

FORUM

MEMBER
MAGAZINE

Discussing international education

BUILDING BACK BETTER?

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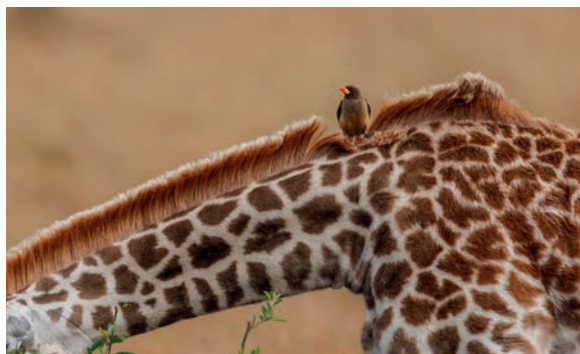
“University of the Arts London is devising more accessible modes of education, learning from our experience of teaching creative disciplines during pandemic lockdowns.”

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“The primary aim of critical internationalisation is to challenge inherent hierarchies in global politics that manifest in international education and to denaturalise these hierarchies.”

**‘I AM BECAUSE OF YOU’: CREATING MUTUALLY
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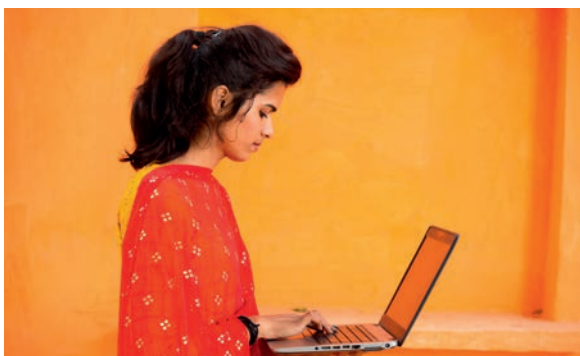
“Our university is at the heart of international cooperation. From here we are telling people that the heart of Mariupol is still beating here in Mariupol University in Kyiv.”

IN CONVERSATION WITH MYKOLA TROFYMENKO

25

“Institutions must focus on developing intercultural competence that contributes to peacebuilding and addressing shared challenges.”

POST-PANDEMIC VIRTUALISATION: IS IT HERE TO STAY?



EDITORIAL

The post-COVID-19 era has brought renewed energy not only to physical mobility but also to build on the pandemic-driven shift to digital classrooms. This is the case for a cohort of teachers for whom online learning is an accepted reality and with students for whom the virtual world is a regular part of their lives.

But what does ‘building back better’ really mean for international education? The emphasis is on the word ‘better’; it invites higher education institutions to rethink internationalisation through the lenses of ethics, inclusivity and sustainability. It calls for more equitable partnerships and encourages reflection on the environmental impact of mobility programmes. In my opinion, this issue of Forum provides a truly global perspective with thought-provoking and stimulating contributions targeted at educators who want to innovate their thinking and their classrooms and build back better.

Several contributions highlight the innovative potential of virtual learning practices, including virtual internships that foster cultural awareness and diverse perspectives. Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) is a key strategy for providing students with meaningful international experiences without requiring travel. Examples include Inholland University of Applied Sciences’ ‘Intercultural SDG Game’ for finance students, which blends UN Sustainable Development Goals with intercultural learning, and Kwantlen Polytechnic University’s virtual programmes

that connect students globally through blended mentorships.

The pandemic diversified the landscape of international education and Gen Z students now demand more personalised, inclusive and flexible study-abroad experiences. Åsa Foster and Andréa Tarlé Borgström provide practical strategies for international offices to tailor support for students from diverse backgrounds. A mentoring programme at the University of Siegen offers insights into supporting international students’ academic success. However, acknowledging its role in supporting students, Luz Pacas Castro reminds us that mentoring must also extend to academics.

Many universities are now prioritising social justice and inclusivity by collaborating with local communities. An inspiring example is St. Cloud State University, which has developed programmes that support all students, including refugee students, students from a migrant background and students of colour.

Financial challenges are ever present. This is evident from a case study from the University of the Arts London, which exemplifies the strategic balancing act between maintaining high rankings, generating income and pursuing global social responsibility.

In this edition’s interview, ‘building back better’ takes on a profound meaning for Mariupol State University, whose Rector, Professor Mykola Trofymenko, shares the compelling story of rebuilding the institution in Kyiv after the original campus’ destruction. This story raises an essential question: How can the international community offer meaningful support?



In sum, this issue reflects the dynamic evolution of international education, balancing innovation with the need for equity, sustainability and social responsibility. ‘Building back better’ is not just a recovery strategy — it is a call to reimagine the future of education in a more inclusive, collaborative and meaningful way.

I’d like to extend my thanks to each of the authors included in this edition as well as Ragnhild Solvi Berg and Queenie Lam of the EAIE Publications Committee, who joined me in reviewing and selecting submissions. I hope you enjoy reading this edition of Forum.

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TIME FOR A RESET

POST-PANDEMIC
INTERNATIONALISATION
IN THE UK



Following the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, national financial strain and the implementation of nativist governmental policy negatively impacted international student applications to higher education institutions across the UK. In this article, Vicky Lewis interviews Ian Storey to understand the perspective of the University of the Arts London in light of these events and explore the institution's commitment to its global social purpose.

Traditionally, UK universities' international strategies have been largely commercially driven and heavily focused on international student recruitment.

During the pandemic, research into UK university strategic plans¹ showed a growing emphasis on tackling global challenges; environmental sustainability; diversity, inclusion, social mobility and social justice; collaborative international partnerships; and civic and community engagement with a global dimension. However, there was a tension between the outward-facing rhetoric about 'making a global contribution' and institutions' inward-facing measures of international success, which tended to revolve around international enrolment levels, income or ranking.

Key stakeholders, interviewed as part of this research, saw the pandemic (which coincided with Brexit-related developments such as the UK's departure from Erasmus+) as an opportunity for a reset – a chance to align post-pandemic strategies better with organisational purpose and values.

THE UK SINCE THE PANDEMIC

In 2022–2023, there were some interesting debates about ways to enhance the global accessibility of UK higher education, to make partnerships with Global South institutions more equitable and to integrate global perspectives into curricula for the benefit of all students.

However, by 2023–2024, these conversations were being drowned out due to the worsening financial state of UK universities.

Many institutions had become reliant on (uncapped) international tuition fees to cross-subsidise both domestic teaching and research activity. At the same time, there was an escalation of unwelcoming rhetoric by a Conservative government desperate to reduce immigration. This came to a head when policy measures were introduced which had an immediate negative effect on international student applications to UK universities (in direct contradiction to the growth agenda in the government's own *International Education Strategy*).

Where did this leave the UK's universities? Would they build on the budding desire to make a positive global impact that does not rely on inbound mobility? Or, in the face of financial pressures, would strategies revert to their narrower, pre-pandemic scope and double down on international student recruitment?

One institution determined not to lose sight of its global social purpose was the University of the Arts London (UAL), whose journey is captured below in a Q&A-style case study.

CASE STUDY Q&A: UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS LONDON

VL: UAL is the UK's largest specialist art and design university, with a global reputation for shaping the creative industries. In 2022, you published a 10-year strategy that explicitly responds to the challenges and opportunities of a world shaped by the pandemic. Can you give an example of any concrete developments that were deliberately prioritised in response to the pandemic?

is: The UAL strategy, entitled *The World Needs Creativity*,² explicitly places social purpose at its heart, valuing the role of creative education to make the world a better place and capitalising on UAL's position to shape thriving and sustainable creative industries. A key guiding policy within the strategy is to bring high-quality creative education to more students than ever before, both in the UK and internationally. This means UAL is devising more accessible modes of education, learning from our experience of teaching creative disciplines during pandemic lockdowns. The university's digital learning portfolio is extending beyond short courses and pre-degree provision with the development of UAL Online, launching in 2025 with a suite of fully online Master's programmes.

VL: You have recently developed a new Global Engagement Strategy. Can you give some examples of innovations that have been included to support the main institutional strategy and reflect the realities of a post-pandemic world?

is: The *Global Engagement Strategy*, approved in May 2024, is premised on creating access to inclusive, globally connected education. The ambition is for UAL to build on its capacity as an initiator and convenor for creativity, facilitating engagement and dialogue between our local (London) and global communities to address the shared challenges of achieving climate, racial and social justice. The strategy

commits UAL to enabling academics from Global South and 'global majority' countries to collaborate with UAL's student and academic communities. In line with our access priorities, UAL is not driving its transnational education provision purely to generate income but to develop equitable partnerships that will enhance the capacity of in-country creative industries.

For UAL students in London, we will be developing in-curriculum collaborative learning and short-term

VL: What criteria will you use to measure the success of your future global engagement activities? Is this different from how you gauged success before the pandemic?

is: Counting numbers of students who benefit from a global experience is relatively straightforward once there's agreement on what should be counted. However, UAL is setting itself the long-term challenge not just to count but to evaluate, aiming to demonstrate impact arising from these experiences. This means asking

University of the Arts London is not driving its transnational education provision purely to generate income but to develop equitable partnerships that will enhance the capacity of in-country creative industries.

mobility offers that provide a greater diversity of students with a meaningful global experience as part of their studies. This commenced in 2023 with the establishment of an international mobility scheme (alongside the national Turing Scheme), providing fully funded short-term study abroad programmes targeted at domestic students who have no prior international experience. From 2024, UAL is exploring how this can be complemented with virtual and hybrid global experiences, further reducing the financial barriers to mobility.

how international mobility benefits the progression and employment of students, particularly those from underrepresented groups. Similarly, with UAL's approach to transnational education, of course it needs to be financially sustainable, but real value and impact would be secured in the extent that future provision is based on equitable partnerships and through co-creation of collaborative provision. And with both, are we reducing our carbon emissions to net zero?

VL: Do you feel that UAL is 'building back better'? And is there anything

you'd add about the opportunities and challenges associated with this?

is: UAL's intention has been to build back better from the pandemic, for both our domestic and our international students. The pandemic forced UAL, like many other universities, to rapidly change how it operated. There were hard lessons for everyone, but ultimately this experience fed into a renewed focus for our institutional and global engagement strategies, leading to a commitment to long-term and deeper organisational change. The challenge for UAL in delivering an ambitious, purpose-oriented strategy comes with the financial constraints most UK universities are facing. The investment needed to build the expertise and capacity to deliver change, while removing the barriers to an inclusive global experience for students, will be challenging as there are many equally important demands on resources.

HOW TYPICAL IS THIS PURPOSE-DRIVEN APPROACH?

There are other examples of UK universities seeking to build back better. The University of Kent has become a national role model for Internationalisation at Home, hosting conferences and developing toolkits.³ SOAS, University of London, has introduced a pioneering suite of equitable joint Master's degrees with institutions in the Global South.⁴

An analysis of post-pandemic institutional strategies shows that almost all now have carbon reduction targets. However, other performance indicators with a

global dimension have barely changed, with international enrolments on the UK campus remaining the most prominent.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the social and academic drivers for international engagement are – for many institutions – being trumped by the financial drivers that have so preoccupied university governing bodies and senior leaders in recent years. The desire to change is present, but the fiscal realities make this difficult.

The desire to change is present, but the fiscal realities make this difficult.

There are no easy fixes. However, following the landslide victory of the new Labour government in July, elected on a platform of 'change', there is renewed hope that – in due course – the UK higher education sector may be in a better position to navigate its way to that reset button.

— VICKY LEWIS & IAN STOREY

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RIGHT TIME, RIGHT FORMAT

SUPPORTING STUDENTS IN THE DIGITAL ERA



Acknowledging the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Åsa Foster and Andréa Tarlé Borgström outline a revised approach to communicating with incoming exchange students. Understanding the shift in stakeholder expectations and the need for new approaches, the authors describe how their institution made use of mid-pandemic innovations to develop a new communication strategy fit for today's circumstances.

The COVID-19 pandemic created many challenges for higher education. Universities had to rethink and redesign their offerings to adapt to the situation. In-person teaching became difficult or impossible and cross-border mobility was put on hold.

But the pandemic also brought possibilities for development. The necessity of finding alternative solutions and frameworks created an environment for digitalisation to thrive. Online meetings, chat groups and virtual learning platforms became part of our daily work.

Student mobility is on the rise again, but interactions have changed. Communication has changed.

COVID-19 no longer affects societies as it did during that period, but it has left a significant legacy. Student mobility is on the rise again, but interactions have changed. Communication has changed. Digitalisation is making it possible to reach people in Asia, Australia, Latin America and everywhere else in the world. It can be used as a resource to connect people and support learning.

In this context, the international office of the engineering faculty at Lund University in Sweden decided to rethink how we could give the right support to incoming exchange students.

CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME

The process of becoming an exchange student is a long one. Finding a suitable mobility destination and completing a competitive application to be selected for an exchange by the home university is just the first step.

Once selected, students need to keep track of administrative tasks, paperwork and practical matters: for example, applying to the host university, requesting and submitting all the correct documents, sorting out financial matters and scholarships, finding transferable courses, looking for housing, arranging travel and visas – all while managing their studies at home.

Students may find it difficult to navigate through all of this. Even with support from the mobility office, it can be overwhelming.

In addition, and in a shift that started well before the pandemic, student expectations and needs have changed. Students expect to find relevant and detailed information as soon as they have a question, and their patience with scrolling through long documents or searching extensive webpages has decreased.

They assume that information will be specific to their personal needs, but how do we, as international education professionals, provide such personalised information to students from diverse backgrounds?

TARGET GROUPS

To be able to meet the expectations of incoming exchange students, we decided that a new communication strategy was required, one that incorporated lessons learned during the pandemic.

The goal was to create a sense of belonging early in the process – at the application stage – by connecting and establishing a supportive network for the students. For that, it was important to identify what information was relevant to students, and when and how that information should be provided.

First, we defined the target groups. We did this based on where students are in the mobility process: prospective students are those interested in exchange studies but still searching for a study destination; applicants are those who have been selected by the home university and are in the process of applying to the host university; and accepted students are those who have been accepted for exchange studies by the host university.

HOW TO REACH THEM

The next step was to identify how to connect and share information with these target groups.

Prospective students seeking information about studies and student life at the host university typically search the internet and then email the mobility office in case of questions. By analysing the emails and student questions, it was possible to adjust the website for prospective students to attend to this target group's needs.

Applicants are at the next step of the process. They have decided on their study destination and need guidance through the host university's application process. We were already adapting our webpages and sending targeted emails to this group, but our systematic review showed that for some

students that was not enough. They still needed an extra hand during the process.

By looking at the questions asked in emails, the responses to surveys and how students submitted their exchange applications, we concluded that the inclusion of virtual Q&A drop-in sessions during the application period could be the right approach. Staff from the mobility group would be available to students to discuss any doubts or questions. For applicants, this provided an opportunity to receive personal guidance and reassurance. From a staff perspective, the accumulated time spent in virtual meetings was much lower than the time that would have been spent answering emails.

Accepted students are in the final stage of preparation for the mobility experience, but they still have a lot on their minds in terms of studies, travel planning and arrival. For this target group, two virtual meetings were scheduled: one after they had received their formal acceptance and one prior to their arrival.

One of the goals with the virtual meetings was to provide relevant information and to create a forum where questions could be answered. No less important was to provide an opportunity to meet other future exchange students, creating a sense of interconnectedness and community before the mobility experience.

CAREFUL COMMUNICATION

This approach was very successful for both students and staff. Staff noticed that the number of emails sent by students diminished and the enquiries received were of a

more qualitative nature, while comments fed back to us in a survey sent to students after their exchange showed that we were on the right track.

One student wrote: "Every piece of communication given by the faculty seemed to be carefully thought [through] for the understanding of people that had not previously been in contact with faculty matters. They were really helpful, and I [had] little to no difficulties regarding my registration."

We live in a society where information is created, processed, stored and communicated to a greater extent than ever before. With the transformations that took place due to the pandemic, new tools for communicating with prospective exchange students all over the world became available. This created possibilities for the development of new strategies that are beneficial for both students and staff.

Making students feel in control of their process by presenting information at the right time, in the right format, while also being available to answer questions at given times, has helped us reduce the number of emails to staff and errors in exchange applications.

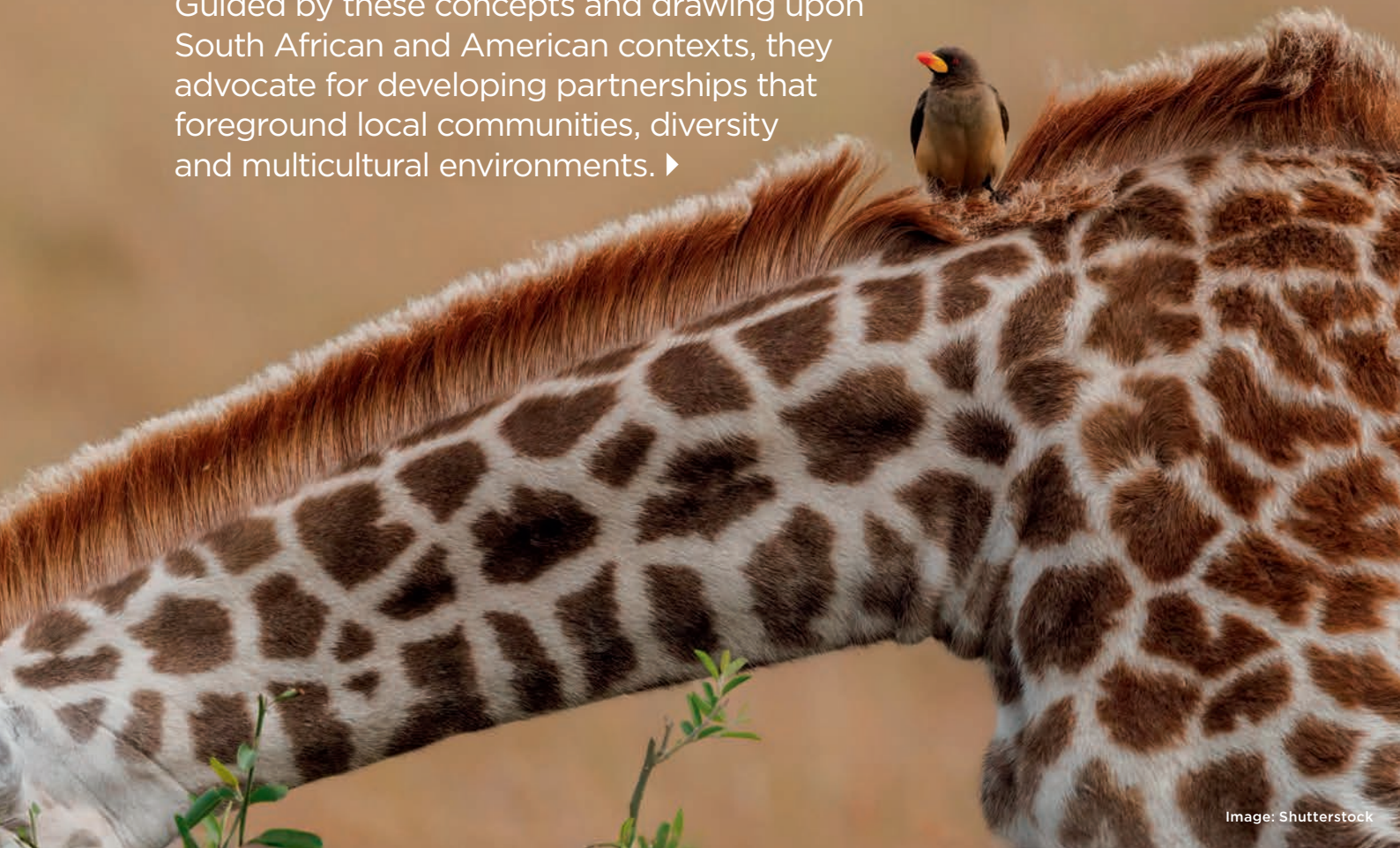
For small offices handling large numbers of students, finding the time to further develop our mobility programmes is always a challenge – but with the right communication strategy, it is possible to both raise quality and make student services more efficient.

—ÅSA FOSTER & ANDRÉA TARLÉ BORG-STRÖM

I AM BECAUSE OF YOU

CREATING MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL PARTNERSHIPS

What is the moral imperative of internationalisation efforts? Taking advantage of the COVID-19-driven pause in internationalisation programmes, Anele Mngadi, Refilwe Moleyane and Shahzad Ahmad explore this conundrum using the theoretical framework of ethical internationalisation and critical internationalisation. Guided by these concepts and drawing upon South African and American contexts, they advocate for developing partnerships that foreground local communities, diversity and multicultural environments. ►



When drafting internationalisation strategies, most practitioners prioritise international student recruitment, expanding their global footprint and generating profit. This often sidelines ethical internationalisation practices and community engagement, creating

PROMOTING FAIRNESS

When ethical internationalisation and critical internationalisation converge, they form a powerful approach to global engagement that combines ethical considerations with a deep analysis of power dynamics and social justice issues. By

COMMUNITY IS KEY

The COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdowns it brought interrupted the normal flow of international higher education, but they also provided an opportunity for reflection on internationalisation strategies. One of these reflections is recognising local communities as key stakeholders.

The first step should be to acknowledge that there is no 'one size fits all' approach to internationalisation: strategies must be responsive to local contexts, including the needs of the communities where universities operate. This means engaging communities and making them active participants in internationalisation strategies. Moving from isolated approaches, universities should make deliberate attempts to incorporate community engagement into their internationalisation efforts.

Comprehensive internationalisation requires a relentless pursuit of social justice, equity and inclusivity. Practitioners must seek collaborative approaches with local community members to ensure communities are not isolated or exploited. These approaches should aim to bring universities and communities together in a process of mutually beneficial co-production. The convergence of university internationalisation strategies and community interests creates an interdependent relationship, fostering mutual respect and shared social norms.

Ignoring community buy-in can lead to communication breakdowns, missed opportunities for creating shared norms, and even crime and xenophobia. Rethinking the role of international education in

The primary aim of critical internationalisation is to challenge inherent hierarchies in global politics that manifest in international education and to denaturalise these hierarchies.

an illusion of isolation between internationalisation efforts and local communities.

Two theoretical frameworks to counter this are critical internationalisation and ethical internationalisation.

Critical internationalisation reimagines the dominant trends of relationships, representation and resource distribution in internationalisation. It promotes ethical and politically conscious internationalisation, rising from concerns about reproducing the uneven global power relations present in the world.¹

While ethical internationalisation focuses on conducting business and study abroad activities in a morally responsible and socially conscious manner, critical internationalisation goes beyond the surface aspects of international engagement and delves deeper into analysing the different power dynamics and inequalities and prioritising social justice issues within the global context.

integrating ethical principles into critical perspectives, organisations can not only strive to conduct their international activities in a socially responsible manner but also actively work towards addressing systemic inequalities and promoting fairness on a global scale.

This convergence fosters a holistic approach to international engagement that values both ethical conduct and critical reflection, aiming to create a more just and sustainable global community.

The primary aim of critical internationalisation is to challenge inherent hierarchies in global politics that manifest in international education and to denaturalise these hierarchies. It also critically examines how local communities are affected by different approaches to internationalisation and how to foster respectful relationships and equitable resource distribution.

community engagement and development is therefore crucial.

'I AM BECAUSE OF YOU'

In South Africa, international partnerships are more than mechanisms for globalisation – they are critical tools for localisation and societal transformation. These collaborations, when rooted in ethical practices, reflect the country's challenge of competing on the global stage while addressing pressing local development needs.

Knowledge and resources should not simply flow from the Global North to the Global South. Instead, there must be a two-way exchange of value, where local communities are acknowledged as co-creators, not mere beneficiaries of external expertise.

BALANCING ACT

What sets South Africa's approach to internationalisation apart is its balancing act between global competitiveness and local relevance. Universities strive to raise their international profiles while

just an idealistic sentiment but a practical framework for collaboration. Partnerships must be transparent, with clear communication around objectives and limitations. By acknowledging both the strengths and constraints of each party, universities can foster partnerships that are equitable and grounded, not just rhetoric.

Ethical engagement is equally important. In many international partnerships, particularly those between institutions of higher learning from the Global North and South, power imbalances persist. Too often, the benefits disproportionately favour the wealthier, more resource-rich partner, which recreates the same power imbalances that characterise global politics.

In South Africa, there is a growing recognition that while benefits may not always be equal, they must be equitable. The needs of the local community should hold as much weight as the global research agenda of the partner universities. Ethical partnerships do not exploit – they empower all stakeholders, ensuring that communities, universities and international collaborators share in the rewards.

This requires a mindset of constant reflection and self-examination. Universities must ask themselves: What is the ultimate purpose of this partnership? Who benefits, and why? Are the right stakeholders actively involved in shaping the process, or are they merely passive participants? By fostering this kind of critical reflection, universities can ensure their internationalisation efforts are aligned with ethical principles, delivering real and lasting value to all involved.²

The success of one partner depends on the success of the other. This is not just an idealistic sentiment but a practical framework for collaboration.

Central to this approach is the concept of *Ubuntu*, a South African philosophy that celebrates human interdependence, captured in the phrase: 'I am because of you.' This principle, when applied to international partnerships, provides a blueprint for mutual respect, ethical engagement and shared benefits. It is a vision of internationalisation that is not only equitable but also transformative.

Post-apartheid South Africa has tasked its universities with the dual mission of correcting historical injustices while contributing to local communities. International partnerships offer a vital bridge between academia and the public, but these relationships must be reciprocal.

remaining deeply embedded in the challenges facing their local environments: poverty, inequality and lack of access to education.

This dual responsibility challenges the 'one size fits all' model often seen in global higher education. South African institutions must simultaneously engage in global knowledge exchange and foster partnerships that meet the specific needs of their communities.

For these partnerships to be successful, mutual dependency is essential. *Ubuntu* and critical internationalisation approaches naturally underpin this idea, asserting that the success of one partner depends on the success of the other. This is not

AFRICAN WORLDVIEW

In the South African context, *Ubuntu* together with critical approaches serves as an anchor for internationalisation, offering a distinctly African worldview that values mutual respect and collective well-being. This approach aligns with broader global calls for decolonising international partnerships, challenging the traditional

Ultimately, internationalisation, when approached ethically, becomes a tool for societal progress.

hierarchies that have long defined North–South collaborations. It proposes a model based on shared values, mutual recognition and equitable outcomes.

Ultimately, internationalisation, when approached ethically, becomes a tool for societal progress. It enables communities to thrive through a commitment to mutuality, equity and transparency – a model that South Africa is championing and that the world can learn from.

SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP

St Cloud State University (SCSU) exemplifies how an institution can effectively engage its community through ethical internationalisation. For nearly a decade, SCSU's Center for International Studies

(CIS) and Multicultural Student Services (MSS) have worked together in a symbiotic relationship. This partnership enhances the university's ability to serve students based on their background, culture, national origin, race, ethnicity and community.

MSS provides engagement opportunities through programming, events and support for domestic and immigrant or refugee students of colour, as well as international students. CIS handles the technical aspects of international education, supporting F-1 and J-1 visa holders, sponsored students, exchange students and academic partner programmes.

The professional staff in both MSS and CIS are experts in addressing the unique challenges faced by students from cross-cultural backgrounds. This intentional and collaborative approach has earned SCSU an excellent reputation among international education partners and prospective international students.

Importantly, the work of MSS does not necessarily require additional funding. Despite financial challenges, SCSU's model responds effectively to the needs of at-risk student populations, increasing student retention and engagement rates. This approach outlines and clarifies equity, diversity and inclusion efforts, addressing the evolving needs of students and the external community. It builds on the common practices in communities of colour, where the greater St Cloud community provides support, opportunities, encouragement, critique and guidance.

In conclusion, local communities have the potential to play a vital role in advancing higher education's internationalisation goals. By prioritising ethical internationalisation and community engagement, universities can create more inclusive and equitable environments, benefiting both institutions and the communities they serve.

—REFILWE MOLEYANE, ANELE MNGADI
& SHAHZAD AHMAD

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JUST THE BEGINNING

EXCITING INITIATIVES FROM THE PANDEMIC ERA

In this article, Carole St-Laurent, Indra Manhas and Zainab Al-koubaisi present various pandemic-era initiatives, including COIL and virtual exchange programmes, developed at Kwantlen Polytechnic University. The authors discuss the inspirations for these projects and provide a comprehensive overview of how they have continued to build upon these mid-pandemic innovations. ►

The challenges and opportunities of the COVID-19 pandemic were not lost on Kwantlen Polytechnic University in Canada. As the world pivoted towards a new reality, our international office – KPU International – seized the opportunity to expand its global education outreach. We provided innovative experiences for our students and laid the groundwork for continued growth and international collaboration.

As Carole St-Laurent, Associate Vice-President for international activities, puts it: “During the pandemic, KPU International implemented several key initiatives that have shaped our journey and helped us to build back better.”

COIL SPRING

In the spring of 2021, we launched our Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) programme. This was a significant step forward in virtual collaborative education at KPU, which is based in the Metro Vancouver region of British Columbia. COIL partners faculty members with instructors from international institutions to co-deliver courses, creating a global classroom experience without the need for travel.

Building on the initial success, we have continually expanded our COIL offerings, from just a single course in 2021 to seven in 2024. These courses span various disciplines (such as English, human resources management, sociology and political science) and have involved multiple instructors and partner schools worldwide (including Pontificia Universidad Javeriana

in Colombia and Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands).

“KPU’s COIL programme exemplifies the university’s commitment to innovative and inclusive global education, offering students and faculty unique opportunities to engage with diverse perspectives and build intercultural competencies,” said St-Laurent.

VIRTUAL EXCHANGE

Alongside our COIL initiative, we designed and launched a virtual exchange programme in response to pandemic travel restrictions.

“This initiative allowed students to participate in intercultural learning experiences with partner institutions in Peru, Colombia, France, Spain and Germany from the safety of their homes,” said St-Laurent.

In addition, virtual internships with organisations in Costa Rica provided students with unique intercultural learning experiences, enhancing their employability and online collaboration skills. Despite the quick turnaround and the challenges of adjusting to a new educational environment, the success of the virtual exchange programme is evident from students’ enthusiastic responses.

“The experience was rewarding as I managed to learn new business concepts [and] work on enhancing existing concepts related to change and innovation,” said Marwan Abdul Rahman, a graduate of KPU’s Melville School of Business. “On top of that, it was a path for growing my professional network.”

“It was beyond my expectations,” echoed Garinder Singh, another Melville graduate. “It was in a different time zone, but I managed it and learned various new things in the cultural and academic fields.”

INDIGENOUS SUPPORT

Still in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, we also launched the Global Indigenous Learning Experience (GILE). This started as a virtual programme in partnership with Edith Cowan University in Australia, before evolving into a hybrid format. This non-credit programme fosters cross-cultural understanding and allows students to engage deeply with Indigenous cultures in both countries.

“This initiative is specifically designed for Indigenous students at KPU and Edith Cowan, offering a blend of virtual and in-person learning,” said St-Laurent.

“GILE is a collaborative project between KPU’s Indigenous Student Services and KPU International, demonstrating the university’s dedication to supporting Indigenous education and global engagement. It exemplifies our commitment to providing unique and enriching global learning experiences.”

PEER MENTORSHIP

Launched during the summer of 2020, our International Peer Mentorship programme began as a direct result of the pandemic. This pairs new students with mentors who provide personalised support, helping them navigate the challenges of university life and adjust to their new environment in Canada.

“This programme helps international students feel at home at KPU,” said Indra Manhas, Director of Global Engagement. “By connecting them with mentors who have first-hand experience of the journey, we’re not only helping them succeed academically but also creating lasting connections that enrich their overall university experience.”

Moving forward, we will continue to leverage the successes of the pandemic era to offer even more dynamic and impactful global opportunities.

Building on the best parts of this pandemic-era initiative, the programme continues to evolve, adapting to the changing needs of international students and becoming a vital part of their university experience.

“Initially, mentees had to sign up for the programme, but now students are automatically enrolled three weeks before the semester begins,” said Manhas. “This provides them with guidance even before they arrive in Canada – and the early engagement has ensured that students feel supported from the outset.”

PRACTICAL ADVICE

Peer mentors offer practical advice on topics such as time management, campus resources and cultural adaptation, while also sharing their own experiences and insights.

“Our mentors receive enhanced training and run fun and educational activities that offer experiences mentees might

not pursue on their own,” said Manhas. “These activities help build connections, foster a sense of community and ease the transition into university life.”

The International Peer Mentorship programme is part of KPU’s broader strategy to enhance student engagement and success, ensuring that every international student has access to the resources and

networks they need to thrive. It uses targeted communications based on where students are in the semester, ensuring that the support provided is timely and relevant. Over the years, the programme has built a strong reputation, becoming a sought-after resource for international students.

“This cycle of support and leadership creates a vibrant, interconnected community, ensuring that each generation of international students benefits from the experiences of those who came before them,” said Manhas.

IMPACTFUL OPPORTUNITIES

Now, in the post-pandemic era, KPU continues to support all of these initiatives as part of our commitment to growing our global outreach and providing diverse opportunities for staff and faculty, all while building back better.

“These initiatives enhance the educational experience and prepare students

and faculty to thrive in an increasingly interconnected world,” said St. Laurent. “By embracing innovative approaches developed during the pandemic, KPU strives to be a strong leader in global education. The achievements of the past few years are just the beginning as we continue to build on this foundation.”

Other types of support that have continued as post-pandemic initiatives include virtual orientations, pre-departure workshops, KPU100 (a free ‘introduction to university’ course) and Community Platform by Unibuddy, which is an online resource connecting students based on shared interests.

We have also created an International Student Handbook, a 30-page guide to preparing for life in Metro Vancouver and the academic journey ahead.

Our dedication to fostering global partnerships and creating enriching learning experiences provides immediate benefits for our students and faculty. Moving forward, we will continue to leverage the successes of the pandemic era to offer even more dynamic and impactful global opportunities.

“By retaining the advantages of online connection while resuming the best elements of in-person support, KPU has found a mix which our students appreciate immensely,” said St. Laurent. “These successes encourage us to explore new initiatives that will offer exciting global opportunities to our community.”

— CAROLE ST. LAURENT, INDRA MANHAS
& ZAINAB AL-KOUBAISI

IN CONVERSATION WITH

MYKOLA TROFYMENKO

SAM ELLIS
EAIE

For this edition of Forum we interviewed Professor Mykola Trofymenko, Rector of Mariupol State University. The concept of building back better has a vivid, tangible meaning for Professor Trofymenko as Mariupol State University's physical infrastructure was destroyed in 2022 during the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. In this interview, Professor Trofymenko discusses the losses faced by the university community, shares details about the university's efforts to rebuild their community in Kyiv and explains their future internationalisation plans.

It must be an incredibly difficult and overwhelming task to relocate and rebuild an entire institution. What have been the major stages in a project like this and how has it played out?

MT: To build back better has been our main principle for the last two years. You know the story of Mariupol city and of the University: It was totally destroyed during the first months of the full-scale invasion. I think the tragedy of Mariupol is one of the biggest tragedies; of 550,000 total inhabitants, at least 120,000 civilians were killed. That's every fourth inhabitant, at least. Within Mariupol University, we also had a lot of losses among our students and staff. And, of course, our physical infrastructure was destroyed. We didn't have any evacuations or green corridors. We were without phone connection, internet, electricity, any means to talk to the outside world. People evacuated in every possible way, by car or on foot.

In the first moments after registering a Telegram channel, we gathered together with all our staff, and we tried to help people to find places to shelter. We also fundraised money for our colleagues that were brought to Donetsk or other Russian occupied territories, many of whom were wounded. We transferred these funds to their bank cards in hopes they would be able to receive treatment or buy medicine.

We decided that we should evacuate our university to Kyiv. Our colleagues at Kyiv National University of Construction and Architecture provided us with an almost 100-year-old building. It was in awful condition, but nevertheless we are grateful for it. In the beginning, the university was me with my computer. After several weeks, there were three of us, after several more weeks, we were seven. Now, we have reconstructed a very beautiful, modern office of Mariupol University in Kyiv – where I'm sitting now, at last. I was waiting until all my departments and instructors could have their offices. And I, as the rector, was the last to receive my office. It was actually the Secretary of State of the United States who helped me to receive it faster (Due to his visit to the university and planned meetings with students at the Rector's Office, builders accelerated the reconstruction). He visited our university in May, and he helped to make sure I received it quickly.

We have this principle, to build back better, in everything we are doing because, we decided not to rebuild the university, but to build up a new one, with a new philosophy. In fact, looking towards the future after our victory, we're anticipating what Ukraine will need to rebuild, to reconstruct and to recover from these awful tragedies.

You've previously indicated your aim to rebuild Mariupol State University "into a modern institution with a new philosophy, while preserving its identity". Could you briefly expand on these aims and explore what this might look like?

MT: We proved to the world that a university is not the walls, it's the people. The university is much more than an educational research institution. We are, in a lot of cases and senses, the only

the opportunities afforded to European Union residents.

I don't know if these people will come back. The university, therefore, tries to connect and to preserve links with Ukraine. For example, using our strong cooperation with Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas, Lithuania, we opened the Mariupol University centre in Kaunas to work with refugees and Ukrainian citizens. Here, we invite them to enrol in

Square. During this disaster, it flew to Kyiv and temporarily organised its nest here, waiting to return home. This bird holds a lot of symbolism. It's a symbol of peace, and it holds the memories of our colleagues who have been killed. We have identified 18 representatives of our academic staff and students who have been killed, and we have 250 students whose fate is unknown.

It's this bird that is flying very high that shows the world what resistance means. The desire to build back better, to build the university of the future.

It's this bird that is flying very high that shows the world what resistance means. The desire to build back better, to build the university of the future.

link between Mariupol and Ukraine for both the inhabitants of Mariupol and the Donetsk region, and the 200,000 residents who live now all over the world. We consider our internationalisation and our cooperations with foreign universities as key to our core goal: to preserve the identity of our city, of our region.

While these Ukrainians in diaspora are in, for example, Lithuania, they fall under the status of refugee. They attend language courses; they start to speak Lithuanian, and they send their children to Lithuanian-speaking kindergartens or schools. Older children attend the local universities and start making use of all

Ukrainian universities in distance learning mode so that they don't forget where they are from.

We are also investing in this idea of a Civic University as a base of our strategy. We identified ourselves as a national leader among Ukrainian Civic Universities. These institutions are very important for communities, for refugees and for addressing identity issues within these groups.

This is embodied by the new symbol of Mariupol University. We rebranded our university after the relocation. The bird in the new university symbol represents the dove from Mariupol's Liberty

Could you speak more about how the community role of the university has changed? How has this impacted daily academic life or student and staff engagement with their community?

MT: First of all, of course, it's an emotional connection with our people. We are rebuilding and reconstructing this building in hopes that when the people of Mariupol will come to our premises, they will feel at home. When you've lost everything, it's vital to have somewhere you can feel like yourself. We are also reconstructing our staff dormitory. We have 100% of our staff working today physically from this building. This is both a huge challenge and a huge achievement.

We have students in our classes, in our laboratories. It's a huge achievement. It's a huge victory. It's impossible

to describe and to explain what we are feeling because two years ago, it was something that we considered unachievable.

We are also trying to show to the Ukrainian communities and to the world, what Mariupol actually was, what the city was before the invasion. It was the symbol of modernisation, of technological development, of reconstruction, of services for the inhabitants on a European level.

For example, we have just finished a project with MHP, a huge empire of agricultural companies. They asked us to work with 30 communities from all over

people, they wanted to come, they wanted to talk to us, they wanted to tell us their pain. Through our activity as a civic centre they received help from the university. We're still now proceeding with this help but in a different way. After two years, people don't need food, for example, they need psychological help.

We have established the special laboratory for children with disabilities; a lot of children are experiencing post-traumatic stress. The university is helping these children, and we are facilitating specialist assistance for their teachers.

The university played this magnetic role for people, they wanted to come, they wanted to talk to us, they wanted to tell us their pain. Through our activity as a civic centre they received help from the university.

Ukraine and teach them how to write applications for different grant projects, how to make a case, how to develop projects, how to present, *etc.* Effective community is one of the ways to champion Ukraine's success.

In the first days following the displacement, we established the university as a humanitarian hub. We gathered all kinds of help from all over the world. The university played this magnetic role for

We also have special programs for veterans who would like to start businesses. Following their service, many have collected some sums of money, and they want to learn how to invest this. Therefore, we have started a veterans' business school.

How has the internationalisation strategy of the university changed? How are you currently reinforcing international collaborations?

MT: Mariupol University now has unbelievably large attention from all institutions across the world. We are trying to make use of this window of opportunity. We are very much active in the European University Alliance, Transform4Europe. I think this is one of our greatest achievements over the last two and a half years. I'm soon travelling to Poland to visit The University of Silesia in Katowice, another member of Transform4Europe, to open a Mariupol University centre on their campus to support Ukrainian refugees in Poland. This unique expertise proves that Ukrainian universities play a huge role as public diplomacy institutions, supporting Ukrainian narratives and our government's activities abroad.

As Ukraine is not a member of the European Union, we cannot be full partners of Transform4Europe. However, it's very encouraging that our fellow members consider us not as an associate partner, but rather as a full partner. We participate in every activity, in every action and, of course, reap the benefits. We understand that we should prepare for life after the victory, and we should integrate into the European University Alliances because we will also be a European university.

We also have a strong cooperation with the UK, where we are twinned partners with the University of Hull. It was fate to collaborate with them. Kingston upon Hull was destroyed during World

War Two; 97% of the city was destroyed during The Blitz. Mariupol has a similar story. After the War, the British government paid special attention to addressing the mental health of Hull's population. This is what we need now. We have several projects with the University of Hull, and we will continue to deepen this cooperation.

Furthermore, universities in the United States are inviting Ukrainian universities to sign agreements and to start collaborations. Next week, we are signing such an agreement with the University of New Haven.

Tomorrow, we will start to realise one of our main goals and begin thinking about the campus of the future. We received a unique present from the minister of education of Ukraine: Four hectares and 13,000 square meters of premises in the centre of Kyiv. Through the project Educational Space for Students and Community, we received €1,300,000 for the reconstruction of this building. I consider this an exciting aspect of our international collaboration. A relocated university that started from nothing is now able to reconstruct its campus with the help of a European Union grant.

So, our university is at the heart of international cooperation. From here we are telling people that the heart of Mariupol is still beating here in Mariupol University in Kyiv.

Finally, what personally keeps you going to drive the internationalisation of Mariupol State University?

MT: I graduated from Mariupol University's international relations bachelor programme. My first job was head of the International Cooperation Office of Mariupol University. I worked for 10 years as a vice rector for international cooperation of Mariupol University. Finally, in December 2020, I was elected rector and appointed by the minister. Furthermore, in May of this year, I defended my thesis for Doctor of Sciences degree in political science [a post-doctoral degree, similar to the habilitation degree awarded by some Western European institutions].

I have been researching issues of public diplomacy for 13 years. In my doctoral thesis, I have a chapter where I

I'm so proud of my team, of my students and of their achievements. This is what I find inspiring.

discuss universities as public diplomacy institutions. We have huge possibilities to support national battles, including on the information front.

I do believe that we are important. I do believe that we preserved Mariupol University. I do believe that through these reconstruction efforts we are also making our small input into the future victory of Ukraine. Everything is important and I'm so proud of my team, of my students and of their achievements. This is what I find inspiring.

POST-PANDEMIC VIRTUALISATION IS IT HERE TO STAY?

Investigating the current state of international education in India, Nidhi Piplani Kapur and Nikita Varghese explore the ongoing effects of internationalisation's virtualisation. Drawing together developments in edtech, governmental policy and decisions made within institutions, the authors point towards potential avenues available following the global pandemic. ►



The year 2020 witnessed a shift from traditional whiteboard teaching methods to accommodating a cohort of 60 or more students on a tiny laptop screen. The COVID-19 pandemic ushered in the Zoom and Microsoft Teams era: when the pandemic was at its peak, students, teachers and institutions connected virtually and disconnected physically at the same time. The

students to adapt to new technologies.

Government policies played a part in virtualisation efforts. For example, the Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds programme was launched in India, helping to promote quality education through digital means. It was accessible to countries including Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, and it was culturally sensitive, too, as

Symbiosis International (Deemed University) in India established global classrooms, allowing local and foreign students worldwide to attend the same online classes and participate in discussions.

The e-academies and symposiums, virtual internships and publications on the internationalisation of higher education established by our Symbiosis Centre for European Studies back in 2020 continue to enable students to engage in intercultural dialogue, work on collaborative projects online and build intercultural competencies.

Collaborative Online International Learning also came into its own during the pandemic as a means for collaboration with international universities, paving the way for Internationalisation at Home. The virtual global classrooms opened up new horizons for the educational community, focusing on flexibility, accessibility and adaptability.

EDTECH BOOM

The pandemic catalysed the Indian educational technology sector, propelling it from a nascent industry to a mainstream phenomenon. Edtech startups witnessed unprecedented growth in their user base, revenue and valuation.

As online microcredentials and certificates became ever more popular during the pandemic, allowing for focused, short-term study in specific areas, companies such as Coursera, Byju's, Unacademy,

The rapid shift to online platforms exposed vulnerabilities around access to IT infrastructure and tools, engagement, digital literacy and the ability to adapt to new technologies.

pandemic exposed the education sector to new scenarios, meaning its members had to reinvent pedagogy and the scope of internationalisation.

The boom provided by globalisation, which enhanced the free movement of goods, people and capital, was curbed due to the COVID-related travel restrictions and quarantine measures, significantly impacting student mobility. Concomitantly, the pandemic opened up avenues for digital transformation, leading to the 'virtualisation of education'. The rapid shift to online platforms exposed vulnerabilities around access to IT infrastructure and tools, engagement, digital literacy and the ability of teachers and

it provided a diverse linguistic landscape for south Asian students.

Partnerships between institutions, government bodies, civil society and private sector entities were crucial in addressing resource, infrastructure and outreach challenges and continuing to create an inclusive learning and teaching process for students in a cosmopolitan setting across the globe. At this juncture, educational institutions served as a nexus between the international, national, regional and local levels.

'THE WORLD IS ONE FAMILY'

Adhering to our motto *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* ('The world is one family'),

Upgrad and Vedantu became significant players in the edtech domain.

With the hybrid education model expected to continue, the use of digital means in Indian education is anticipated to reach a compound annual growth rate of 4.4% by 2025.¹

It is important to note, however, that virtual modes cannot fully replace the benefits of in-person interaction. A hybrid approach that combines the best of both worlds can be an effective strategy, wherein educators employ 'blended learning models' and 'flipped classrooms'. Although virtual programmes often have lower travel, accommodation and visa costs and contribute to a smaller carbon footprint, they cannot replace campus experiences.

INDIAN GOVERNMENT POLICY

In 2020, while dealing with public health priorities amid the pandemic, India also reconsidered its priorities in the education sector. The government developed a National Education Policy (NEP), which emphasised improving higher education in India by developing an internationalised curriculum and teaching processes, introducing globally tailored programmes and faculty training and launching internationally compatible evaluation and learning outcomes, encouraging Internationalisation at Home.

As part of the NEP and in the post-COVID era, the government has encouraged twinning degrees, dual

degrees and joint degree programmes in partnership with foreign universities to enhance global collaborations. In line with this, the University Grants Commission released guidelines for promoting and maintaining standards of academic collaboration between Indian and foreign institutions. Memoranda of understanding have been signed with numerous countries to facilitate student exchange programmes and study abroad initiatives across Europe, the Middle East, Africa and North America.

By pushing for academic reforms, the NEP provides a framework to integrate technology and global collaboration in the Indian higher education system, allowing students, faculty members and institutions to engage nationally and internationally through digital platforms, breaking down traditional barriers to global learning.

INBOUND, OUTBOUND

The number of higher education institutions in India offering online programmes increased from 42 in 2020–2021 to 58 in 2021–2022 – a 38% rise.² The top five countries where international students enrol in Indian online programmes are Guyana, the United Arab Emirates, Nepal, Saudi Arabia and the United States.

The number of Indian students studying abroad has also increased significantly: to 0.44 million in 2021, 0.75 million in 2022 and around 1.5 million in 2023. This shows that the trend of 'revenge

travel' – the act of taking a trip that wasn't possible during the pandemic – is real.³ It is projected that over two million Indian students will be enrolled in international programmes by 2055.

However, it is said by many that this mobility is based on Indian students' desire to pursue better-quality higher education. This highlights the need to expand internationalisation efforts at home.

As part of the NEP, Indian universities are encouraged to provide high-quality online degree programmes, certificate courses and short-term courses, aligning with an emphasis on lifelong learning. The policy also introduced the Academic Bank of Credits, a digital repository allowing students to collect credits from both domestic and international institutions and transfer them as needed. As of September 2024, around 2153 higher education institutions have been brought on board.

Moreover, the creation of the National Education Technology Forum under the NEP provides a platform for Indian universities to integrate international best practices in virtualisation. The NEP therefore promotes both physical exchange and the use of virtual platforms for global research networks and virtual training for faculties.

CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Balancing the benefits of pandemic-driven innovations with the advantages of traditional practices has proved

key to creating a resilient and adaptive educational landscape since the pandemic. Universities can offer a multicultural experience through actively implementing Internationalisation at Home for all students, regardless of whether they pursue mobility opportunities. In our view,

through comprehensive risk assessments, emergency response plans and crisis communication teams.

Internationalisation practices may face challenges given that nations are trying to prioritise their socio-economic development amid a tumultuous global

Indian universities are being encouraged by the government to adopt virtual models for international collaboration and educational exchanges. This will help maintain a resilient system and create a global workforce.

Moving forward, innovations in virtualisation can help us build and sustain education systems that can adapt to crises. We must ramp up our efforts towards Internationalisation at Home and our hybrid approaches to teaching and learning to ensure continuity of education in general and the internationalisation of higher education as a whole.

— NIDHI PIPLANI KAPUR & NIKITA VARGHESE

Blended learning approaches are here to stay and will be further propelled in the Indian educational landscape.

Internationalisation at Home and blended learning approaches are here to stay and will be further propelled in the Indian educational landscape by the NEP.

This is particularly important because although the COVID-19 pandemic is over, other challenges remain. Conflicts at the regional level, including wars in Europe and the Middle East, as well as the volatile nature of protests in the UK, Bangladesh and Nigeria, raise concerns regarding the physical security of students and teachers. The European Association for International Education's 2024 Barometer report indicates that around 40% of professionals in Ukraine are believed to be prioritising online learning during the ongoing Russian invasion.⁴

Institutions are therefore continuing to build on their crisis management strategies and protocols, including

economy. However, capitalising on soft power diplomacy may further help to promote cross-border mobilisation, academic collaboration and international outreach between institutions and governments.

THE WAY FORWARD

Given that the EAIE Barometer says around 58% of institutions in Europe aim to engage in virtual activities related to achieving their internationalisation goals in the coming years, and institutions in India are focusing on expanding the NEP policy implications for digital education, institutions must retain the virtual innovations that enhance accessibility, flexibility and global collaboration. At the same time, they must focus on developing intercultural competence that contributes to peacebuilding and addressing shared challenges.

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FLEXIBLE SUPPORT

Mentoring in the post-COVID landscape

In this article, Luz Pacas Castro reflects on the COVID-19 pandemic's effect on an international student mentoring programme. From the changing roles of programme coordinators to embracing new delivery methods, Luz highlights the importance of adaptability and actively engaging with student feedback. ►

In 2014, the University of Siegen introduced the Mentoring in International and Academic Exchange programme, known as MAX. This was set up by the Vice-Dean for International Affairs in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities as a peer-to-peer academic mentoring scheme to support international students, improve academic success, build networks and encourage Internationalisation at Home.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world, it created several challenges. According to a survey conducted by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the lack of personal contact and infrastructure were major challenges for both international exchange students and domestic students.¹ It was therefore an advantage that MAX already existed as a stable pillar of support.

Registrations for the programme increased rapidly, as newly arrived international students and those who were not able to travel to Germany and had to participate in distance learning were seeking support and connections within the local student community. Whereas we used to have 12 to a maximum of 28 participants per academic year, our first call for mentors and mentees during the pandemic pulled in 54 participants for the summer and winter semesters of 2020. It is clear from these figures that people's willingness to support each other – and their need for connection – was great.

CHANGING NEEDS

Although we had already been running the programme for several years and therefore had no problems with getting started for the year, some innovations were necessary; MAX had to be adapted to the situation and the changing needs of the students.

Whereas the mentoring previously consisted of core peer-to-peer counseling, we now started to convene online meetings with the whole group – and we broadened the topics of discussion to include not only academic questions but also those around infrastructure and cultural exchange. In contrast to the core peer-to-peer mentoring, we highlighted the topics that seemed relevant to everyone at that time – such as library information and registration

Intercultural exercises and quizzes about the region were also integrated into the sessions so that both home and international students had the chance to get familiar with the local area. The role of the programme coordinator changed, with more importance given to encouraging and organising dialogue between participants and providing information on infrastructural issues.

IMPORTANT INNOVATIONS

One Master's student participating as a mentor described the features of the programme as follows: "At the regular group meetings, which unfortunately took place exclusively via Zoom in view of the pandemic, it was possible for us mentors and mentees to discuss everyday university life and any questions about exams,

The role of the programme coordinator changed, with more importance given to encouraging and organising dialogue between participants and providing information on infrastructural issues

for seminars – and we also created opportunities to discuss more general topics. We encouraged peer-to-peer mentoring in break-out rooms, chat portals and privately organised sessions, sometimes online.

subjects and events at the university in the group. Getting to know each other was not neglected either and was facilitated by [...] the head of the programme, with entertaining and at the same time instructive intercultural exercises."²

In almost all of the feedback, the lack of personal meetings due to the pandemic was mentioned as a major loss, while the coordination of joint meetings, coaching support for mentors and intercultural exercises was highly appreciated.

In addition to the mentoring programme, further supportive online formats with external speakers were offered, including an academic writing workshop and an online career talk. One of the most notable innovations was that the support structures were not only adapted to the situation on an ad hoc basis but also underwent continuous transformation.

In the conversations with participants, we regularly asked about current needs so that we could jointly identify important topics and learn how to organise them within the sessions. In this way, we created a constant discourse and quality assurance and could jointly design and transform the programme. MAX therefore kept improving through constant evaluation.

LESSONS LEARNED

During the feedback rounds, we found out that there was a strong need and interest in meeting face to face again, which corresponds to the findings of the survey conducted by the DAAD. Building on these insights, we have identified the following three key lessons.

First, in the sense of 'building back better', we gave up the exclusive online

meetings after the pandemic and went back to individual peer-to-peer mentoring, covering individual needs and topics. Nevertheless, we supplemented these sessions with innovations retained from the pandemic era, with intercultural exercises and peer-to-peer discussions on topics of shared interest still taking place.

Second, we realised that we also wanted to improve the academic culture of mentoring recognition in the post-COVID era. While certificates of participation used to be the standard form of recognition, we improved our structure by highlighting the work of our mentors through testimonial videos. Furthermore, we are planning something new by organising a joint meal with staff members. We want to show that 'building back better' means dedicating time to mentors, honouring their work and encouraging participation.

"Certificates proving involvement in student engagement only have meaning when students and lecturers give them meaning through interaction," as Resch, Knapp and Schritteser (2021) put it. "Based on Mead's theory of the self (1934), lecturers and peers can be understood as 'significant others' for students, when it comes to acknowledging their engagement in the academic community."³

Third, adapting to students' needs has remained our way of thinking and acting. Individual consultation sessions, in particular, are still often requested online and are therefore offered in both formats.

Career talks and similar events also still take place in hybrid formats.

Overall, the pandemic gave this valuable programme the opportunity to transform and improve – and it has done just that. MAX has adapted through constant discourse and evaluation, without losing its core ideas and objectives. It benefits international students – including those who arrive late due to visa problems – and it promotes Internationalisation at Home. In the post-COVID landscape, we must all continue to work on honouring international engagement and constructing flexible support programmes.

— LUZ PACAS CASTRO

1. DAAD. (2023). *International student mobility in Germany: Summary of the results for the first International University Benchmark (Bintho) in the 2020/21 winter semester*. https://static.daad.de/media/daad_de/pdfs_nicht_barrierefrei/der-daad/analysen-studien/daad_2023_bintho-report_2020-21_summary.pdf

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HOW COVID-19 HELPED US IMPROVE STUDENT WORK EXPERIENCE

Investigating the topic of experiential learning programmes, Lisa A. Miller and Kevin J. Vaughn discuss their experiences using Riipen, a platform that facilitates online internships. They outline the gaps that online internships can fill, reflect on the ethics of such programmes and discuss the opportunities that they afford otherwise ineligible students.

The University of California, Riverside University Extension (the university's continuing education division) serves both domestic and international non-matriculated students. Our international students enrol in short-term non-credit and credit-bearing programmes, including English as a second language, postgraduate certificates and diplomas (with internships), study abroad schemes and pathway programmes leading to matriculation as undergraduate and graduate students at University of California, Riverside (UCR) and elsewhere.

Before the pandemic, we were already making efforts to buffer ourselves against risks in the international market — indeed, we were predicting added volatility due to the results of the US election in 2016. We were diversifying our international markets, we were employing more digital and business-to-consumer marketing and we were building our portfolio of fully online programmes, short courses and stackable or flexible offerings.

This helped us to some extent when the full force of COVID-19 hit us in March 2020, but we still lost a large percentage of our international enrolments. Of course, in line with many other institutions throughout the world, everything shifted to an online environment. The pandemic forced institutions to reflect upon and re-evaluate their online programming.

PANDEMIC EFFECTS

Before the pandemic, UCR University Extension offered a substantial number of in-person classes to meet the experiential and visa compliance needs of our large and thriving international student population. With the onset of COVID-19 came the closure of schools, state-wide stay-at-home orders and the



Image: Shutterstock

sudden shift of all courses at UCR to an online modality. Faculty and instructors integrated Zoom into their courses so they could maintain their scheduled classes. Courses with labs had to improvise to incorporate hands-on learning in a fully

best practices, such as the longstanding 'flipped classroom' model, more robustly into their courses. Technology provided alternatives to experiential education via online learning, remote internships and virtual study abroad. For UCR

PLATFORM FOR SUCCESS

It was during this time that Riipen, an experiential platform, was first introduced to the UCR team. Riipen stood out as an innovative and engaging way to bring the corporate world into the classroom: it collaborates with small to medium-sized companies to identify project-based work that can be used by educators as an assignment within their courses. Students can work individually or within teams to complete projects that range from the creation of social media marketing campaigns to grant writing and from mobile application development to data analysis.

Riipen has partners in diverse industries, meaning instructors from a wide array of disciplines can find projects that will add to their students' overall learning. Companies provide regular feedback to the students and instructors, which allows for comprehensive assessment of the assignments. Furthermore, students can add their project-based work experience to their CVs and LinkedIn profiles.

With all the confusion that the pandemic wrought on the educational landscape, it did bring about a period of flexibility, creativity and true 'outside of the box' thinking

remote setting. International students returned home and had to set their clocks so they could attend their lectures in Pacific Standard Time.

Yet with all the confusion that the pandemic wrought on the educational landscape, it did bring about a period of flexibility, creativity and true 'outside of the box' thinking. Faculty and instructors began to incorporate pedagogical

University Extension, online internships were an area of great interest as our postgraduate diplomas required an internship placement to graduate. Even as we emerged from the pandemic, many companies were slow to bring temporary staff into the office, so virtual internships remained a primary focal point.

ETHICAL CONCERNS

Using unpaid work as part of experiential learning brings with it numerous considerations, including financial, pedagogical and ethical concerns. These include whether the assignment constitutes meaningful work experience; issues related to legal protections typically afforded to workers; the ethics of expecting work output for the benefit of the employer for no compensation; and questions regarding

determined by how the experience itself is defined. Remote, project-based learning is a new type of work modality and often not fully evaluated by all stakeholders.

However, in our experience with Riipen, our concerns have been adequately addressed. Employers bring to Riipen projects that have a finite lifespan. Because they are meant to be a single assignment and just one of the multiple assessments that students are graded on,

to our academic programming. UCR University Extension specialises in courses centred on workforce development, which concentrate not only on theory but on applied skills and concepts. By integrating Riipen's project-based work, we have been able to move from simulated exercises to formative work experience.

Additionally, the use of these embedded projects provides hands-on learning experiences to international students who would not otherwise have access to employment while studying in the US. Due to strict F-1 student visa regulations, visiting students are prohibited from employment, both paid and unpaid. However, project work done as part of a graded course assignment is permissible. Riipen has been the perfect mechanism for us to provide students with sought-after skills and experience that will help them further their career objectives upon graduation.

COVID-19 impacted education in fundamental ways. As institutions flexed to meet student needs, they enacted strategic changes. In some cases, the changes were finite; others proved to be significant and long-lasting. We have found that our Riipen-embedded curriculum allows us to fulfil our central mission, which is to offer exceptional educational experiences and lifelong learning opportunities for all ages, backgrounds and cultures. This novel instructional method has helped us to 'build back better'.

— LISA A. MILLER & KEVIN J. VAUGHN

Student work is closely monitored by the instructor to ensure that the primary beneficiary of the project is the student

equity of access to these opportunities and the unfair burden unpaid work can have on students from a lower socio-economic background.

One issue in particular – the potential to displace paid workers for unpaid employment – is significant enough to consider for the purposes of this article. Riipen focuses on project-based work that is submitted by companies, matching this with faculty and instructor course assignments or projects. One could argue that the companies are displacing workers by engaging the free labour of students to accomplish work needs instead of retaining current workers or hiring new staff. The regulation of work-based learning varies from country to country and is often

the projects have a defined start and end date and a limited scope. As a result, the work is narrower and more focused than what would be expected from employees.

Project goals are negotiated by the instructor prior to the start of the term to ensure that the project meets stated learning objectives and is well integrated into the curriculum. Student work is closely monitored by the instructor to ensure that the primary beneficiary of the project is the student. While this is a reciprocal relationship, the primary intent is skills acquisition for the students.

HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE

In the post-pandemic era, Riipen has become one of the most innovative additions



VIRTUAL LEARNING BEYOND THE PANDEMIC

HOW COIL IS TRANSFORMING OUR FINANCE CURRICULUM

In this article, Kitty Puiman Lau provides a detailed overview of Inholland University of Applied Sciences' Finance department's COIL initiative. Exploring the learning objectives and the reactions from students, the author maps this COIL's journey from pilot study to fully fledged initiative. ►

Before the pandemic, Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) programmes were absent from the finance curriculum at Inholland University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands. While we had international courses and intercultural activities for business students, there were none for finance students.

One notable post-pandemic practice is our COIL 'Intercultural SDG Game,' which significantly advances internationalisation by allowing students to collaborate with peers globally without physical travel, making international experiences more accessible and inclusive. This international initiative is crucial in the field of finance, where student and staff mobility is nearly non-existent and the workforce is traditionally homogeneous. The COIL programme provides valuable exposure to diverse perspectives, enhancing students' cultural awareness.

By introducing this virtual exchange game, we have put finance on the internationalisation playing field. Recognising the value of integrating COIL into our teaching, we refreshed our finance curriculum to embed virtual learning and boost internationalisation. Supported by government funding initiated during the pandemic for virtual international cooperation projects, the first edition of the COIL programme was launched in the academic year 2022–2023. CEU San Pablo University in Spain and Hogeschool Gent in Belgium were the first partners, followed by HTW Berlin in Germany a year later.

Participating students are happy to share their enthusiasm: "I mostly enjoyed the interactivity" said one student. Another added: "What a great idea to communicate in this way with students from different countries." and remarked that "It was really cool that we learned so much about the SDGs and other cultures."¹

SOWING THE SEEDS

Our Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) game gives finance students the chance to carry out interdisciplinary collaborations with international peers to develop a game focused on the SDGs and related cultural dimensions. It provides

leadership skills. The course's learning objectives include responsible and effective collaboration and communication with professionals from various disciplines to solve complex global issues efficiently.

Hence, this project not only imparts knowledge about global challenges but also highlights the practical aspects of working in diverse teams. For instance, students discovered that scheduling meetings during siesta hours was not feasible for Spanish students, thus emphasising the importance of understanding and adapting to different cultural norms for international collaboration.

This project not only imparts knowledge about global challenges but also highlights the practical aspects of working in diverse teams.

a new way of thinking and operating for students, management and staff, and it promotes co-creation and active learning by doing. By offering education remotely, it is also cost effective.

Our COIL pilot started as an incidental Internationalisation at Home practice, maturing into being embedded in the curriculum and part of a long-term strategy for student and staff mobility.

Following their training in business English in the first year, this course is positioned in year two of finance students' programme, combining English, intercultural communication and global

NO LECTURES

The success of these virtual collaborations has demonstrated online learning's potential to create inclusive and engaging educational experiences. The use of educational gamification platforms such as Seppo in the SDG game programme allows students to co-create and compete in a dynamic and interactive environment.

One of the programmes' major innovations is that no lectures on cultural dimensions are given. Rather, students study the theory themselves, creating questions or challenges for building the game. Their understanding is then demon-

strated by providing feedback on assignments. Teachers are no longer lecturers; instead, they are facilitators and coaches helping to create the game. In the final session, the student teams play each other's games; while playing, they are, in fact, learning! This hands-on, creative approach facilitates deep learning and fosters a sense of community among participants from various cultural backgrounds.

EVOLVED, EXPANDED, EMBEDDED

Building on the success of the initial pilots, our COIL programme was expanded to include more students and partner institutions from 2021 to 2024.

The post-pandemic pilot began with 10 students in Rotterdam and with only one COIL partner. With funding secured for the following year and two COIL partners on board, the improved course was offered with the challenging gamification co-creation component.

Last year, this matured edition was included as part of the renewed curriculum. It included non-finance students from three partner universities and finance students from various locations in the Netherlands, addressing the initial shortage of intercultural lecturers at each location.

The course received positive evaluations, prompting the programme manager to decide to quadruple the COIL offering in the following academic year to include the entire cohort of second-year finance students. This cemented its place in the renewed second-year finance curriculum.

WIN, WIN... WIN!

Obviously, for this extensive offer to work, more COIL partners and trained teachers needed to step up their game (pun intended). Fortunately, in June 2024, we were given the opportunity to present our COIL programme at the International Cooperation and Programs university network. This network aims to facilitate and enhance European cooperation in student exchange and international projects.

Our COIL programme was well received by potential partners who appreciated the appealing e-pedagogy design for both teachers and students. On top of this, COIL's accessibility — ensuring that all students, regardless of their geographical or financial constraints, can participate in international exchanges — and this specific COIL's focus on global sustainability challenges, aligns with the strategic goals of many institutions. We all share the aim to develop responsible global professionals with a growth mindset.

PHYSICAL MOBILITY

As for shaping global finance professionals at Inholland University of Applied Sciences, our next step after this taste of virtual exchange is to encourage physical mobility. The curriculum has recently been enriched, with finance students now being given the opportunity to go abroad in their fourth year. Remarkably, accountancy students lacked any exchange opportunities in the old curriculum, but the new curriculum design

allowed students to go on exchange in their final year.

Time will tell whether their positive COIL experience will tempt the current student population to grab this new opportunity go abroad. Therefore, early implementation of this gamification-based COIL is part of a strategy to boost the overall mobility of finance students in the future.

SERVING GENERATION Z

The evolution and maturation of virtual modes of study since the pandemic is clearly reflected in the innovative COIL course that we have integrated into our renewed finance curriculum. This approach has successfully retained the best aspects of pandemic-era innovations, combining convenience with effective, inclusive and budget-friendly international education practices. Moreover, it serves as a strategic tool to increase both student and staff mobility.

The positive feedback from both students and lecturers suggests that our COIL game's e-pedagogy design resonates well with the needs of Generation Z, enhancing both their virtual learning experience and their motivation to study abroad. The true impact of this internationalisation strategy will be measured in the coming years as we gather data — the proof of the pudding will be in the eating!

— KITTY PUIMAN LAU

1. Inholland. (2024, April 25). *Finance and business studies students enthusiastic about COIL courses*. Inholland News. <https://www.inholland.nl/nieuws/en/finance-and-business-studies-students-enthusiastic-about-coil-courses/>

GOTHENBURG

THE COOL CITY WITH GREAT IDEAS AND A GREEN HEART

Gothenburg © House of Vision

Gothenburg, host of the 35th Annual EAIE Conference and Exhibition, is a charming port city with a rich history and a big heart. Situated on the Swedish west coast, the city prides itself on its environmental credentials. It has quietly built a reputation as a sustainable tourism destination. This compact, green, pedestrian-friendly city also has several thriving sectors, including life science, mobility, and cutting-edge technology. Here's an introduction to next year's host city.



In the early 17th century, Sweden desperately needed a port to the rest of the world. In response to this, Gothenburg was founded. Thanks to its strategic location, it soon developed into Sweden's most important hub for trade and industry. Today, the city stands in the middle of the largest and most extensive urban development in modern times and is known for its innovative power and sustainable work.

HOTSPOT FOR INNOVATION AND COLLABORATION

Gothenburg fosters strong partnerships between businesses, academia and the public sector, creating a dynamic environment built on the key foundation of collaboration. The city is home to several large international companies, such as Volvo, SKF, AstraZeneca and Mölnlycke Healthcare. Furthermore, its thriving academic landscape, with two major universities, forefronts the city's inventive spirit. 10% of the population are students.

Aiming for climate neutrality by 2030, Gothenburg has built a reputation as one of the world's most sustainable tourism destinations. You will encounter a city where making sustainable choices is effortless — it just comes naturally.

CITY CENTRED VENUE

Locals emphasise Gothenburg's charm and a 'small town in a big city' feel. The 35th Annual EAIE Conference and Exhibition will take place right in the city centre at the Swedish Exhibition & Congress Centre and in-house hotel, Gothia Towers, conveniently located just 25 minutes from the airport and within walking distance of various local sights. Right on the venue's doorstep, the city offers world-class restaurants, a lively cultural scene, green parks, trendy microbreweries and Swedish design. Nestled at the edge of Sweden's western archipelago, it is also easy to reach the rugged coastline and appreciate the country's unique flora and fauna.

MECCA FOR FOODIES

Gothenburg is a natural paradise for food lovers. Thanks to the cold, clean waters surrounding the city, fish and seafood are enjoyed at a quality that is hard to match. Blue seafood is increasingly popular and acts as a nutritional powerhouse while protecting our planet's resources.

Restaurants in Gothenburg include everything from Michelin-awarded gourmet food to imaginative street food, local craft beer and classic establishments. The chefs let the seasons reflect the menus with local ingredients, and vegetarian food is served everywhere.

Make sure to enjoy a *fika* — a cup of coffee and something sweet, preferably a cinnamon bun. The Swedish tradition of *fika* has become a worldwide sensation, and for good reason.



GET YOUR CULTURE FIX IN GOTHENBURG

Gothenburg offers an abundance of cultural experiences. The city buzzes with energy all year round, with a busy schedule of theatre, opera, concerts, festivals, exhibitions and museums.

Gothenburg's music scene is extensive. The Göteborg Opera stages performances of all kinds, and the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, the Swedish National Orchestra, offers classical music at the Concert Hall.

The many museums offer fascinating insights into art, culture and nature. Highlights include the triple Michelin-starred Gothenburg Museum of Art — one of Sweden's top museums for Nordic art, the Röhsska Museum of Design and Craft, which has exhibitions on Swedish design history and the Museum of World Culture.

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Another must-see attraction is World of Volvo. The experience centre, deeply rooted in Volvo's history, offers a mix of exhibitions, activities and music.

Experience a 360-degree breathtaking cinema journey through space, back in time and to places unreachable by humans at Wisdome, Sweden's largest full-format visualisation dome, housed at Universeum National Science Centre.

The people of Gothenburg love thrift shopping, and the circular economy is growing. International brands and local labels coexist side-by-side and there are many renowned second-hand shops in the city.

SWEDISH NATURE – AT YOUR DOORSTEP

Access to nature is easy in Gothenburg with its many green spaces, leafy city parks, nature reserves, vast lakes and stunning woodlands just around the corner.

The unique archipelago is reached by a short tram and ferry ride. With over 20 islands to explore, the Gothenburg archipelago is a must-see attraction all year round. Stroll along scenic coastal paths through charming fishing villages and enjoy the beauty of the nature reserves.

THE WARM-HEARTED PEOPLE

People in Gothenburg are recognised for being friendly and having a relaxed attitude. In fact, the people can be considered one of Gothenburg's main highlights. Sometimes, just being greeted with a simple smile can make your whole day, not to mention when you're also pointed in the right direction. A very warm welcome to Gothenburg!

Article and images provided by the Gothenburg Convention Bureau



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5 MUST-DO'S IN GOTHENBURG

- **Experience Gothenburg's Museum of Art** with an impressive collection of Nordic art.
- **Take a 'Swedish fika' break in Haga**, one of the oldest neighbourhoods in Gothenburg.
- **Enjoy fresh fish and seafood** from the ocean at the newly renovated iconic fish market hall, Feskekôrka.
- **Stroll through tranquil parks** like the Garden Society of Gothenburg, the Botanical Garden, and Slottsskogen City Park.
- **Take a day trip** to the beautiful Gothenburg archipelago.



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FORUM THROUGH A JOURNEY OF INSIGHTS AND

For over two decades, Forum has been the cornerstone of conversations in international higher education, addressing the most pressing issues faced by professionals in the field. From its humble beginnings to a magazine that shapes discourse around global issues, Forum has continually grown alongside the EAIE community. Take a journey through the key milestones that have marked Forum's growth and discover how it has reflected the dynamic changes in international education over the past 25 years.



1989

EAIE founded,
first conference in
Amsterdam



2017

Forum explored how
IHE can contribute to
the SDGs



1999

First edition of Forum
magazine published

2014

EAIE celebrated
25th anniversary



2012

Introduction of first edition
related to a theme



2009

Celebrated 10 years
of Forum

2011

EAIE Publications
Committee established



THE YEARS AND CONVERSATIONS



2019

Celebrated 20 years
of Forum



2020

Forum made available
to all in response
to the pandemic



2023

Forum focused on
student well-being
and mobility challenges

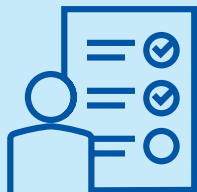
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FORUM GOES
FULLY DIGITAL





WRITE FOR THE EAIE



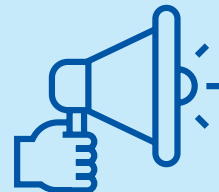
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06
AUG

How to support the international mobility of LGBTQIA+ students

Facilitate the international mobility of LGBTQ+ students in a safe and supportive manner.

<https://ow.ly/3V2550SROVB>



01
OCT

How to make your blended staff trainings a success

Explore how Blended Intensive Programme frameworks can be used for staff training and skill sharing.

<https://ow.ly/ny8C50TzLFT>



08
OCT

Maximising engagement and impact at international education conferences

Use this how-to guide to find out what you should be doing before, during and after international education conferences..

<https://ow.ly/TtO350TGxLT>

EAIE PODCAST



04
SEP

Leonard Engel and Mervin Bakker: The EAIE at 35!

Reflect on 35 years of the EAIE's journey in international higher education. Listen in to celebrate the EAIE's past, present and future.

<https://ow.ly/OE8O50TfIHA>



11
SEP

Sonya Reines-Djivanides & Ulrich Schneckener: The fundamentals of peacebuilding

Dive into the heart of peacebuilding and explore whether peace is a distant ideal or a goal we can actively pursue.

<https://ow.ly/qUaO50TI4mB>



02
OCT

Britta Piel, Richard Delahaye, Ceren Genc, Sabine Sainte-Rose, Kimmo Kuortti: Learning from failure, leveraging community

Discover how embracing failure can lead to growth, resilience and stronger international higher education partnerships.

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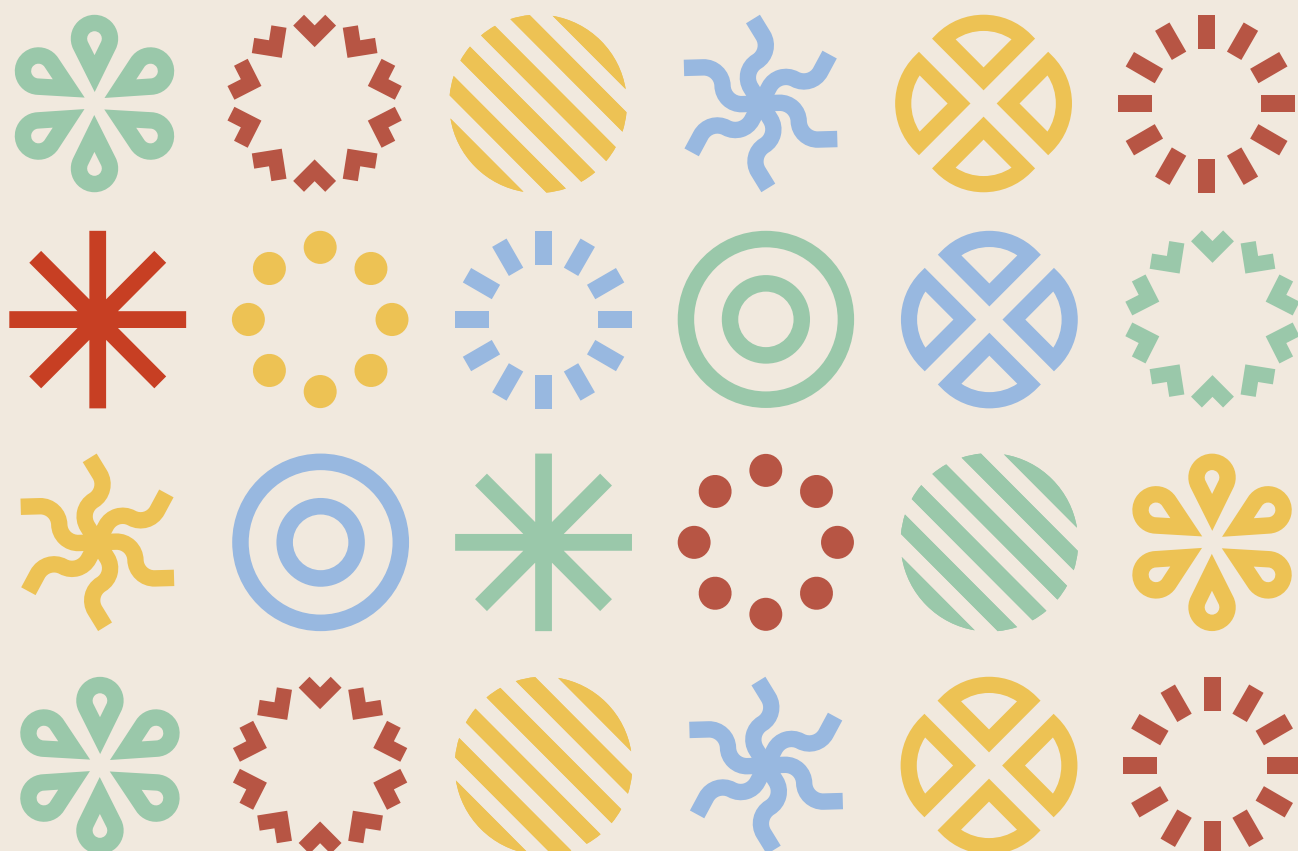
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