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How to internationalize the curriculum-

Guide for biomedical education and educators.

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Introduction

The guide "How to internationalize the curriculum-Guide for biomedical education and educators" has been developed within the framework of the CBHE project BIOSINT-101082863-ERASMUS-EDU-2022-CBHE.

We observe a growing trend among European universities to strengthen the internationalisation of their curricula. The primary motivation behind this approach is to attract more international students, thereby improving the financial stability of the institutions. Additionally, this strategy creates new opportunities for domestic students, a point that is particularly relevant for students at Western Balkan universities.

This guide aims to provide practical advice to Western Balkan universities on effectively internationalising their curricula. It is structured into four key sections:

- 1 How to Internationalise your curriculum: literature Study
- 2 Innovative teaching strategies in higher education: COIL and CLIL
- 3 10 Practical recommendations
- 4 Specific points of attention for biomedical education

The guide reflects in particular also my experience of 35 years of international cooperation.

Special thanks go also to my assistant Ellen Matthijs for all the preliminary research work as well as to Prof. Adrian Sturza of the Victor Babes University of Medicine and Pharmacy of Timisoara in Romania for sharing his experience in biomedical sciences. His contribution has added significant value to this guide, complementing my own experience in engineering curricula.

Kindest regards



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1 How to internationalise your curriculum: literature study

In this first chapter we will further develop the policy of 3 universities/organisations who have developed clear guidelines on how to include internationalization in the curriculum.

1.1 Karolinska Institute in Sweden¹

Karolinska Institute in Sweden is a well-known European medical university that is paying a lot of attention on how to internationalise the curriculum.

In its policy the university starts with the definition of what is according to them internationalization of the curriculum. They refer to the definition of Prof. Betty Leask, an authority in this field.

“Internationalisation of the Curriculum is the incorporation of international, intercultural and/or global dimensions into the content of the curriculum, as well as the learning outcomes, assessment tasks, teaching methods, and support services of a program of study”, Prof. Betty Leask, 2015

Furthermore, they define what is a curriculum and they distinguish 3 different levels in an academic curriculum in order to state clearly that a curriculum is not limited to the pure academic knowledge.

A curriculum is a student’s journey at a higher education institution through:

The formal curriculum: the courses, training, assessment and learning activities students participate in, as well as the knowledge and skills intentionally taught to students (intra-curricular) This is the curriculum that is documented in course syllabi and descriptions;

The informal curriculum: the learning experiences from other agencies outside the formal setting, such as student-led initiatives, student support services, social and educational activities, etc. They are extra-curricular;

The hidden curriculum: the processes, pressures and constraints that fall outside the formal and informal curricula : the unspoken or implicit academic, social, and cultural messages that are communicated to students.

The Karolinska Institute clearly emphasizes that internationalisation initiatives are more likely to succeed when they are integrated into standard university practices, rather than being developed separately or perceived as operating outside regular university processes.

In this context, addressing the following questions can make a significant positive contribution:

- 1 How can we internationalise the curriculum in a specific disciplinary area in a particular institutional context and ensure that, as a result, we improve the teaching and intended learning outcomes for all?
- 2 How can we move beyond isolated, optional subjects, experiences, and activities haphazardly spread across the curriculum, to a planned and systematic process that focuses on all students?
- 3 How do we engage academic staff (and leadership) in the process of IoC?
- 4 How do we implement international/intercultural/global/language intended learning outcomes in the content, teaching and learning activities, and assessment tasks in our educational programmes?
- 5 How do we monitor and follow-up the IoC process efficiently?
- 6 What tools, training, incentives and support strategies are needed for effective IoC?

They emphasize also the micro, meso and macro levels of the institutional responsibility across the three target actors: students, teachers and administrators:

The micro level

- Engaging with students in a way that they can comment on and contribute to the development of an internationalised curriculum, providing them with tools and support in developing language competence, and intercultural competence;



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- Supporting teachers and course leaders in rethinking the content and delivery of their courses, providing them with tools and professional development in the areas of language competence, intercultural competence, international disciplinary learning and global engagement;
- Getting support staff involved by offering professional development in intercultural and language competence.

The meso level

- Student unions and student representatives;
- Programme leaders and committees, including any person(s) responsible for educational development as well as person(s) responsible for internationalisation at the programme level;
- The different instances of support services for teaching and learning, ranging from Academic Writing Support, to Library and Student Health.

The macro level

The macro level consists of decision-making bodies within the university to ensure the work carried out is anchored and supported in order to ensure motivation and engagement of all stakeholders, these included:

- the Committee for Higher Education
- the Working Group for Internationalisation
- the Unit for Teaching and Learning
- Education and Research Support.

Furthermore, the university emphasizes the importance of always considering the local context in Sweden when pursuing internationalisation efforts.

Everyone has healthcare requirements that need to be met by the local healthcare system. The concept of superdiversity presents a new opportunity for understanding access to healthcare in Sweden.

According to Sweden Statistics, roughly 40% of Swedish nationals living in the Stockholm region have either one or two parents born abroad or were born abroad themselves. Healthcare systems and teaching paradigms must therefore incorporate how to navigate this superdiversity (Bradby et al., 2019).

This clearly indicates that the local situation can offer a lot of opportunities to stimulate universities to internationalise the curriculum. Especially in the medical sector the great societal diversity offers a lot of chances to internationalise the curriculum.

1.2 Portland Community college in the United States²

We do not want to limit our view to only EU universities. Therefore we also got a look to the policy of Portland Community College, which is one of the best private universities in the Western part of the United States.

Portland Community college defines course internationalization as “a process by which international elements are infused into course content, international resources are used in course readings and assignments, and instructional methodologies appropriate to a culturally diverse student population are implemented” (Schuerholz-Lehr et al., 2007, p. 70).

Portland Community College stresses three approaches to internationalize content (adapted from the University of Waterloo). Each approach has obviously a different degree of difficulty.

- Add-on: Easy to implement and requires no fundamental changes in course content or pedagogy. Examples: adding on a reading, a guest lecture or an assignment with an international or intercultural focus.

- Infusion: Requires preparation and rethinking of the course design. Examples: including course goals that focus on the development of intercultural knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors; including readings and assignments that reflect diverse points of view that are discussed in class.
- Transformation: Difficult to implement, especially in certain disciplines. Main goal: shift in cultural perspective and development of the ability to move among different cultures and worldviews.

The university gives also clear examples of internationalized learning outcomes that can be possibly used for internationalizing the curriculum:

- To analyze how the behavior of individuals, groups, and nations affect others politically, economically, environmentally, artistically, spiritually, etc.
- To think critically of societies in a comparative context and to how one's own society fits in the context of others.
- To understand aesthetically and interpret creatively the artistic and cultural expressions of other cultures.
- To integrate knowledge about other cultures into a coherent and inclusive worldview.
- To analyze individual and cultural differences.
- To describe world geography and the global environment, conditions, issues and events.

By the end of the course and depending on the phase of internationalization of the course, students should be able to achieve one or a few of the above international outcomes, that are not always very easy to measure.

It is also important to know if students achieve these outcomes. The assessment tasks are very important in order to measure this. What assessment task(s) could students complete to demonstrate achievement of international perspectives? There is no "one method" of assessment. All instructors will choose their own assessment tools with regard to learning outcomes.

Some internationally-focused learning activities you can incorporate into the class, can be illustrated by the following examples.

- Problem-solving activities in an international or intercultural context.



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- Field trips to work sites of companies engaged in international trade.
- Speakers from international backgrounds during class
- The connection of native students with international ones, either on campus or at a sister college abroad (via teams, skype, etc.)
- Journal writing/ other self-reflective writing on global topics
- Simulations/ practice role-play activities involving an international context

1.3 European Association for International Education (EAIE)³

We do not limit this overview to universities only, but share also the suggestions of the European Association for International Education, since 1989 the leading organization in representing the educational professionals in higher education.

According to EAIE, a constructively aligned internationalised curriculum includes the following aspects in the entire study process :

- Articulation of the intended internationalised learning outcomes;
- Planning of teaching and learning activities with appropriately chosen learning materials, contents and literature which include international and intercultural perspectives;
- Assessment of the intended learning outcomes with explicit assessment criteria of the international or intercultural dimensions; and
- Defining the 'long-term impact' on the student development and linking this to the graduate attributes, such as the development of intercultural competence, transferable and employability skills, or global citizenship.

To achieve a fully internationalised curriculum, the EAIE outlines 5 key steps:

- 1 Recognise and embed global/international/intercultural dimensions in learning outcomes

In practice it often happens that the student learning outcomes do not reflect (or at least not explicitly) any international or intercultural dimensions. Yet despite this absence, these elements do often spontaneously occur in teaching and learning practices. For instance, in the classroom you may ask students to evaluate a situation, an issue or a problem from multiple cultural perspectives.

Surely, you would expect students to learn something from this activity, but if it is not captured in a learning outcome and assessed, students may not be aware of what it is they are learning through this. So the advice is to recognise what you are already doing and to gain inspiration from readily available descriptors of international, intercultural and global competences..

2 Consider who is in your classroom: mind the gap

The diversity of learners in the classroom challenges lecturers to design appropriately structured learning activities that support the development of intercultural competence and international perspectives. There is a wide variety of instruments that can be used to internationalise teaching and learning, such as guest lectures from local cultural groups; international companies or international partner universities; working with local cultural, ethnic, religious or international communities; as well as including comparative international literature, content and case studies. However, given the heterogeneous nature of our international student population as well as our domestic student groups, lecturers need to be much more aware of the backgrounds of their learners in terms of prior knowledge and experiences, learning strategies and academic preparation and expectations. For instance, make sure you give students thinking time, as not everyone may be as fluent in the language of instruction. Have students pre-discuss in pairs before a plenary discussion and present new information in different modalities: in speech, writing, video or visuals.

3 Tap into 'global knowledge pluralism' and uncover other knowledges

In an internationalised curriculum, connections between international and intercultural perspectives, standards and examples from across the globe are explored, and the selected literature and case studies need to invite comparative analysis and engaging discussions. Tap into this plurality of knowledges by, for example, making students responsible for sourcing and describing case studies utilising their cultural backgrounds.

4 De-culturalise assessment

Assessment should not be a test of culture, but a test of student learning

In a multicultural learning environment the assessment tasks should be carefully considered, as well as the potential cultural bias in the task and the assessor. In particular, lecturers need to be mindful that the assessment tasks and/or criteria should avoid specific cultural knowledge needed to complete a task.

5 Align for impact

An internationalised curriculum can foster students' intercultural mindset and employability skills. This kind of student development cannot happen through a single module; rather this should be continuously and progressively addressed throughout a degree course by connecting modules to the programme learning outcomes, building a logical sequence and matching the needs of the society and the field of work.

2 Innovative teaching strategies in higher education: COIL and CLIL

In an increasingly interconnected world, higher education institutions are embracing innovative teaching approaches to prepare students for global challenges. Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) are 2 practical examples that are quite easy to implement in an internationalized curriculum.



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These approaches are not just teaching methods — they are tools for embedding Internationalisation into curricula. By fostering global perspectives within local classrooms, they make international experiences accessible to all students, regardless of mobility constraints. Through active engagement with diverse perspectives, these methods cultivate essential intercultural skills and attitudes in both students and staff, enriching the academic community as a whole.

Within this chapter we try to demonstrate how these strategies enhance collaboration, inclusivity, and cultural understanding, equipping higher education institutions to thrive in a globalized educational landscape.

2.1 Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL)⁴

One of the most effective ways to bring international perspectives into higher education is through Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL). This innovative approach allows students and faculties from different countries to work together on shared projects, using digital tools to bridge geographical and cultural divides.

COIL integrates global collaboration into existing curricula, providing students with an opportunity to develop intercultural communication skills, to deepen subject-specific knowledge, and to gain hands-on experience in working with peers from diverse backgrounds.

As already stated, COIL stands for “Collaborative Online International Learning”, which refers to "online learning in an international setting, with interactive involvement of students and faculty from different international and intercultural backgrounds in and outside the classroom" (Leask , 2020:188)

COIL projects are based on the involvement of teachers and students, with different geographical origins, language and culture, for the development of collaborative teaching and learning processes using online communication tools. These projects are an accessible alternative to democratise the experiences of internationalisation (at home) of students and teachers, as well as an opportunity to





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enrich the process of building individual and collective knowledge, offering challenging dynamics of working in heterogeneous teams.

2.1.1 COIL into practice: different steps

- How to find a COIL partner

The process starts with the definition, by the teacher(s) involved, of the theme and objectives of the project, which will ground the design of the learning strategy.

The second next is to interact with potential partners in order to identify one (or more) for the project. It will always be advantageous for teachers to explore possibilities with personal international contacts or others they may find interesting. Partners from different areas can also be considered; consequently, mono- and cross-disciplinary COIL projects can be created.

- Designing the COIL project

After identifying the partner, the project should be defined in detail, i.e.:

- the duration of the project, the number of international teams and elements per team (per partner);
- the activities and tasks that students should carry out (presentation, regularity of (as)synchronous contacts, learning outcomes, deadlines, among others);
- the dates of the periodic meetings for monitoring and evaluating the project;
- the communication tools that will be used.
- The evaluation standards, methods and criteria that will be used

- Developing the COIL project



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The success of a COIL project depends on a good communication and interaction between the partners (teachers and students). It will be up to each teacher to identify needs and ensure the active participation of students in the project.

The development of the COIL project should be also based on common guidelines for the courses involved and it should end with the evaluation (weaknesses & strengths) of the work developed by teachers and students.

2.1.2 The benefits of COIL: Benefits Across All Levels⁵

- Student Level

COIL provides students with accessible international experiences that foster intercultural competence, global awareness, and language skills. By collaborating across cultures and using digital tools, students develop critical 21st-century skills like communication, cooperation, and adaptability, preparing them for a globalized workforce.

- Teacher Level

For educators, COIL expands pedagogical practices and deepens professional development through collaboration with international colleagues. It strengthens global networks, promotes innovative teaching methods, and can pave the way for future research and development partnerships.

- Institutional Level

COIL enhances diversity and inclusion, strengthens international partnerships, and supports institutional goals to prepare students for a complex, globalized labor market. Adopting COIL positions institutions as leaders in innovative and sustainable educational practices.

- Global Level

COIL promotes cross-cultural understanding and reduces barriers to international collaboration. By offering travel-free internationalization, it reduces carbon footprints and supports global efforts to address shared challenges while fostering peace and mutual understanding.



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2.1.3 Example of COIL⁶

The article “Professional and Intercultural Engineering Competences -Learning across borders” from prof. Dr. Wim Van Petegem from KU Leuven describes a practical example of COIL cooperation in technology and gives a clear overview on the organization, benefits and challenges of the COIL Learning. The article states that “learning by doing” is applicable to this new way of learning. A COIL learning experience provides academic and intercultural enrichment for both students and professors.

2.2 Content and Language Integrated Learning(CLIL)⁷

While COIL offers a unique way to foster global connections through virtual collaboration, another innovative approach to increase internationalization in the curriculum is **Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)**. Where COIL focuses on connecting students across borders using digital tools, CLIL integrates international perspectives directly into the classroom by teaching academic subjects in a foreign language. This method not only enhances students’ subject-specific knowledge but also strengthens their language skills in an immersive, real-world context.

CLIL, or Content and Language Integrated Learning, is an educational approach where students learn a subject and a foreign language simultaneously. It’s widely used in multilingual education settings across Europe and other regions, aimed at enhancing both subject knowledge and language skills in a practical, immersive way.

2.2.1 CLIL into practice

Understand CLIL Principles

CLIL involves teaching subjects through a target language (not the learners' first language) and it focuses on the **4 Cs**:

- Content: Subject knowledge and skills.
- Communication: Using language to learn while learning to use language.
- Cognition: Developing thinking skills for understanding content.
- Culture: Promoting intercultural understanding and global citizenship.



Schematic presentation of the 4C's framework

The 4Cs framework", demonstrates the interrelationship of the fundamental CLIL constructs between content (subject/topic), communication (language), cognition (learning and thinking), and culture (intercultural awareness)

CLIL often includes practical tasks, projects, and group work where students can actively use the language in a subject context.

Set Clear Objectives

- Content objectives: Define the subject knowledge students should acquire.
- Language objectives: Specify the language skills (vocabulary, grammar, functional language) students will learn.
- Cognitive objectives: Include problem-solving, critical thinking, and analytical skills.
- Cultural objectives: Incorporate perspectives that foster intercultural awareness.
- Teacher and Student Roles in CLIL:



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- Teachers: Act as both subject experts and language facilitators. They design activities that align with language and content goals and encourage communication in the target language.
- Students: Are active learners, using both their linguistic and cognitive skills. They're encouraged to work collaboratively and apply language skills in meaningful ways.

2.2.2 Benefits of CLIL⁸:

- Language Immersion: Learners use the target language in real contexts, enhancing vocabulary, grammar, and fluency naturally.
- Cognitive Development: Studies suggest that learning in two languages can boost problem-solving, critical thinking, and cognitive flexibility.
- Global Competence: It prepares students for a globalized world, where multilingualism is increasingly advantageous.
- Engagement and Motivation: Learning content through another language often makes the subject matter more engaging and keeps students motivated.
- By embedding language and content seamlessly, CLIL fosters deeper learning, equips students with practical language skills, and promotes a global perspective.
- In fact, CLIL should be included in every curriculum that is being taught in English.



3 10 Practical recommendations

In this chapter, we aim to present ten highly practical recommendations for universities to consider when planning to internationalise their curricula. These recommendations are grounded in the theoretical reflections from Chapters 1 and 2, as well as insights drawn from 35 years of experience in international collaboration.

1 A clear definition of the purpose of the internationalization of the curriculum accompanied by a clear financial business plan.

The first challenge is to define the exact purpose of internationalising the curriculum. Is the university seeking to attract more international students, or is the aim to better prepare graduates for an internationally oriented society or labour market? We assume that, for most universities, the primary motivation for initiating the process of internationalising the curriculum will be the first purpose. Naturally, this requires a well-defined financial plan, specifying at minimum how many international students must enrol to achieve financial break-even or to generate a minimum financial benefit. The university's financial model—whether fully privately funded or publicly funded and accredited—plays a crucial role in shaping this financial business plan.

2 A clear pathway towards Internationalisation of the curriculum.

It is very important to develop a clear timeline for internationalizing your curriculum. The timeline should contain measurable milestones and objectives. Universities should realize that internationalizing takes time. It is advisable to create a realistic timeline rather than rushing the process without securing the support of all stakeholders.

3 Involve all stakeholders.

One of the first steps is to define and convince all stakeholders who can contribute to the process. The following list is not exhaustive but includes the most evident stakeholders we are thinking of when internationalizing a curriculum: the educational authorities, the management, the academic staff, the administrative staff and the supporting services, the students, the workfield,

The educational authorities : If you offer an internationalised curriculum, you have to ensure that the curriculum will be accredited in order to be sure that the curriculum will be recognized and in case of public universities also financed by the responsible political authorities. Some countries introduce also limits as to the maximum number of English taught curricula that they will finance/recognize and have a quite intensive application procedure.

The management: It is essential for both the university and faculty management to be fully convinced of the added value of an internationalized curriculum. Integrating this curriculum into the existing educational programs and structures of the faculty should happen as soon as possible. Additionally, securing swift yet thorough accreditation is crucial. This minimizes the risk of a future dean with a less international perspective potentially halting the progress of the internationalized curriculum.

The academic staff: Academic staff must recognize the significant value of teaching in another language or enhancing their courses with internationally oriented literature. As discussed in Chapter 2, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) can be a valuable addition to any curriculum taught in English. However, implementing a fully English-taught curriculum in the Western Balkans is particularly challenging and requires substantial effort from university professors.

Resistance to change often grows with age, making this transition more difficult for older professors nearing the end of their careers. Younger staff members, by contrast, tend to be more open to innovation. This issue is especially pronounced in the Western Balkans, where many professors



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continue their academic careers beyond the age of 65 and often have a limited proficiency in English.

The administrative staff and operational support:

It is essential that university staff are equipped to address the specific needs of international students, with proficiency in English being a crucial factor.

This may necessitate hiring additional staff or engaging personnel with specialized skills, as international students often have unique needs that differ from those of local students. These needs extend beyond intercultural challenges and include practical matters such as housing, weekend activities, visa and tax issues, health care, enrolment procedures, and the establishment of a buddy system.

Providing tailored support in these areas is vital to ensuring a smooth and enriching experience for international students.

The students:

Local students play a crucial role in successfully internationalizing the curriculum. Their openness is essential for welcoming foreign students into the local student community. To foster this integration, introducing a buddy system is highly recommended. In such a system, local students guide foreign peers in navigating daily life. However, setting up a buddy system requires time—not only to establish the system itself but also to recruit and motivate local students to participate. If the curriculum is taught in English, it is important to convince local students of its added value. Resistance or enthusiasm for studying in English can vary across faculties. Typically, students in human and biomedical sciences are more receptive than those in technologically oriented fields. In addition, student associations should actively participate in the integration of foreign students. This is a significant challenge that should not be underestimated. To ensure success, it is highly recommended that faculty staff members guide student associations throughout the process, overseeing their involvement and encouraging participation.





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The work field:

The professional field can be a key ally in successfully internationalizing the curriculum. Internationally oriented companies often prefer graduates with an international education. Similarly, in the medical sector, many hospitals face shortages of skilled staff and often treat patients whose native language is not the local one. They highly value new employees with an international mindset and strong language skills.

4 Improve proficiency in the English language!

After defining and consulting all stakeholders, it is crucial to introduce positive incentives within your organization or curriculum. This approach fosters co-ownership and boosts motivation, ensuring the internationalization process has the best possible chance of success.

- The primary focus should be on improving English language proficiency. In the Western Balkans, this remains a key challenge, particularly among older professors who often lack English skills. With limited incentives to encourage them, as many have already reached the peak of their academic careers, we recommend prioritizing younger academic staff in international curricula. Additionally, recognizing English proficiency as a crucial criterion for academic and administrative promotion could further drive progress in this area.
- Another encouraging initiative can be to stimulate the younger academic staff members to attend international congresses. At these occasions they can establish scientific contacts with other international professors, what will definitely lead to an increased knowledge of English, an increased number of scientific papers, more intensified international contacts and an increased number of international agreements and projects, all crucial conditions in successfully implementing an internationalized curriculum. Of course, the university management must recognize that this entails a financial investment. However, an increased number of international projects will undoubtedly provide a significant return on the initial investment.
- Students in Western Balkans very often have a very limited of knowledge English. Therefore we surely suggest to include an obligatory English language course in every university



curriculum. Students with sufficient English proficiency are far more likely to volunteer as buddies for incoming international students. In the Western Balkans, student buddies are often financially compensated by the faculty, which serves as a strong incentive. However, we would advocate for a more academically focused incentive to encourage participation.

5 Academic recognition with even 1 ECTS credit in an elective course would already be a step in the good direction, although this is not always easy to realise. Being buddy of international student can also facilitate future student exchanges to the country of origin of the incoming international student.

5 Create the ideal conditions for successful student and staff exchanges

One of the great obstacles for successful implementation of internationalizing the curriculum is the significant lack of recognized student and staff mobilities. Many exchanges take place without academic recognition and are entirely self-funded by the outgoing students.

- academic recognition

Academic recognition of periods spent abroad remains a significant challenge for many universities in the Western Balkans, despite being a critical factor in the successful implementation of student mobility programs. Some professors at home universities still hold the belief that students cannot fully graduate without completing their specific courses. To address this, universities must urgently establish international agreements with institutions offering similar study programs. This requires fostering academic trust between the universities involved. The situation becomes even more complex when professors are compensated based on the number of students attending their courses. While we do not support this system, ensuring exchange reciprocity can serve as a pragmatic solution where necessary.

- adequate financial support

There is still a lot of work to do to facilitate and to simplify the exchange possibilities between Western Balkan universities and EU partners. Of course, the KA1 program offers a possibility, but it involves an intensive application process that must be repeated annually by the receiving EU

partner. This process urgently needs to be streamlined and made more sustainable, with reduced administrative burdens.

- Other obstacles

Even with approved KA1 agreements, international exchanges remain challenging. One major obstacle, as mentioned earlier, is the lack of English proficiency. However, additional barriers exist. Erasmus grants generally cover only the additional living expenses in the EU, yet many students and staff from the Western Balkans mistakenly expect the grants to cover all costs of living abroad. Additionally, many depend on secondary jobs in their home countries to maintain financial stability, making it difficult or impossible for them to participate in mobility programs that entail extra expenses.

Another challenge is the academic disparity between many Western Balkan universities and their EU counterparts. This often results in disappointing experiences for EU professors, who may be reluctant to supervise students again due to inadequate academic preparation and limited English proficiency. To tackle this issue, it is essential for Western Balkan universities to build partnerships and set up cooperation agreements with EU institutions of similar academic level.

6 Internationalise your course content!

It is essential for staff to incorporate more internationalised learning materials into their courses. This can be achieved by exploring international literature relevant to their subjects, but it can also happen more organically. Professors with extensive international networks or numerous international publications often naturally integrate newly acquired global knowledge into their teaching. Additionally, participating in teaching exchanges at universities abroad can significantly enrich the academic expertise of professors in the Western Balkans. Such experiences expose them to new content and teaching methods from other countries, providing an ideal opportunity to compare these with the approaches used in their home institutions. Comparing practices across countries is one of the most effective pedagogical strategies for internationalising the curriculum.



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Another important aspect is inviting guest lecturers from internationally oriented professionals in the field. These experts can highlight the added value of an internationalised curriculum by demonstrating how it enhances the employability of graduates. While the risk of brain drain is a valid concern, we firmly believe in the benefits of cultivating internationally minded students.

Inviting foreign professors as guest lecturers is another excellent approach. Under the KA1 framework, this is not only feasible but highly recommended as a tool for curriculum internationalisation. Additionally, when an international professor participates in a PhD defence, it offers an excellent opportunity to invite them to deliver a few lectures in English as part of your internationalised curriculum.

7 Use digital learning tools

Use digital learning tools to facilitate international learning activities with other universities, as described in the chapter of Innovative Teaching Strategies. We think more particularly about a successful implementation of the COIL strategy. Also teaching medical subjects in English is highly recommended (CLIL)

8 Promote the new curriculum and disseminate the examples of good practice!

A key factor in successfully internationalising the curriculum is effective promotion of the new programme and sharing success stories to inspire and attract prospective students.

Recruitment policy plan

When launching a new international curriculum, it is essential for a university to incorporate a well-developed recruitment policy into its business plan. This should include an adequate budget to support recruitment efforts. A cost-effective initial strategy for attracting international students is to share detailed information about the new curriculum with the university's existing international contacts. The information should be clear and comprehensive, covering key aspects such as the curriculum structure and duration, tuition fees, housing options, and enrolment procedures and requirements.



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It will also be important to participate in international recruitment fairs, although these events can be quite costly. Organising recruitment trips to specific target countries and collaborating with local educational stakeholders is another effective but expensive option. Participating in diplomatic missions can also be a valuable opportunity, though it requires a significant investment. Additionally, universities may consider offering tuition fee waivers to enhance recruitment success in certain countries.

Dissemination of success stories

A very adequate way of increasing the publicity of your newly developed international curriculum is to actively promote success stories. The development of a website on which international students testify about the positive experience of a stay/study abroad has a large added value for recruitment purposes. These students can also be excellent ambassadors to convince other students to go abroad for study or exchange purposes. These students are also ideal candidates to give an extra dimension to the buddy programme. Graduates who secure employment due to the added value of their study or stay abroad are the best ambassadors a university could have.

9 Limit the administrative burden but act and teach internationally!

Setting up an internationalised curriculum requires significant administrative effort, particularly for accreditation purposes, which should not be underestimated. However, the Western Balkans generally have a bureaucratically structured system, often driven by governmental requirements. That said, we encourage universities in the region to limit administrative tasks to those that are strictly legally necessary, avoiding unnecessary bureaucracy. It's far more productive to actively contribute to the internationalised curriculum than to get bogged down in excessive administrative work. Of course, the ECTS documentation for each course in the internationalised curriculum must be carefully prepared, with particular attention given to clearly defining international learning outcomes, ensuring assessment methods account for intercultural differences, and mandating the use of internationally oriented learning materials and textbooks.





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10 Listen to your students and respect the intercultural differences

One of the most valuable recommendations is to seek students' input on how to internationalise the curriculum.

International students can perhaps present their home country during their stay abroad. It can be a very valuable source to get to know intercultural differences and to stimulate mutual understanding between local and international students.

International students can share their experiences regarding the challenges they face when studying in a foreign country. These obstacles may involve issues that the university might not be aware of, often due to intercultural differences.

To enrich the learning experience, local students can share their views on the added value brought by international students who are following the same curriculum.



4 Specific points of attention for biomedical education

Internationalizing a curriculum in biomedical education involves designing and adapting the curriculum to incorporate global perspectives, practices, and standards. This approach equips students with the skills, knowledge, and cultural competency to work in diverse, international environments.

4.1 Recognize the Internationalization Goals

- **Global Competency:** Give students the tools they need to comprehend international healthcare systems and collaborate in multicultural teams.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Place a strong emphasis on appreciating and comprehending cultural variations in healthcare delivery.
- **Collaborative Skills:** Encourage communication and cooperation across borders.
- **Criteria Curriculum alignment** should be done in accordance with worldwide norms for biological education and research.

4.2 Take into Account Global Views

- **Use case studies** from various nations that deal with issues related to global health (e.g., infectious illnesses, public health emergencies).
- **Healthcare Systems:** Provide a global comparison of healthcare systems.
- **Ethical Considerations:** Talk about bioethical concerns while concentrating on global frameworks and cultural settings.

4.3 Adaptation of Curriculum Content

- Topics in Global Health: Include courses on global health topics like as epidemiology, pandemics, and the effects of climate change on human health.
- Cultural Diversity: Provide information about caring for patients from a range of backgrounds.
- International Standards: Take into account directives from international medical societies/organizations

4.4 Develop Communication and Language Skills

- Language trainings: Provide courses in medical English or other pertinent languages.
- Cross-Cultural Communication: Provide the necessary abilities to communicate effectively with international teams and a variety of patient populations.

4.5 Strengthen the Development of Faculty

- Faculty Global Exposure: Promote faculty involvement in international conferences, workshops, and exchange initiatives.
- Trainings: Offer trainings on how to include global content into the curriculum
- Global Internships: Arrange internships or clinical rotations in different countries.

4.6 Create Opportunities for International Collaboration

- Exchange Programs: Develop student and faculty exchange programs with universities worldwide.
- Collaborative Projects: Facilitate research and project collaborations with international institutions.
- Virtual Learning: Use technology to connect classrooms across borders for joint courses or projects.



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4.7 Accreditation and Recognition

- International Accreditation: Seek accreditation from international bodies to ensure the curriculum meets global standards.
- Credentialing: Align coursework with international licensing and certification requirements.

4.8 Evaluate and Update Regularly

- Feedback: Gather feedback from students, faculty, and international partners on curriculum relevance.
- Comparative analysis: Regularly compare the curriculum with international programs.
- Adaptability: Update content to reflect emerging global trends in biomedical science.

4.9 Build a Supportive Ecosystem and Address Challenges

- Cultural Exchange Activities: Host events that promote cultural exchange and understanding.
- Support Systems: Provide resources to help international students and faculty integrate.
- Cultural Barriers: Address potential resistance through workshops and open discussions.
- Funding: Seek grants and partnerships to support internationalization efforts.
- Logistics: Ensure seamless execution of exchange programs and collaborations.

By systematically integrating these steps, biomedical education programs can produce graduates who are not only proficient in their field but also prepared to address healthcare challenges on a global scale.

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