

Integrating Virtual Exchange into the University Classroom: An Online Course for University Educators

What is Virtual Exchange?

Virtual exchange (VE), also commonly referred to as Telecollaboration or *Collaborative Online International Learning* (COIL), is a broad term used to describe different approaches to engaging students in online intercultural collaboration projects with partners from different cultural contexts within their programmes of study and under the guidance of teachers or trained facilitators. Virtual Exchange has become a very popular way for teachers across all subject areas to internationalise their classrooms and to give their students first-hand experience of intercultural communication and using their digital skills.

Target group

Teachers from the University of Graz and member universities of the Arqus Alliance who are interested in internationalising their courses and also in preparing their students for the global workplace.

A high level of digital literacy is not required to take part in the course. However, an openness to working with and learning about online technologies is a prerequisite. The course will be run in English and will take place online using an online Virtual Learning Environment as well as videoconferencing tools.

Course content

Participants will be required to read about, observe, and discuss the different aspects of running a Virtual Exchange project. They will examine and analyse different models of telecollaborative task design, assessment, and strategies for integrating the exchanges into their coursework. There will be opportunities for general discussion and debate about the underlying principles and issues related to Virtual Exchange, including English as Lingua Franca, students' digital literacies and intercultural communication breakdown. Most importantly, participants will receive a practical guide to the steps for setting up and running a Virtual Exchange project and enable participants to network with others in order to establish potential Virtual Exchange partnerships.

The course will be online. This will involve a videoconference session each day of the course followed by short tasks which participants will carry out individually or in groups before the following session.

This course will **have six contact days over a three-week period** for university teachers from the University of Graz and its Arqus network members. The course is a combination of live sessions via a videoconferencing tool and asynchronous tasks and discussions which will take place in a Virtual Learning Environment.

Live online sessions:

Week 1:

16 November 2021: 09.30-11.00 CET

18 November 2021: 09.30-11.00 CET

Week 2:

23 November 2021: 09.30-11.00 CET

25 November 2021: 09.30-11.00 CET

Week 3:

30 November 2021: 09.30-11.00 CET

2 December 2021: 09.30-11.00 CET

Aim:

The aim of this online course is to familiarize participants with Virtual Exchange as a pedagogical activity for engaging students in authentic intercultural collaborative projects with international partners.

Objectives:

Introduce the concept of Virtual Exchange and how it is being employed in university contexts.

Make the participants aware of the potential learning outcomes of Virtual Exchanges.

Offer a practical guide to the steps for setting up and running a Virtual Exchange in university education.

Provide materials and activities to help teacher trainers prepare to engage their students in a telecollaborative exchange project.

Enable participants to network with others in order to establish potential Virtual Exchange partnerships

The course will be online. This will involve a videoconference session each day of the course followed by short tasks which participants will carry out individually or in groups before the following session.

Programme:

Day 1 (week 1)	Day 2 (week 1)	Day 3 (week 2)	Day 4 (week 2)	Day 5 (week 3)	Day 6 (week 3)
What is Virtual Exchange? Examples of Virtual Exchange projects in University Education	What is an effective task in Virtual Exchange? Designing effective tasks for your Virtual Exchange in your subject area	What communication technologies to use in your Virtual Exchange?	Virtual Exchange and issues of assessment Integrating the Virtual Exchange into your course and curriculum	Dealing with intercultural problems and language issues in Virtual Exchange Collaborating with your partner teacher	Preparing a Virtual Exchange for your context Finding partnerships for Virtual Exchange in your Network

Trainer's Biodata:

Trainer: Dr. Robert O'Dowd (University of León, Spain)

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Dr. Robert O'Dowd is Associate Professor (professor titular) for English as a Foreign Language and Applied Linguistics at the University of León, Spain. He has taught at universities in Ireland, Germany and Spain and has over 40 publications on the application of Virtual Exchange in university and pre-university education settings. He was the founding president of the UNICollaboration academic organization for telecollaboration and virtual exchange (www.unicollaboration.org) and has been invited to be plenary speaker at international conferences in the US, Asia and across Europe.

Course costs and cancellation policy

The course costs will be covered by the Office of International Relations of the University of Graz for all selected participants.

Please note that there will be cancellations costs in the amount of € 150,00 for no/too late cancellation (if you cancel at least 15 calendar days before the course starts, there will be no charge).

In the case of unsuccessful participation (attendance requirement is 100%) an expense allowance in the amount of € 150,00 will be retained.