





# TERMS OF REFERENCE

## Regarding the Joint Cooperation between URGENT partners on Academic Mobility and Research Cooperation

#### **Between**

#### THE URGENT PROJECT

And

#### 1. Parties

- (1) The Urban Resilience and Adaptation for India and Mongolia (URGENT) Project: Curricula, Capacity, ICT and Stakeholder Collaboration to Support Green and Blue Infrastructure and Nature-based Solution, hereafter referred to as "URGENT Project".
- (2) The ......

## 2. PURPOSE and BACKGROUND

The URGENT Project wishes to enter into an agreement with its project partners regarding the herein described guidelines for (a) academic mobility, including physical and virtual mobility, (b) recognition of distantly gained credits, (c) research cooperation, including MSc and PhD supervision and (d) sharing of experimental facilities. The intent of these Terms of Reference (ToR) is to provide an information basis to which all project partners subscribe and enter into agreement to uphold these guidelines. It is the intent of this ToR to outline a shared vision regarding academic mobility and research cooperation with regard to academic and research exchange in particular related to studies focused on Green and Blue infrastructure development and the application of nature-based solutions.

Academic mobility refers the exchange of students (and teachers) in higher education from one teaching institution to another. This exchange can both happen within the country or outside the country in which the student or teacher is based. Within the URGENT project, a particular emphasis is placed on international academic mobility in order to capitalize on the manyfold international targets and partners that the project has. Academic mobility traditionally divides mobility in two aspects; virtual and physical mobility.

Virtual mobility relates to students visiting another institution outside their original country of study to participate in courses and earn credits in a foreign higher education organization — without leaving their







home. This means, the students will use internet facilities and other information and communication technologies to participate in courses from a foreign university without being physically present. Physical mobility refers to students that leave their country for a period of time and partake in university courses at the foreign university themselves, such as within the ERASMUS+ Programme of the European Union.

Striving for a more unified approach to university teaching, both virtual and physical mobility have become a popular means of studying among new university students. Recent numbers support this increase in academic mobility considering that there were approximately 250,000 exchange students in 1965 and around 3.7 million exchange students in 2011 (OECD, 2011). As such, the URGENT project is committed to fostering this flexible approach in an attempt to nurture and support an international exchange of scientific information. It is the intent of the URGENT project to strengthen academic mobility in each of its partner universities.

Students participating in academic mobility will earn distantly gained credits as per the regulation of the country in which they take courses in. As such, it is vital that the signing party (i.e. university in country of origin of the student) recognizes the gaining of credits in foreign universities. This requires a transfer of credits between the university in the country the credits were earned in and the country to which the student returns to finish their degree. As part of these Terms of Reference and in order to facilitate academic mobility, the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is applied. The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is a tool of the European Higher Education Area intended to facilitate transparency regarding academic mobility. It assists students in moving between countries and in having their academic qualifications and study periods gained abroad recognised. ECTS allows credits taken at one higher education institution to be counted towards a qualification studied for at another. ECTS credits represent learning based on defined learning outcomes and their associated workload. ECTS enhances the flexibility of study programmes for students. It also supports the planning, delivery and evaluation of higher education programmes. It is a central tool in the Bologna Process, which aims to make national education systems more comparable internationally. ECTS also helps make other documents, such as the Diploma Supplement, clearer and easier to use in different countries. ECTS has been adopted by most of the countries in the European Higher Education Area as the national credit system and is increasingly used elsewhere. (https://education.ec.europa.eu/educationlevels/higher-education/inclusive-and-connected-higher-education/european-credit-transfer-andaccumulation-system). The signing party agrees that, as outlined in the ECTS' User Guide 2015, all credits gained during the period of study abroad or during activities of virtual mobility, as agreed in each individual Learning Agreement and confirmed by the respective Transcript of Records, should be transferred without delay and counted towards the student's degree without any additional work by or assessment of the student (ECTS Guide 2015).

Apart from academic mobility, another aim of the URGENT project is to strengthen scientific cooperation with and between the URGENT partners. As part of this, URGENT partners, as outlined in these ToRs, are expected to share their developed knowledge products, experimental facilities and scientific know-how with each other as well as lay the foundations for the development and implementation of future research projects. Additionally, the URGENT project aims at fostering the exchange of MSc and PhD students between URGENT partners, which is also described in these ToR.

The URGENT Project aims at promoting green and blue infrastructure and nature-based solutions for resilient, climate-friendly, and livable cities in India and Mongolia through ICT-enhanced tertiary







education linked to labor markets & wider stakeholder circles. Of particular relevance to these **TERMS OF REFERENCE (TOR)** is the second objective of Work Package 4:

- Development of Arrangements for Credit and Physical Mobility, sharing of experimental facilities and Joint MSc and PhD supervision and research collaboration.

As such, engagement and close cooperation between the URGENT partners with a particular focus on academic exchange and research cooperation are paramount for fulfilling the objective outlined above. Hence, it was decided to formulate these guidelines to which every URGENT partner signing these ToR promises to adhere to.

#### 3. RESPONSIBILITIES

## 3.1 Objectives

The objective of these Terms of Reference is to commit to a shared vision regarding academic exchange and research collaboration. These Terms of Reference will be effective upon signature by each party. Upon the mutual consent of the parties, collaboration may be carried out in, but not necessarily limited to, the following activities:

- **3.2** The Signing Party agrees to share existing scientific knowledge products that align with the goals of the URGENT project on the SIP. These knowledge products include, but are not limited to:
  - Guidelines, Reports, Publications
  - Questionnaires
  - Online Modules and Online Workshops
  - Seminars and Webinars
  - Notes and Summaries from Workshops, Courses, Trainings or similar activities
  - eBooks, eJournals, Videos
  - Relevant Software Tools for Green and Blue Infrastructure Developments
- **3.3** The Signing Party agrees to inventories and share a list of experimental facilities available at their institution in order to strengthen their research cooperation.
- **3.4** The Signing Party agrees to be open to discuss their participation in collaborative scientific efforts now and in the future regarding the development and implementation of research projects with an open mind.
- **3.5** The Signing Party agrees to promote the exchange of students of their institution to one of the URGENT partner universities.
- **3.6** <u>The Signing Party</u> agrees to acknowledge distantly gained credits in their study programmes as outlined in the ECTS Guide 2015. The signing party agrees to follow the guidelines described in the ECTS Guide 2015 and to adhere to them.
- **3.7** The Signing Party agrees to promote academic exchange both for virtual mobility and physical mobility alike. Both options should be open to students wishing to partake in academic exchange
- 3.8 The URGENT Project will be responsible to
  - Assist in promoting scientific exchange between partner universities







- Assist in carrying out the necessary steps for academic mobility as per the ECTS 2015 guidelines developed by the European Union
- Manage the organization and scheduling related to the use of shared experimental facilities
- Prepare a list of MSc and PhD supervisors for facilitating student exchange and enabling scientific cooperation

## 4. PUBLICITY and ADVERTISING

The parties agree that each may publish or advertise the existence and nature of their cooperation and shared activities origination from efforts taken based on these TERMS OF RERENCE. Nothing in this agreement shall be construed as confidential.

#### 5. AMENDMENTS

The terms of this agreement can be amended, with the approval of both Parties, by means of exchange of letters or email through the authorized officials at each institution. Either Party may initiate the exchange of letters or email. Any amendment to this agreement must, to be effective, be in writing and signed by the authorized representatives of each party.

## 6. TERMINATION

This agreement may be terminated by either Party by giving written notice of the intent to terminate the agreement. Such termination shall not affect the execution and conclusion of specific activities in effect under the terms of this agreement nor publication and dissemination of results of research in progress.

## 7. ACCEPTANCE

If parties agree to the terms and conditions set out in this agreement, acceptance must be notified by signing, dating and returning copies of this letter to each party.







These ToR are to be signed by the Project Coordinator of the URGENT project, the National Coordinator of the URGENT Project and a representative of the party entering the agreement. By signing the TERMS OF REFERENCE, the party entering this agreement confirms its intent to deliver on the activities described above and to adhere to the rules set related to the accreditation of distantly gained credits. The agreement enters into effect on the date in which it is duly signed by both parties.

N WITNESS WHEREOF, the duly authorized repression Behalf of	On Behalf of the URGENT Project
FULL NAME	FULL NAME – PROJECT COORDINATOR
DATE and SIGNATURE	DATE and SIGNATURE
	FULL NAME – NATIONAL COORDINATOR
	DATE and SIGNATURE