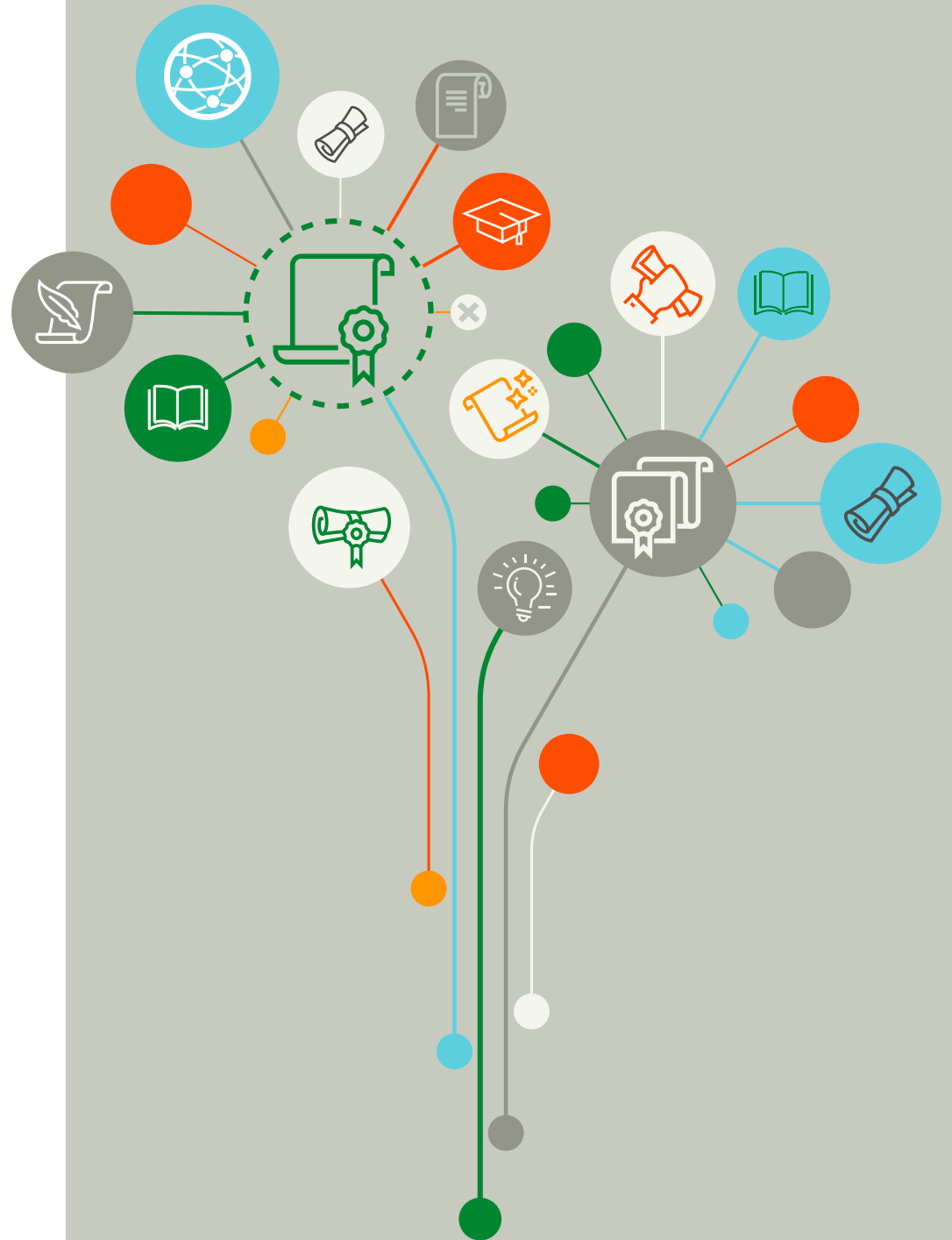


Pathways to **PRACTICE**

———— A PRACTITIONER'S TOOLKIT ————

CERTIFICATE OF INTERNATIONAL MERITS

By Karin Frydenlund



ABOUT THE EAIE

*F*ounded in 1989, the European Association for International Education (EAIE) is the European centre for knowledge, expertise and networking in the internationalisation of higher education. As a member-led association of more than 3000 members from over 95 countries, our mission is to help our members succeed professionally and to contribute to developments in international higher education from a European perspective.

We achieve this mission through a combination of training, conferences and knowledge acquisition and sharing. We partner with key stakeholder organisations and institutions to promote our membership's interests and advance international higher education in Europe and the rest of the world.

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TOPIC IN CONTEXT

Mobility programmes have long been one of the key driving forces to meet the demand of internationalisation within higher education. International offices generally provide different exchange opportunities and are rewarded by success in numbers. Internationalisation is frequently measured and reported in terms of incoming and outgoing students and teachers, duration of exchange, etc. Internationalisation at home and integration of international aspects in the general curriculum is often cited as an important endeavour, but lack measurable and visible value. Although mobility is an important aspect of internationalisation, far from all students are able to take advantage of the opportunity. Thus, it is important to recognise activities students find themselves, eg volunteer work, as well as develop additional international activities for students not able to take part in traditional mobility.

Institutions need to increase and present other activities that can equally equip the students with cultural sensitivity and global insight. By giving students the opportunity to gain an additional non-credited certificate emphasising international experiences, higher education institutions can offer international opportunities to all students. The Certificate of International Merits helps to achieve this goal. The issue of limited opportunities for a majority of students to gain international



exposure has been brought to light by the Medical Faculty at Lund University in Sweden. Although the certificate has sprung out of needs within health sciences disciplines, it is applicable to all educational programmes.

The certificate was initially developed to find ways for students with limited mobility opportunities to achieve strategic goals of internationalisation. In order to obtain the certificate, students must engage in different international activities. Throughout their studies students receive recognition for their participation in a wide range of activities, both credit bearing such as traditional mobility, summer courses, virtual exchanges and other courses with global perspective offered by the institution, as well as non-credit bearing including mentoring, attending international symposiums, conferences, *etc.* The activities can be part of both the formal and informal curriculum.

In order to obtain the final award, the students collecting international merits must submit written reflections as well as present their experiences to a student audience. The activities are uploaded in a portfolio where students keep track of what they do and keep a diary to support the final presentation.

WHAT PROBLEM DOES IT SOLVE?



While many students are able to provide proof of their international experience by having credits from their period abroad on their transcript or a diploma from an international institution, others may not have such concrete evidence. By providing a tangible Certificate of International Merits, your institution, faculty or department can provide incentives for students to enhance their global understanding and cultural sensitivity. You decide and regulate what can be part of the certificate. Students can engage in activities arranged either on the faculty/department/university level or engage in an activity arranged by a student organisation or by him/herself, eg volunteer work, (student) conferences, summer courses.

The certificate provides the students with:

- a chance to collect international experience that will lead to a concrete and visible goal of receiving a certificate
- the ability to present international experiences and competences to future employers

The certificate gives the institution a chance to:

- present and record a wide range of international activities
- stimulate students to take part in intercultural and international activities
- create new key incentives for internationalisation

WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED?

The development and implementation of a certificate is a joint effort between academics, administrative staff and students. It should be supported by the academic leadership. The decision to develop a programme might be made by a faculty board, education board, or, if the aim is to offer a certificate to all university students, the vice chancellor's office.

Staff that have agreed to act as certificate administrators will need to oversee the operational processes. This includes management of the certificate's web page on the institution's website, as well as the online registration system and personal digital portfolio for students. They will also be in charge of keeping track of the merits earned by students.

A small number of academic staff will have to support the programme through approval of the final report a student submits to earn his or her certificate. Students interested in gaining the skills and understanding that come with internationalisation, thereby earning the certificate, will stay involved and engaged during their time both at the home institution as well as abroad.

TERMINOLOGY

Certificate of International Merits:

A certificate awarded to students presenting international activities in a clear and easily accessible way

Merits:

Credits for student involvement in international activities resulting in the receipt of the Certificate of International Merits

Personal digital portfolio:

A digital diary where students keep track of their activities and upload personal reflections of their international experiences

Internationalisation at home:

Internationalisation at home takes place inside and around the higher education institution (Beelen & Jones, 2015)

KEY STEPS

IN THE PROCESS



1. Present the concept of Certificate of International Merits to academic management and staff
2. Develop operational processes
3. Secure activities
4. Develop reporting structure and process

1. PRESENT THE CONCEPT OF CERTIFICATE OF INTERNATIONAL MERITS TO ACADEMIC MANAGEMENT AND STAFF

Bring the concept to the agenda of your academic leadership responsible for internationalisation. Get approval to develop the certificate.

a. Establish a working group

- The first task of the working group is to decide on a formal title for the award – ‘Certificate of International Merits’ or similar.
- Next, identify what activities currently exist that can be included in the programme and what more can be developed. The activities may exist on institutional, departmental or faculty level.
- Put on workshops to discuss what should and should not be included as a ‘merit’. How many activities will each student collect, how to divide home and abroad activities (will students be required to go abroad at all to earn merits?), and how students are expected to present their experience in a final report.

b. Present the certificate to the academic management

- While creating the programme, it is advisable to keep academic management apprised of developments.
- Upon final approval, choose a launch date.
- Academic leadership responsible for internationalisation should publish an official statement at the time of launch.

2. DEVELOP OPERATIONAL PROCESSES

With approval from the academic leadership, it is time to develop the administrative processes and routines. The administration needs to:

a. Create an online registration system for students.

b. Create a personal digital portfolio for students.

- If possible, make use of existing online learning platforms used at your institution.

- The portfolio should be structured in a way that students can upload evidence of participation, pictures and notes/diary from activities.

c. Create a website.

Create a website with instructions on how to sign up, how to engage in different international activities, information about how the digital portfolio works, contact details for programme leadership, a statement from the academic leadership, and a statement to future employers.

d. Develop a marketing and communication plan.

- Use existing platforms, including the school website, the newly created programme website, and social media.
- Secure quotes from programme leaders or academic staff involved.
- Print brochures or put a notice in the school newspaper if budget allows.

3. SECURE ACTIVITIES

During the study period, students should engage in a previously agreed-upon amount of activities with an international perspective. Some activities require continuous or multiple engagements, eg guest lectures or membership in a foreign-language club.

a. Examples of activities at home:

- Foreign-language clubs or language cafés
- Mentoring visiting international students
- Guest lectures on global topics
- Virtual exchange, either extra-curricular or part of a module already in the course. If it is the latter, student should do additional reflection to acquire certificate credit.

b. Examples of activities abroad:

- Traditional exchange studies
- Data collection/thesis work
- Summer courses
- Conferences/workshops
- Short-term mobility visits

4. DEVELOP REPORTING STRUCTURE AND PROCESS

a. Proof of participation

Students should collect evidence of participation and upload this to the portfolio. If attending a lecture, workshop or similar they can ask the instructor to sign the programme or take a photograph that confirms participation. If a student attends a course or a conference, it is usually possible to get a certificate of participation.

b. Documenting merits

Students should reflect on their experiences after each activity and upload the reflections to their personal digital portfolio. Questions to consider in reflections (the same as in the final report):

- How has your participation contributed to an expansion of your global perspective in relation to your education and your future profession?
- How can the experience be applied in different cross-cultural situations?

c. Completion of international activities

When the student has completed a minimum of three activities, it is time to notify the certificate administrator, who can give final approval of the activities and confirm that the student can proceed to write a final report and present the experiences to fellow students.

i. What to include in the final report:

- A summary of the activities
- A reflection focusing on the following questions:
 - How has your participation contributed to an expansion of your global perspective in relation to your education and future profession?
 - What has your participation taught you in relation to your education and future profession?
 - How can the experience be applied in different cross-cultural situations?
 - What has been most rewarding and interesting about collecting international merits?

ii. What is the format of the report?

- The final report should include 500–1000 words in which students reflect on their international experiences in relation to their education and future profession.
- The report should be structured as an essay with distinct paragraphs and headings where the reflective questions are the headings. The report may include photos.

d. Approval from academic staff

In order to obtain the certificate, academic staff members involved in the programme should review the final report. Academic staff should keep in mind that collecting merits and reflecting upon international experiences is very personal, and only give approval as a quality-control measure that the report was written to university standards.

e. Final presentation

In order to earn the certificate, students should present their experiences in a ceremony or poster session to other students in the programme as well as programme leaders.

“

The Certificate of International Merits is a great way to promote international experiences among students, as well as to encourage reflection and discussion between students and professionals.

— *Hampus Holmer, Medical School graduate 2017*

SUCCESS STORIES

“

Through my Certificate of International Merits I have been able to achieve the international focus I wanted during my studies. There have been many opportunities to collect merits and it has increased my knowledge of global hearing healthcare.

— *Elisabeth Karlsson, Audiology graduate 2017*





“

Certificate of International Merits gave me an opportunity to seek and reflect upon international experiences in a way that I otherwise never would have done.

— *Artin Entezarjou, Medical School graduate 2017*



SUCCESS CHECKLIST

-  Don't rush! Take the time needed to involve administration, academic staff and students in order to give the certificate a solid basis to grow on when it is launched.
-  Don't 'copy and paste' a certificate from another institution. Make it your own. Universities are unique.
-  Don't forget to inform and involve your communication department before you plan the launch.
-  You will be asked, "How much does this cost?" Remember that you can answer, "A lot of the activities and engagements already exist".



TAKE- AWAYS

The implementation of a Certificate of International Merits within your institution will open up new opportunities to visualise and measure the success of different international activities. It will provide new ways of rewarding activities beyond mobility, encouraging staff to incorporate internationalisation into the curricula. Students will engage in activities throughout their education, seek their own activities and learn to connect their education, personal development and global awareness as a triangle where all three corners are interconnected.

FURTHER READING

Further reading:

Beelen, J., & Jones, E. (2015). Looking back at 15 years of internationalisation at home. *Forum, winter issue*, 6-8.

De Wit, H., Hunter, F., Howard, L., & Egron-Polak, E. (Eds.). (2015). *Internationalisation of Higher Education*. Brussels: European Parliament, Directorate-General for Internal Policies.

Hanson, L., 2010. Global Citizenship, Global Health and the Internationalization of Curriculum: A study of Transformative Potential. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 15.

Leask, B. (2015). *Internationalizing the curriculum*. London: Routledge.

Parmar, M. 2011, Internationalization of the Curriculum: A study of internationalization, its development and stimulation for three different educational programs at the faculty of medicine. Lund University, Sweden, pedagogical paper.

Links to universities offering Certificate of International Merits or similar:



[Lund University, Faculty of Medicine, Sweden](#)



[Gothenburg University, Sahlgrenska Academy, Sweden](#)



[University of Bergen, Norway](#)



[University of Nottingham, England](#)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Karin Frydenlund has extensive experience in internationalisation. After eight years of managing the International Office at the Faculty of Medicine at Lund University, Sweden, she joined the International Office at Malmö University, Sweden, in February 2017. Prior to these positions she worked on the development of internationalisation at the University of Southampton, England, and at the International Institute for Industrial Environmental Economics at Lund University. Karin is a steering group member of the EAIE Expert Community *Health and Welfare Education*.