

IFMSA Policy Document Student Mobility

Proposed by the IFMSA Team of Officials

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Policy Statement

Introduction

Given the increasing Globalisation of health systems, Student mobility programs with medical students crossing borders to study, learn, research, etc, is an inevitable phenomenon reshaping the fabric of societies. There is a growing need to equip aspiring doctors with the skills to enhance their engagement with diverse populations, cultures, and healthcare systems. Student mobility programs that transcend borders are an effective way to ensure the globalisation of medical education, as medical curricula worldwide need to adapt and incorporate more Global Health learning opportunities for future healthcare professionals. However, such student mobility programs can face multiple challenges that need to be addressed so that student mobility programs are accessible to larger numbers of students to participate in and benefit from, adding significant experience to their medical curricula.

IFMSA Position

The International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA) has been running the largest student-run medical exchange program worldwide for 73 years, allowing over 15 thousand medical students each year to embark on a journey to explore healthcare delivery, healthcare research, and the best practices of managing and improving health systems in different professional, cultural, and social settings.

Through these exchange programs, IFMSA aims to develop culturally sensitive medical students and skilled researchers intent on shaping the world of science. IFMSA's exchange programs are key promoters of intercultural learning and cooperation among medical students and health professionals, which is much needed in a globalised world.

IFMSA asserts the necessity of standardising exchange programs, emphasising the importance of each exchange adhering to a high-quality framework that includes appropriate supervision, recognition, and endorsement from institutions. IFMSA recognises the need to ensure equal access to Student Mobility Programs for all medical students and underscores the importance of dismantling barriers that may impede students from accessing such opportunities. Therefore, the foundational principles of Student Mobility should engage all stakeholders to promote best practices in a socially accountable and ethical manner.

Call to Action

Therefore, the IFMSA calls on:

Governments, Embassies, and Other Foreign Affairs Representatives to:

- Facilitate and Expedite visa procedures for students participating in student mobility programs.
- Adopt and Actively support policies that promote student mobility.
- Provide student mobility programs and institutions implementing them with access to public resources and facilities and fund them.
- Recognising and validating student mobility programs and including it in the formal assessment to obtain government qualifications or jobs.

Universities and Medical Faculties to:

- Incorporate and promote student mobility programs within medical curricula and raise awareness of its importance and benefits.
- Establish partnerships with organisations that facilitate student mobility programs like IFMSA.
- Provide financial support, scholarships and sufficient resources to the participating students.
- Assist students with visa procedures and document preparation
- Capacitate students with language and intercultural competencies.

- Ensure access to tutors, facilities, and educational equipment.
- Grant official academic recognition and degree credits for program participants

Educators and Tutors to:

- Accept international students in their research or clinical departments.
- Adjust their teaching methods in a global communication language.
- Include their international students in any research activity of their department.
- Provide their international students with resources, educational materials, and guidance.

International Medical Associations and NGOs to:

- Establish partnerships with IFMSA and other organisations that facilitate student mobility programs.
- Advocate for and help raise awareness about the importance and benefits of student mobility.
- Provide student mobility programs with funding and resources to address global health challenges, fostering a collective approach to medical education and community engagement.

IFMSA National Member Organizations (NMOs) to:

- Ensure IFMSA's student mobility programs adhere to regulations, continuously re-evaluating and improving through feedback and impact assessment forms.
- Collaborate with local, national, and international stakeholders to promote IFMSA's student mobility programs.
- Advocate for the importance and benefits of student mobility through actions
- Provide language and intercultural competency training to the participating students.
- Aid exchange officers and program coordinators in supporting students during exchanges.
- Issue certificates of participation in mobility programs to home educators/tutors
- Facilitate well-established student mobility programs and initiatives such as SCOPE, SCORE, SCORA Xchange (SXC), PHEX, GAP, and GoSCORP

Medical Students to:

- Participate in student mobility programs and initiatives.
- Advocate for and help raise awareness about student mobility's importance and benefits by sharing their experiences.
- Volunteer in organising and facilitating student mobility programs.

Position Paper

Background information

“Student mobility” refers to the process whereby a person enrolls at an academic institution across a national border for part or all of one’s education” (1). It takes various forms, such as an exchange, clinical clerkships, medical electives, research clerkships, etc. Student mobility represents an opportunity for all students to develop valuable skills and to expand their horizons by studying or undertaking training abroad.

According to different systematic reviews, educational exchanges are considered one of the most influential and long-lasting influences on attitudes towards national culture. Therefore, student and academic exchange investment is significant” (2).

Even if the benefits of mobility are widely recognised, and student mobility is getting increasingly frequent, more accurate statistical data is needed to analyse these data and thus make decisions to increase mobility. The literature raises many weaknesses and threats of each form of student mobility, where visa issues, the lack of academic recognition, the financial burden, and the cultural shock and mental health within exchanges stand out.

As students, it is important to recognise these factors and address them to have greater and even accessibility to these opportunities for all students worldwide.

Discussion

1. Student Mobility

1.1 Definition

Student mobility typically refers to students' movement across borders for educational purposes(3). According to UNESCO, international students are “individuals who have physically crossed an international border between two countries to participate in educational activities in the country of destination, where the country of destination of a given student is different from their country of origin.”(4)

Student mobility can take various forms, such as completing a full degree in another country, enrolling in a semester or a year-long study abroad program, or participating in short-term mobility programs (internships, summer schools, workshops, and electives)(3)

By recognising the need and benefits of student mobility, IFMSA has been working throughout the years to provide such exchange opportunities to medical students worldwide.

1.2 Overview of Student Mobility Worldwide

Student mobility has been proliferating for the past few decades as the value of student mobility has become progressively more recognised and needed(3). The number of internationally mobile students witnessed a remarkable surge from 0.3 million in 1963 to just over 2 million in 2000(3). Since then, that number has grown substantially to exceed 6 million in 2021(5).

However, student mobility patterns vary considerably across countries and regions(5). Some countries have more inbound than outbound movement of international students and are thereby considered traditional host countries, such as the USA, Australia, the UK, Russia, and Canada(5,6). In contrast, some countries have more outbound than inbound movements, such as China, India, Vietnam, Kazakhstan, Brazil, and Colombia(5,6). Both inbound and outbound mobility prevail for some countries, which is the case for many European countries (5,6).

1.3 Overview of Medical/Healthcare Student Mobility Worldwide

Student mobility is an integral part of healthcare students' course of studies and an almost standardised practice for the study of human medicine(7)

Medical/Healthcare students are regularly engaged in various forms of student mobility, such as study abroad programs, international clinical/research clerkships, and electives^[5]. This is driven by the increasing demand for healthcare workers who possess intercultural competencies in response to the changing dynamics of patient demographics and healthcare contexts influenced by globalisation and the rising trends of individual mobility in the form of tourism, migration, etc. (7)

2. Benefits of student mobility

2.1 Factors that affect the choice of medical/healthcare students to mobilise

Given the substantial benefits of mobility for students, a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing their decisions to mobilise is crucial.

One of the main factors that support students' decision to mobilise is having adequate access to information about various mobility programs early in their course studies. This is particularly impactful when the programs are integrated into their academic curricula and officially recognised by their respective academic institutions(8). As students become aware of the existing opportunities to mobilise through recommendations and support from academic staff, faculty members, and family, as well as the experiences of their peers, they gain the confidence to enrol and participate (8)

Other significant factors include students being aware of the benefits and competencies they acquire on academic, clinical, and personal levels by experiencing medical education and healthcare systems in different social and cultural settings. Additionally, having a genuine interest in exploring and experiencing other cultures and countries serves as a strong motivator (8)

On the contrary, the main factors hindering students' decision to mobilise are financial burdens and linguistic barriers (8)¹. Other factors include their sociocultural background and ties to their home country and limited to no faculty involvement, leading to uncertainty regarding credits and academic recognition for their mobility program.

2.2 Outcomes: post-electives competencies

Student mobility offers multiple positive outcomes to students who participate in it and universities. International electives provide substantial advantages to medical students, impacting them personally and professionally. By furnishing a valuable learning experience that facilitates the acquisition of essential medical competencies and personal resilience, these electives contribute to the education of future physicians who are globally aware and well-prepared to address the challenges of an interconnected world(9).

2.2.1 Clinical Skills

International health electives provide medical/healthcare students with unique experiences to develop their knowledge and clinical skills in diverse healthcare settings(10).

These electives are generally clinical immersion experiences, with students' involvement ranging from passive observation to active participation in various aspects of healthcare, including clinical assessment, case management, and involvement in procedures under supervision(11). Consequently, these students are exposed to diseases rarely encountered in their home country, offering them a unique perspective on epidemiological variations and global health(12) and clinical hands-on experience they may need to receive in their home country(13).

As a result of these enriching experiences, students who engage in international health electives often report enhanced self-confidence in practising clinical skills, including history-taking and performing physical examinations, compared to their peers who did not undertake electives abroad(10).

2.2.2 Research Skills

International research electives are crucial in preparing medical students for future research and academic medicine engagement. Exposure to diverse methodologies cultivates critical thinking and adaptability, while active participation in research projects hones essential data collection, analysis, and interpretation skills. These experiences foster understanding of the integral connection between research and medical practice. Networking opportunities globally open doors for joint projects, contributing to students' readiness to navigate the complexities of research in diverse healthcare settings. International research electives provide a concise and immersive learning experience, equipping students to meaningfully contribute to academic medicine(11).

2.2.3 Cultural experience

In an age of globalisation and cultural diversification, international student mobility is essential for enhancing students' cultural competence and capacity to effectively interact within multicultural settings(14).

During international student mobility experiences, students gain insights into local cultural norms and attitudes towards health, understanding how these factors impact healthcare in countries(12). Additionally, students immerse themselves in a new culture, acquiring skills in working within different cultural settings, engaging in intercultural communication, and learning how to approach people and patients appropriately. Moreover, students learn to embrace and adapt to new cultures and professional habits, fostering an understanding of diverse life and work practices within the host country. Simultaneously, this exposure allows them to reevaluate their culture and gain a new perspective (15).

Ultimately, healthcare workers with solid intercultural competence are better equipped to provide patient-centred care that respects the cultural values and preferences of individuals from diverse backgrounds. This improves doctor-patient relationships, health outcomes, and a more inclusive healthcare system.

2.2.4 Personal Growth

Personal growth is a notable outcome of international student mobility, contributing significantly to the development of medical/healthcare students. Through exposure to diverse healthcare systems, cultural contexts, and challenging scenarios, students undergo a journey of self-discovery governing transformative personal growth(10).

As students find themselves in unfamiliar environments, they are pushed beyond their comfort zones, fostering adaptability, resilience, and heightened self-confidence. Additionally, students learn to recognise and assert their boundaries, expressing when they feel insufficiently competent for a particular task. Interactions with people

within and outside the hospital provide valuable insights into their behaviour and attitudes, offering opportunities for self-reflection. (15)

Ultimately, medical/healthcare students emerge with a more nuanced understanding of global health issues and social determinants of health, along with developed emotional resilience, enhanced interpersonal skills, increased self-confidence, and a deeper understanding of their values and beliefs(10,12).

2.2.5 University advantages

Besides the advantages a student mobility program can have for the student participating, the universities and the Medical Faculties can benefit from an ongoing collaboration between students and faculty. First of all, the incoming students can be part of the workforce or any hospital and, at the same time, if it is a research spot, be part of a lab team. The student can be a link for the start of the collaboration between universities, resulting in the globalisation of medical education. This way, student mobility increases competition between universities through pressure for transferable credits, for better and more courses, improving the provided education, and ultimately leading to the recognition of mobility programs(16).

3. IFMSA's Student Mobility Programs

3.1 IFMSA Exchanges Programs

IFMSA was created to foster cooperation and collaboration among medical students by breaking down social barriers through promoting opportunities for dialogue; this was initiated via the Standing Committee On Professional Exchange in 1951 (the first IFMSA standing committee), which focuses on Professional clinical exchanges. Moreover 1991, SCORE (the Standing Committee On Research Exchange) was created, widening the academic and skillset training offered by IFMSA exchanges to medical students worldwide.

Both exchange programs are endorsed by the World Federation of Medical Education (WFME), the World Organization of National Colleges, Academies and Academic Associations of General Practitioners/Family Physicians (WONCA), the Federation of European Neuroscience Societies (FENS), the European Society for Emergency Medicine (EuSEM), the World Federation of Societies of Anaesthesiologists (WFSA), the International Pediatric Association (IPA) and the World Psychiatric Association (WPA), in addition to many others. (17)

3.2 Definitions Relevant to IFMSA Exchanges

3.2.1 SCOPE: Standing Committee on Professional Exchange

IFMSA Professional Exchanges include a 4-week or 8-week clerkship in a clinical or a pre-clinical department at a Medical School or Hospital in 105+ National Member Organizations worldwide, providing clinical, cultural and Global Health experiences for medical students through rotations in several medical departments, educational activities, Global Health education and cultural programs. Current statistics showcase 1200+ hospitals worldwide participating in SCOPE exchanges, with 5300+ student exchanges in the previous exchange season (April 2022-March 2023). (17)

3.2.2 SCORE: Standing Committee on Research Exchange

IFMSA Research Exchanges include 4-week or 8-week clerkship in clinical or pre-clinical departments at a Medical School or hospital in over 80 National Member Organizations worldwide, providing four types of

research projects: Basic Science research project (lab work, literature study), Clinical research project with lab work (studying a highly specific clinical topic combined with basic research lab), Clinical research projects without lab work (investigating a highly specific clinical topic in a data collecting, clinical setting) and Global Action Project (combined theoretical teaching, research and fieldwork on endemic diseases). Current data obtained regarding the Research program showcases the participation of over 750 universities worldwide, with over 1000 research tutors from around the globe mentoring students in the 1150+ currently active research projects. During the past IFMSA Exchange Season (April 2022 - March 2023), over 1550 students participated in this program. (19,20)

3.2.3 Bilateral Exchanges

A bilateral contract is a contract whereby two NMOs send a student on exchange and host a student from the other NMO based on reciprocity. (20)

3.2.4 Unilateral Exchanges

A unilateral contract is when an NMO sends or hosts a student without reciprocity. (20)

3.3 Standing Committee Objectives:

SCORE Objectives

- Enable students to take responsibility for their learning according to their personal interests.
- Introduce students to the basic principles of medical research.
- Widen the students' horizons and provide the opportunity to experience different approaches to health care, ethical research standards, medical research, education, and treatment.
- Enhance the academic quality of the medical student curricula and achieve educational benefits of practical and theoretical knowledge in medical research.
- Facilitate collaboration and partnership between medical universities, research institutions, and allied medical students across the globe to share and spread new achievements in medical research. (18)

SCOPE Objectives (called Global Health Learning Objectives)

- To know the host country's primary health concerns and basic epidemiology and how it differs from the home country.
- To understand the structure of the health care system in the host country and how it is funded.
- To have a knowledge of the medical education system in the host country.
- To observe professional and doctor-patient relationships in the host country and compare them to the home country.
- Identify any differences in public health regionally and nationally in the host country.(20)

The IFMSA Exchange Standing Committees (SCOPE/SCORE) have always sought the development of their student-led exchange programs. They have long been considered a stable source of education for medical students worldwide and will continue to do so in the upcoming period. However, IFMSA Exchange programs were severely affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic in terms of decreased number of active NMOs, reduced number of students going on an exchange, increased demand for capacitating exchange officers, and inappropriate handover practices. In Research Exchange, the number of students who went on exchange during the 2019-2020 season (Immediately before the pandemic, April 2019 to March 2020) was 2917 students, and now, during the season 2023 to 2024, the number of students who went on Research Exchange became on

average 1530 students per year, which is lower than the number of students who went on Research Exchange during the 2009-2010 season (1630 students). (21)

3.4 Other IFMSA Initiatives

3.4.1 PHEX: Public Health Exchanges

The Public Health Exchanges are a collaboration between SCOPH and SCOPE to empower and educate medical students in Public Health. Health science students and medical students are eligible to apply for a Public Health Internship. Through this program, they can participate in Public Health Programs, volunteer, and gain insights into their implementation across different countries. (22)

3.4.2 GAP: Global Action Project

The Global Action Project (GAP) is one of the research projects to improve knowledge and awareness of Public Health and community-based research, especially on endemic diseases. This program is a collaboration between SCORE and SCOPH. This project aims to encourage future health professionals to learn the necessary skills for the prevention, promotion, research, detection, and treatment of endemic diseases worldwide. Through a four-week intervention program, students will reinforce basic research abilities in exceptional circumstances and experience how these endemic diseases are handled in their native environment. Students will also be involved in the development of health promotion programs. (23)

3.4.3 SCORA exchange

The SCORA X-Change is a unilateral exchange program for IFMSA members focused on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. The goal of this program is to provide the participants with information about the hosting country's social and healthcare situation and strategies on the previously mentioned topics, emphasising the importance of global health and encouraging intercultural exchange and discussions between them. NMOs (National member organisations) in the IFMSA prepare an application based on specific requirements, of which 10-20 are selected to host this exchange program. Each year, there are two exchange terms, meaning that this process takes place twice per year. (24)

3.4.4 Go SCORP

SCORP exchanges or "GoSCORP" is a unilateral exchange for IFMSA members focused on capacity building, volunteer work and discussions on given themes connected to human rights and peace. GoSCORP focuses on providing participating members with an experience centred around a human rights-based approach to volunteerism and social work, building their capacities regarding intercultural competencies and specifically chosen themes connected to human rights and peace. (25)

4. Recognition

The credibility of higher education programmes and qualifications is of the utmost importance for students, their employers, the public, and the academic community (26). However, the increasing international student mobility poses a major challenge regarding credit transferability, as educational systems vary significantly across countries. The confusing and unclear regulations for studying abroad, both at the national and university levels, make students confident about the recognition of their overseas credits. This issue is further compounded when

trying to transfer credits between countries with similar educational systems, let alone across entirely different ones.

In IFMSA, Recognition is used when the exchange is recognised as a formal part of the student's curriculum. It can take place during the elective period or not, but it means that students will receive credits for their working hours during their exchange and will not need to obtain those hours through their curriculum. More specifically, the students must recover the working hours/lessons they missed once they return to their universities. Then it is considered partial recognition, and if they receive the credit hours they have spent on exchange and do not need to obtain those hours through their curriculum anymore, then it is considered full Academic Recognition.

To address this problem, the ERASMUS/SOCRATES program has implemented the "European Credit Transfer System" (ECTS). Unlike traditional methods of credit recognition, ECTS focuses on establishing a framework where universities agree to recognise pre-defined study components, making credit transferability easier. This framework promotes student mobility within ERASMUS/SOCRATES, simplifies credit recognition, and promotes transparency among participating universities (27).

Gaining recognition for the exchange program from universities and other relevant organisations can help the exchange quality by receiving financial support, access to university facilities, flexible academic schedules, and enhanced program promotion to attract more students, tutors, and stakeholders (28).

5. Obstacles

Notwithstanding the extensive growth in student mobility across world regions, "it has still only reached a tiny proportion of the world's tertiary student population, just 2.6%"(3). This lack of equity is felt even more keenly in specific world regions, such as Latin America and the Caribbean, with the lowest percentage of internationally mobile students (1.3%). At the same time, Central Asia is an outlier, with 14.4% of students being internationally mobile. (3)

Factors affecting this data can be explained in the following points:

5.1 Visa issues

Visa complications are viewed as a major obstacle students encounter as they prepare for their worldwide travels for a mobility program. This can result in last-minute cancellations and an inability to participate and take these opportunities for many students worldwide.

According to the NEO Report from August 2023, a substantial 65.2% of National Exchange Officers (NEOs) encountered visa issues for their exchange students, reflecting the pervasive nature of this obstacle. Among these challenges, only 35.8% were successfully resolved by the NEOs, while 29.4% remained unresolved, leading to regrettable cancellations or postponements of exchanges. This highlights the urgency to address the complexities associated with visa procedures, where incomplete documentation, insufficient funds, lack of travel purpose or strong ties, inadequate travel insurance, and failure to meet health requirements contribute to the recurring problem.(29) In the NORE report from August 2023, 58% of National Officers of Research Exchanges (NOREs) reported no visa issues for Outgoing students, while 8.3% faced considerable challenges, with at least 10 Outgoing students encountering visa issues in their NMO. Similarly, for Incomings, 50% of NOREs reported no visa issues, but 31% mentioned that 1 to 3 incoming students faced visa challenges in their NMO during the same exchange periods..(30)

Increased endeavours should be undertaken to support the mobility of medical students, as it has demonstrated its effectiveness in advancing medical competencies and global health education among healthcare professionals, and visa issues should be a manageable burden for these international education efforts.

5.2 Financial burdens

Social selectivity for international student mobility relies substantially on the student's ability to pay a significant portion of the cost of the mobility program. Consequently, many students who complete the physical mobility experience come from families with an above-average economic status and highly educated parents (31). Rising living costs are affecting the mobility of international students, and many are reconsidering their decision to study abroad. In that context, 72% of students said they would apply for work visas, while 44% said they would consider changing their study destination if the work visa duration were to be shortened. (31)

5.3 Language barrier

The language barrier is a frequent, serious, and common problem among international students. According to data collected from other systematic reviews, Asia is the region where students experience this difficulty the most. Some universities in this region have even implemented a follow-up in terms of their incomes so that they can achieve their academic expectations, recognising that studying has many internal and external factors involved, one of them being the language barrier and communication skills. Providing a friendly teaching environment that can motivate them to pay personal attention to learning the language would help international students in their academics and establish social relationships in the host community to understand the local culture. (32)

5.4 Sociocultural factors

The international learning journey is transitional and transformational, necessitating identity change and reconstruction to a greater or smaller extent. Managing one's identity shift is a necessary cross-cultural competence for international students. The challenges that come with this process can cause quite some discomfort and tension within a person. It is essential to address the issues of international student identity and mental well-being. Most students find it challenging to build relationships within their program and department, so they seek social support outside of their department by interacting with other international students on campus. (33)

5.5 Uncertain academic recognition/credits

More than 2/3 of the IFMSA NMOs do not have full recognition for their exchanges; meanwhile, there are NMOs who have achieved full recognition for some or majority of the universities participating in their exchange programs. This indicates there are still places where students have to face uncertain academic recognition(34). NMO should put more effort into addressing the issue and contacting faculty to claim academic recognition. The ultimate goal of the exchanges is to make better physicians by increasing exposure to other cultures and healthcare systems and to research(35).

Consequently, due to the uncertainty of a mobility program, as far as the recognition part is concerned, many medical students prefer not to try participating in a mobility program.

5.6 Lack of Support from the University/Faculty

Given the extensive logistical and financial requirements needed to host students from other countries for academic purposes, It is paramount that the hosts receive sufficient backing from their universities and faculties.

As a student-led exchange program, IFMSA exchange program hosts only sometimes receive such a privilege. Often forcing students to think outside the box to finance and reach solutions that ensure the exchange program reaches its optimum quality. This significantly burdens the hosting students, in addition to the original orchestration of the already complex exchange program and their personal and academic obligations. This problem usually arises due to the need for more academic recognition of the exchange program from the hosting university, hence refusing to support the students and considering it an external program.

A potential solution that should be considered is if the university and organising students agree on specific academic objectives to be met in the exchange program to ensure its educational quality and recognise it.

6. Global Health & Student Mobility

One of the greatest outcomes of an exchange program for medical students is to acquire knowledge and skills related to Global Health (GH). Global health is an important topic in medical education, considering that it “came about from the perception that several major health problems are affected by factors resulting from globalisation”(36). “The emergence and re-emergence of infectious diseases, especially the recent influenza, Ebola, and the current COVID-19 pandemic, the increased mobility of immigrants and refugees, which results in greater ethnic and cultural diversity of populations and more complex challenges to epidemiological surveillance; and the growing burden of diseases related to urbanisation, environmental pollution, climate change, and a model of economic development that has deepened the differences between the rich and the poor, generating poverty, violence, and illness”(36); are just a clear example of why global health should be included in our medical curriculum.

Nowadays, as can be seen, many of the pathologies, risk and protective factors, and even diagnostic and therapeutic approaches depend heavily on this topic. Unfortunately, although its integration into the medical curriculum has been proposed, making it compulsory in different universities is impossible.

In this sense, there has been an active movement on the part of students and recent graduates who advocate for global health, such that many reviews declare that the interest in this area is a relatively recent phenomenon in academic medicine. “Over the last two decades, interest in Global Health in graduate medical education has steadily grown, with many residencies currently offering curricula and experiences in Global Health”(37). It should be noted that most of these opportunities are extracurricular and organised on an elective basis, mostly actively by the students themselves. And it is here where international student mobility stands out.

According to many systematic reviews across the world, “student global health organisations have driven the development of global health programmes in the UK, the Netherlands, the USA, Canada, Australia, and Germany”(38), and even more, “medical students themselves have been key champions for global health in university curricula and have established a strong network of global health organisations, both at UK universities and internationally, through the International Federation of Medical Students Associations (IFMSA)” (35).

All of the above stands out for the student outbound mobility as a major element in the internationalisation of medical education and global health, even when the internationalisation is online. In the case of other exchange programs, such as the ERASMUS program, “it also allowed the respondents to learn the differences between medical education systems in Poland and host countries, especially the culture of teaching and learning and the approaches to the curriculum. Similarly, it allowed us to observe differences and compare healthcare systems, including the organisation, culture, and healthcare financing. The ERASMUS experience impacted the career plans of 57% of respondents, and 28% of them reported working abroad in healthcare or research afterwards” (39), potentiating global health education and advocacy.

Another point is online student mobility, where a report states, "Internationalisation of medical education can be achieved at home-via structured online peer exchanges-and can provide students with intercultural skills and networking opportunities that are typically achieved via international in-person travel" (40)

In summary, global health has increased in recent decades at the expense of medical students' motivation, who have independently sought and organised ways to connect and participate in medical internship programs worldwide.

7. Academic Qualities and Educational Objectives of Mobility Programmes

Students' Academic Mobility primarily aims to enhance the quality of education and research while fostering personal, societal, and national development in response to the demands of international education integration(41). The objectives of the student's mobility program are categorised into five key areas to encompass various aspects of learning.

- **Medical Knowledge and Clinical Skills:** Students acquire these through a supervisor explaining cases and their practical application. They also learn to identify healthcare systems and epidemiological variations between their home and host countries.
- **Medical Education System:** Students analyse the differences between the medical education systems in the host and home countries, identifying valuable strategies for potential adoption back home.
- **Communication:** In terms of improvement of English language or other languages, as well as observing doctor-patient relationships and inter-professional collaboration to learn healthy communication.
- **Social and Cultural Horizons:** Aim to expand students' social and cultural awareness within the diverse healthcare and societal environment. The last category is personal development: This area fosters personal growth through enhanced self-confidence, proactive behaviour, and independent learning skills (12).

For a student mobility program to be educational and valuable to all students who participate, it must ensure high quality. Evaluating the academic quality of exchanges is a crucial element for the ongoing advancement and enhancement of the program. This is the most important step for most student mobility programs to be officially recognised by the Universities and the Medical Faculties and work together to provide educational opportunities to more medical students worldwide.

8. Student Mobility Initiatives

IFMSA has been actively engaged in Student Mobility programs since its establishment in 1951 through different types of exchange opportunities. Besides this, few internationally recognised programs offer mobility for healthcare professionals. These programs provide academic recognition and are great platforms for cross-cultural experience, and along with the IFMSA exchanges, they highlight the importance and the need for global educational opportunities.

8.1 Oxford Electives

Oxford electives refer to elective courses or study opportunities available to students at the University of Oxford. These electives allow students to tailor their academic experience, explore specific interests, or engage in

interdisciplinary studies. Oxford's renowned academic environment and diverse elective options provide a well-rounded and enriching educational experience.(42)

8.2 AMSA international exchanges

The AMSA (American Medical Student Association) International Exchanges program provides medical students with transformative global experiences. Connecting students worldwide, the program fosters cultural understanding, exposes participants to diverse healthcare systems, and promotes collaboration. AMSA International Exchanges enrich medical education by offering unique perspectives and fostering a global community of future healthcare leaders.(43)

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