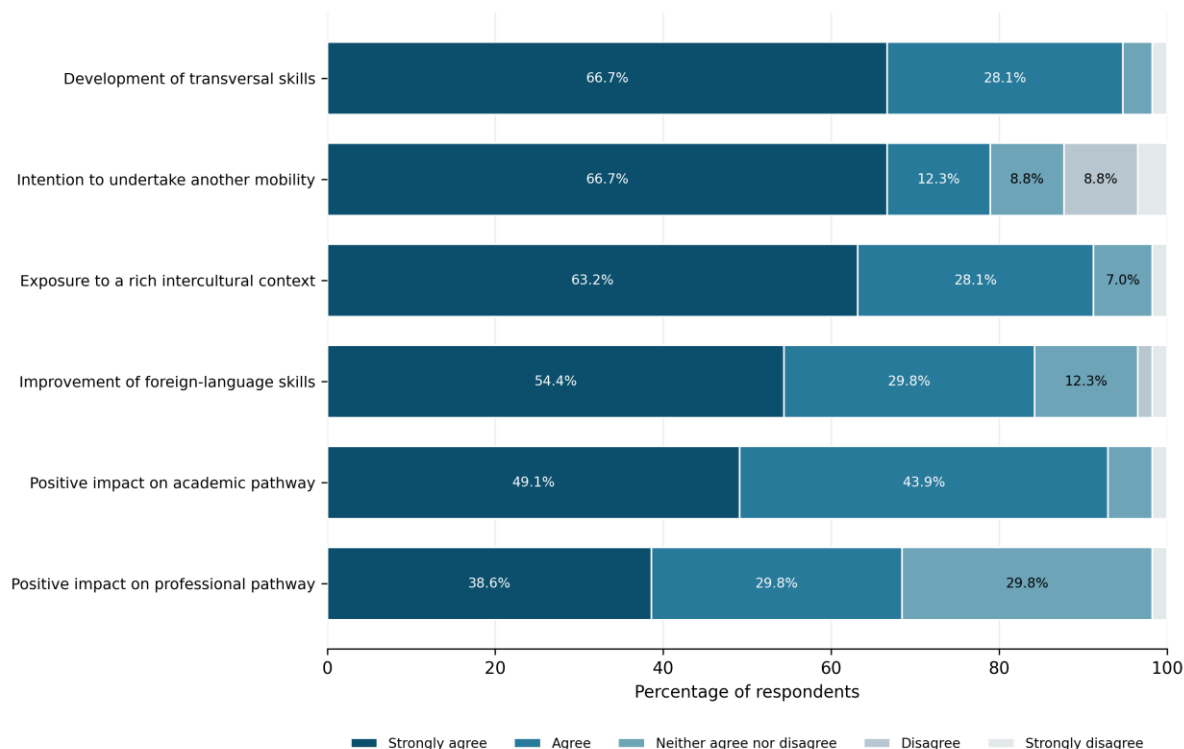


Figure 1. Students' perceptions of academic mobility impact (n = 57)

The concentration of responses in the two favourable categories indicates both strong perceived value and restricted variance. For example, two-thirds strongly agreed that mobility developed transversal skills and that they would undertake mobility again. These distributions should therefore be interpreted as retrospective evaluations by a self-selected mobile group rather than estimates of effects caused by mobility.

Satisfaction varied across the mobility lifecycle (Figure 2). Host-institution courses and programmes were rated satisfied or very satisfied by 84.2%, support and counselling by 84.2%, and social and cultural activities by 82.5%. Satisfaction was lower for support during mobility (73.7%), credit recognition and reintegration (68.4%), overall lifecycle support (68.4%), and pre-departure guidance (66.7%).

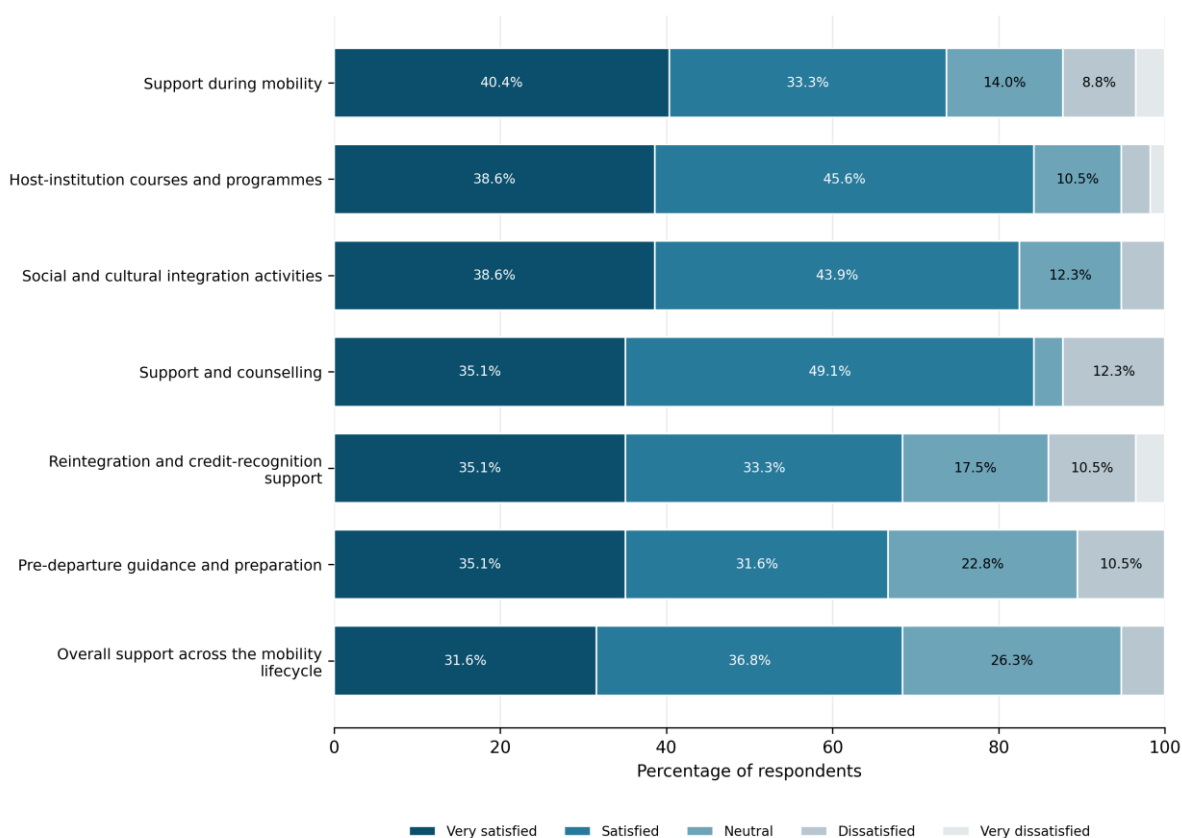


Figure 2. Ratings of student satisfaction with mobility support and host offer (n = 57)

Open-ended accounts of curricular integration were uneven. Some students reported full recognition or that mobility courses replaced home-programme requirements. Others described partial recognition, weak correspondence between courses, or complete non-recognition. One doctoral respondent stated that a blended intensive programme closely related to the doctoral topic had not been recognised as an academic course (P56). These responses clarify why generally positive experiential evaluations coexisted with weaker ratings of post-mobility recognition.

4.2. RQ2: Perceived barriers and equity considerations

Costs and living expenses were the most widely endorsed barrier: 90.3% agreed or strongly agreed that they represented a challenge (Figure 3). Complex application procedures and limited information were endorsed by 77.6%, programme compatibility by 76.9%, language barriers by 68.7%, and limited support and guidance by 68.6%. Safety and health concerns were endorsed by 63.4%, calendar differences by 58.9%, and high academic demands by 55.9%. Cultural adaptation, cultural misunderstanding, homesickness, and combining study with travel were less uniformly endorsed, although each remained relevant to a substantial minority.

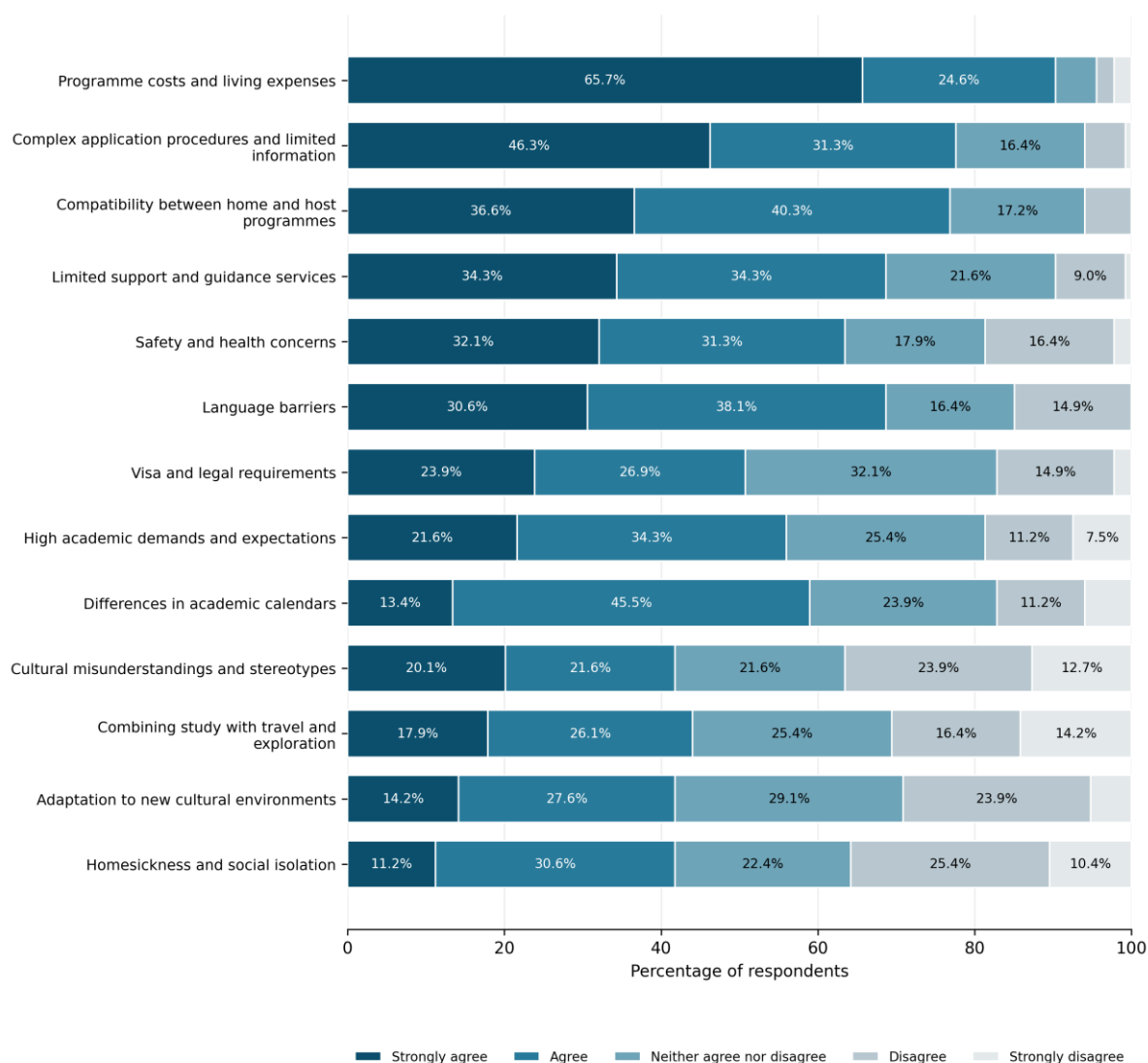


Figure 3. Student perceptions of factors represent barriers / challenges to participating in programmes with curriculum-embedded mobility (n = 134)

Students with previous mobility experience reported a lower broad barrier score (Mdn = 3.54) than students without previous mobility (Mdn = 3.77), $U = 1,701.5$, $p = .026$, $r_{rb} = -.225$. This small effect may reflect greater familiarity and mobility capital among participants, but the cross-sectional design cannot determine whether mobility reduced perceived barriers or students who perceived fewer barriers were more likely to participate.

Qualitative responses reinforced the structural character of the most salient barriers. A respondent who otherwise viewed embedded mobility positively warned that an unfunded requirement could create severe financial constraints and argued that “equity of access ... should be ensured through some form of financial support” (P16). Another respondent described mandatory mobility as potentially burdensome without assurance of financial independence and called for scholarships to make participation fair (P34). Participants also emphasised that affordability alone was insufficient: academic fit,

recognition, clear information, and alternatives for students with justified constraints were repeatedly mentioned.

4.3. RQ3: Attitudes, programme attractiveness, and previous mobility

The ten embedded-mobility attitude items were generally favourable (Figure 4). The highest combined agreement concerned expansion of academic or professional networks (90.3%), in-depth cultural experience (80.6%), programme appeal (80.6%), global belonging (80.6%), labour-market opportunities (78.4%), and coherent or innovative learning (77.6%). Perceived ease of integration into the programme structure was notably less positive: 47.7% agreed, 29.1% were neutral, and 23.1% disagreed. Students therefore distinguished the potential value of embedded mobility from the practical ease of implementing it.

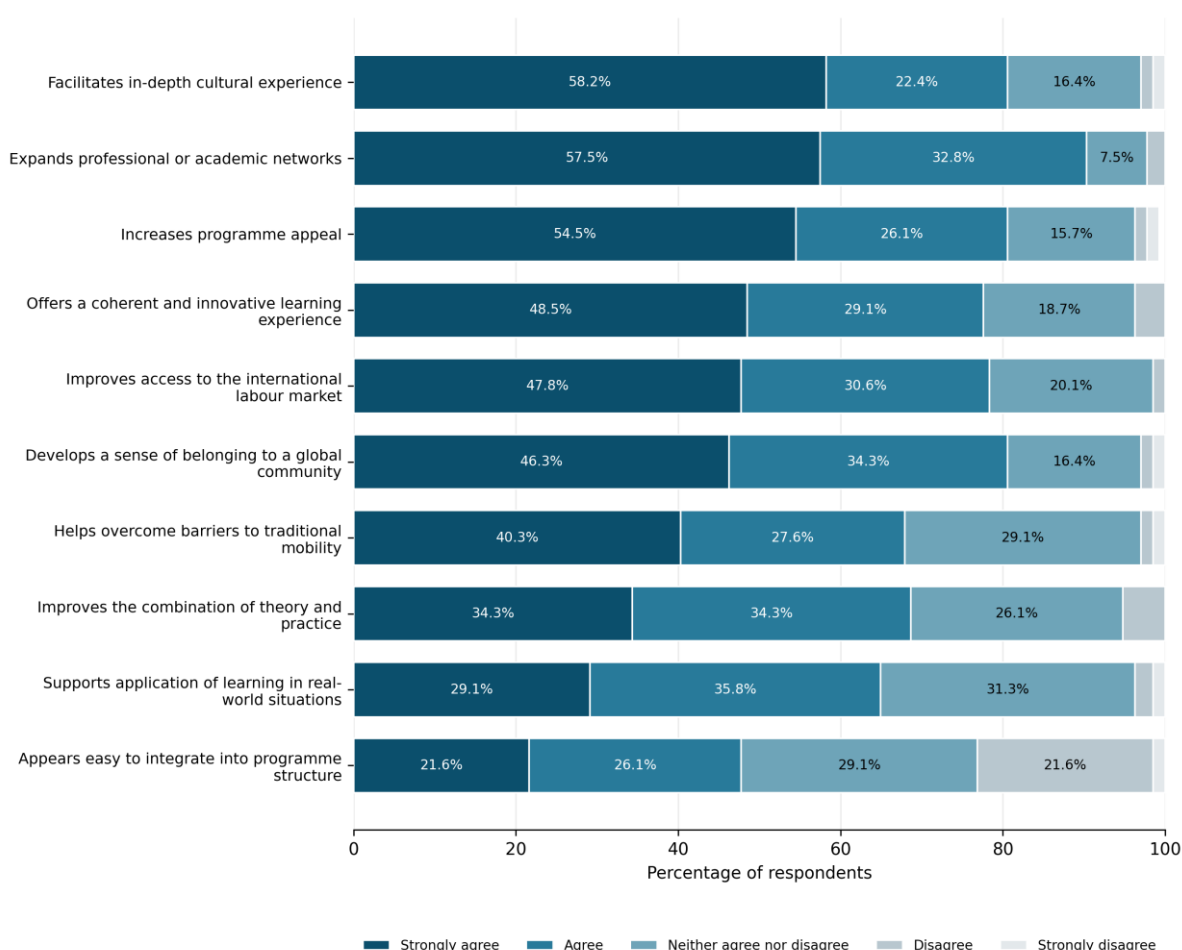


Figure 4. Student perceptions of curriculum-embedded mobility benefits (n = 134)

When asked directly how embedded mobility would affect programme attractiveness, 52.2% selected *significantly increase* and 40.3% selected *somewhat increase*. Only 4.5% selected *no impact*, and 3.0% selected either decrease category. In the Programme B vignette, 67.9% were very or extremely interested, 19.4% were moderately interested, and 12.7% were slightly or not at all interested.

General embedded-mobility attitudes did not differ between previously mobile and non-mobile students, nor did the single programme-attractiveness item. However, previously mobile students expressed greater interest in the concrete Programme B scenario, $U = 2,731.5$, $p = .011$, $rrb = .245$. They also rated their current programmes as a somewhat better fit with desired competences. Table 3 presents the full set of planned comparisons.

Table 3. Comparisons by previous physical mobility experience

Outcome	Previous mobility, M (SD); Mdn (IQR)	No previous mobility, M (SD); Mdn (IQR)	U	p	rrb
Programme-competence fit	3.98 (0.88); 4.00 (1.33)	3.71 (0.73); 4.00 (0.67)	2,724.5	.016	.242
Embedded-mobility attitude	4.15 (0.55); 4.20 (0.70)	4.09 (0.56); 4.10 (0.80)	2,251.0	.801	.026
Importance of enrolment factors	4.20 (0.51); 4.17 (0.75)	4.08 (0.56); 4.17 (0.75)	2,409.5	.334	.098
Perceived barriers	3.56 (0.48); 3.54 (0.54)	3.71 (0.54); 3.77 (0.62)	1,701.5	.026	-.225
Programme-attractiveness effects	1.54 (0.80); 1.00 (1.00)	1.64 (0.76); 2.00 (1.00)	1,988.5	.299	-.094
Interest in Programme B	4.12 (0.89); 4.00 (1.00)	3.64 (1.12); 4.00 (2.00)	2,731.5	.011	.245

**a Lower values indicate a stronger increase in programme attractiveness. Positive rank-biserial correlations indicate higher values among previously mobile students.*

Qualitative responses explained both the appeal and its conditionality. Participants associated embedded mobility with predictable recognition, reduced bureaucracy, coherent learning outcomes, equal international exposure, networking, and personal development. One respondent argued that embedded mobility could offer “streamlined procedures, seamless credit transfer and increased administrative support” (P16). Another emphasised that the decision would be visible from the beginning of the programme and would therefore provide “a sense of recognition” (P2).

At the same time, mandatory participation was not universally considered an advantage. One participant wrote that easier access would be welcome, but “if it’s not something I want then being forced to do it might lead to repulsion” (P25). A divergent response stated that mobility was not a deciding factor as long as both programmes offered some form of international opportunity (P73). The qualitative evidence therefore supports conditional rather than unconditional attractiveness.

4.4. RQ4: Institutional support, mobility valuation, and attitudes

Among previously mobile students, all four focal constructs were positively associated (Table 4). Institutional-support satisfaction correlated with mobility valuation ($\rho = .414$), perceived personal-professional impact ($\rho = .495$), and attitudes towards embedded mobility ($\rho = .385$). Mobility valuation and perceived impact were strongly related ($\rho = .717$), suggesting substantial conceptual and experiential overlap. Both were moderately associated with embedded-mobility attitudes.

Table 4. Spearman correlations among focal constructs in the previously mobile subsample (n = 57)

Construct	1	2	3	4
1. Institutional-support satisfaction	—			
2. Mobility valuation	.414**	—		
3. Personal-professional impact	.495***	.717***	—	
4. Embedded-mobility attitude	.385**	.407**	.416**	—

These associations do not establish that support causes favourable attitudes or that one construct mediates another. They nevertheless show that students who evaluated their previous support more positively also tended to value mobility more strongly, report greater impact, and hold more favourable attitudes towards an embedded model. The qualitative accounts indicate why recognition may be particularly consequential: predictable credit transfer was described not simply as an administrative convenience, but as evidence that the institution had designed the mobility period as a credible part of the programme.

4.5. Integration of quantitative and qualitative findings

Table 5 summarises the principal points of convergence and qualification across the two data strands.

Table 5. Mixed-methods joint display

Quantitative pattern	Qualitative explanation or qualification	Integrated interpretation
Previous mobility was evaluated positively across most outcomes.	Students described academic, cultural, linguistic, and networking gains, but some reported partial or absent recognition.	Experiential value can coexist with institutional friction.
Costs were the strongest barrier; procedures, compatibility, and guidance also ranked highly.	Respondents linked compulsory mobility to funding guarantees, recognition, clear information, and alternatives for constrained students.	Equity depends on structural feasibility, not curricular inclusion alone.
Embedded mobility increased programme attractiveness for most respondents.	Respondents valued predictability and integrated design, but some resisted compulsion or prioritised academic fit over mobility.	Attractiveness is high but conditional on agency and implementation quality.
Support, valuation, impact, and attitudes were positively associated.	Recognition and lifecycle support were treated as signals of programme credibility.	Institutional dependability is one component of favourable evaluation, alongside perceived educational value.

5. Discussion

5.1. RQ1: Mobility is highly valued, but retrospective evaluations are selective

Students with previous mobility experience reported substantial academic, intercultural, linguistic, and transversal-skill value. These findings align with research describing mobility as both instrumental and developmental (European Commission et al., 2014;

Krzaklewska, 2008; Lesjak et al., 2015). The particularly strong ratings for transversal and intercultural outcomes support the educational rationale for integrating international experience into curricula.

The results should not, however, be read as estimates of causal impact. The mobile subsample was self-selected, and the distributions were strongly concentrated at the favourable end of the response scale. Students who complete mobility may be especially motivated to interpret it positively, and the use of predominantly affirmative item wording may have encouraged acquiescent responses. Professional-pathway benefits were less uniformly endorsed than academic or personal benefits, providing some evidence that respondents did not evaluate every domain identically.

Satisfaction results also show that mobility is not a single experience. Host teaching and socio-cultural provision were evaluated more positively than preparation, lifecycle support, and recognition. This distinction supports a process-oriented view in which educational outcomes and institutional arrangements should be assessed separately. Positive learning does not cancel administrative weakness.

5.2. RQ2: The principal barriers are structural

Costs, application complexity, programme compatibility, and limited guidance were more salient than homesickness or cultural adaptation. This pattern is consistent with European evidence that financial and institutional conditions remain central to participation (Hovdhaugen & Wiers-Jenssen, 2021; Muja et al., 2024). The lower barrier score among previously mobile students may reflect familiarity, successful navigation, or pre-existing mobility capital. It should not be interpreted as evidence that mobility itself removes barriers.

For embedded mobility, structural barriers acquire additional importance because participation is tied to progression. A requirement that is academically coherent but financially inaccessible is not equitable. Similarly, formal recognition rules have limited value if students still face uncertainty, delays, or discretionary decisions after returning. The qualitative findings reinforce the need to treat affordability and recognition as design conditions established before enrolment and departure.

5.3. RQ3: Programme attractiveness is substantial but conditional

Most respondents indicated that embedded mobility would increase programme attractiveness, and more than two-thirds were very or extremely interested in the concrete Programme B scenario. At the same time, general attitudes did not differ by previous mobility experience. This suggests that the broad idea of embedded mobility appeals to both mobile and non-mobile students, whereas previous experience may be more relevant when respondents imagine committing to a specific semester-abroad requirement.

The study does not establish that students evaluate embedded mobility more favourably than an otherwise equivalent optional programme. Programme A was not rated separately, and the survey did not randomly assign alternative programme

descriptions. The findings instead show that respondents could articulate perceived added value when asked to compare the formats and that many expressed interest in Programme B. Claims of superiority over optional mobility would require an experimental vignette design, matched programmes, or observed enrolment decisions.

The qualitative material highlights an important pressure between structure and agency. Advance knowledge of the mobility requirement can improve predictability, but compulsion may discourage students who cannot travel or who prefer other forms of international learning. Embedded mobility is therefore most credible when programmes preserve meaningful choice concerning destination, timing, format, or justified alternatives while maintaining common learning outcomes.

5.4. RQ4: Support is associated with favourable evaluation, not demonstrated as a causal mechanism

Institutional support, mobility valuation, perceived impact, and attitudes towards embedded mobility were moderately associated. The strong relationship between valuation and impact indicates that students' judgements of benefit are not sharply separable. This overlap, together with the small mobile subsample and cross-sectional design, made a complex serial mediation interpretation inappropriate.

The revised findings support a narrower conclusion: students who were more satisfied with support also tended to evaluate mobility and embedded-mobility provision more favourably. Recognition emerged qualitatively as a visible test of whether the programme could fulfil its commitments. It is therefore reasonable to interpret institutional dependability as one condition of attractiveness, but not as a variable shown to outweigh learning gains or causally produce acceptance.

The idea of embedded mobility as a *programme-level commitment* can be retained as a provisional theoretical interpretation. When mobility is compulsory, students evaluate not only the anticipated international experience but also the programme's ability to make that experience feasible and academically safe. The present study did not directly operationalise this construct, and future research should develop and validate measures of perceived institutional commitment, trust, and curricular reliability.

5.5. Implications for research and theory

Future research should distinguish more carefully among optional, selective, and compulsory mobility and between short-term, semester-long, blended, and virtual formats. Experimental vignette studies could vary funding, recognition guarantees, flexibility, and compulsion while holding programme quality constant. Longitudinal studies could measure attitudes before enrolment, before departure, during mobility, and after recognition decisions. Larger samples would permit country, discipline, and student-background comparisons and confirmatory validation of the scales developed here.

Theoretically, the findings suggest that embedded mobility should be analysed at the intersection of *Internationalisation of the Curriculum*, student agency, and institutional

trust. *Transformative learning* may explain the perceived value of intercultural experience, while *curriculum theory* explains alignment; neither is sufficient without attention to who bears the risks of participation. A *theory of embedded mobility* therefore needs to incorporate both learning design and distributive responsibility.

5.6. Implications for institutional practice

Programme coordinators and curriculum designers should establish mobility pathways before recruitment. This includes mapping equivalent modules, learning outcomes, workload, assessment, and credit recognition; publishing the mobility sequence and available destinations; and ensuring that mobility does not extend programme duration. Learning agreements should be pre-approved, and recognition decisions should follow clear timelines with transparent appeal routes.

International-relations offices should provide a single, accessible information pathway across the full lifecycle. Pre-departure guidance should include academic expectations, funding schedules, accommodation, accessibility, insurance, visa requirements, and points of contact. During mobility, students need rapid academic and administrative escalation routes. After mobility, dedicated staff should support recognition and reintegration rather than transferring coordination burdens to individual students.

University leadership should resource embedded mobility as core educational provision. Staffing, digital systems, contingency funding, disability support, and partner coordination cannot depend entirely on temporary projects. Institutions should monitor participation, withdrawal, delayed progression, and recognition outcomes, disaggregated where ethically and legally appropriate, to identify whether compulsory mobility creates unequal effects.

5.7. Implications for policy, funding, and quality assurance

Funding agencies and policymakers should align grants with real costs and provide funds before departure. Supplementary support is needed for students with disabilities, health needs, caring responsibilities, employment constraints, or destinations with high living costs. Programme rules should allow accessible alternatives, such as another destination, adjusted timing, short-term or blended formats, or equivalent internationalised learning, when physical travel is not feasible.

Quality assurance bodies should examine embedded mobility as part of programme design rather than as an auxiliary service. Relevant evidence includes automatic or pre-authorised recognition, curricular alignment, student information, financial planning, accessibility, alternative routes, complaints and appeals, and the monitoring of progression outcomes. A programme should not be considered inclusive merely because all students are formally required to participate.

5.8. Limitations and future directions

Several limitations delimit the findings. First, convenience and snowball sampling and the concentration of respondents in Romania restrict transferability. Future studies should use stratified multi-institutional samples and country-level comparisons. Second, exact fields of study and institutions were not collected. Subsequent surveys should include these variables because disciplinary structure and institutional capacity may influence mobility feasibility.

Third, responses were self-reported and cross-sectional. Social desirability, acquiescence, common-method variance, and self-selection may have contributed to the favourable pattern. The embedded-mobility attitude items were all positively worded, and several showed ceiling effects. Future instruments should include balanced wording, more discriminating response options, behavioural intentions, and observed programme choices.

Fourth, the questionnaire was developed for the study and was not formally piloted. The attitude scale showed an interpretable one-factor exploratory structure, but the barrier scale did not demonstrate a stable unidimensional structure. Independent samples should be used for cognitive testing, item refinement, and confirmatory factor analysis. Barrier domains should be modelled separately rather than assumed to form a single construct.

Fifth, only 57 respondents had previous mobility experience. This restricted statistical power and prevented stable multivariable or mediation modelling. Larger mobile samples and longitudinal designs are needed to test temporal relations among support, perceived impact, valuation, and later programme choice.

Sixth, qualitative data consisted of written survey comments rather than interviews or focus groups. They clarified reasons and conditions but did not permit probing or sustained exploration of contradictory views. Future qualitative research should examine students enrolled in programmes with actual compulsory mobility, especially those who postpone, decline, or seek alternatives.

Finally, the optional-versus-embedded comparison was hypothetical. Programme A was not rated independently, and respondents were not randomly assigned to programme conditions. Experimental comparisons and studies of actual enrolment and persistence are required before concluding that embedded mobility is preferred to optional mobility.

6. Conclusions

Students in this study generally regarded *curriculum-embedded physical mobility* as an attractive feature of higher education programmes. Previously mobile students reported strong academic, intercultural, linguistic, and transversal-skill value, while respondents across the sample associated embedded mobility with networks, cultural experience, coherent learning, and programme appeal.

This favourable pattern was conditional. Costs, complex procedures, programme compatibility, recognition, and limited guidance remained prominent concerns. Students' explanations showed that a mandatory international period is credible only when institutions make the requirement foreseeable, adequately funded, academically recognised, and flexible enough to accommodate legitimate constraints.

The findings do not establish that embedded mobility is superior to optional mobility or that institutional support causes acceptance. They instead show that educational value and institutional feasibility are jointly relevant to how students evaluate a compulsory mobility model. Embedded mobility should therefore be approached not as an inherently inclusive innovation, but as a curricular commitment whose legitimacy depends on coherent design, equitable access, and dependable institutional practice.

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Supplementary Material

The attractiveness of curriculum-embedded mobility in higher education: students' perspective

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This supplementary file contains detailed sample distributions, measurement documentation, exploratory factor-analysis results, procedural clarifications, and the complete questionnaire administered in the study.

S1. Countries of origin and study

Table 1. Country of origin ($n = 134$)

Country	n	%
Romania	84	62.7
Cyprus	8	6.0
France	6	4.5
Greece	6	4.5
Germany	4	3.0
Iran	4	3.0
Türkiye	4	3.0
Spain	3	2.2
Poland	2	1.5
Switzerland	2	1.5
Syria	2	1.5
Austria	1	0.7
Belgium	1	0.7
Cameroon	1	0.7
Italy	1	0.7
Japan	1	0.7
Jordan	1	0.7
Lebanon	1	0.7
Moldova	1	0.7
Slovenia	1	0.7

Table 2. Country of study ($n = 134$)

Country	n	%
Romania	86	64.2
Cyprus	8	6.0
France	6	4.5
Greece	5	3.7
Belgium	4	3.0
Türkiye	4	3.0
Austria	3	2.2
Germany	3	2.2
Iran	3	2.2
Czech Republic	2	1.5
Italy	2	1.5
Poland	2	1.5
Switzerland	2	1.5
Hungary	1	0.7
Spain	1	0.7
Sweden	1	0.7
United Kingdom	1	0.7

S2. Measurement documentation

Table 3. Composite measures used in the analysis

Measure	Items	Respondents	Response format	Example item	α	ω
Programme-competence fit	3	All respondents	1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree	"The study programme I currently pursue provides me the competences needed for the desired job."	.76	.76
Mobility valuation	6	Previous mobility only	1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree	"Academic mobility has had a positive impact on my academic pathway."	.77	.79
Institutional-support satisfaction	8	Previous mobility only	1 = very dissatisfied to 5 = very satisfied	"Support services provided by your institution in terms of reintegration and academic credit recognition."	.83	.83
Personal-professional impact	7	Previous mobility only	1 = not at all to 5 = to a very large extent	"To what extent did mobility contribute to your overall personal growth and development?"	.86	.87
Embedded-mobility attitude	10	All respondents	1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree	"Including embedded mobility in a programme increases its appeal to me."	.81	.82
Importance of enrolment factors	12	All respondents	1 = not important at all to 5 = extremely important	"Academic credit transfer: the opportunity to integrate credits acquired in international learning experiences in your diploma."	.82	.83
Perceived barriers	13	All respondents	1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree	"High programme costs and living expenses."	.71	.71

Note. All composites were calculated as item means. Higher values indicate more of the named construct. The embedded-mobility attitude items were all positively worded. The barrier index is used as a broad exploratory summary; item-level results remain primary.

S3. Exploratory dimensionality checks

Principal-axis factoring was used. Factorability was assessed with the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin statistic and Bartlett's test. Factor retention used 95th-percentile parallel analysis and a sequential stopping rule. Oblique rotation was planned for multi-factor solutions but was not required for the retained single-factor solutions.

For the embedded-mobility attitude items, $KMO = .81$ and Bartlett's $\chi^2(45) = 369.45$, $p < .001$. Parallel analysis retained one factor.

Table 4. One-factor principal-axis solution for embedded-mobility attitude items ($N = 134$)

Item	Loading	Communality
Including embedded mobility increases programme appeal	.614	.378
Offers a coherent and innovative learning experience	.573	.329
Improves the combination of theory and practice	.515	.265
Facilitates in-depth cultural experience	.501	.251
Appears easy to integrate into programme structure	.392	.153
Supports application of learning in real-world situations	.609	.371
Helps overcome barriers to traditional mobility	.565	.319
Improves access to the international labour market	.523	.273
Develops a sense of belonging to a global community	.692	.479
Expands professional or academic networks	.618	.382

For the barrier items, $KMO = .65$ and Bartlett's $\chi^2(78) = 275.35$, $p < .001$. The 95th-percentile parallel analysis retained one factor under the sequential criterion. Loadings and communalities indicated only a

modest common dimension, particularly for programme costs. The broad composite should therefore be interpreted cautiously.

Table 5. One-factor principal-axis solution for perceived-barrier items (N = 134)

Item	Loading	Communality
Linguistic barriers	.403	.162
Adaptation to new cultural environments	.507	.257
Compatibility between home and host programmes	.361	.130
Application complexity and access to information	.446	.199
Limited support and guidance	.335	.112
Homesickness and social isolation	.437	.191
Visa and legal requirements	.335	.112
Differences in academic calendars	.388	.150
Safety and health concerns	.498	.248
Cultural misunderstandings and stereotypes	.572	.327
High academic demands and expectations	.350	.123
Combining study with travel and exploration	.358	.128

S4. Complete questionnaire

The following section reproduces the questionnaire administered through QuestionPro. Formatting has been adapted for documentary presentation, but item wording and response options are retained.

Hello: You are invited to participate in our research "Embedded Mobility in Higher Education: Students' Perceptions".

In this analysis, several students from different European higher education institutions will be asked to complete a survey that investigates their perceptions about embedding international academic mobility experiences in study programmes curriculum (at bachelor, master, and doctoral levels) starting from their mobility experience and perceptions.

It will take approximately 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There are no foreseeable risks associated with this project. However, if you feel uncomfortable answering any questions, you can withdraw from the survey at any point. It is very important for us to learn your opinions.

Your survey responses will be strictly confidential and data from this research will be reported only in the aggregate. Your information will be coded and will remain confidential.

If you have questions at any time about the survey or the procedures, you may contact the research team by email at the following email address: alexandru-mihai.cartis@unibuc.ro.

Thank you very much for your time and support!

Risks and benefits

The risks associated with the present study are minimal from all perspectives. There are not direct benefits that may result from participating in this study, excepting direct contribution to important research for developing educational offerings. We cannot and we do not guarantee or promise that you will receive any material benefit, or of another kind, by participating in this study.

Participants rights

If you have read this introduction and decided to participate in this study, we are kindly asking you to understand that your participation is fully voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or to stop your participation at any time, without any penalties or limiting any of the benefits that would normally be included. The alternative is not to participate. You have the right to refuse to reply to some of the questions. The study results will be presented in scientific or professional meetings and/or will be published in scientific journals and/or publications. Your privacy will be ensured in all data processing steps without any exceptions. The researchers are committed to ensure full anonymity of all participants and to ethically and responsibly manage all data collected through this survey.

GDPR

According to Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation), the researchers are obliged to safely manage and solely for the mentioned purposes the data you will provide in the present study, such as socio-demographic information and the replies to the survey.

Confidentiality

Identification data may be removed from the private identification data, and, after such a removal process, the data provided in the survey may be used for future studies and be distributed to other researchers for future research, without firstly requesting any specific consent from your side in this regard.

Consent

By clicking on the button below, you acknowledge that your participation in the present study is fully voluntary, you agree to the above-mentioned terms and conditions, you are at least 18 years of age, and

you acknowledge that you can withdraw from the present study at any time and by any reason.

1. I agree, the study can begin (the survey will continue)
2. I don't agree, I don't wish to participate in this study (the survey will close)

Demographic information

In the present section of the survey, we will ask for a series of demographic data that support the analysis of patterns and similarities across age groups, gender, country of origin, parents' education level, and other information.

What age group do you belong to?

Please consider your age at the time of completing this survey.

1. 18-22 years
2. 23-28 years
3. 29-35 years
4. 36-45 years
5. 46-55 years
6. 56 years or above
7. I don't want to answer

What is your gender?

1. Female
2. Male
3. I don't want to answer
4. Other _____

What is your country of origin?

Please write down the name of your country of origin.

In what country do you study at this moment?

Please write down the name of the country where you study at this moment.

Do you belong to any or more of the following categories?

Please select one or more of the following categories that fit with your current situation.

1. Members of minority ethnic communities
2. Young people above 18 years old that leave the child state protection system
3. People with disabilities
4. Single family carers
5. People from rural areas seeking employment
6. People released from detention
7. Elderly people seeking employment
8. None of these categories
9. I prefer not to answer
10. Other _____

What is your parents' highest education level?

Please select the higher education level achieved by each of your parents.

	None	Primary school	Lower secundar	Upper secundar	Bachelor's degree	Postgraduate	I prefer not to
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			y school	y school		studies	answer
Mother	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Father	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

What is your current employment status?

Please select all options that better describe your current employment status.

1. Full-time equivalent job
2. Part-time equivalent job
3. Own business / freelancer
4. Work in NGO / NPO
5. Unemployed
6. Other _____

Which of the following statements better describe your job intentions after graduation?

1. I intend to change my job with another from the same field.
2. I intend to change my job with another from a different field.
3. I don't intend to change my job after graduation.
4. Other _____

What is your current family situation?

Please select all options that better describe your current family situation.

1. Married, without children
2. Married, with one or more children
3. Not married, without children
4. Not married, with one or more children
5. Single parent with one or more children
6. I prefer not to answer
7. Other _____

Information about educational / academic record

In the current section of the survey, we will ask for a series of data about your educational / academic route and other related information, to support us contextualise the data analysis based on educational / academic records and characteristics.

What is the level of the study programme you are enrolled in at this moment?

Please select the level of the study programme you are currently pursuing. In case you are enrolled in more than one programme, please consider highest level programme or the most representative programme for this study from your point of view.

1. Bachelor's degree
2. Master's degree
3. Doctoral / Ph.D. degree
4. Postdoctoral studies
5. Other postgraduate studies
6. I am not a student at this moment (the survey will close)

Did you pursue the bachelor's degree in the same field of study as the current programme or in a different field?

1. In the same field of study
2. In a different field of study

In what year of study are you currently enrolled?

Please refer to the 2023-2024 academic year

1. I
2. II
3. III
4. IV

5. VI
6. VI
7. Other _____

What is the financial format of your study programme?

1. I have a scholarship
2. The programme / university does not require fees
3. I pay tuition fees
4. Other _____

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Strongly agree
The study programme I currently pursue provides me the competencies needed for the desired job.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
There is room for improvements in the contents of the study programme I currently pursue.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My academic pathway till now provides me the competencies needed for the desired career.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
There is a significant discrepancy between the academic offer and the labour market needs in my field.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Higher education studies are essential to achieve the competencies needed in my field.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The format of the study programmes I followed respond to the training needs in my field.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

What do you intend to do after graduating from the current study programme?

In case you consider that more than one option describes your situation, please select the most important option OR the option closest in time after graduation.

1. Apply to a new study programme, in the same field of study.
2. Apply to a new study programme, in a different field of study.
3. Find a job in the same field of study.
4. Find a job, regardless of the field.
5. Take some time off from study or work.
6. I encounter difficulties deciding what to do next.
7. I did not decide yet.
8. None of the options above.

Information about your academic mobility experience

In the current section of the survey, we will ask for a series of data about your experience in participating in academic mobility experiences, as well as connected information.

During current or past higher education studies, did you take part in academic mobility experience(s)?

1. Yes
2. No

What type and length of mobility did you undertake during your studies?

In case you undertook several mobility opportunities, please select all relevant options below.

1. 1-semester long mobility
2. 1-year long mobility
3. Short-term mobility (less than 1 semester)
4. Other _____

In what country(ies) did your mobility took place?

In case you undertook several mobility opportunities, please mention all countries.

When did you return from your last mobility?

Please mention the date when you returned home from your last mobility experience.

• _____

How did you fund your mobility opportunity(ies)?

In case you undertook several mobility opportunities, please choose all relevant options below.

1. Erasmus+;
2. DAAD
3. Fullbright
4. Horizon
5. Self-funded
6. Private sponsors
7. Other _____

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
If I had the possibility / chance, I would undertake a new mobility in the next period.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Academic mobility has had a positive impact on my academic pathway.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Academic mobility has had a positive impact on my professional pathway.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Academic mobility has significantly contributed to the development of transversal skills (e.g., communication, teamwork, problem-solving).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Academic mobility exposed me to a rich intercultural context.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Academic mobility significantly improved my foreign language skills.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Overall, how satisfied are you with your academic mobility experience(s)?

1. Very Unsatisfied
2. Unsatisfied
3. Neutral
4. Satisfied
5. Very Satisfied

How satisfied are you with the following aspects related to your academic mobility experience(s)?

	Very dissatisfied	Not satisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very satisfied
Level of support and counselling you received during the mobility experience(s)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Support services provided by your institution in terms of pre-departure guidance and preparation (before the mobility taking place)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Support services provided by your institution during the mobility (e.g., addressing academic	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

concerns, resolving administrative issues)					
Support services provided by your institution in terms of reintegration and academic credit recognition (after the mobility)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Level of support you received from your institution throughout your entire academic mobility experience (before, during, and after)?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Courses and programmes offered by the host institution	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Social and cultural integration activities and events offered during your mobility experience(s)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

To what extent did your academic mobility experience(s)...

Please consider the direct impact of your mobility experience(s) on each of the aspects mentioned below.

	Not at all	To a little extent	Somewhat	To a large extent	To a very large extent
contribute to your overall personal growth and development?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
immerse you in the local culture?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
improve your intercultural competences (i.e., your ability to interact effectively with people from different cultures)?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
cause you to see the world from a different perspective?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
contribute to your professional career perspectives?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
improve your linguistic and communication skills?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
improve your ability to adapt to new environments and challenging situations?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

How valuable was the experience to collaborate with international colleagues during the academic mobility?

1. Not at all valuable
2. Slightly valuable
3. Moderately valuable
4. Very valuable
5. Extremely valuable

Were your academic mobility experiences integrated into the curriculum of your study programme?

1. Yes
2. Sort of
3. No

Could you please elaborate on this (integration of mobility experience(s) into the curriculum of your study programme)? What happened and how?

Which of the following situations best describes your experience related to academic mobility?

1. I have applied for one or more mobility grants, but I was not selected.
2. I was selected for one or more mobility grants, but I did not manage to go.
3. I had the intention to apply for one or more mobility grants, but I never applied.
4. I never intended to apply for any mobility grant.
5. Other _____

What are the main reasons for not taking part in an academic mobility experience?

Please select all options below that best describes your situation (not more than 5 options).

1. Lack of financial resources
2. Requirements or restrictions of the desired programmes / courses
3. Lack of awareness related to existing opportunities
4. Professional / family engagements and/or responsibilities
5. Linguistic barriers
6. Concerns about successfully transferring credits or completing coursework abroad
7. Low interest in international learning experiences
8. Lack of institutional communication related to mobility opportunities
9. High bureaucratic processes
10. Matters related to safety and security in a foreign country
11. Difficulty in obtaining visa or other necessary travel documents
12. Other _____

Which of the following aspects would raise the probability for you to consider undertaking an academic mobility experience in the future?

Please select all options below that best describes your situation (not more than 3 options).

1. Scholarships and financial grants
2. Clear guidance regarding the content of the courses / study programmes
3. Support in successfully finalising the mobility
4. Raising awareness and information regarding available opportunities
5. Flexible academic requirements that can support students to participate in mobility
6. Linguistic support and/or language classes
7. Focus on specific fields of study or research opportunities available through mobility programmes
8. Access to diverse and inclusive environments
9. Integration of mobility experiences into the curriculum of your study program at your home institution
10. Other _____

How important do you think it is for universities to integrate (embed) academic mobility experiences directly into study programs, ensuring automatic recognition of credits and learning outcomes?

1. Not important at all
2. Slightly important
3. Somewhat important
4. Important
5. Extremely important

Students' perception on embedded mobility

In the current section of the survey, we want to analyse the students' perception on embedded mobility in study programmes, based on some parameters considered in this regard.

What is embedded mobility?

Embedded mobility refers to a learning experience that integrates physical mobility into the curriculum of a study programme or other educational activity (courses, short-term programmes, micro-credentials, etc.). This experience becomes an essential component for successfully completing the programme and obtaining the relevant diploma/certification.

Embedded mobility experiences can be short-term (1 week to 3 months) or long-term (1-2 semesters).

Programmes with embedded mobility experiences require all students to participate. The degree of administrative and academic support for these programmes is typically high.

Embedded mobility example

This is an example of how embedded mobility could be implemented in a master's programme with 4 semesters.

Students typically complete semesters 1 and 4 at their home university. Semester 2 offers flexibility, allowing students to choose between studying at their home university or a partner university (as specified by the programme). This decision is acknowledged by the student during application. To ensure an international learning experience, semester 3 follows a set structure: if semester 2 is spent at the home university, semester 3 must be completed at a partner university. Conversely, if semester 2 takes place at a partner university, then semester 3 can be completed at either the home university or another partner university (details outlined in the program description).

Regardless of the chosen combination, all students will spend at least one semester (25%) studying at a different university, fostering intercultural understanding, and broadening their academic network.

In your opinion, how does embedded mobility, where international study is a mandatory part of the curriculum, differ from classical/traditional mobility programmes, where international experiences might be optional or separate from the curriculum?

When considering the differences, you might think about factors such as programme structure, learning outcomes, student support, etc.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Strongly agree
Including embedded mobility in a programme increases its appeal to me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Embedded mobility offers more coherent and innovative learning experiences compared to classical/traditional mobility programmes.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Embedded mobility ensures a better theory and practice combination.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Embedded mobility facilitates access to in-depth cultural experiences.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Embedded mobility seem easy to integrate into the overall programme structure.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Embedded mobility can help apply classroom learning to real-world situations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Embedded mobility supports overcoming barriers encountered in participating in classical/traditional mobility programmes.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Embedded mobility ensures increased chances of insertion in an international labour market.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Embedded mobility contributes to the development of a sense of belonging to a global community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Embedded mobility expands professional and/or academic networks.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Imagine you had the opportunity to participate in a master's programme with embedded mobility that perfectly aligns with your academic and professional interests. The programme offers a semester abroad at a partner university as mandatory part of the curriculum. Considering the learning goals and programme content, which country/university combination would be most attractive to you and why?

When making your selection, you might consider factors like university's expertise, research opportunities, specific courses offered, or cultural immersion opportunities.

What are the most important 3 factors that determine the chosen country/university combination?

Please select all items that describe your perspective on the matter, up to 3 options.

1. Programme/university prestige
2. Cultural environment
3. Cost of living and programme fees
4. Spoken language
5. Research opportunities
6. Course/programme offer
7. Support and guidance services
8. Level of accessibility and inclusion
9. Extracurricular activities offer
10. Internship/employment opportunities
11. Other _____

How would including embedded mobility in a study program likely affect the overall appeal of the program for you?

Please select one option from the following:

1. Embedded mobility would significantly increase the program's attractiveness.
2. Embedded mobility would somewhat increase the program's attractiveness.
3. Embedded mobility would have no impact on the program's attractiveness.
4. Embedded mobility would somewhat decrease the program's attractiveness.
5. Embedded mobility would significantly decrease the program's attractiveness.

Could you please elaborate your choice?

In your opinion, how important are the following factors in deciding to enrol in study programmes with embedded mobility?

	Not important at all	Slightly important	Somewhat important	Important	Extremely important
Career Advancement: The potential impact of embedded mobility on future job opportunities and acquiring valuable skills relevant to professional aspirations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Academic Opportunities: The opportunity to access specialist courses, research facilities, or learning resources that are more difficult to access	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

normally.					
Personal Development: Achieving new levels of self-knowledge and increased confidence by overcoming new challenges.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Intercultural Competences: The opportunity to develop communication skills and adaptability in intercultural environments, crucial for navigating varied global contexts.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Practical Application of Knowledge: The opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts and gain practical experiences in the field of interest.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Academic Credit Transfer: The opportunity to integrate credits acquired in international learning experiences in your diploma.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Travel and Exploration: The opportunity to discover new places and destinations, adding an element of adventure to your academic journey.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
International Collaboration: The possibility to cooperate in carrying out projects, research, or team tasks with colleagues from different countries.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Personal Interest: Aligning the features of the learning experience with one's own interests, hobbies and/or passions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Academic Mentoring: Access to mentoring and guidance from experienced teachers during your mobility.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cost and Financial Considerations: The affordability of the programme, including tuition, living expenses, and any available financial support.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Language Acquisition: The possibility of improving language skills through contact with environments where a different language is spoken.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

To what extent do you agree or disagree the following factors represent barriers / challenges to participating in programmes with embedded mobility?

	Strongly disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Strongly agree
High programme costs and living expenses	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Linguistic barriers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Adaptation to new cultural environments	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Compatibility between study programmes at home and host universities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Complexity of application procedures and access to information about course offerings at partner universities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Limited support and guidance services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

"Homesick" feelings and social isolation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Visa and legal requirements for travel (where applicable)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Differences of academic calendar	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Concerns related to safety and health matters	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cultural misunderstandings and stereotypes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Too high academic rigors and expectations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Challenges of combining studying with travel and exploring new places	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Final considerations

Imagine you are considering two master's programmes in your field of study. Programme A offers a traditional mobility experience, where international study is optional. Programme B integrates embedded mobility, requiring a semester abroad at a partner university. Considering the learning experience and potential outcomes, how interested would you be in pursuing Programme B with embedded mobility if given the opportunity?

1. Not interested at all
2. Slightly interested
3. Somewhat interested
4. Very interested
5. Extremely interested

Imagine you are considering two master's programmes in your field of study. Programme A offers a traditional mobility experience, where international study is optional. Programme B integrates embedded mobility, requiring a semester abroad at a partner university. Considering the learning experience and potential outcomes, describe the added value and/or benefits you perceive from embedded mobility experiences compared to traditional, optional mobility programmes.

When considering added value, you might think about factors such as academic integration, cultural immersion, career preparation, or personal development.

Is there anything else you would like to share with us?