

No travel required: providing international experience to students

Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Conference 2021 (Chartered Association of Business Schools)

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Aim:

The aim of this session is to outline the evolving approaches to enhancing students' international experiences within a postgraduate programme. The lessons learned from these approaches will be discussed with future developments identified. This contributes to the theme of developing enterprising, ethical and work-ready students through sharing a new initiative in addressing the issue of enabling students with global skills which is an important part of work-readiness. Participants will learn how the two approaches were designed and utilised in this postgraduate programme and how they may be able to adapt a similar approach in their own practices.

Methodology:

Our MA Marketing Suite of programmes have always relied on the diverse, international student and staff base for its internationalisation and international experience of students. Physical international student exchanges, which often is the most prevalent way of enhancing international experience and developing global skills, was not an option for this suite of programmes for various reasons. This includes the challenges posed by a one-year time limited programme, sustainability, and perhaps most important, widening participation and inclusive opportunities for all students. Within this context, this programme has been exploring ways in which the internationalisation agenda can be achieved without the need for students to physically travel.

This session will outline and explore the evolution of this as follows:

1. Stage 1 - module level: the process started with a dedicated 'International Week' in every term where each module will explore an 'international' theme related to the content of the module. Some of the activities during this week included discussing an international case study, inviting international academics or practitioners to deliver sessions or including international specific content in the lecture. This was piloted for a year and had mixed outcomes. The main drawbacks of this were: it relies on the module teaching team to arrange the task/content and there was very mixed engagement with this; students didn't feel any discernible difference between this week compared to any other.
2. Stage 2 – virtual exchanges: a specific virtual student exchange project with a university outside of the UK was organised. This specific exchange involved mixing students from two different levels of study in two different disciplines - social policy and marketing. The former had the knowledge and understanding of social justice related issues but lacked the marketing and communications skills to promote these messages. The latter had the marketing and communication skills but, in most cases, lacked a detailed understanding of social justice issues and initiatives to address them. Hence the aim of this exchange was to provide students with an opportunity to learn from each other discipline specific skills and knowledge as well as the exchange of cultural insights and ways of working. The feedback and impact of this session will be discussed during the session.
3. Stage 3 – international week: following on from feedback of the stage 1 outlined above, a dedicated international week where all normal teaching is suspended was organised. This included workshops in cultural awareness, international industry speakers, a short student

exchange project with an international university as well as international themed quiz. The feedback and impact of this session will be discussed during the session.

The participants will also be able to share their own experiences and best practices within the internationalisation landscape.

Contribution:

The benefits and impact include:

- Provide all students the opportunity to develop global skills regardless of their economic situation, family backgrounds, caring responsibilities and so on.
- Providing students international experiences and global skill development opportunities at various levels with different audiences.
- Exploring how businesses work in different countries in different contexts.
- Student reflections on their own global skills and the importance of continuously developing them.

The challenges include:

- Engagement – both at staff and student levels
- Measuring impact of global skills development

Key takeaways:

Internationalisation of the curriculum and developing global skills in graduates has gained greater recognition within business education. The globalised and interconnected world we live in makes it extremely unlikely for a graduate to succeed in their careers without these skills. Given this, business schools have a responsibility and requirement to ensure that all students have an opportunity to develop these skills. Physical travel is not always necessary to achieve this and can in fact disadvantage some groups of students (e.g. those with caring responsibilities). Finding new ways to provide these opportunities to students need to be explored. This session shares this journey of exploration within one postgraduate programme.