



**MANUAL ON  
MOBILITY:  
A SOUTH TO  
SOUTH  
PERSPECTIVE**

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# 1.INTRODUCTION

The Toolkit “ *Mobility Handbook*” was developed within the Work Package 4 (WP4) of the Toolkit project, which had the aim to enhance the capacity of the Asian Universities in strategizing, promoting and managing students’ mobility schemes. The design of a shared mobility management model involved all the Asian Universities and was coordinated, through a bottom up approach, by the Uppsala University.

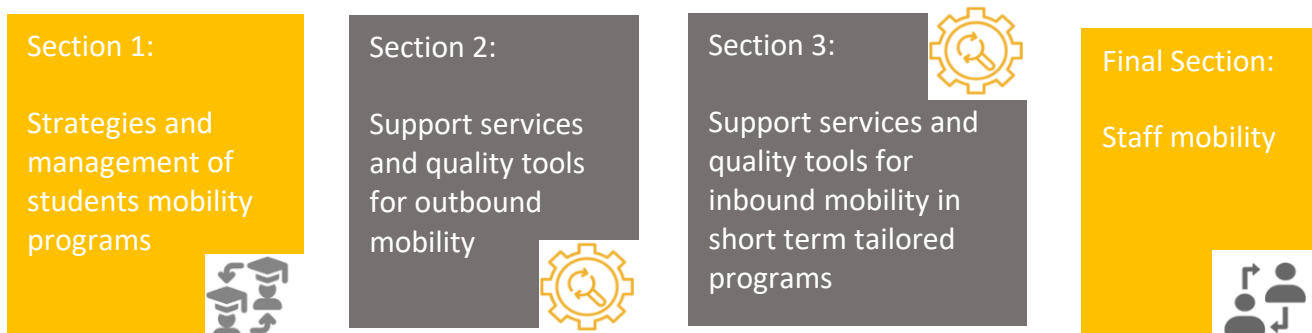
This brief case study report is part of the external evaluation exercise of the Toolkit project, which consisted of a multi-phased process aligned with the overall project time frame. The overall purpose of the almost two-year process was to support the implementers to assess the progress made through the project’s experience and to capture the learning and achievements. To this end, this case study report represent an attempt to document the co-creation methodology employed during the development of the manual on mobility, which was mentioned as good practice by the participants to the evaluation.

The coordination of the entire WP4 was equally shared between the Uppsala University

(Sweden) and Yezin Agricultural University (Myanmar). They worked collectively with the representatives of the three different focus groups-representing the Asian partners- for the duration of the entire WP to draft and finalize the handbook.

The Handbook, as highlighted in the Toolkit website, was not specifically designed as a prescriptive guide but rather as a set of principles that are meant to guide and assist Asian Universities in implementing or improving strategies, services and quality tools related to students’ mobility.

The Handbook consists of four main sections as shown in the boxes below:



The final version of the *Mobility Handbook* was presented for the endorsement of the Consortium during one of its official meetings and published on the Project website

## 2. THE PROCESS

The starting point underpinning the work behind the Mobility Toolkit was that Asian partners should work on something useful to them, not based on abstract concepts. From the very beginning, therefore, the whole process was chosen to be participatory and bottom up.



The first step was to collect and revise all the materials developed for the training on mobility management carried out by the Uppsala University, such as all the PowerPoint presentations and other documents. This phase was accompanied by a continuous brainstorming on ideas, coming mostly from the Asian partners on what they wanted to see in the document and how to organize it.

To guarantee meaningful participation to all the contributors, it was decided that they

*freshspectrum*

would keep the original division created for the training, into three focus groups. Each focus group was made up of people from different universities and each group had a focal point/representative. For phase 1, each group was given a specific chapter/section of the handbook to draft/work on, as illustrated below:



### Phase 1

- FG 1 → Section 1
- FG 2 → Section 2
- FG 3 → Section 3

For phase 2 and 3, the drafted sections were re-distributed amongst the groups. For example the chapter drafted by FG1 was looked at by FG2 and so on, as illustrated below. The rationale behind this choice was that every group would have the possibility to

look at the drafts with a different perspective, bringing in their university needs and experiences. Throughout phase 2 and 3 the drafted chapters were enriched by additional text and all sorts of improvements until a final rough draft was completed. Beside fostering

cooperation, the work in groups produced a very good first draft that was then sent to the

European partners for their feedback, which was very positive.

## Phase 2

FG 1 → Section 3  
FG 2 → Section 1  
FG 3 → Section 2

## Phase 3

FG 1 → Section 2  
FG 2 → Section 3  
FG 3 → Section 1



The comments given by the European partners were then discussed by the focus groups participants and the coordinator in a Zoom meeting. Every comment was looked at and discussed together in a friendly and participatory environment. It was decided to use the same division into groups formula to address the comments and include them into the draft.

Each group worked on the original section they initially wrote (e.g. FG1 worked on section 1, FG2 worked on section 2) to modify the draft according to the comments.

The final phase consisted of a thorough review by the University of Uppsala, checking grammar and small inconsistencies as well as focusing on the flow of the text.

“My biggest concern was the ownership. I truly wanted all the people involved to feel this was their handbook and to feel fully involved”

*University of Uppsala Coordinator*

*“[..]Writing the handbook was very good actually because we got some time to get together to express our ideas. I mean, everybody working for the project has had time to express their ideas, and it's quite inclusive. I mean, we have ideas from Laos, we also have ideas from Myanmar and Sri Lanka. So we included the ideas from different perspectives, different experiences that we have from different countries, which is a very good thing. And we took turns to check and edit each other's work, which makes the handbook more useful and context based”. A participant from Souphanouvong University*

### 3. LEARNING & LEGACY

As mentioned by most participants in the evaluation, the learning brought about by this experience relates to the methodological aspect and its replicability.

From the Uppsala University coordinator's point of view, it was a great learning curve. Although the Focus Groups were already set up when this activity started and members knew each other, one of the main issues was to ensure that everyone would be equally participating and giving input to the handbook. When working in groups, it is common for some individuals to work more than others. To avoid this unpleasant dynamic, much effort was dedicated to coordination at different levels. The coordinator dealt with the chair of the groups who was tasked with assigning each section to the members. The chairs' responsibility was to coordinate internal work and, through the system of writing and revision, to make sure each member had the possibility to effectively provide input to the text. Therefore, the overall coordinator was mainly following up with the chair of the groups and jumped in only when it was strictly necessary to motivate some members.

*"If I have to express my personal learning from this experience I would say that there is a lot of coordination work, which is time-consuming, and writing clear instructions and using a serious participatory approach is harder than it seems...It was worth it though! And I am happy with the result". Uppsala Coordinator*

From the participants' point of view, the overall South-to South (between Asian Universities) and North-to South (between European and Asian Universities) dialogue was described as sometimes lengthy, due to the different time zones, but overall it was highly

appreciated. The bottom-up participatory methodology that focused on what the Asian Universities really wanted was reported as one of the main outcomes.



Some participants explained that this methodology has already been replicated in the University of Peradeniya:

*"The constitution for a university's student society needed to be developed and instead of the academic staff developing it for them we used the same methodology we learned with the Toolkit handbook. I did follow the same method with those students and we ended up with a very nice document! The students were happy to do it in that way because it was interactive. They developed their own document, and they're proud of it "* Participant from University of Peradeniya

Overall, all the people interviewed described the Handbook on Mobility as a product that fits perfectly the needs of the Asian universities. The guidelines on how to go

about international collaboration would be equally as easy to understand and refer to for those who were not involved in the Toolkit project.

*“ In my university, we don't have permanent staff members, mainly. So, for example, one director comes five- six years and the staff is also rotating often. This manual is a reference guideline for anyone new. They can self-study it and get a lot of information on how to run the IRO office systematically. So that is really, really an advantage for the university and International Relations Office”. A participant University of Kelaniya*

In conclusion, this experience can be considered a good learning experience for all those involved. The methodology developed can be replicated in different settings and contexts; it could also be further expanded and adjusted. Ultimately, the handbook is a

solid product that fits the purpose for which it was developed. If and how it shall be further embedded into the Universities' rules and organizational culture remains to be seen and it could be assessed in the future through other follow up projects or collaborations.

*“About the handbook, we did not have a term of references for the mobility management, now we have it, which is very good for our office and we get to use the guidebook on our daily work and also we can develop it further to be our specific terms reference for our office as well”. A participant from Souphanouvong University*

For the time being, it emerged that the handbook is a useful tool whose legacy goes beyond the mere product to touch upon personal knowledge gains and participatory methodological tools that could be replicated in a variety of settings.