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BUDDY SYSTEM FACULTY OF DENTAL MEDICINE UNIVERSITY OF MEDICINE, TIRANA



Erasmus+ KA2 Capacity Building in the field of Higher Education

Strengthening capacities and digital competences in biomedical education through internationalization
at home BIOSINT

101082863-BIOSINT-ERASMUS-EDU-2022-CBHE

Project number: 101082863-BIOSINT-ERASMUS-EDU-2022-CBHE

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BUDDY SYSTEM

FACULTY OF DENTAL MEDICINE

UNIVERSITY OF MEDICINE, TIRANA

➤ WHAT A BUDDY SYSTEM IS?

The buddy system is a program in which international and local students match with each other in order to enhance support, integration, and collaboration. During their match, students are paired based on mutual interests, etc., and both parties offer support, guidance, and accountability.

The Buddy System will have as a goal to help exchange students to adopt to the daily life at the Faculty of Dental Medicine. Through this program exchange student can interact with a local student (buddy) who can provide friendship.

Through this system the aim is to assure cultural exchange, promote the academic experience, and provide a smooth adaption for exchange students. The main idea is that students who have experience can assist new students to adapt to the life in Tirana and to adapt in our Faculty.

The details are up to you but the important thing is to be there if your buddy has any need or worries. The help can consist from picking your buddy from the airport, showing around in the best places in Tirana, present with the other mates, classes etc.

➤ THE HISTORY OF BUDDY SYSTEM.

The buddy system has been firstly created with the aim to support the new students. Its origin can be found several decades ago and has developed to address various challenges faced by students. Here is a brief overview of its development:

1. **Early Origins:** The buddy system in universities started informally, with older students guiding new students of their first year. This informal mentorship helped new students navigate the campus life, understand academic expectations, and integrate socially.

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2. **Institutionalization:** With the time, the universities started to evaluate the benefits of this peer support system and began formalizing it. In the mid-to-late 20th century, several universities established structured buddy or mentoring programs as part of their orientation and student support services.
3. International student support. Now, this system is not only used for local students but especially for international students, who face difficulties in integrating in the academic and social life of the host universities.
4. Expansion and Diversification. Several universities have applied different matching systems such as students of the first years, students with disabilities, students enrolled in some specific academic branches.
5. Digital form. With the development of the technology, different universities have applied the online application of matching buddies. This was very helpful, especially during the COVID 19 period.

➤ POINTS IN WHICH WE NEED TO FOCUS

- 1.Implementation Plan: The implementation plan shall describe how a buddy system would be set up, including selection and training of buddies along with initiation processes of the program.
- 2.Roles and Responsibilities: The system will be implemented under the monitoring of the staff of the Faculty of Dental Medicine, in cooperation with the UMT Rectorate.
- 3.Evaluation Metrics: The participant satisfaction will be assessed through surveys to assess their overall experience and contentment with the program.
- 4.Possible Challenges: a) Mismatch between buddies. b) Lack of engagement. c) Irregular or infrequent meetings. d) Lack of Training.
- 5.Success Stories or Case Studies: Examples from other Universities about successful buddy systems will help illustrate the benefits and strategies.
- 6.Feedback Mechanisms: At the end of each semester, participant of the system buddy will be invited to fulfil a detailed survey through which they will share their experiences. Through these

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surveys the points where the system should improve and we should focus more will be more evident.

7. Long-Term Vision: The vision behind the buddy system in the Faculty of Dental Medicine is that eventually it will foster a friendly, inviting, and lively atmosphere. A campus where every student can excel academically, develop professionally, and be personally successful in an environment that cares about their success and wellbeing.

➤ HOW THE BUDDY SYSTEM ACTUALLY WORKS?

Let's briefly describe how the buddy system actually works. There are five steps contained in the buddy system in total, which go like this:

1. Matching of the individuals: The first step would involve matching up the students with each other based on various criteria that would be incorporated in the applications. They are, however, not only confined to academic interests but also include extracurricular activities. Also, it is a common experience that new faculty students are paired with older and more experienced students; therefore, they have a guide and friend in one.

2. Goals and expectations: Both parties should be clear about their goals for the smooth running of everything. This might include, but is not limited to, adjusting to the institutional culture, facilitating one through administrative processes, or even teaching techniques.

3. Regular interaction: The matched buddies have to meet and also have live and online interactions in order for their communication to be the best in can. A fixed meeting can help them have a schedule and know exactly when and where to address their concern and discuss the challenges and opportunities of growth.

4. Providing feedback: Feedback is essential as there will always be room for improvement as our faculty is the first one to incorporate the buddy system in the Faculty of Dental Medicine.

5. System evaluation: Evaluating the buddy system from time to time helps to point out its effectiveness; thus, the necessary changes can be executed. At the end, when the implementation of the buddy system will have been completed, some feedback collection is to be done from participants, Albanians, and internationals, for some changes on the basis of it.

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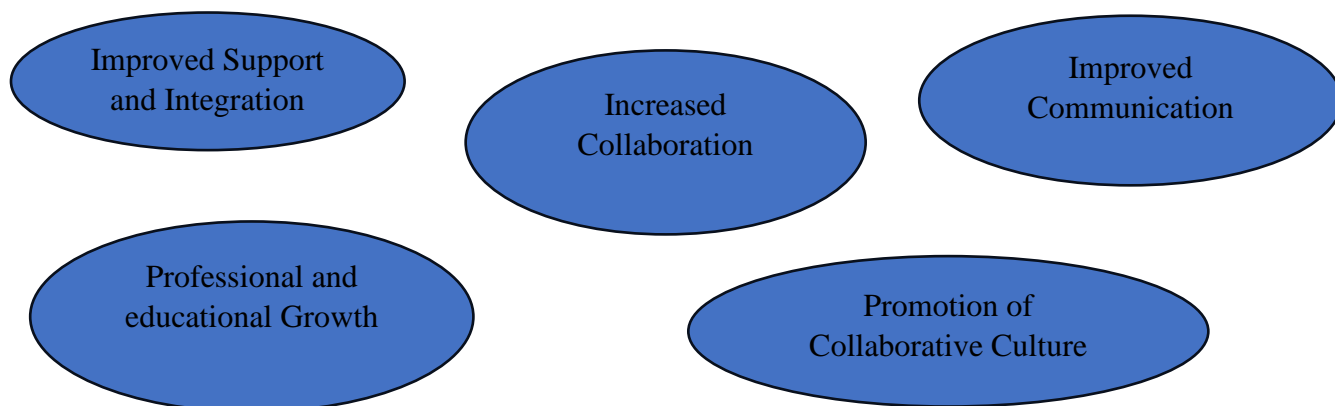
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➤ HOW CAN WE INCORPORATE THIS SYSTEM INTO THE FACULTY OF DENTAL MEDICINE, TIRANA?

1. Motivating students to participate.
2. Adding the adequate information to the faculty website and also designing posters to be published.
3. Organization of the meetings explaining the whole process: the form of application, the matching process.

Benefits of including the buddy system into our Faculty:



BIOSINT PROJECT

The BUDDY system is implemented in the Faculty of Dental Medicine, University of Medicine, Tirana, under the project with the title: ***“Strengthening capacities and digital competences in biomedical education through internationalization at home”, BIOSINT, ERASMUS-EDU-2022-CBHE-STRAND-2, Nr. 101082863***, where our institution is a Partner.

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HOW CAN I HELP A NEW STUDENT?

- The support will be given in the academic area: an orientation regarding the courses, numbers of ECTS, the way of examination etc.
- The support can be given in the language barriers.
- The support can be given in introducing the local traditions.
- The support can be given in an emotional level.
- The duration of the buddy system will be until the new student feels fully integrated.



HOW CAN I REGISTER?

It is a very simple process, you should fulfill our form with your main data, the link is available in google drive link in the website of the Faculty of Dental Medicine:
<https://fmd.edu.al/nderkombetarizimi/>

The link: <https://forms.gle/m7dH7e61UEoZTcYp6>

Or You can fulfill the document which is also uploaded in the website and send it by email to:
info@fmd.edu.al

Or

You can print it, fulfill it and send it by hand to the office of the Specialist for academic affairs, career and relations with students, at the Faculty of Dental Medicine.

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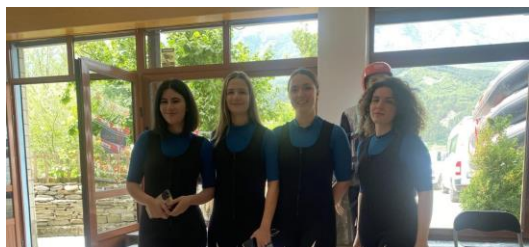


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WHO WILL THIS SYSTEM MAINLY BE FOR?

This system will be a support for international students who need someone to be by their side and guide them. This includes students from neighboring Albanian-speaking countries.



MOTIVATION

- Information sessions will be held in order to motivate students with experience to be buddy mentors of the international students.
- Certificate will be given to the mentoring students and the participation in the buddy system will be considered a bonus for conducting future mobilities.

DATA REGISTERING

- The application forms fulfilled by the students who want to be part of the BUDDY system will be stored and evaluated, in order to have the possibility to find the appropriate match for each international new student.

A GOOD BUDDY SHOULD BE:

- Friendly and cooperative
- Eager to help others
- Listen carefully the other and have the ability to extract the main information
- Be able to share his/her own experience and knowledge

BENEFITS OF BEING A BUDDY:



- Create professional connections from which several opportunities can be created
- Personal growth: gaining problem solving skills
- Create new friendships
- Be the promoter of new institutional collaborations

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- Enhancing the CV and receiving the certificate
- Improved language skills and vocabulary
- Get to know new cultures and traditions

THE BUDDY SHOULD BE AVAILABLE:

-Before arrival

- You can pick your buddy from the airport
- You can help find accommodation

-Upon arrival

- You can meet in person your buddy
- You can show him/her around Tirana
- You might explain how the academic environment works, how are the classes organized



ADVANTAGES BRINGING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A "BUDDY" SYSTEM IN THE FACULTY OF DENTAL MEDICINE:

1. Improved support for students, resulting in students with improved self-confidence and emotional well-being
2. Students with better academic achievements: fruitful collaboration results in students who are more motivated to achieve good academic grades
3. Development of students' social skills, leadership skills, teamwork
4. Creation of collaborations and agreements with international institutions
5. Access to contemporary cultures and teaching methods
6. Positive reputation of the Faculty
7. Creating an attractive environment for other international students

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BUDDIES COMMIT TO OBSERVE THE FOLLOWING PROCESS:

- For the initial meeting with your Buddy, choose a public location and notify a friend or family member.
- Inform someone in case of any changes, delays, cancellations, or if you are unable to attend.
- If meeting at a bar, ensure payment for your own consumption and adhere to legal and safe drinking practices.
- Provide inclusive and non-discriminatory options only.

CAN I BE A BUDDY MENTOR IF I'M A FIRST YEAR STUDENT?

Yes! Even if you have just arrived in Tirana, it is not a problem, as you can enjoy the city together. And if there are questions you do not know answers, just send us an e-mail and we will figure it out together.

HOW OFTEN DO YOU SUGGEST TO MEET?

This is up to you, however we would suggest every two weeks. The first weeks will be more intensive with questions about the Faculty of Dental Medicine and about Tirana.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY BUDDY HAS A PROBLEM OR QUESTION THAT I DON'T KNOW?

You may not be able to deal with all of your friend's questions or problems. Please do not hesitate to contact us.

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CONTACT

Address:

"Dibra" Street,
AL1005 - Tirana - Albania

Faculty Website: <https://fmd.edu.al/>

Faculty Email: info@fmd.edu.al

University Website: <http://umed.edu.al/>



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The BUDDY FORM

1. Complete this form how much as you can to raise the probability to match with an appropriate buddy and email it to: info@fmd.edu.al
Or
2. The link is available in google drive link in the website of the Faculty of Dental Medicine: <https://fmd.edu.al/nderkombetarizimi/>
The link:
<https://forms.gle/m7dH7e61UEoZTcYp6>
Or
3. You can print it, fulfill it and send it by hand to the office of the Specialist for academic affairs, career and relations with students, at the Faculty of Dental Medicine
4. We inform you when we find a buddy.
5. Contact your buddy, arrange the first meeting online or in person

○ **Data Privacy Statement**

By fulfilling this application, I acknowledge that the personal data provided herein will be used solely for the purpose of evaluating my candidacy for the System Buddy Program and for statistical evaluation for reports, scientific reports without revealing my identity.

Email: _____

Phone Number: _____

First Name: _____

Last Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Gender: _____

Nationality: _____

Spoken language(s): _____

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Country of study/work: _____

City: _____

Institution (University, Faculty): _____

Language(s) wanted for my buddy to speak: _____

Number of buddies wanted: _____

Hobbies: _____

The branch of study/ The branch where you have finished your studies:

- Dentistry
- Dental Technician
- Dental Hygienist

Year of study: I, II, III, IV, V, Graduated

Postgraduate studies/Specialty: _____

Expectations: _____

I want someone with the same gender with me: Yes No

Comments, details we or your buddy should

know: _____

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