

NUPACE¹ 2021-2022: A Remote Experience

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A. Introduction

Whereas FY 2020 witnessed a meltdown, where, for the first time in the twenty-five-year history of the programme, NUPACE admission ground to a halt, FY 2021 saw a totally new experiment unfold: ‘NUPACE Remote’. As is well known, Japan, in FY 2020 and 2021, in its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, firmly shut its borders. Foreign nationals, especially new visa applicants, were precluded from entering the country on the legal basis that they were “... likely to commit an act which could be detrimental to the interests or public security of Japan”.³ Consequently, in FY 2021, when faced with a further extension to the prohibition on the entry of new students, and yet another year of “0” admission, NUPACE took the plunge in deciding to operate the programme remotely.

This report is divided into three parts. *Section B* outlines the background, student status, and affiliation of NUPACE’s remote student ‘intake’ of FY 2021, *Section C* deals with issues of physical and mental health, as faced by these students, and *Section D* introduces some of the pressing concerns affecting the organisation of NUPACE in the first half of FY 2022, which, to a certain extent, have been aggravated by the restructuring of Nagoya University’s international apparatus.

B. Turning Remote and ‘Remote’ Student Composition (FY 2021)

In January 2021, the Second State of Emergency was declared for a total of eleven prefectures in Japan, including Aichi, the home prefecture to Nagoya University. This declaration was promptly followed in February by the reinstatement of a ban against new entrants to the country, including international students. With the physical arrival of exchange students now unachievable, NUPACE switched to ‘Plan B’, i.e., the ‘admission’ of inbound exchange students in a remote capacity. This shift in education platforms, however, proved radical, and necessitated the following wide-sweeping preparations:

1. Advance requests to each School at Nagoya University for list of online courses that could be opened to exchange students.
2. Compilation/editing of online course information and course instructors’ contact details in a digestible form.
3. Preparation for the early despatch to students of ID numbers, CAS IDs and passwords to enable a timely information security-check, procurement of NU e-mail address, and access to NUCT (the latter requiring course instructors to initially upload the student’s information).

¹ NUPACE is the acronym for the *Nagoya University Programme for Academic Exchange*, Nagoya University’s student exchange programme for incoming students established in February 1996. Students enrolled in degree programmes at institutions with which Nagoya University has concluded academic exchange agreements are eligible to apply for the programme. Courses that constitute the NUPACE programme are principally taught in English; Japanese language proficiency is not a prerequisite, although students proficient in Japanese may enrol in regular university courses.

² Any errors or omissions in this article are the sole responsibility of the author. Feedback should be addressed to k46189a@cc.nagoya-u.ac.jp.

³ Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act, Article 5, Paragraph 14.

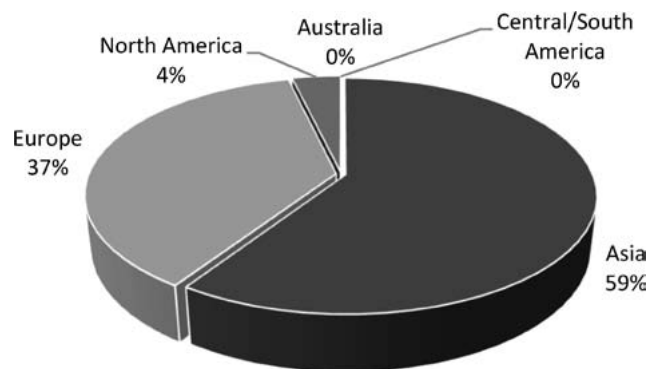
4. Scheduling of multiple online orientations via ZOOM, both in English and Japanese to help students navigate the complexities of Nagoya University’s academic and information security structure.
5. Update to the NUPACE online course registration system, to enable off-campus access and registration.
6. Instructions to course instructors/academic advisors regarding the NUPACE student course registration flow.

Unfortunately, as the academic year progressed, an array of factors, including Japan’s delayed procurement

of vaccines, the hosting of the Olympic Games, and the increasingly deep-seated unpopularity of the Suga Government in the run-up to the general election, rendered a loosening of border restrictions inconceivable. Consequently, not only spring, but also autumn admission was conducted remotely and the ‘study abroad experience’ for many students ended as it had begun: Online.

This section of the report illustrates NUPACE student composition, commencing with the regional breakdown of students who participated in NUPACE in FY 2021, albeit remotely.

Pie-chart 1. NUPACE Students by Region of Home Institution in FY 2021 (Remote Programme; Total: 81 Students)



A comparison with FY 2019, the last year when NUPACE students were admitted to the programme, reveals that the total ‘intake’ decreased by 63%, from 218 to 81, with the regional composition shown in *Pie-chart 1*. Note that the majority of students opting to participate in NUPACE on a remote basis stemmed from Asia and Europe; in contrast, the educational policies of many institutions in the United States, and particularly Australia, prevented students from engaging in ‘study abroad’, even at the virtual level. Consequently, due to

the miscellany of complexities and limitations involved, the number of institutions actually ‘sending’ students to NUPACE in FY 2021 practically halved from 95 to 48, with the number of countries dropping from 26 to 20.

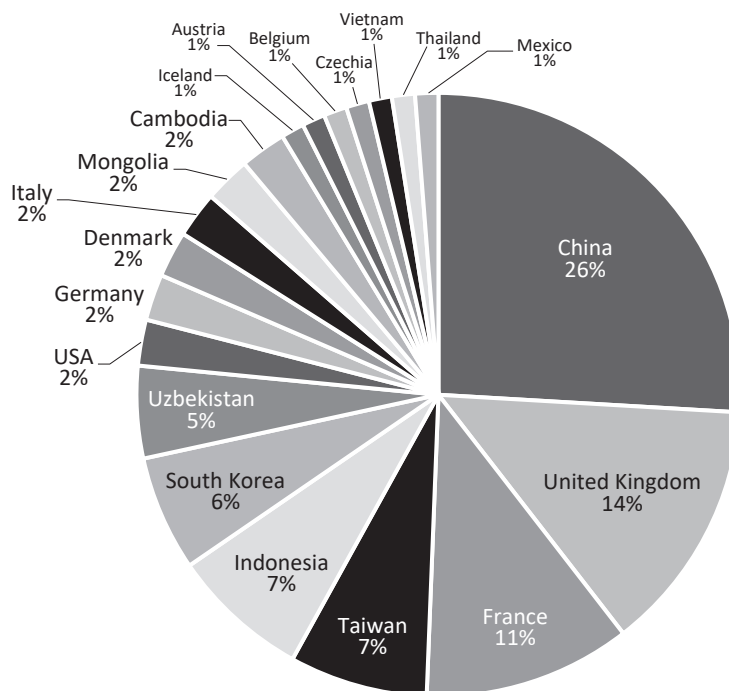
For a more detailed breakdown, *Map 1* and *Pie-chart 2* depict the composition of NUPACE students according to country of home institution.

Map 1. NUPACE Students by Country of Home Institution in FY 2021 (Remote Programme; Total 81 Students)



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Pie-chart 2. NUPACE Students by Country of Home Institution in FY 2021 (Remote Programme; Total: 81 Students)

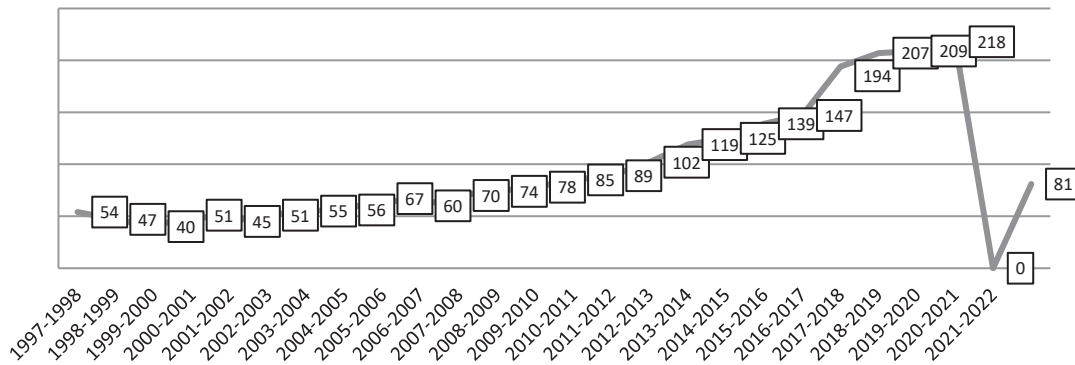


P.R. China, with 21 students, accounted for a quarter of NUPACE’s virtual intake of students in FY 2021, a mirror of its proportion in ‘normal times’. However, of particular note is the fact that the United Kingdom and France followed behind. Indeed, surprisingly, given the remote nature of the programme and the very tangible problem of time difference, 9 of the 20 countries sending students to NUPACE in 2021 were actually located in Europe, giving evidence of NUPACE’s strong links

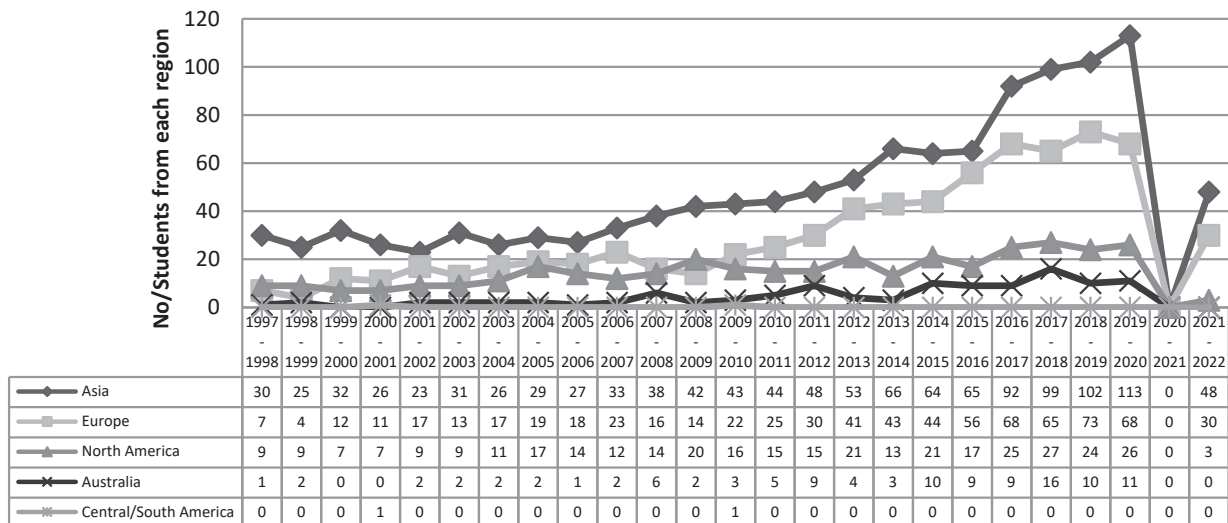
with that continent.

Moving on to longer term trends, *Graphs 1 and 2* depict movements in the regional composition of incoming students during NUPACE’s twenty-six-year lifespan. Whilst FY 2020 proved unprecedented in that admission was reduced to zero, figures for FY 2021 should be considered more than healthy, given the remote platform utilised.

Graph 1. Trend in the Number of Inbound Exchange (NUPACE) Students Newly Admitted in each Fiscal Year: February 1996 - March 2022 (Total: 2,463 Students)



Graph 2. NUPACE Students by Region of Home Institution: February 1996 - March 2022 (Total: 2,463 Students)



C. ‘Remote’ Participation and Student Health

With 81 NUPACE participants in FY 2021, the operation of the exchange programme in a virtual environment can be considered a numerical success. It is an achievement

that would appear to confirm that online exchange experiences are ‘doable’, and possibly even recommended as a parallel alternative to physical mobility in this new, exciting digital world.

However, the manifold problems encountered by students in the endeavour to ‘study abroad’ remotely, especially for a period exceeding two weeks or so, should never be underestimated. A myriad of very real and stressful challenges spring to mind, including, time differences, the inability to efficiently find information on course offerings, the instability of Wi-Fi connections, problems in adapting to online class teaching methods, problems in adapting to online class applications/technology, inadequate opportunities to build social networks, etc. In November 2021, NUPACE faculty members, concerned about the physical and mental health of students who were enrolled in NUPACE on a remote basis, decided to send a simple ‘Well-Being Questionnaire’ to the autumn student cohort of 40 students to check on stress levels. The questionnaire comprised of two very basic questions, as follows:

1. Are you feeling any stress due to the remote nature of the programme?

2. If ‘yes’, what is the cause of your stress? (Multiple answers possible.)

- a) The time difference is affecting my physical well-being.
- b) The time difference is affecting my mental well-being.
- c) The course content of the classes is difficult to follow.
- d) There is too much homework.
- e) The remote nature of the classes makes it difficult to interact with professors and fellow students.
- f) My Internet connection is weak.
- g) Other (please specify)

NUPACE received 34 responses from the total student body of 40 students, i.e., a response rate of 85%. 14 students (41% of all respondents) admitted to suffering from stress, with the breakdown of causes, as follows:

Cause of Stress	Number/ Respondents (Multiple Response)	(Of whom Home Institution is located in <u>Asia</u>: 10 Respondents)	(Of whom Home Institution located in <u>Europe</u>: 3 Respondents)	(Of whom Home Institution located in <u>North America</u>: 1 Respondent)
a) The time difference is affecting my physical well-being.	5	(4)	(1)	(0)
b) The time difference is affecting my mental well-being.	6	(6)	(0)	(0)
c) The course content of the classes is difficult to follow	4	(4)	(0)	(0)
d) There is too much homework	5	(4)	(1)	(0)
e) The remote nature of the classes makes it difficult to interact with professors and fellow students	6	(4)	(1)	(1)
f) My Internet connection is weak	6	(6)	(0)	(0)
g) (Other) Long hours sitting behind a computer	1	(1)	(0)	(0)
(Other) Not knowing whether I will be able to travel to Japan, or not, for my 2 nd semester	1	(0)	(1)	(0)

Interestingly, NUPACE students residing in Asia demonstrated more pronounced levels of stress than students further afield, not least vis-à-vis the issue of time difference. Additional problems affecting predominantly Asian students included the difficulty of fully comprehending the content of classes from a remote environment, as well as tenuous Wi-Fi connections. In any event, the fact that over 40% of respondents to the questionnaire indicated higher than average stress levels suggest that semester/year-long student exchange programmes are probably not best served through a remote learning platform.

D. Conclusion: A NUPACE Rebound?

Looking ahead to FY 2022, the future appears bright. Japan’s Government, realising that a *sakoku* mentality was not going help revive the economy (to speak nothing of its debilitating effect on the maintenance of foreign relations and friendships), finally squeaked open its doors to the limited categories of newcomer students and technical interns. Buoyed by this development, NUPACE has admitted no fewer than 86 students in spring 2022 alone, the majority of whom have already entered Japan. Needless to say, witnessing first-hand the vivacious smiles of exchange students who have waited close to two years to enter Japan is a sight to

behold. Moreover, faculty and staff are currently screening 108 applications that have already been submitted for autumn 2022 admission. These figures underscore the revival and robustness of the NUPACE programme. It is reassuring to learn that COVID-19 has failed to dent its popularity.

That being said, for NUPACE it is difficult to envisage a ‘back to normal’. The operation of a programme of this scale requires significant manpower reserves. Unfortunately, here, NUPACE staff members, comprising one associate professor and one designated lecturer, continue to be stretched to their physical limits, a fact aggravated by the complete loss of a professorship at the end of FY 2019. The author had hoped that the wide-reaching reconstruction inherent in Nagoya University’s ‘Global Vision’ Plan, effective as of April 2022, would provide some relief. However, the cementing of Nagoya University’s international organisation into an administrative structure has resulted in a vacuum, with many faculty members affiliated to “International Affairs” severed from any meaningful deliberation or decision-making processes including those revolving around budgets and personnel. With this cold reality biting hard, in FY 2022, NUPACE faculty members intend to initiate the restructuring of the NUPACE programme to a more manageable format.

Appendix 1. NUPACE Duties and Activities

Category of Duty	Contents
1. Admissions and Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Determining admissions policy ➤ Screening application documents ➤ Informing applicants and their home universities of application results ➤ Preparing and disseminating pre-arrival information ➤ Preparing/conducting academic, general life, dormitory, and pre-departure orientations ➤ Compiling and editing academic programme syllabi ➤ Checking students’ course registration details ➤ Formulating and analysing questionnaires relating to student satisfaction
2. PR, Recruiting, Exchange Agreements, and Inter-University Visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Determining PR policy ➤ Compiling and editing the NUPACE prospectus ➤ Compiling and editing NUPACE website contents ➤ Devising the Nagoya University fact-sheet for dissemination to partner institutions ➤ Networking at international education conventions (NAFSA, APAIE) and visiting partner institutions ➤ Negotiating and establishing student exchange agreements ➤ Arranging and hosting visits by partner institutions
3. On- and Off-campus Advising and Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Consulting with, and responding to enquiries from partner institutions (including student balances) ➤ Responding to enquiries from students (pre-admission) ➤ Advising students on academic and general matters (post-admission) ➤ Liaising with students’ academic advisors, international student advisors, course instructors, and administrative staff
4. Education and Exchange Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Teaching/academic advising/research activities ➤ Planning and liaison with Nagoya University student volunteer networks, community volunteers, student housing governing bodies ➤ Event planning and implementation ➤ Arranging language support activities at Elementary and Junior High Schools in Nagoya

Appendix 2. Institutions Sending Students to NUPACE: February 1996 – March 2022

	Country/Region	Institution	Agreement with	No. Admitted	
Asia 1,230 Students; 50% of Total	Cambodia <12>	Royal University of Agriculture	*University-wide	2	
		Royal University of Law and Economics	*University-wide	9	
		Royal University of Phnom Penh	*University-wide	1	
	China (PRC) <485>	Beijing International Studies University	*Humanities (Graduate)	9	
		Beijing University of Technology	*Engineering	33	
		Central South University of Technology	*Engineering	7	
		China University of Political Science and Law	*Law	24	
		Dalian University of Technology	*University-wide	7	
		Donghua University	*Humanities	5	
		East China Normal University	*Education	8	
		East China University of Political Science and Law	*Law	37	
		Fudan University	*University-wide	16	
		Harbin Institute of Technology	*University-wide	10	
		Huazhong University of Science & Technology	*University-wide	33	
		Jilin University	*University-wide	24	
		Nanjing University	*University-wide	30	
		Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics	*Engineering	1	
		Northeastern University	*University-wide	45	
		Peking University	*University-wide	27	
		Shanghai Jiaotong University	*University-wide	19	
		Shenyang University of Technology	*Engineering	5	
		Sun Yat-sen University; Lingnan (University) College	*Economics	18	
		Tianjin University	*Env/*Engineering	3	
		Tongji University	*University-wide	37	
		Tsinghua University	*University-wide	29	
		University of International Business and Economics	*Economics	9	
		University of Science and Technology of China	*University-wide	4	
		Xi'an Jiaotong University	*University-wide	16	
		Zhejiang University	*University-wide	29	
		Hong Kong <42>	Chinese University of Hong Kong	*University-wide	20
			City University of Hong Kong	*University-wide	5
	University of Hong Kong		*University-wide	17	
	India <2>	University of Poona	University-wide	2	
	Indonesia <91>	Bandung Institute of Technology	*University-wide	17	
		Diponegoro University	*Education	1	
		Gadjah Mada University	*University-wide	50	
		Padjadjaran University	*Humanities	6	
		State University of Surabaya	*University-wide	14	
	Kazakhstan <3>	University of Indonesia	*Engineering	3	
	Kazakhstan <3>	Kazakh Humanities and Law University	*Law	3	
		Korea (ROK) <350>	Chungnam National University	*Economics	36
			Ewha Womans University	*University-wide	37
	Gyeongsang National University		*University-wide	87	
	Hankuk University of Foreign Studies		*Humanities (Graduate)	2	
	Hanyang University		*University-wide	28	
	Korea Maritime and Ocean University		*University-wide	2	
	Korea University		*University-wide	50	
	Kyung Hee University		*University-wide	25	
	Mokpo National University		*University-wide	30	
	Pohang University of Science and Technology		*University-wide	1	
	Seoul National University		*University-wide	18	
	Sungkyunkwan University		*University-wide	19	
	University of Seoul		*Law	9	
Yonsei University	*University-wide	6			
Laos <1>	National University of Laos	*University-wide	1		
Mongolia <10>	National University of Mongolia	*University-wide	9		
	Mongolian University of Science and Technology	*University-wide	1		

Country/Region	Institution	Agreement with	No. Admitted	
Philippines <14>	University of the Philippines, Los Banos	*University-wide	14	
Singapore <4>	Nanyang Technological University	*University-wide	3	
	National University of Singapore	*University-wide	1	
Taiwan <97>	Fu Jen Catholic University	*Humanities	1	
	National Chengchi University	*University-wide	20	
	National Chiao Tung University	*Engineering	7	
	National Chung Cheng University	*University-wide	7	
	National Taiwan University	*University-wide	41	
	National Tsing Hua University	*University-wide	21	
Thailand <58>	Chulalongkorn University	*University-wide	44	
	Kasetsart University	*University-wide	14	
Turkey <9>	Bilkent University	*University-wide	9	
Uzbekistan <33>	Samarkand State University	*University-wide	4	
	Tashkent State Institute of Law	*University-wide	13	
	University of World Economy & Diplomacy	*University-wide	16	
Vietnam <19>	Foreign Trade University	*Economics	14	
	Hanoi Law University	*Law	3	
	Hanoi University of Technology	*University-wide	2	
Europe 701 Students; 30% of Total	Austria <29>	Johannes Kepler University of Linz	*Law	3
	Medical School of Vienna	*Medicine	20	
	University of Innsbruck	*University-wide	5	
	University of Klagenfurt	*Env/*Engineering	1	
Belgium <4>	Institut Supérieur de Traducteurs et Interprètes (ISTI)	*Languages and Cultures	3	
	KU Leuven	*University-wide	1	
Czechia <1>	Czech Technical University in Prague	*University-wide	1	
Denmark <23>	University of Copenhagen	*University-wide	18	
	Aarhus University	*University-wide	5	
France <182>	École Nationale des Ponts et Chaussées (ENPC)	*University-wide	7	
	École Normale Supérieure d'Architecture Paris Val-de-Seine	*Environmental Studies	19	
	École Normale Supérieure de Lyon (ENS Lyon)	*University-wide	7	
	Université de Grenoble	*University-wide/ *Humanities	51	
	Université Lyon III – Jean Moulin	*University-wide	35	
	Université Paris II – Panthéon-Assas	*Law	4	
	Université Paris IV – Sorbonne	*Humanities	2	
	Université Paris Cité (Paris VII – Denis Diderot)	*University-wide	23	
	Université Paris Saclay – Paris Sud	*University-wide	2	
	Université de Strasbourg	*University-wide	32	
Germany <202>	RWTH Aachen University	*University-wide	28	
	Technische Universität Braunschweig	*University-wide	37	
	Technische Universität Chemnitz	*University-wide	34	
	Technische Universität Darmstadt	*Engineering/ *Env. Studies	6	
	Technische Universität München	*University-wide	43	
	Universität Freiburg	*University-wide	39	
	University of Duisburg-Essen	*Education	12	
	University of Mainz	*Engineering/*Science	2	
	University of Regensburg	*Law	1	
Iceland <7>	University of Iceland	*University-wide	7	
Italy <15>	University of Bologna	*University-wide	15	
Netherlands <4>	University of Twente	*University-wide	4	
Norway <11>	University of Oslo	*University-wide	11	
Poland <39>	Medical University of Gdansk	*Medicine	12	
	Warsaw University of Technology	*Engineering	27	
Russia <4>	Moscow State Institute of Engineering Physics	*Engineering	2	
	Moscow State University	*Informatics (Graduate)	1	
	Russian Academy of Science, Siberian Division	*Agricultural Sciences	1	
Spain <1>	University of Barcelona	*University-wide	1	

	Country/Region	Institution	Agreement with	No. Admitted
	Sweden <49>	KTH Royal Institute of Technology	*University-wide	3
		Lund University	*Law	25
		Uppsala University	*University-wide	21
	Switzerland <15>	Université de Genève	*University-wide	15
	United Kingdom <145>	University of Bristol	*University-wide	18
		University of Durham	*University-wide	9
		University of Leeds	*University-wide	13
		University of London – SOAS	*University-wide	22
		University of Manchester	*Science	21
		University of Sheffield	*University-wide	33
		University of Warwick	*University-wide	29
N. America 384 Students; 16% of Total	Canada <18>	Toronto University	*University-wide	3
		Université de Montréal	*University-wide	10
		University of Calgary	*University-wide	1
		University of Ottawa	*University-wide	1
		York University	*University-wide	3
	Mexico <21>	Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México	*University-wide	21
	USA <348>	Green Mountain College	*Law	15
		Harvard University	Medicine	3
		Iowa State University	*University-wide	8
		Johns Hopkins University	*Medicine	1
		New York University	*University-wide	37
		North Carolina State University	*University-wide	87
		St. Olaf College	*University-wide	35
		Southern Illinois University at Carbondale	*University-wide	9
		University of California, Los Angeles	University-wide	2
		University of Cincinnati	*University-wide	31
		University of Florida	*University-wide	5
		University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign)	*University-wide	40
		University of Kentucky	*University-wide	21
		University of Michigan	*Engineering	26
		University of Minnesota	*University-wide	21
University of Oregon	*University-wide	2		
University of Pennsylvania	*Medicine	5		
Oceania 113 Students; 4% of Total	Australia <113>	Australian National University	*University-wide	13
		Flinders University	*University-wide	1
		Macquarie University	*International Development	5
		Monash University	*University-wide	31
		University of Adelaide	*University-wide	25
		University of South Australia	*University-wide	7
		University of Sydney	*University-wide	14
		University of Western Australia	*University-wide	17
S. America 2 Students	Brazil <2>	University of Brasilia	*University-wide	1
		University of São Paulo	*University-wide	1
	37 Countries/Regions	157 Institutions	(* denotes tuition waiver)	2,463 Students

Appendix 3. Institutions Sending Exchange Students to NUPACE: April 2021 - March 2022 (Remote Programme)

	Country/Region	Institution	Agreement with	No/ Students	Full-Term Equivalent
Asia 48 Students; 59% of Total	Cambodia <2>	Royal University of Law and Economics	*University-wide	2	1.0
		China (PRC) <21>	Beijing University of Technology	*Engineering	3
		China University of Political Science and Law	*Law	1	0.5
		Dalian University of Technology	*University-wide	1	1.0
		Donghua University	*Humanities	3	2.5
		East China University of Political Science and Law	*Law	2	1.0
		Harbin Institute of Technology	*University-wide	3	3.0

Country/Region	Institution	Agreement with	No/Students	Full-Term Equivalent	
	Jilin University	*University-wide	2	2.0	
	Shenyang University of Technology	*Engineering	1	1.0	
	Sun Yat-sen University; Lingnan (University) College	*Economics	1	0.5	
	Tianjin University	*Env/*Engineering	1	0.5	
	Xi'an Jiaotong University	*University-wide	2	2.0	
Indonesia <6>	Gadjah Mada University	*University-wide	1	0.5	
	State University of Surabaya	*University-wide	4	3.5	
	University of Indonesia	*University-wide	1	0.5	
Korea (ROK) <5>	Hanyang University	*University-wide	1	0.5	
	Korea University	*University-wide	1	0.5	
	Kyung Hee University	*University-wide	2	1.0	
	Mokpo National University	*University-wide	1	1.0	
Mongolia <2>	National University of Mongolia	*University-wide	2	1.0	
Taiwan <6>	National Chung Cheng University	*University-wide	1	0.5	
	National Taiwan University	*University-wide	3	2.0	
	National Tsing Hua University	*University-wide	2	1.5	
Thailand <1>	Kasetsart University	*University-wide	1	1.0	
Uzbekistan <4>	Samarkand State University	*University-wide	2	1.0	
	Tashkent State University	*University-wide	2	1.5	
Vietnam <1>	Hanoi Law University	*Law	1	0.5	
Europe					
<i>30 Students;</i>	Austria <1>	University of Innsbruck	*University-wide	1	0.5
<i>37% of Total</i>	Belgium <1>	KU Leuven	*University-wide	1	0.5
	Czechia <1>	Czech Technical University in Prague	*University-wide	1	0.5
	Denmark <2>	University of Copenhagen	*University-wide	2	1.0
	France <9>	École Normale Supérieure d'Architecture Paris Val-de-Seine	*Env. Studies	3	2.0
		Université Grenoble Alpes	*University-wide	2	1.5
		Université Lyon III – Jean Moulin	*University-wide	1	0.5
		Université Paris Cité (Paris VII – Denis Diderot)	*University-wide	1	0.5
		Université Strasbourg	*University-wide	2	1.5
	Germany <2>	Technische Universität München	*University-wide	2	1.0
	Iceland <1>	University of Iceland	*University-wide	1	0.5
	Italy <2>	University of Bologna	*University-wide	2	1.0
	United Kingdom <11>	University of Bristol	*University-wide	1	1.0
		University of Durham	*University-wide	3	2.5
		University of Leeds	*University-wide	1	0.5
		University of London – SOAS	*University-wide	1	1.0
		University of Manchester	*University-wide	1	1.0
		University of Warwick	*University-wide	4	3.0
N. America					
<i>3 Students;</i>	Mexico <1>	Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México	*University-wide	1	0.5
<i>4% of Total</i>	USA <2>	New York University	*University-wide	1	0.5
		University of Oregon	*University-wide	1	0.5
20 Countries/Regions	48 Institutions	(* denotes tuition waiver)	81 Students	55.0 FTEs	