Prototypical Exchange Study Models for Music Teacher Education

A practical guide for programme coordinators, international offices and academic advisors.

Makes mobility models easier to explain, compare and choose.

Guiding idea: supported uncertainty – reduce avoidable risk while keeping room for meaningful discovery.

Suggested citations:

Nørstebø, K., Fretheim, S., Jenssen, R. H., & Knigge, J. (2026). Prototypical exchange study models for music teacher education: A practical guide for programme coordinators, international offices and academic advisors. TEAM – Teacher Education Academy for Music, Work Package 4. https://teacher-academy-music.eu/student-mobility/study-abroad/resources

Knigge, J., De Baets, T., Economidou Stavrou, N., Fretheim, S., Girdzijauskienė, R., Jenssen, R. H., Nørstebø, K., & O'Connell, L. (2026). The Mobility Designer: Design principles for mobility in music teacher education [Online tool]. TEAM – Teacher Education Academy for Music. https://teacher-academy-music.eu/student-mobility/study-abroad

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Introduction and contents

What this guide presents

This guide presents five prototypical models for organising exchange studies in music teacher education. It offers practical advice on how each model can be applied and connects the models to the online Mobility Designer* by showing how relevant Design Principles are embedded throughout the guide.

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*The Mobility Designer is an online tool:
https://teacher-academy-music.eu/student-mobility/study-abroad

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Why different study plan models are needed

A practical response to the tension between structure and flexibility.

The central challenge

Exchange studies offer music education students invaluable opportunities to broaden their pedagogical perspectives, experience diverse musical traditions, and develop intercultural competencies essential for modern music educators. However, the structure of an exchange programme significantly impacts both the academic outcomes and the overall experience. This guide outlines five prototypical exchange study plan models designed specifically for bachelor-level music education, each offering distinct advantages and serving different student needs and circumstances. *(see DP 3.1 and DP 3.2)*

Understanding these models enables administrators and academic staff to provide appropriate guidance, establish effective partnerships, and develop institutional policies that support successful exchange experiences. Four of these models represent common approaches to structuring exchange studies (1) the pre-designed package plan, (2) the flexible study plan, (3) the plan based on electives, and (4) the short-term study plan. The fifth model is deliberately speculative. Each model is illustrated with concrete examples of course configurations to demonstrate how a typical exchange period might be structured, providing practical templates that can inform institutional planning and student advising.

In addition, the document concludes with a discussion on exchange-study models (5) that cannot currently be organised within today's mobility frameworks, prompting reflection on how mobility might be made more accessible and flexible in the future.

What needs to be clearer

- Information before departure
- Credit transfer and recognition *(see DP 3.4)*
- Practical support and responsibilities *(see DP 5.1)*
- Instrument lessons, ensembles and practicum implications

What still needs to stay open

- Student-specific pathways
- Host-specific strengths and local opportunities
- Different forms of meaningful learning
- Formats that suit different student profiles

Why a spectrum of models matters

The models in this guide are not competing recipes. They are different ways of balancing structure, flexibility, support and equity. Many institutions may need several models rather than only one.

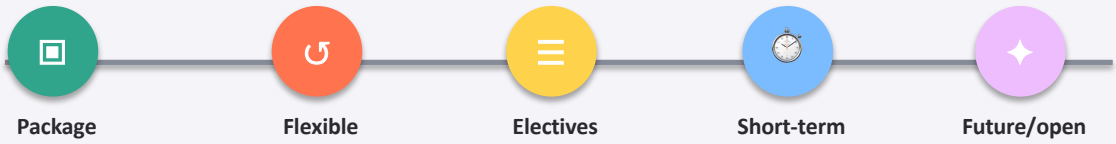
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Choosing between models

Use the spectrum and comparison as a guide, not as a hierarchy.

Model spectrum

The best model depends on how much structure the student needs and how much flexibility the institution can support. *(see DP 3.1 and DP 3.2)*



Quick comparison

Model	Best when…	Strength / risk
Package	Students need predictability; partners can pre-align a full semester. *(see DP 3.3)*	Clear / may feel fixed
Flexible	Students have clear goals and need adaptation after arrival. *(see DP 3.2)*	Responsive / needs support
Electives	Students want choice within a reliable catalogue.	Balanced / needs elective space
Short-term	A full semester is difficult or not inclusive enough.	Accessible / narrower scope
Future/open	Institutions want to rethink recognition and mobility. *(see DP 3.4)*	Innovative / hard to implement

A useful reminder: a more open model is not automatically more equitable. The more uncertainty a model places on the student, the more support may be needed.

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At a glance: choosing the right model

Use the models as a spectrum, not as fixed categories. The best choice depends on student needs, curriculum space, partnership maturity and the purpose of the exchange.

1. Package

A ready-made 30 ECTS semester where courses, credits, schedules and recognition are agreed in advance. *(see DP 3.3 and DP 3.4)*

Best for: Students who need predictability, strong scaffolding and low administrative uncertainty.

2. Flexible

A provisional plan becomes a final learning agreement during the first weeks after arrival. *(see DP 3.2)*

Best for: Mature, self-directed students who have clear interests and need adaptation to host-specific opportunities.

3. Electives

Students build a semester from a curated catalogue of exchange-friendly electives. *(see DP 3.2)*

Best for: Students who want both choice and advance certainty, and programmes with sufficient elective space.

4. Short-term

A focused mobility format such as a summer school, residency, intensive project or blended course. *(see DP 4.3 and DP 5.1)*

Best for: Students who cannot be away for a full semester or need a lower-threshold mobility option.

5. Future/open

A speculative model that asks what mobility could look like if recognition followed learning more flexibly. *(see DP 3.4)*

Best for: Strategic conversations and pilot projects that want to think beyond current frameworks.

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Simple decision guide

A quick route into the models before reading the detailed pages.

Need maximum predictability? → **Pre-designed package** *(see DP 3.3)*

Need choice but pre-approval? → **Electives** *(see DP 3.2)*

Need adaptation after arrival? → **Flexible plan** *(see DP 3.2)*

No room for a full semester? → **Short-term / blended** *(see DP 4.3)*

Want to rethink what counts? → **Future / open model** *(see DP 3.4)*

This guide is not a rule. It is a conversation starter for advising students and designing partner agreements.

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Model 1: Pre-designed package plan

Page A — explanation, suitability, strengths and watchpoints.

What this model is

The pre-designed package plan is the most structured model. The host institution offers a fixed curriculum, usually equivalent to a full exchange semester, that has already been prepared for incoming students. Courses, ECTS, schedules, assessment formats, and the broad shape of the learning agreement are known before departure. *(see DP 3.3 and DP 3.4)*

What it looks like

fixed semester package, often 30 ECTS
learning agreement and recognition clarified before departure
balanced combination of practical music studies, pedagogy, ensemble work and contextual learning
can be offered as a repeatable pathway within a stable partner agreement

Best for

students with less prior mobility experience
students who need language, financial or administrative predictability
institutions building a repeatable mobility offer

Music teacher education focus

Guarantee individual instrumental tuition, include ensemble participation as a core social and musical space, and plan practicum sequencing before the student leaves. *(see DP 3.1)*

Strengths

clear expectations before departure
strong institutional scaffolding
efficient for advising, quality assurance and communication

Watchpoints

may feel too fixed for students with specific goals
requires careful pre-alignment between partners
risks becoming too separate from local student life if cohort-based

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Model 1: Pre-designed package plan

Page B — before, during, after, example and what to clarify.

Sample 30 ECTS package

Performance Studies — 7.5 ECTS
Composing and Arranging for Larger Ensembles — 7.5 ECTS
Ensemble Playing and Leadership — 7.5 ECTS
Professional Practice in Community Music — 7.5 ECTS

Before

publish a clear package with ECTS, assessment and workload
settle learning agreement and recognition before departure *(see DP 3.4)*
clarify accommodation, orientation and named contact person *(see DP 5.1)*

During

provide induction and regular check-ins
support ensemble and peer integration
monitor whether the fixed package works as intended

After

complete recognition smoothly
debrief academic and emotional reintegration
use feedback to refine the package

What to clarify before students commit

How are instrument lessons guaranteed?
Is ensemble participation credit-bearing?
Can practicum be included or must it stay at home?

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Model 2: Flexible study plan

Page A — explanation, suitability, strengths and watchpoints.

What this model is

The flexible study plan is the most adaptive of the currently workable models. The student arrives with a general direction and academic goals, but the final study plan is shaped after arrival once the actual course offer, ensembles, subject specialists and local opportunities become visible. *(see DP 3.2)*

What it looks like

- first weeks include course visits, advising and adjustment
- courses or credits may be adapted to match student level and interests
- responds to host-specific strengths such as conducting, folk music or technology
- depends on trust and quick communication between home and host institutions

Best for

- mature, self-directed students with clear academic goals
- students seeking host-specific opportunities
- partnerships with responsive staff and room for negotiation

Music teacher education focus

Flexibility must be supported rather than left to chance. Use a checklist for instrument lessons, ensemble access, practicum status and recognition so that core MTE elements are not overlooked.

Strengths

- high academic fit and responsiveness
- supports student ownership and discovery
- can make visible opportunities that were not clear before arrival

Watchpoints

- can feel overwhelming without close support
- requires strong advising capacity early in the semester
- recognition must be documented carefully *(see DP 3.4)*

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Model 2: Flexible study plan

Page B — before, during, after, example and what to clarify.

Example negotiated 30 ECTS plan

Applied Piano — 8 ECTS
Early Childhood Music Education — 7 ECTS
Digital Tools for Music Learning — 6 ECTS
Classroom Management and Group Dynamics — 5 ECTS
Vocal Ensemble — 4 ECTS

Before

prepare a provisional plan and student goals
clarify which elements may change after arrival
agree communication routines between home and host advisors

During

use the first 2–3 weeks for course visits and advising
confirm instrument lessons, ensemble participation and practicum status *(see DP 3.2)*
document all changes in the learning agreement *(see DP 3.4)*

After

close the final agreement and credit transfer
reflect on how adaptive planning worked
capture host-specific opportunities for future students

What to clarify before students commit

Who advises the student during the first weeks?
What changes are allowed and how are they approved?
How can uncertainty be reduced without removing flexibility?

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Model 3: Plan based on electives

Page A — explanation, suitability, strengths and watchpoints.

What this model is

The elective-based plan sits between a fixed package and a flexible plan. The host institution publishes a catalogue of exchange-friendly courses, and students compose a study plan from within that bounded framework before departure. The model supports choice without leaving the whole plan open-ended. *(see DP 3.2)*

What it looks like

host publishes a catalogue with course descriptions, language, assessment and ECTS
students choose a coherent combination before departure
the model offers bounded choice within a stable administrative frame
a short add/drop period may allow minor changes after arrival

Best for

students who value advance planning but want choice
programmes with enough elective space for a semester abroad
institutions wanting a manageable but attractive exchange offer

Music teacher education focus

The catalogue should make MTE elements visible: pedagogy/didactics, ensemble options with credit, and whether individual tuition or practicum is available. *(see DP 3.2 and DP 3.4)*

Strengths

balances choice and security
easier to scale across partners
encourages thematic exploration and host-specific enrichment

Watchpoints

depends on accurate and updated catalogue information
selected courses may still clash or be cancelled
not all MTE programmes have enough elective space

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Model 3: Plan based on electives

Page B — before, during, after, example and what to clarify.

Example elective catalogue

Music and Technology — 5 ECTS
Instrumental Didactics — 5 ECTS
Arts Management and Music Entrepreneurship — 5 ECTS
Performance Studies — 7.5 ECTS
Ensemble Playing and Leadership — 7.5 ECTS
Intercultural Music Pedagogy — 5 ECTS
Community Music Practice — 5 ECTS
School Music Observation — 5 ECTS

Selected 30 ECTS bundle

Performance Studies — 7.5 ECTS
Ensemble Playing and Leadership — 7.5 ECTS
Music and Technology — 5 ECTS
Instrumental Didactics — 5 ECTS
Arts Management and Music Entrepreneurship — 5 ECTS

Total = 30 ECTS

Before

publish the elective catalogue well in advance
support students in building a coherent 30 ECTS bundle
pre-approve the selection with both institutions *(see DP 3.1 and DP 3.4)*

During

allow limited add/drop if courses clash or are unavailable
support students in joining ensembles and selected classes
check whether workload and course combination are manageable

After

transfer credits according to the approved bundle *(see DP 3.4)*
review which electives worked well for exchange students
update the catalogue using student feedback

What to clarify before students commit

Which electives are actually open to exchange students?
Can the selected combination reach 30 ECTS without clashes?
What happens if a course is cancelled?

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Model 4: Short-term study plan

Page A — explanation, suitability, strengths and watchpoints.

What this model is

The short-term study plan is a focused, time-limited format. It may take the form of a summer school, intensive project, residency, short practicum, school observation period or blended mobility experience combining online preparation, a shorter physical stay and online follow-up. *(see DP 4.3 and DP 5.1)*

What it looks like

- organised around a clear theme, project or intensive learning activity
- often easier to fit around practicum-heavy or tightly sequenced curricula
- can lower barriers related to cost, caring responsibilities or confidence *(see DP 5.2)*
- should be treated as a meaningful model in its own right

Best for

- students who cannot be away for a full semester
- students who need a lower-threshold or blended format
- institutions seeking to widen access to mobility

Music teacher education focus

Short-term formats are especially promising for conducting, ensemble projects, school observation, community music or culturally specific music practices that benefit from concentrated engagement.

Strengths

- widens participation
- works well for intensive artistic or pedagogical themes
- can act as a stepping stone to longer mobility

Watchpoints

- usually offers fewer credits and a narrower scope
- requires strong coordination because time is limited
- risks being undervalued if framed as less than semester mobility

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Model 4: Short-term study plan

Page B — before, during, after, example and what to clarify.

Example 4-week / 10 ECTS intensive

International Summer Institute in Choral Music Education
Conducting masterclasses and score study
Choral pedagogy seminars
Choir participation and rehearsal leadership
Cultural immersion activities *(see DP 4.3)*

Before

communicate focus, duration and credit logic clearly
prepare students for intensive learning and group work
provide practical information early, especially for blended formats

During

coordinate closely because the timeframe is short
create social and artistic cohesion quickly
include structured reflection throughout the programme

After

recognise the experience as meaningful mobility
support reflection on transfer to home context
use feedback to improve future intensives

What to clarify before students commit

What learning is realistic in the short format?
How will online preparation/follow-up be integrated?
How will the programme be recognised at home? *(see DP 3.4)*

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Future mobility: thinking beyond today

A deliberately "crazy" model for discussion

What would mobility look like if recognition followed learning, rather than forcing learning to fit fixed course boxes? This model invites institutions to imagine exchange as a more open, trust-based and context-sensitive learning pathway. *(see DP 3.4)*

What could count as study?

- Host courses and workshops
- Ensemble participation
- School observations
- Community music activities
- Local voluntary music life
- Folk music or cultural practices *(see DP 4.3)*

What would need to change?

- More trust between partners
- Broader recognition methods
- Portfolio-based documentation
- Less rigid course matching
- Clearer ways to evaluate informal and situated learning

Question for future work: How flexible can a mobility model be while still being academically credible and practically recognisable?

Why this matters

The future/open model makes visible the limits of today's structures. It asks whether valuable learning in music teacher education is sometimes hidden because it does not fit neatly into predefined courses, semesters or ECTS categories.

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Model 5: Future / open model

Page A — explanation, suitability, strengths and watchpoints.

What this model is

The future or open model is a more speculative mobility model. It asks what mobility might look like if institutions recognise learning more flexibly and trust students, partners and host communities to shape exchange pathways around valuable learning opportunities on site. *(see DP 3.4)*

Three possible future formats:

Black boxes	Decide-yourself model	Beyond the university
open frame, later clarified	self-designed, negotiated	community arenas count

Each format can use the same recognition logic: learning intention, evidence portfolio, final dialogue, and ECTS against agreed outcomes.

What it looks like

- student knows the destination and broad goals, but not every detail in advance
- learning may happen in courses, ensembles, schools, local music life and community settings
- black boxes, decide-yourself and beyond-university are parallel ways to imagine future organisation
- recognition is based on trust, documentation, reflection and dialogue rather than rigid matching
- the model encourages institutions to think beyond current mobility boxes

Best for

- strategic conversations about the future of mobility
- pilot projects with a high degree of partner trust
- contexts that want to recognise learning beyond formal course structures
- exchanges involving community music, folk music, school practice or local cultural participation

Strengths

- broadens what counts as valuable learning
- opens space for artistic, cultural and community-based learning
- challenges overly rigid recognition structures

Music teacher education focus

The key question is what valuable musical, pedagogical, artistic and community-based learning in MTE is currently invisible because existing frameworks cannot easily recognise it. This may include ensembles, teaching observations, rehearsals, local cultural practices and reflective documentation.
(see DP 4.3)

Watchpoints

- difficult to implement in current systems
- requires new trust-based recognition practices
- may be hard to explain within existing ECTS frameworks
- transparent limits are needed so flexibility does not become insecurity

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Model 5: Future / open model

Page B — before, during, after, example and what to clarify.

Possible future pathway

Host classes and workshops
Local ensemble participation
School observations
Community music work
Reflective portfolio for recognition

Before

agree broad goals, values and documentation methods
clarify how trust-based recognition might work
prepare students for an exploratory pathway

During

document learning across multiple sites and settings
support reflection and mentoring throughout the exchange
review emerging opportunities as they unfold

After

use portfolios, reflections and evidence for recognition *(see DP 3.4)*
discuss what the model reveals about current limits
translate insights into future pilot or policy work

What to clarify before students commit

What counts as learning beyond formal courses? *(see DP 4.3)*
How can evidence be documented without over-bureaucratising it?
How flexible can recognition become?

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Practical format cards: models 1–2

1. Pre-designed package plan

A ready-made 30 ECTS semester where courses, credits, schedules and recognition are agreed in advance. *(see DP 3.3 and DP 3.4)*

Sample structure

Performance Studies — 7.5 ECTS
Composing and Arranging for Larger Ensembles — 7.5 ECTS
Ensemble Playing and Leadership — 7.5 ECTS
Professional Practice in Community Music — 7.5 ECTS

Clarify before commitment

How are instrument lessons guaranteed?
Is ensemble participation credit-bearing?
Can practicum be included or must it stay at home?

Best for: Students who need predictability, strong scaffolding and low administrative uncertainty.

2. Flexible study plan

A provisional plan becomes a final learning agreement during the first weeks after arrival. *(see DP 3.2)*

Sample structure

Applied Piano — 8 ECTS
Early Childhood Music Education — 7 ECTS
Digital Tools for Music Learning — 6 ECTS
Classroom Management and Group Dynamics — 5 ECTS

Clarify before commitment

Who advises the student during the first weeks?
What changes are allowed and how are they approved?
How can uncertainty be reduced without removing flexibility?

Best for: Mature, self-directed students who have clear interests and need adaptation to host-specific opportunities.

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Practical format cards: models 3–4

Compact summaries for reader-friendly comparison and advising.

3. Plan based on electives

Students build a semester from a curated catalogue of exchange-friendly electives. *(see DP 3.2)*

Sample structure

Performance Studies — 7.5 ECTS
Ensemble Playing and Leadership — 7.5 ECTS
Music and Technology — 5 ECTS
Instrumental Didactics — 5 ECTS
Arts Management and Music Entrepreneurship — 5 ECTS

Clarify before commitment

Which electives are actually open to exchange students?
Can the selected combination reach 30 ECTS without clashes?
What happens if a course is cancelled?

Best for: Students who want both choice and advance certainty, and programmes with sufficient elective space.

4. Short-term study plan

A focused mobility format such as a summer school, residency, intensive project or blended course. *(see DP 4.3)*

Sample structure

International Summer Institute in Choral Music Education
Conducting masterclasses and score study
Choral pedagogy seminars
Choir participation and rehearsal leadership
Cultural immersion activities

Clarify before commitment

What learning is realistic in the short format?
How will online preparation/follow-up be integrated?
How will the programme be recognised at home?

Best for: Students who cannot be away for a full semester or need a lower-threshold mobility option.

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MTE: what every model must make visible

The model is useful only if students and staff can see how key MTE challenges are handled. *(see DP 3.2 and DP 3.4)*

Instrumental tuition

What is guaranteed?
How many lessons or what format?
Who teaches and how is it recognised?

Ensemble participation

Can the student join an ensemble?
Does it carry credit?
How does it support musical learning and social integration?

Practicum

Can practicum be included abroad?
If not, how is sequencing handled?
What alternatives are possible?

Equity perspective

Different models distribute uncertainty differently. Highly flexible models may be rich and rewarding, but they can also place more responsibility on the student to navigate systems, negotiate changes and absorb risk. More structured models can broaden access by reducing that burden. A strong mobility system should offer more than one pathway. *(see DP 5.2)*

Equity is not only about giving students the same option. It is about giving them options that are realistically accessible.

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The mobility cycle

Before, during and after mobility need different forms of support.

Before

clear programme information
learning agreement and recognition *(see DP 3.4)*
practical preparation
peer or mentor contact

During

named contact person
academic advising
ensemble/social integration
well-being check-ins *(see DP 5.2)*

After

credit closure
reflection and debriefing
reintegration into home studies
student experience shared forward

Why this matters especially in MTE

In music teacher education, academic credibility and belonging often depend on details such as access to instrument lessons, opportunities to join ensembles and the relationship between practicum requirements and mobility timing. These details need attention before, during and after exchange. *(see DP 3.2 and DP 5.1)*

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One-page planning checklist

Use this page when advising students or designing a partner agreement.

Fit

☐ Which model best fits this student and curriculum? *(see DP 3.2)*
☐ Is the intended learning goal clear?
☐ Is there enough elective or flexible space?

Support

☐ Who is the named contact person?
☐ What practical support is confirmed? *(see DP 5.1)*
☐ How will wellbeing and integration be followed up?

Recognition

☐ What will count for credit? *(see DP 3.4)*
☐ What evidence is needed?
☐ Who approves changes?

MTE elements

☐ Instrumental tuition?
☐ Ensemble participation?
☐ Practicum or observation?

The checklist is deliberately simple: it helps ensure that the model is not only attractive, but also workable and fair.

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