Virtual Engagement for International Student Exchange

TOOLKIT
From the ACU

Welcome to the first in a series of member-led resources from the ACU – created by members, for members. In 2020, COVID–19 has had a transformative impact on universities across the ACU network. The ‘great pivot online’ has accelerated existing trends towards remote working, online delivery and digital collaboration, transforming internationalisation activities, including student exchange and study abroad.

Higher education institutions are experimenting with virtual engagement and exchange as a means of fostering international connections and global citizenship.

While this cannot replicate the experience of immersion in another culture, and depends on digital access, online collaboration offers the potential to enable a more diverse group of students to access the benefits of international experience.

The ACU is committed to bringing universities together from around the world, to advance knowledge, promote understanding, broaden minds, and improve lives. Fostering mobility and exchange is an integral part of this.

We hope you find this resource useful for developing new collaborative activity within the ACU network and beyond.
Glossary of terms

Disclaimer: Definitions relating to virtual engagement are widely contested. For the purposes of this toolkit, the following definitions are employed.

**Internationalisation**
Internationalisation at national, sectoral, and institutional levels can be defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education. Hudzik (2015).

**Comprehensive Internationalisation**
Comprehensive internationalisation is a commitment, confirmed through action, to infuse international and comparative perspectives throughout the teaching, research and service missions of higher education. It shapes the institutional ethos and values and touches the entire higher education enterprise. It is essential that it be embraced by institutional leadership, governance, academic staff, students and all academic service and support units. It is an institutional imperative, not just a desirable possibility. Comprehensive internationalisation not only impacts all of campus life, but the institutions’ external frames of reference, partnerships and relations. The global reconfiguration of economies, systems of trade, research, and communication, and the impact of global forces on local life, dramatically expand the need for comprehensive internationalisation and the motivations and purposes driving it. Hudzik, 2011.

**Global Citizenship**
Global citizenship is defined as awareness, caring, and embracing cultural diversity while promoting social justice and sustainability, coupled with a sense of responsibility to act. Roynen and Katzarska-Miller (2013).

**Virtual Engagement**
Virtual engagement is an educational strategy that promotes and supports the interaction of students in online international collaborative projects which enable them to experience intercultural exchanges with peers of another culture or in a different geographical location. O’Dowd (2018). It is the umbrella term for virtual events and exchange programmes and projects. O’Dowd (2018) refers to the following expressions related to virtual engagement:

- Tele-collaboration
- Online Intercultural Exchange
- Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL)
- Global Virtual Teams
- Globally Networked Learning Environments
- E-tandem / Tele-Tandem Learning

**Virtual Exchange**
Virtual Exchange includes short-term interactive initiatives such as the implementation of a Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) project (see below).

A virtual exchange project will most often be an educational exchange, with identified learning outcomes, embedded in an existing module, where a small project is identified and worked on collaboratively by students, at two or more universities in different geophysical locations. The collaborative project builds student skills in language and communication, digital competence, and intercultural competence.

Virtual Exchange can also include online international short learning programmes that include international and intercultural exchange learning outcomes.

**Collaborative Online International Learning**
COIL is a pedagogy. It is a way of building collaboration among academics and students around the world. COIL projects are designed and developed through collaboration between academic (professors/faculty) partners in two (or more) different education institutions and geophysical locations around the world. The project is jointly implemented by the academic partners with their groups of students interacting and collaborating.

A separate document on COIL has been included for higher education practitioners who are looking to begin COIL programmes at their institutions.

**Virtual Events**
Virtual events include activity-focused initiatives such as (non-credit-bearing/ extra-curricular) Summer School, webinar series, guest lecture, or seminar. Sehl (2020) describes virtual events as an online event that involves people interacting in a virtual environment on the web, and can include multi-session online webinars, demonstrations, masterclasses, question and answer sessions, panels, and interviews. Virtual events may not include any collaboration.

**Virtual Mobility**
Virtual mobility programmes include sustained faculty-led, virtual, peer-to-peer learning opportunities / projects across borders and cultures. Vrians, Petegem, Up de Beeck and Achten (2016) summarise virtual mobility as the use of ICT to obtain the same benefits as one would have with physical mobility without needing to travel. In addition, virtual mobility is a form of learning consisting of virtual components through fully ICT-supported learning environments including cross-border collaboration with people from different backgrounds and cultures working and studying together.

**Virtual Events for Experiential Learning**
An event or series of events could be arranged to give students a virtual practical experience. This could be students in one location or groups in several geolocations and could be synchronous or asynchronous. Examples might include virtual tours of:

- Cities and locations (architecture; wildlife and tourism; art galleries and museums)
- Campuses and facilities at partner institutions
- Cultural tours:
  - Medical/Veterinary Health facilities
  - Scientific and laboratory facilities
- Factory & Industrial facilities

An event might also be very specifically targeted to a practical outcome of a programme, for example, synchronous/asynchronous streaming of:

- A process or procedure (medical, veterinary, scientific, building construction, engineering, etc.)
- An artistic exhibition
- A fashion show
- A business event
- A TED talk

**List of Abbreviations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACOU</td>
<td>Association of Commonwealth Universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASS</td>
<td>Computer Assisted Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COIL</td>
<td>Collaborative Online International Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DUT</td>
<td>Durban University of Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INH</td>
<td>Internationalisation at Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Computer Technologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICD</td>
<td>Internationalisation of the Curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICD</td>
<td>Internationalisation of the Curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IC</td>
<td>Information and Computer Technologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IL</td>
<td>International Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LO</td>
<td>Learning Outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIL</td>
<td>Online International Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QA</td>
<td>Quality Assurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SARS-CoV-2</td>
<td>Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUNY</td>
<td>State University of New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCC</td>
<td>University of Cape Coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCT</td>
<td>University of Cape Town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VE</td>
<td>Virtual Engagement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Virtual Experiences**
Individual professional experts could be brought in to give presentations to a group of students through, for example, a virtual guest lecture: a simulated client interaction. The use of virtual reality glasses and video can be used to give students an immersive experience of an authentic situation, for example life in a refugee camp.

**Bandwidth**
Bandwidth refers to the volume of information that can be sent over a connection and is calculated in megabits per second (mbps). Sometimes confused with internet speed, which refers to how fast information is downloaded, bandwidth is the amount of information that can be received.
Introduction

Welcome to the Toolkit for Virtual Engagement for International Student Exchange developed by the Durban University of Technology (DUT) for the Association of Commonwealth Universities.

Virtual engagement for international student exchange aims to give students an international experience while remaining at home, offering the opportunity for intercultural exchange and the development of global citizenship attributes. While the opportunity to undertake physical mobility is typically limited to a small number of students and staff, Castro et al. (2020) virtual engagement for internationalisation provides an opportunity for a larger proportion of staff and students to access to the benefits of internationalisation and can act as a ‘gateway’ to physical mobility. This objective has guided the use of virtual engagement / COIL at the Durban University of Technology.

The impact of Covid-19 on global higher education, which brought staff and student mobility to a standstill, has increased interest in virtual engagement as a tool for accessible internationalisation and accelerated innovations within the higher education community.

Alongside this, it has also brought into focus the challenges that students and university staff in different geophysical locations around the world face in transitioning to remote working, teaching and learning, and the need for context sensitivity in internationalisation. These challenges include but are not limited to:

- Gaining access to devices and data
- Poor or non-existent connectivity
- Poor bandwidth
- Insufficient funds to purchase data or airtime
- Overload of cellular networks or global technical glitches (for example failure in a sea connection cable)
- Breakdown in electricity supply
- Working from a non-campus-based location

The ACU published a snapshot of digital engagement in Commonwealth universities based on a survey of its members in 2020. The survey highlights a stubborn digital divide both between and within countries, and its impact on universities’ current capacity to deliver teaching and research.

However, it also highlights a window of opportunity – not only to use the lessons learned to build stronger, more resilient institutions, but also to widen access to higher education and to bring international learning to more students.

With this context in mind, this Toolkit aims to provide:

- An introductory resource for different approaches to international virtual engagement
- Support for developing virtual engagement with a pedagogical focus, agreed learning outcomes, appropriate student assessment, and structured evaluation of the activity for future improvement
- Support for enabling the interaction of students in different geophysical locations across the globe, remaining sensitive to culture and context
- Practical tips, tools and resources for implementation, drawing on examples from DUT and ACU practice

After reading this toolkit, readers should:

- Have a working knowledge of the nature and extent of different types of virtual engagement
- Be familiar with the differences between extra-curricular virtual engagement such as virtual events and academic exchange
- Have insight into the capacity required for virtual engagement
- Understand the different technical tools used to support virtual engagement
- Understand the teaching, learning and engagement tools required for academic virtual engagement

A resource for developing COIL is included separately in this document.
1. Considerations for institutions engaging in virtual engagement

1.1. A Contribution toward Broader Internationalisation Objectives

When developing international virtual engagement, higher education institutions should consider how this activity contributes towards wider global learning and internationalisation objectives. Key areas include, but are not limited to:

- Achieving the institutional strategic plan
- Supporting the teaching and learning strategy
- Achieving graduate attributes
- Broader community engagement
- Developing a new generation of student and staff leaders
- Higher education social justice
- Addressing the UN Sustainable Development Goals

1.2. Opportunities and Benefits

- Global perspectives
  - International student virtual engagement facilitates the participation of people from all over the world, enabling global perspectives
- Accessibility and fewer barriers to entry
  - International virtual engagement enables participants to attend at little cost (if they have the tools to connect virtually) compared with an in-person activity
  - Participation in international virtual engagement is a smaller time commitment than in-person activities, enabling greater levels of participation
- Content can be made available on demand, 24 hours a day so participants who missed a synchronous session can still access it asynchronously at a time convenient to them. Outside of virtual engagement, the on-demand benefit is not often experienced
- Greater diversity of participants
  - International virtual engagement brings experts and leaders in the field close to participants who might not, ordinarily, have this opportunity
- Diversity of models
  - Virtual engagement could also be curated as a hybrid programme, project or event, where there is a virtual component followed by an in-person continuation within the participating institutions
- Reduced environmental impact

1.3. Challenges and Shortcomings

The following challenges and shortcomings should be considered in the development of international virtual engagement:

- For Participants
  - Different time zones
  - Participant internet access, data and bandwidth capabilities
  - Access restrictions to web tools, for example Google, Facebook or WhatsApp in certain countries
  - Participant environment. Some participants may be accessing the activity from an internet café, or a shared or communal house which may then produce a significant amount of background noise
- For Universities
  - Credit approval could be challenging within the international virtual engagement space
  - Capacity for digital resources, or technology needed for virtual engagement

Shortcomings include:

- No face-to-face networking
- Harder to maintain focus/engagement
- The experience of culture in the hosting country/city is harder to create in a virtual exchange event
2. Roles and responsibilities of academic and administrative staff involved in curating a virtual event

In curating a virtual engagement programme, project or event, consideration should be given to the role of various staff who will be involved (see example in Table 1).

It is important to establish a strong team that could include a project leader, administrative staff, social media practitioners, academic/teaching/research staff, marketing experts, instructional designers, and technical support.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic expertise</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Leaders</td>
<td>Lead and curate the programme, project, or event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Contributors</td>
<td>Delivery of Lectures, Delivery of Talks, Facilitation of Teaching and Learning, Assessment of Learning Outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administrative and support staff</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event Secretariat</td>
<td>Contact and manage participants, e.g. send out invitations, make logistical arrangements, send thank you letters after the event, clarify roles and expectations of participants, source additional resources as determined by the organising team, e.g. virtual platforms and media tools, arrange meetings, sending out connection links for these, for example a Zoom meeting link, keeping notes/minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Keep records of all financial matters, advise on financial matters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing and Social media practitioners</td>
<td>Communicate and market the programme, project or event to target audiences, directly and through social media, e.g. Facebook and Instagram, advise on the best platforms to use for the event, project or programme and bandwidth requirements, handle any technical challenges experienced by academic staff and participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technological advisers</td>
<td>Advise on the best platforms to use for the event, project or programme and bandwidth requirements, handle any technical challenges experienced by academic staff and participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Designers</td>
<td>Support the curation of the teaching and learning content, helping to ensure learning outcomes are met</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1. Successful coordination

The successful administration and coordination of a virtual event - in addition to that which is generally required for face-to-face international short learning programmes or summer schools - must include a focus on technology. Utrecht Summer School (Utrecht Network, 2015) recommends the following steps for coordinating a Summer School.
### Table 2: Considerations for coordinating an in-person vs. a virtual Summer School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Considerations for Coordinating a Summer School</th>
<th>Considerations for Coordinating a Virtual Summer School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1: Initiation</strong></td>
<td>At initiation stage, consider the following:</td>
<td>For virtual engagement, the location is online.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Study level</td>
<td>Considerations in this context include:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Programme dates</td>
<td>• Online platforms for programme delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Duration</td>
<td>- Faculty and students’ online access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Location</td>
<td>- Bandwidth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Target Audience</td>
<td>- Content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Market</td>
<td>• See more under Basic Tools for virtual engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 2: Internal Preparation</strong></td>
<td>• Institutional commitment to the academic exchange programme including liaison with internal faculty members</td>
<td>• In addition to the same considerations for internal stakeholders and budgets, local logistics are very different within a virtual context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Academic support including commitment from academic staff to deliver content</td>
<td>• In place of venues and transport, focus on:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Local logistics</td>
<td>- Technical logistics – ensuring all participants are able to access live sessions within a reasonable time considering differing time zones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Budgets</td>
<td>- In disadvantaged areas of developing countries, there may be instances where only one computer is available for a group of participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 3: External Preparation: Planning</strong></td>
<td>• Setting up your core group – who are integral to making the programme run smoothly</td>
<td>• See Roles of Academic and Administrative Staff section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- ICT support staff</td>
<td>• Preparing academic content in a virtual setting allows coordinators to include academic expertise outside their geographical areas and from multiple institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Academic staff and facilitators</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Coordinators</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The recruitment of teaching staff and experts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 4: Advertising and student recruitment</strong></td>
<td>Marketing and recruitment for summer schools, and wider study abroad and exchange, typically happens at international study abroad fairs or conference expos.</td>
<td>During COVID-19 many institutions have used virtual platforms for marketing and recruitment, for example using virtual roadshows and marketing webinar series to reach international audiences/target partner institutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 5: The event</strong></td>
<td>Implementation of the event usually requires management of the different teams that ensure the running of the event. This would include:</td>
<td>In a virtual setting, depending on the content, the same applies, however, the management of the technical requirements also apply when the programme is running.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Academic staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Logistics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Industry experts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Excursion contacts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 6: Student Evaluations</strong></td>
<td>At the end of the programme students typically submit an evaluation based on their experience.</td>
<td>• Online evaluations can be made using tools such as Google or Microsoft forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 7: Reflection and evolution</strong></td>
<td>The cycle requires reflections based on evaluations and data from this to inform planning for next event.</td>
<td>• Coordinators should remember to include questions on the virtual and technical aspects of the programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• For the virtual setting, it is also important to reflect on the technical and virtual aspects of the programme, accessibility and the experience of users</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Basic tools for virtual engagement

3.1. Technical Tools

When considering any virtual engagement, there is a need to consider what platform will be used for delivery. This will depend on issues such as the format, length and scope of the activity. Different institutions will also have preferences and potentially licenses for different platforms. An illustrative list of options and associated considerations is shared in Table 3.

Table 3. Examples of some Online Platforms and Considerations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Platform</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Moodle       | Learning Management System (LMS)      | • What LMS is used by the institution and how easy is it to register non-registered students into the LMS?  
• What are the institutional policies regarding this? |
| Blackboard   |                                       |                                                                                                       |
| Canvas       |                                       |                                                                                                       |
| Padlet       | Web based application/tool for project management Group collaboration, Mind mapping, bulletin board | • Useful applications for students who have bandwidth issues  
• Easy to access on mobile phones  
• Using Padlet for student collaboration  
• Works well for participants using a mixture of devices as Padlet works on any internet-enabled device, including: PC, laptop, tablet, smartphone, etc.  
No software or apps need to be downloaded or installed, so it can be used immediately by anyone with internet access. Walls created in Padlet can be exported in several ways, including PDF or spreadsheet, or embedded into your class blog, LMS or Edmodo page |
| Trello       | Group collaboration software that can be used to help teams work together remotely. You can find chat, video calls, and other collaboration tools within the app. | • Difficult for those who are not part of the Team domain, issues with guests joining the Team  
• Data heavy |
| MS Teams     | Channel based messaging platform       | • Data ‘heavy’  
• Useful to keep the thread of work together/groups |
| Slack        | Social networking web platform         | • Create a private group  
• Manage access to the private group  
• Consider privacy issues |
| Face Book    |                                       |                                                                                                       |
| WhatsApp     | Popular chat and instant messaging application | • Data light  
• Good for semi-synchronous communication  
• Widely used across the globe - familiar |
| Zoom         | Video conferencing facility            | • Data heavy  
• Password protected entrance into the meeting to avoid Zoom bombing - see video on how to use the Zoom platform for remote and online learning |
| Google Hangouts |                                       |                                                                                                       |
| Skype        |                                       |                                                                                                       |

The ACU Summer School used the Zoom platform for the delivery of the 2020 programme. Zoom support recommends the following for such an event:

- The bandwidth used by Zoom be optimized for the best experience based on the participants’ network  
- It automatically adjusts for 3G, WiFi or Wired environments  
- Zoom provides a list of recommended bandwidth for meetings and webinar panellists which can be found .

The ACU Summer School used the Padlet (See Table 3) platform for student groupwork and presentations.
3. Basic tools for virtual engagement

3.2. Teaching and Learning Considerations and Tools

A teaching and learning virtual engagement can include activities such as a virtual workshop, a short learning programme, a Summer or Winter School, or a COIL project, amongst others. When choosing to develop, curate and deliver such engagements, the following key factors must be considered, alongside sound educational principles.

Aims and Objectives - Internationalised Learning Outcomes (LO)

First, determine the aims and objectives of this virtual engagement, including internationalised learning outcomes, and associated tasks and activities. It is important to determine what students will be able to do at the end of the teaching and learning engagement. It is also important to note that there are different qualification frameworks in each country that guide the levels of learning. When crafting the learning outcomes consider the educational level of the engagement and ensure that the LO is relevant to the level, and SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely).

If the educational engagement aims to develop inter-cultural competence, then ensure that a LO which addresses cultural competence is crafted. An example of a LO which aims to develop cultural competence might be: Students should demonstrate, using a photograph, an element of the culture of [country] which is important to them.

Delivery - Methods and Communications

Considerations for the delivery of virtual engagement include the following:

- **Bandwidth:** For international virtual engagement, it is important for participants from countries with low bandwidth to consider using tools and platforms which are data sparing rather than data heavy.
- **Language:** The language of instruction of the host institution, however for international virtual engagement, it is important to note that there may be participants who are not first language speakers of the language of instruction of the engagement.

In some cases, interpreters may be necessary, however, this is also dependant on the capacity of the host institution. In other cases, for students who are not first language speakers, allowances of extra time for assessment tasks of group work may have to be made.

**Access:** The types of devices that will be used should be taken into consideration when determining the platform, as interfaces of different platforms are different on laptops and smart phones.

**Synchronicity:** Virtual engagement programmes, projects or events can be offered through different methods of transmission: in real time, in the learner’s own time, or a mixture of both, known as Synchronous, Asynchronous and Semi-synchronous approaches.

**Synchronous:** This virtual classroom is ideal for presenting instruction or information to a geographically dispersed group. It allows the audience to view the same visuals and hear the same audio simultaneously and to virtually interact with the instructor and other participants. In turn, it allows the instructor to ‘read’ the audience and to hear their questions, opinions and perspectives. Synchronous approaches are also useful for extending instruction, allowing participants to discuss a topic or to correct misconceptions after taking a self-paced course. Malamed (2020)

- **Asynchronous:** Some advantages to asynchronous learning are that it allows for flexibility in the learner’s schedule. It can provide information and training at the moment a person needs it, if typically allows learners to go back and review as needed, and participants can learn at their own pace Malamed (2020).

- **Semi-synchronous:** Where students can collaborate in real time, or where there are significant time differences, over span of time. In semi-synchronous activities, it might be necessary to direct the discussion is in a structured way to ensure students do not move off topic and that there is a strong moderator presence. Assessment can also be delivered semi-synchronously, for example, a double jump or triple jump assessment.

**Task Sequencing:** When planning for participants to engage and meet the learning outcomes it is important to consider the logical flow of the tasks.

**Examples of tasks could be:**
- Watch a video or documentary
- Read an article
- Add a discussion point to the discussion forum
- Post an article from a literature search and then write an essay

Definitions

**Synchronous**

Synchronous refers to the methods of delivery where collaboration is occurring in real time. For example, interactive lectures over Zoom, where there are breakout rooms included for group work.

**Asynchronous**

Asynchronous refers to the methods of delivery where collaboration is not occurring in real time. For example, blogging allows for students to collaborate at different times.

**Semi-Synchronous**

Semi-synchronous refers to a mix of synchronous and asynchronous methods of delivery. Examples of semi-synchronous activities include: watching a video together at the same time and then engaging in a discussion asynchronously, or using a platform designed to deliver semi-synchronous activities which might include starting to watch a video at the same time allowing students to watch at their own pace and then engage in a discussion in a chat forum later. Another example of this is collaboration over a platform like Whatsapp.

Virtual Engagement Teaching and Learning Participant Briefs - Overview of Resources

Examples of teaching and learning participant briefs from the ACU and UCC 2020 Summer School are provided in the appendices. The teaching and learning activities within the Summer School were communicated to students prior to the commencement of the programme.

- Exploring our Diversity - An intercultural session
- Elevator Pitch - Sharing your Studies in 60 Seconds
- Group Project Brief
- Marking rubric for student work

3.3. Assessments and Evaluations

Teaching and learning tools also include assessment and evaluations. Useful considerations when developing these include:

- Types of assessments to be used to test the participants achievement of the learning outcomes
- Sequence of these assessments
- What is going to be assessed, when, by whom and in what format?
- Examples include: An essay, a video, or a multiple-choice test

The evaluation tools can be quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods. Instruments to conduct the evaluation could include questionnaires, interview schedules and focus group discussions. It is also important to communicate the assessments and the criteria to participants. An example is a marking rubric.
3.4. Partnering for Virtual Engagement

Virtual engagement provides opportunities to deepen long-term collaboration between partners through activities including but not limited to:

- Virtual exchange and mobility programmes for both staff and students
- Joint teaching
- Virtual, international research engagement and collaborative partnerships
- Design and community engagement in virtual study abroad and short-term programmes
- The development and implementation of collaborative joint modules or full qualification

When planning an international virtual programme, project or event, clear partnership roles are critical to success. Setting out the terms of this partnership are important through, for example, a Memorandum of Understanding; a Terms of Reference Agreement or a Partnership Agreement. See Appendix I for an example of a general MOU that would allow for virtual engagement activities.

Partnerships could be developed through contact made directly with another university, through a regional or international university networks (such as the Association of Commonwealth Universities), discipline-based associations, or with industry, NGO, charity and community organisations.

Virtual ‘speed dating’ or ‘partnering fair’ events can also be arranged to find a partner for collaboration, for example the Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) events hosted by the State University of New York with the intention of fostering partnerships outlined at Appendix F.

Tools for creating your own partnering event

A checklist for a partnering event has been included as Appendix J and an example of a programme for the partnering event is given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plenary session</th>
<th>Welcome, introductions, etiquette considerations, purpose of the event</th>
<th>Programme Director</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breakout sessions</td>
<td>Each breakout approx. 5 minutes, where one pair of participants can share information (more than two people per breakaway session is also possible - this would require more time and it is possible that participants might not fully engage in groups with larger numbers)</td>
<td>Break-out room facilitators (1 per room)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plenary closing session</td>
<td>What will happen next</td>
<td>Programme Director</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Student preparation for virtual engagement

4.1. Accessibility and Environment

Organisers will need to be aware that not all participants will have a designated area for work or study-related activities. Background noise may be a factor that needs to be accommodated in order to ensure the inclusion of all voices in sessions.

Students can be advised in advance to do everything they can to:

• Ensure their environment is conducive for academic engagement
• Ensure their background is not distracting to other participants (Platforms such as Zoom and MS Teams allow the use of customised background images for this, although these are heavy on data)
• Minimise background noise – the use of device headphones is recommended where possible

4.2. Digital Etiquette

It is helpful to introduce students to concepts of etiquette in video conferencing, where appropriate. For example in Zoom, in a group discussion, there is a button to raise your hand. This function allows for the session chair or the moderator to fairly give all participants the opportunity to speak.

See Appendix F for more information on Netiquette for the online space.

4.3. Technical and Environment Preparations for Students and Participants

Participants’ digital and device capabilities are also an important factor to consider.

Smith (2020) lists the following as the basic technical requirements for video conferencing:

• Network and Hardware Requirements: a webcam for desktop or laptop with built in webcam (N.B. Some video conferencing facilities only support the 1280 X 720 picture resolution which requires a 720-pixel camera.
• Computer Processing: For audio and video quality, a fast processor is recommended. Lifesize.com recommends a minimum of 2GB of RAM and a quad core processor
• Sufficient Network Bandwidth: The network bandwidth required will depend on the desired resolution and frame rate: 1 Mbps is sufficient for 15 fps at 720p resolution, while 30 fps at 4K will require closer to 4 Mbps. It should be noted that the more participants there are on a video conference call, the more bandwidth is required

However, many students may not be able to secure these technical requirements. Where possible, organisers should use a range of tools to allow for data limitations and support students with data bundles and/or access to devices to allow their full participation.

Student preparation for virtual engagement – ACU Summer School 2020

• The Programme schedule was developed to accommodate the different time zones of students and academic presenters
• Students were provided with data vouchers/grants to ensure accessibility
• Intercultural Sessions to develop intercultural competencies were included throughout the programme
• Students and presenters were provided with orientation relating to the ideal environment and background for sessions
5. Intercultural learning, cultural diversity and managing group dynamics

In a face-to-face study abroad or exchange programme, students typically receive intercultural instruction. Organisers of international virtual engagement should incorporate intercultural learning into pre-programme activities, and via dedicated workshops sessions. It is important to ensure that sessions are facilitated by trained cultural diversity experts with the expertise to navigate intercultural group dynamics and enable the group to successfully achieve relevant intercultural competence objectives.

Henmann (2016) and Mery (2020) recommend the following factors when managing intercultural group dynamics:

- Acknowledging and respecting cultural differences
- Including activities that are aimed at overcoming cultural and language barriers
- Establishing rules and norms for group interaction
- Strong Communication
- Building rapport and trust amongst group members
- Leveraging cultural diversity for common goals
- Planning around different time zones
- Creating through facilitation, an open, tolerant and diverse environment

In the case of the ACU Summer School, informal sessions were facilitated prior to the formal programme via Facebook, and a dedicated session, Exploring our Diversity, was held, to encourage students to share specific aspects of their culture. The template for this session is included at Appendix A.

Good luck with your virtual engagement activities!
References:


APPENDICES:
Tools and Templates for Virtual Engagement
Appendix A: Summer School: Exploring our Diversity

International virtual student engagement should incorporate intercultural learning into programme activities, which could include workshop sessions. This template from the UCC and ACU Summer School shows a briefing for students for an example intercultural workshop session, sent in advance to students to communicate the task and inform their preparations.

Session Brief for breakout rooms (35 – 45 minutes)

Please come prepared to talk informally about two of the topics below in small groups. If you choose topic one, please remember to wear your outfit or have the object you’re going to talk about with you:

1. Wear a cultural outfit / bring a cultural item to this session
   - Tell us about the cultural outfit or item: what is it made of, what does it depict, where does it come from, why is it important to you, etc.

2. Share something about migration to or from your home country. This could be:
   - A personal family/experience or
   - A topic relating more generally to an aspect of migration in your country

3. Share something about one of the most visited places in your country
   - Why is it so popular?
   - What can you see and do there?
   - Have you been and what did you like best about it?
   - If your country was an Instagram image, what would it depict?

4. Tell us something about your country’s history
   - What most resonates with you?
   - What aspect impacted your life the most?
   - How has your country’s history been impacted by migration?

Appendix B: Sharing your studies in 60 seconds

A core part of an international virtual student engagement session is likely to involve participants sharing their academic work. This template can be used to help students prepare to present concisely in an intercultural group setting.

Introduction

An elevator pitch is a short concise statement of your research or studies, delivered in a brief encounter with the idea of getting a second chance to share more. The goal of your elevator pitch should be to create a remarkable and positive impression of you and your research or studies.

Brief

We would like you to develop a 60 second elevator pitch sharing your studies – this might be your research or the course you are studying towards.

GRAB ATTENTION  SPARK CURIOSITY  SUMMARIZE

Questions your pitch should address

- What is the topic of your research or your studies?
- What is the problem, issue or question that your research or studies are addressing?
- Why is this research problem or your studies interesting or important (the “so what”)?
- How does your research or studies link into the larger disciplinary conversation in your field?
- What does your research or studies add to your discipline?

Resources

https://uclalibrary.github.io/research-tips/deconstructing-the-elevator-speech/
http://www.jillhopke.com/2013/03/communicating-science-from-the-elevator-pitch-to-research-presentations/
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O6U9OGpvV78&feature=emb_rel_end
The aim of the group project is to enable you to demonstrate your understanding of migration in relation to your assigned group topic. Through this group project, you should demonstrate the ability to apply knowledge of the migration topic in relation to your individual country context. In addition, you should demonstrate an understanding of the differences and commonalities that are present in your different countries and the global interconnectedness of these migration issues. You must explain the influence and impact on the different countries and societies in the group.

Group topics:
- Climate and migration
- Health and migration
- Marginalised communities and migration
- Refugee and host community relations
- Refugee and migrant integration
- Migrant decision-making
- Migrant demographics
- Migrant vulnerability

An example of climate and migration:
A student from Nigeria might talk about the effects of climate on food production and forced migration for food security, the Indian student might have the same issue but the UK student might talk about migration into the UK but on questioning might realise this is due to climate change in the originating country so then their project could be on the effects of climate change in the originating country so then their project could be on the effects of climate change in the originating country.

Instructions for students:
- Each student is to identify an issue, related to their topic, in their own country, for example, drought and food production in Kenya
- Introduce and describe the issue that is present in each of the different countries within your group, providing domestic context to the identified issue
- Engage, within your groups, in a comparative discussion around the commonalities and differences you have found with your group members around the issue you have identified and how these issues have manifested within your different contexts. You might like to record some of these discussions for use later when writing up your final document
- In your discussions remember to describe the impact of this issue in your different countries and different societies
- Conduct a short literature review of the assigned topic and through a literature review, describe any factors that have been explored in other parts of the world that are relevant to your topic
- Each group is to produce an article on their final reflections for publication in the ACU E-Magazine. The articles will be published in the ACU e-Magazine
- Create a unique and innovative presentation (for example power point presentation, narrated or not, video, photo-story etc) of these discussions and findings on Padlet for presentation to the Summer School participants, moderators and guests at the end of the programme. This should be a visual presentation
- All the groups will have an oral defence of their project

Guidelines for group work:
- Each group should nominate someone to coordinate the group, facilitate discussion and meetings
- Groups should nominate a scribe or two to keep notes and someone to give a summary of the discussion at the end of the session
- The notes should be circulated to all group members (this can be the hand-written notes)
- If you are using a platform in which you can record the session (eg Zoom, Teams etc) then someone should be responsible for this and for circulating the recording to the other members
- Group members need to be cognizant of those in the group who might have bandwidth challenges, when choosing technology to hold meetings

Guidelines for E-Magazine article:
- Each group must write a reflective article using their group discussions and integrating literature which will be published in the ACU E-Magazine
- Conduct a literature review:
  - You might like to identify key words for your search and assign each group member a different key word to search (mind mapping your summary might help to identify key words)
  - Each member should find 2 articles for inclusion in the final literature review
  - Each member can write up their section and
  - One person could be assigned to collate the review
- Ensure all group member perspectives are represented equally in your end products

Guidelines for the Padlet presentation:
- Each group is to put their project into a visual presentation and upload it onto the Padlet wall
- This presentation can be in any medium you choose – for example power point, narrated or not, video, photo-story or any other media you might like to use
- The presentation must be uploaded to Padlet on Tuesday 11th August no later than 3pm Ghana
Appendix D: Group work rubric

Clear evaluation frameworks, communicated openly to students, can help ensure international student group work tasks run smoothly and achieve their objectives. This example rubric includes criteria that can be used in assessing an intercultural group project and should be shared with students as part of their brief.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Innovation</th>
<th>Contextualization</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Diversity of perspectives</th>
<th>Understanding of the ACU audience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic 1</td>
<td>No innovation.</td>
<td>No contextualization from group members</td>
<td>Lack of understanding of brief</td>
<td>Artefact and article lacks group perspectives and team effort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound 2</td>
<td>A few new ideas</td>
<td>A few perspectives from group members</td>
<td>Understanding of only a few aspects of brief</td>
<td>Some evidence of teamwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average 3</td>
<td>Some new ideas and thinking</td>
<td>Some use of different perspectives from group members</td>
<td>Display of some understanding of brief</td>
<td>Average participation from all team members evident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thorough 4</td>
<td>Fair usage of new ideas and thinking with innovative presentation methods</td>
<td>A fair amount of different perspectives</td>
<td>Demonstrates clear understanding of the brief</td>
<td>Clear demonstration of team effort and diversity of voices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extensive 5</td>
<td>Completely new ideas and ways of thinking, building on existing knowledge/ very original methods of presentation</td>
<td>Different perspectives from a number of group members providing good contextualization</td>
<td>Excellent interpretation of brief with clear and structured discussions</td>
<td>Excellent group effort with clear evidence of diversity of voices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extensive 5</td>
<td>Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thorough 4</td>
<td>Excellent understanding of audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average 3</td>
<td>Some understanding of ACU audience, writing still not relatable to audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound 2</td>
<td>Some evidence of teamwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic 1</td>
<td>No understanding of ACU audience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOOLKIT: VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENT EXCHANGE
**Appendix E: Virtual engagement evaluation for organisers**

Organisers will want to assess the success and learning points following a virtual engagement activity. This template can be adapted by virtual engagement organisers to evaluate their own processes by critiquing sessions with other members of the organising group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Session: Date: Time: Name:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Technology</strong></td>
<td>Access for students Access for presenters and speakers Quality of Sound Quality of Visuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group Dynamics</strong></td>
<td>Student interaction Student participation Student feedback Structural Group Dynamics Group leaders? Group collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Programme Presentation / Delivery</strong></td>
<td>Timeous sessions Planning and Organisation Challenges Future Opportunities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Appendix F: Useful resources for international virtual engagement in higher education**

This Toolkit refers to a number of models and tools for curating virtual engagement activities. The following table includes links to a number of external resources for COIL, partnering, technical support and collaborative tools, but is by no means exhaustive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Link</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introductory Guides for virtual engagement and COIL</td>
<td>Forum on Education Abroad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University of Washington, Bothell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University of Minnesota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The E-Learning Coach Podcast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Centre for Innovation in Teaching and Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnering for COIL</td>
<td>State University of New York COIL Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Florida International University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical and etiquette guides</td>
<td>Twitter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zoom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Instagram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Online Learning Etiquette</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation tools</td>
<td>Google Forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Microsoft Forms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix G: Developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS) model

Inter-cultural competence is an important part of internationalised learning outcomes. A useful model for understanding learning gains within cultural awareness is the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS). The DMIS model can be used for different phases of virtual engagement activities.

Appendix H: Partnership profile

Virtual ‘speed dating’ or ‘partnering fairs’ can be an effective means of finding a partner for collaboration for virtual student engagement. This template partner profile form could be used as a basis for discussions to inform partnership-seeking events.

Please let us know a little more about you and your interest in collaboration so we may assist with looking for a partner

| University: |
| Date completed: |
| Name: |
| Email: |
| Department: |
| Academic discipline: |
| Would you be interested in a partner in another discipline? | YES | NO |
| Detail of your teaching/research interests: |
| Ideas for collaboration/partnering: |
| Additional information that a partner may find helpful: |
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Between

University X

and

University Y

1. Introduction

In the pursuit of excellence in scholarship and dissemination of knowledge to generate reciprocal benefit within a framework of openness, fairness, and equity, that will serve both the partners, the ___________________ and the ___________________, hereby sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for Academic Collaboration. The ___________________ and the ___________________ are hereinafter referred to as the “Parties”. Through this MoU, the parties express their intention, in principle, to facilitate and develop a meaningful and mutually beneficial relationship, and to encourage the development of new collaborative undertakings. The two parties have mutually agreed to the following:

2. Purposes

The aim of this MoU is to provide for cooperation on academic activities of the two institutions that will strengthen mutual understanding, foster friendly co-operation, and to promote sustainable and productive academic collaboration and exchange between faculty, students and research of both the parties in integrated learning programmes.

3. Activities Envisaged

In pursuit of the aim of the MoU, the two institutions may develop specific activities to implement the mutual understanding set forth in this agreement. These shall in every case be subject to mutual consent and the availability of adequate resources, and shall be set forth in supplementary agreement protocols.

The Parties hereby agree to undertake to promote, within the framework of the provisions of the respective governments’ regulations applying in each of the institutions, the following activities:

3.1 Academic Collaboration

3.1.1 Research collaboration, including joint research projects in areas of mutual interest.

3.1.2 In so far as research can be promoted by a period of residence at the partner university, both universities agree to appropriately support members of the partner university. Each will ensure that visiting academics are integrated well into existing research terms and, if possible make working space available to them.

3.1.3 Exchange of faculty members and research personnel. The number, timing and duration of such exchanges may vary according to the needs of the particular programme (refer to particular departmental MoU – if relevant).

3.1.4 Exchange of academic information and materials, publications, research databases, and courseware.

3.1.5 Sharing of library resources such as research papers, indices, books and magazines on relevant subjects where possible and appropriate.

3.1.6 Sponsoring and conducting joint conferences, seminars, colloquia, training programmes, workshops and other academic meetings on matters of mutual interest.

3.1.7 Extending invitations for attending scholarly and technical meetings and assisting in making arrangements for attending national and international conferences.

3.1.8 Offering of joint or each partner’s programme on mutual agreement.

3.2 Exchange of Students

3.2.1 Each institution may exchange students upon mutual agreement, for a period not exceeding one year.

3.2.2 The home institution will screen student applications and recommend students to the host institutions for an invitation.

3.2.3 Students will perform duties in the relevant academic department as agreed upon by the departmental supervisor.

3.2.4 Transcripts of result will be provided to the home institution soon after the completion of the exchange.

3.2.5 Each student will register and pay tuition and required fees at the host institution. The host institution will waive tuition if the student follows the agreed upon academic program, which may include limited choices made at the host institution even after commencement of the exchange, negotiated with the host/contact person.

3.2.6 Students enrolled at the host institution will be subject to the same rules and regulations as local students. Students will be eligible for all the services and rights normally provided to local enrolled students.

3.2.7 Each student will be responsible for arranging the necessary relevant immigration requirements (e.g. a study permit).

3.2.8 Students are responsible for cost of accommodation, international and local travel in host country, books, equipment, health insurance and other expenses arising out of the exchange.

3.2.9 The host institution may offer an exchange student for language assessment if necessary/applicable.

4. General considerations

4.1 The terms of and the necessary resources for, such joint activities and exchange programs shall be discussed and mutually agreed upon in writing by both parties through the liaison officers specified by the parties prior to the initiation of the particular activity or program.

4.2 Each party should approve any funding for such activities internally. The parties may also go for external funding. The final approval of any project is subject to the approval of both institutions and will be dependent, in part, upon the availability of guaranteed support funds.

4.3 It is the intention of the institutions that all research derived from the collaborative efforts of the two parties will be the joint property of both parties, proportionate to the parties respective contributions, unless otherwise specified in a particular departmental MoU or the specific institutional policies on intellectual property.

4.4 The activities under the MoU will be undertaken by specific appointees from each institution.
Appendix I: MoU Example

5. Communication between the institutions
Both institutions shall communicate with each other on a need to basis, through their respective International Relations offices.

The contact persons for the and for the is

6. Duration of the Agreement
The agreement shall take effect upon approval by both parties. It shall be effect for an initial period of three years. If the two institutions agree, it shall be renewed for an additional period of three years upon an official exchange of letters. This process shall be used to renew the agreement for each three-year period.

7. Amendments to the Agreement
Any amendment of and/or modification to the MoU will require the written approval from both parties.

8. Cooperation monitoring and progress report
The agreement shall operate as both disciplines specific and interdisciplinary projects by individual and collective members of each institution. The institutions` representatives as stated in paragraph four (4) will be responsible for the collection of written reports on any projects relevant to the co-operation.

9. Specific Partner Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs)
Cooperation goals and objectives for each project must be clearly stated with clearly defined target dates and financial obligations from each partner in separate Memoranda of Understanding between collaborative partners.

10. Financial Obligation
No financial obligation is presupposed on either party. Each partner will take care of its own financial obligation, except by mutual agreement.

11. Termination
Either party may terminate the agreement at any time after consultation and mutual agreement with three months prior written notice. The said termination would not affect the faculty or students from either institutions participating in a current exchange, thus enabling them to complete the agreed duration of their participation.

Dated signatures of authorised personnel

| Signature 1 |
| Signature 2 |

Appendix J: Partnering event checklist

Virtual ‘speed dating’ or ‘partnering fairs’ can be an effective means of finding a partner for collaboration for virtual student engagement. This checklist can be adapted for organising a partnering event for virtual engagement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Person responsible</th>
<th>Date completed</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decide on the date and time for the event.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decide number of participants (open invitation or limited numbers)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose technology platform</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create an invitation – including all the necessary information and a link for guests to RSVP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design a template for partner profiles (see Appendix I for an example)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send out the template, together with a link for the event, to those who have indicated they will attend</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request profiles &amp; contact details are returned by a set date</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decide how many breakout sessions will be required</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allocate participants into pairs for breakout sessions during the event</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decide on the roles the organisers will play in the event e.g. programme director, moderator, administrator etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure that there is technical support available throughout the event</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Host the event</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up with partners post-event to ascertain the number of successful partnerships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOOLKIT: VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENT EXCHANGE
What is Collaborative Online Learning (COIL)?
### What is Collaborative Online Learning (COIL)?

**1. What is Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL)?**

COIL is a pedagogy. It is a way of building collaboration among academics and students around the world. The design, development and implementation of a COIL project is an example of internationalisation of the curriculum (and internationalisation at home) in action. COIL embodies applied and/or authentic learning in groups of students.

COIL projects are designed and developed through collaboration between academic (professors/faculty) partners in two (or more) different education institutions; and geophysical locations around the world. The project is jointly implemented by the academic partners with their groups of students interacting and collaborating. The diagram in section 1.7 explains the different components of COIL.

The following link is to a three-minute video explaining what COIL is and how it engages students in powerful global learning: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ASuCF-YRqtE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ASuCF-YRqtE)

**1.1. Where did COIL begin?**

Some 16 years ago, COIL was founded by Dr Jon Rubin at the State University of New York (SUNY), USA. You can find out more about the COIL model at SUNY by accessing [http://bit.ly/whatisCOIL](http://bit.ly/whatisCOIL) or contacting coilinfo@suny.edu.

**1.2. Are there other terms used apart from COIL?**

There are several terms used for collaborative learning including:
- COIL
- Online International Learning (OIL)
- Telecollaboration
- Online Intercultural Exchange
- Computer Mediated Communication
- Intercultural Communication
- Computer Assisted Learning (CAL)

Some characteristics of a COIL project are that it:
- Can involve students who are at different levels/years of study and/or different types of qualifications
- Can involve different group sizes from each partner institution
- Is relatively short – typically 6 weeks (although it could be a full semester)
- Is part of an existing module/course
- Typically has one or two learning outcomes that are agreed by the two academic partners
- Can be synchronous; asynchronous or blended
- Is technology-mediated not technology-driven
- Promotes student tasks/projects that are collaborative
- Promotes reflection as an important aspect

Adam Zahn, Director, Global Engagement, Office of Global Engagement at Drexel University (personal communication, 2019) indicates that COIL:
- Brings together students & teachers in geographically distant locations, from different lingua-cultural backgrounds
- Aims to create team-taught learning environments where teachers from different cultures work together to develop a joint project that, emphasizes experiential collaborative learning
- Gives new contextual meaning to content students explore
- Uses technology to bridge distance between students
- Is an inherently networked model of education
- Projects cannot exist on a single campus; they require an actively engaged international partner

**1.3. What are the principles of COIL?**

- Promoting internationalisation
- Establishing partnerships
- Designing co-operative assignments for students
- Collaboration
- Providing academics and students with an international experience whilst at home
- Stimulating academics and students to 'Think outside the box'
- Promoting the development of 3 key attributes in students:
  - Inter-cultural competence
  - Technological competence and
  - Working as a member of a team/international team

**1.4. How is a COIL project developed?**

The partner academics agree on:
- the learning outcomes to be achieved by both groups of students
- the design of an ‘ice-breaker’ whereby the students get to know each other
- the design of the tasks for the students
- on how the students will be assessed, if at all (for example: will they be assessed; will each academic assess their own students; will there be joint assessment; will there be a common assessment rubric; will credit be awarded for the project)
- how students will reflect on their experience and learning
- how the academic partners will reflect on the project
- any opportunities for evaluation of the project for quality assurance

Some characteristics of a COIL project are that it:
- Can involve students who are at different levels/years of study and/or different types of qualifications
- Can involve different group sizes from each partner institution
- Is relatively short – typically 6 weeks (although it could be a full semester)
- Is part of an existing module/course
- Typically has one or two learning outcomes that are agreed by the two academic partners
- Can be synchronous; asynchronous or blended
- Is technology-mediated not technology-driven
- Promotes student tasks/projects that are collaborative
- Promotes reflection as an important aspect

Adam Zahn, Director, Global Engagement, Office of Global Engagement at Drexel University (personal communication, 2019) indicates that COIL:
- Brings together students & teachers in geographically distant locations, from different lingua-cultural backgrounds
- Aims to create team-taught learning environments where teachers from different cultures work together to develop a joint project that, emphasizes experiential collaborative learning
- Gives new contextual meaning to content students explore
- Uses technology to bridge distance between students
- Is an inherently networked model of education
- Projects cannot exist on a single campus; they require an actively engaged international partner

**1.5. What are some of the benefits of COIL?**

COIL:
- promotes equitable access to a virtual mobility
- introduces the academic partners and the students to new/ cross disciplinary knowledge
- promotes the attainment of the 3 key competencies of cultural competence, technological competence and teamwork
- can support initiatives such as the decolonisation of the curriculum (all participants knowledge is equally valued) and greening of the curriculum
- gives students an authentic experience of working in a multidisciplinary team (if the project is across disciplines)
- can be used to give students an immersive learning experience
- projects value disciplinary and cultural knowledge equally

**1.6. Some Challenges Relate to**

- finding a suitable COIL partner may take considerable time
- time zones/differences may influence the project design
- different academic year structures [semester start dates etc.] may influence when the project can be implemented and its duration
- ensuring that there is equitable access for students to devices, data and the selected technology platform in both groups and that these factors are considered in the design phase or that adjustments are made in implementation accordingly
**What is Collaborative Online Learning (COIL)**

**C - Collaborative**
Academic partners - in different geographical locations co-designing innovative projects for their students to work together

- Principles include teamwork; intercultural communication

**L - Learning**
Projects provide opportunities for innovative approaches to learning, for example problem/inquiry based, reflection, writing intensive, collaborative

**O - Online**
Collaboration using technology mediated platforms to support learning

**I - International**
Working as a member of an international team. The team may comprise students across more than one discipline. Principles include cross-cultural exchange of ideas

1.7. Table 5: Examples of COIL projects: an ACU Member University in South Africa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COIL Project</th>
<th>A state university in the United States and an ACU member university in South Africa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Global Health and Health Disparities</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Students: 22 Masters students from the US &amp; 34 Bachelor's degree students from South Africa</td>
<td>- Platform: Moodle classroom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic/Learning Outcome</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Instructions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 to 23 March</td>
<td>Course Objective 3: Collaborate on interdisciplinary teams to promote optimal health outcomes.</td>
<td>1. Icebreaker Activity - post in student lounge</td>
<td>- Introduce yourself to your classmates by name and what you prefer to be called &lt;br&gt; - Share your nursing experience (years in nursing and current and past nursing experience) &lt;br&gt; - Share other information about yourself that you feel comfortable with (i.e. where you live, what are your hobbies, etc.) &lt;br&gt; - Respond to 2-4 students from our collaborating partner &lt;br&gt; - If you would like to post a short video (no longer than 10 minutes) on the ESC Repository (link) something interesting about your community or culture. Some suggestions are: &lt;br&gt; - Typical foods that you eat &lt;br&gt; - The hospital / health setting where you work &lt;br&gt; - An issue related to the sustainable goals in your community &lt;br&gt; - Human rights day (DUT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 28 March</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goals and the effects on abject poverty</td>
<td>2. Pick one of the Sustainable Development Goals 2-17 (not number 1) and choose 1 of the target areas (listed within the particular goal) that need to be addressed</td>
<td>- Write an initial post (without looking at your classmates’ postings first). Identify ways that you as a professional nurse, can contribute to achieving one of the targets for the SDG you have chosen &lt;br&gt; - You can use both your experience and supporting literature in your assessment and analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 to 12 April</td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Read and reflect on 2-4 of your peers’ postings. Share your reflections on your peer’s postings related to the Development Goal they chose to highlight.</td>
<td>- Having posted and read your peers postings, write a 250-word reflection of how you see professional nurses contributing to the SDGs &lt;br&gt; - You might like to use a model of reflection to help you structure your reflective writing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.8. Quality Assurance

There may be different aspects of QA to consider in hosting virtual events.

The partners responsible for organising the event may design and develop common evaluation tools, for example, questionnaires, focus group interviews, student reflections. Data would be collected, analysed, evaluated and used to guide the planning, design and implementation of future events accordingly.

Each individual institution/organisation that is participating may have their context-specific policies, procedures, systems, and processes that may set out requirements for QA for the event. The individual institution/organisation would be responsible for the fulfilment of these requirements which will differ from those of their partners in the virtual event.

Data from both the common and the individual sources could be integrated to inform future events.
For more information on Virtual Engagement at DUT, please contact:

**DR LAVERN SAMUELS:**
Director: International Education and Partnerships:
SamuelsL@dut.ac.za

**DR PENELOPE ORTON:**
Specialist: COIL: International Education and Partnerships:
Pennyo@dut.ac.za

**MS LESLEY COOKE:**
Specialist: International Education: International Education and Partnerships:
Cookela@dut.ac.za

**MS DIVINIA JITHOO:**
Specialist: International Education: International Education and Partnerships:
DiviniaJ@dut.ac.za

**@DUT_Tweets**
Durban University of Technology: International Education and Partnerships:
international@DUT.ac.za
www.dut.ac.za