

DEVELOPING GLOBAL, VIRTUAL TEAMWORK SKILLS

for VET graduate
employability

An International Specialised Skills Institute Fellowship.

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Sponsored by the Higher Education and Skills Group, Department of Education and Training (Victorian Government)

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i. Executive Summary

An increase in the exchange of knowledge, trade and capital around the world, driven by technological innovation has created a globally connected world. Rapid advances in information communication technology has reshaped the style and frequency of global communications and led to an increase in work being conducted online using global, virtual teams. This is driving a need for students, the future work force, to have high level intercultural communication skills and digital literacy to manage working across computers, cultures and time.

As it is incumbent on tertiary education to prepare graduates for employability, business and government are putting pressure on tertiary institutions to design authentic learning opportunities that build skills to manage the technology and intercultural communication required to work in this globally and digitally connected world.

The Fellow responded to this new skill demand by investigating international educational approaches to developing graduates' global skills in order to inform a pedagogical approach for training Australian vocational education students in this field. This addressed core policy priorities of the Department of Education and Training which included developing quality education and training systems for VET, delivering innovative and quality training that meets current and future industry needs and developing greater employment and further educational outcomes.

The Fellowship research began at the end of 2016 with the Fellow attending two international conferences in the Netherlands; Beezr: Virtual Collaboration across Cultures and COIL: Collaborative Online International Learning Europe, to learn from educators actively conducting global, virtual student collaborations. The Fellow interviewed key speakers at the conferences and gained valuable insights

from the presentations into the challenges and benefits of various methodologies for educating teachers and students on how to work with the complexities of different cultures in multiple time zones using new digital technologies.

The Fellow also visited tertiary institutions in Belgium to interview practitioners working on strategies for expanding global collaborations. In order to gain understanding of business practices in preparing employees for global virtual teamwork, the Fellow undertook training in business methodologies for identifying and developing intercultural competency in employees to prepare them for working with other cultures.

This report captures the key learnings from the international discoveries and recommends actions for tertiary institutions, government and industry for developing intercultural competency and digital literacy to prepare vocational education graduates for employability in the highly digitised and culturally connected 21st century.

1. Fellowship Background

1.1 Aim

This International Specialised Skills Institute fellowship was sponsored by the Higher Education and Skills Group (HESG) Department of Education and Training, Victoria. As such, the Fellowship required a particular focus on key priority areas that would develop quality education and training for Victorians in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector. The priority areas this Fellowship focused on are:

1. Delivering innovative and quality training that meets current and future industry needs
2. Developing greater employment and further educational outcomes

In keeping with this requirement, the aim of this fellowship was to encourage and enable the development of global virtual teamwork skills in the vocational education and training sector for graduates' global employability. Employees with the skills to work globally are in demand due to an increase in the exchange of knowledge, trade and capital around the world, driven by technological innovation.¹ Companies are finding it hard to locate globally competent workers who can effectively operate across technology, countries and cultures in this globalised environment.²

PriceWaterhouse Coopers (PwC) estimate that by 2020 global worker mobility will increase by 50%.³ For Australia, worker mobility will be influenced by closer trade ties with Asia and the rapid growth in Asian middleclass consumption which "...represents an extraordinary opportunity for Australian businesses, particularly service based businesses."⁴ Globally, it is estimated that there will be a shortfall of 85 million globally qualified workers by 2020.⁵

Tertiary education institutes have traditionally developed intercultural skills through student exchange or study tours however; these are not as accessible for VET students as they are for Higher Education students. Limited mobility grants (for example, the governments' New Colombo Plan has only one category for VET – Endeavour Grants) makes funding study tours difficult for VET students. Furthermore, the Victorian Training Guarantee (VTG) funding rules requires a VET student to reside in the state they are studying in, which diminishes student exchange opportunities for this sector.

The paucity of intercultural competency learning options from mobility, alongside the demand for new digital global work skills, indicated there was a need to design new learning experiences that helped prepare VET graduates for cross-cultural, digital collaboration for careers in a global age.⁶

In order to address this, the Fellowship sought to examine innovative and

1 Reimers, F. M. (2013). "Assessing global education: An opportunity for the OECD." Retrieved February 3: 2015.

2 Chaney, Lillian H., author, & Martin, Jeanette S. (2014). Intercultural business communication (Sixth ed.). Boston: Pearson.

3 PricewaterhouseCoopers 2014, The Talent challenge: Adapting to Growth. <https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/hr-management-services/publications/assets/ceosurvey-talent-challenge.pdf>

4 p3.. <https://www.skillsforaustralia.com/2016/06/27/business-services-industry-brief/>

5 Dobbs, R., et al. (2012). "Talent tensions ahead: A CEO briefing." McKinsey Quarterly 2012(4): 92-102.

6 Coryell, JE, Spencer, B & Sehin, O 2013, 'Cosmopolitan Adult Education and Global Citizenship: Perceptions From a European Itinerant Graduate-Professional Study Abroad Program', Adult Education Quarterly,& Sehin 2013)

effective international approaches for developing global skills to inform a best practice approach that could be applied in the VET sector in Victoria. There was emphasis on examining how technology was being used to conduct virtual global collaborations to ensure skills development did not rely on mobility and was accessible and equitable for all Victorian VET students. As Europe is particularly active in developing global virtual learning approaches, due to significant support from the European Commission through the Erasmus Programme, the Fellow focused the research on this regions' emerging practices.

It was envisaged that the learnings from the international investigation would help to inform the development of an instructional design framework for developing graduates' abilities to participate in global virtual collaborations as well as a Good Practice Guide to assist teachers delivering instruction to students for how to work in global virtual teams. This guide would extend earlier work conducted in 2013 by the International Education Association of Australia (IEAA) and the Office of Learning and Teaching which developed a series of Good Practice Guides for Learning and Teaching Across Cultures (LTAC).

Together, it is hoped that these outcomes will assist with the development of learning approaches to improve intercultural communication and collaboration skills. This would give Victorian VET students' greater abilities for working locally in Victoria's multi-cultural society, as well as open up a whole world of employment opportunities VET students could undertake as members of global virtual teams.

1.2. Research methodology

The research undertaken for this Fellowship is classified as applied research. Applied research is undertaken by a company or an individual in order to address a specific problem that society or business is facing.⁷ The problem this research is addressing is: **How to encourage and enable the development of VET graduates' global skills through global, virtual collaborations.**

The Fellowship used a qualitative research approach as qualitative methods can supply a greater depth of information about the nature of the learning processes.⁸ Qualitative research is based on the notion that social reality is created and sustained through the subjective experience of people involved in communication⁹ which makes it particularly relevant for understanding how global skills, such as intercultural communication, are developed.

An interpretivist theoretical perspective was applied to this research, as Greene¹⁰ explains, "interpretive studies seek to explore peoples' experiences and their views or perspectives of these experiences." As such this interpretive study placed emphasis on experience and interpretation rather than statistics.

The sample for this study was drawn from tertiary education practitioners (professional staff, academics, Learning and Teaching staff) involved in designing or delivering approaches for developing intercultural communication skills.

Data collection methods included interviews and documentation. The multiple modes of data collection allowed for between-method triangulation, which Denzin¹¹ describes as taking more than one approach to gathering the data.

7 Bajpai, N. (2011). Business research methods, Pearson Education India.

8 Matveev, A.V., 2002. The advantages of employing quantitative and qualitative methods in intercultural research: Practical implications from the study of the perceptions of intercultural communication competence by American and Russian managers. *Theory of communication and applied communication*, 1(1), pp.59-67.

9 Morgan, G. and Smircich, L., 1980. The case for qualitative research. *Academy of management review*, 5(4), pp.491-500.

10 Greene, J.C., 1990, P5. Three views on the nature and role of knowledge in social science. *The paradigm dialog*, pp.227-245.

11 Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S., 1994. *Handbook of qualitative research*. Sage publications

Quinlan¹² argues that between method triangulation can provide a broader and potentially more valid view of the phenomena being researched as data from one source can be compared to another to produce clearer patterns and answers.

One on one interviews were conducted face to face in the Netherlands, Belgium and Australia. Ethics approval was applied for from RMIT University Ethics Committee to allow interview findings to be used in research papers. In the interviews, practitioners were asked open questions regarding the design or delivery of approaches they had taken for developing students' intercultural communication skills as well as semi-structured questions based on the 6 good practice principles of Learning and Teaching Across Cultures¹³ to understand how these might relate to intercultural communication and working in global, virtual teams. See Appendix A.

The documentation data collection method involved collecting journal papers and case studies from the Office of Learning and Teaching that revealed strategies for developing graduates' intercultural communication skills for working in global virtual teams.

Thematic analysis was chosen to assist with 'identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data and organises and describes the data set in rich detail.'¹⁴ Thematic analysis of the interviews and documentation was undertaken by uploading all the data into Nvivo Qualitative analysis software and organising and sorting data under nodes which were then organised into core concepts and key themes. These themes informed the instructional design framework for developing intercultural communication skills and a Good Practice Guide for working in global virtual teams.

1.3 Training

A secondary aim of the Fellowship was to undertake the Intercultural Readiness Check (IRC) licensing course to develop knowledge of how business readies employees for intercultural communication on global projects, particularly those undertaken in global virtual teams. As VET is skills-based learning, it was deemed important to understand the business perspective in order to produce a framework that developed the skills global business required.

The Intercultural Readiness Check¹⁵ is an instrument which claims four competences: Intercultural Sensitivity, Intercultural Communication, Building Commitment and Managing Uncertainty, are necessary to strengthen international management development. The IRC also finds three criteria are required to be interculturally effective. These criteria are adapted from Thomas and Fitzsimmons¹⁶ and include the ability to connect (form relationships), the ability to perform (do things) and the ability to enjoy (for achievement). The IRC licensing course enabled the application of authentic business approaches to the design and development of tertiary education experiences for developing student's intercultural communication skills.

1.4 The Fellow's Bio

The Fellow, Sally Parrott, is passionate about developing tertiary students' global employability skills, particularly their intercultural communication skills. In her recent role as a Program Manager of VET Marketing & Communications and Public Relations programs at RMIT University, Sally developed a model for students to learn how to work across cultures and time zones in global virtual teams (GVT).

12 Quinlan, C., Babin, B., Carr, J. and Griffin, M., 2019. Business research methods. South Western Cengage.

13 Leask, B., and Carroll, J., Learning and Teaching Across Cultures: Good Practice Principles and Quick Guides. International Education Association of Australia (IEAA), Melbourne, October 2013

14 Braun, V. and Clarke, V., 2006, p.75. Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative research in psychology, 3(2), pp.77-1

15 Brinkmann, J., 2002. Business Ethics and Intercultural Communication. Exploring the overlap between two academic fields. Intercultural Communication, 5, p.2002.

16 Smith, P.B., Peterson, M.F. and Thomas, D.C., 2008. The handbook of cross-cultural management research. Sage Publications.

Referred to as a Virtual, Global Work Integrated Learning (WIL) project (VGWP), this model has been recognised with a Reimagine Education gold award for nurturing employability (2017) and a RMIT University Award for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (2016) as well as forming the focus of a chapter written by the Fellow in the 2018 book; *The Globalisation of Higher Education*.¹⁷

Sally is a member of the Australian Collaboration Education Network (ACEN) and the International Education Association of Australia (IEAA) and has actively shared the VGWP model at research symposiums, conferences, workshops and presentations with these organisations and their special interest groups in Victoria and Nationally.

The VGWP model is also being used as a case study for the Fellows' Higher Degree by Research. This research is investigating how authentic, experiential learning can be adapted for developing graduate's skills for global virtual teamwork and as such is directly related to this Fellowship.

¹⁷ Singh, M., Gray, T., Hall, T. and Downey, G., 2018. Globalizing Higher Education Policy Practice: Internationalizing Education Through Learning Transformations in Knowledge Construction. In *The Globalisation of Higher Education* (pp. 445-460). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

2. Fellowship Learnings

2.1 Australian Situation

This Fellowship is important for the future employability of young Australians, more specifically, the employability of current vocational education and training (VET) students, which are a large portion of the future skilled workforce. The research undertaken, and outcomes developed, from this Fellowship address a key employability opportunity; employees with the skills to work globally are in demand. The business world is now fully globalised, and employers simply can't locate enough globally competent workers who can effectively operate across technology, countries and cultures.

For Australia, worker mobility is being influenced by closer trade ties with Asia and the rapid growth in Asian middleclass consumption which "...represents an extraordinary opportunity for Australian businesses, particularly service-based businesses. This is driving demand for specialists with knowledge of Asian markets."¹⁸ At the same time, there has been a rapid increase in the uptake of the global virtual team mode of working which provides companies with access to an international pool of talent. Suddenly being located at the farthest corner of the world is no longer an impediment to Australian graduates with the skills to work online using digital technologies in global teams.

Developing these global business skills, which include intercultural communication and working in global virtual teams, has been recognised by governments and

educational institutes as crucial for economic and employment stability. The Global Citizenship Symposium in Australia¹⁹ reported that the two dominant themes across government and education are: i) preparing young people for the global economy and ii) developing their global social awareness and capacities.²⁰

2.2 Skills Enhancement and Knowledge Acquisition

The aim of this Fellowship was to cultivate skills and knowledge for:

1. Delivering innovative and quality training that meets current and future industry needs
2. Developing greater employment and further educational outcomes

This was enacted through an investigation of best practices and approaches for undertaking global virtual collaborations between tertiary institutions internationally. This knowledge was then applied to designing approaches for VET students' in Victoria to engage in global virtual collaborations to develop skills required for global employability. Specifically, this Fellowship set out to:

- » Examine innovative and effective approaches for developing global virtual collaboration skills to inform a best practice approach for VET in Victoria.

18 PwC Industry Brief-Business Services 2016, p3. <https://www.skillsforaustralia.com/2016/06/27/business-services-industry-brief/> (Accessed January 28 2017)

19 Murray, D, 2014, 'Fostering Global Citizenship and Global Competence: A National Symposium, International Education Association of Australia Melbourne

20 Coryell, JE, Spencer, B & Sehin, O 2013, 'Cosmopolitan Adult Education and Global Citizenship: Perceptions From a European Itinerant Graduate-Professional Study Abroad Program', Adult Education Quarterly,

- » Develop an Instructional design framework and Good Practice Guide to assist teachers to develop students' skills for working in global virtual teams.
- » Disseminate these resources to encourage and enable the development of skills for undertaking global virtual collaborations in tertiary students in the vocational education and training sector, for global employability.

The skills and knowledge developed by this Fellowship will be extended to three cohorts:

1. The Fellow - The fellow acquired skills and knowledge surrounding approaches for developing tertiary students' global skills. This knowledge was used to develop resources for the second and third cohorts.
2. VET Practitioner - Resources were developed to provide tertiary teachers, particularly VET teachers, with the skills and knowledge to assist students with developing global skills.
3. VET students - The VET students at the heart of this fellowship will ultimately benefit from the teaching resources developed through this fellowship as the resources will be applied in the classroom to develop their global skills for employability.

2.3 Actions taken to address skill and knowledge development

A structured series of approaches were developed to gain a better understanding of how educational institutions were creating approaches for developing graduates' global virtual collaboration skills for employability. This included attending and presenting at international conferences, interviewing leading practitioners in the global skills development field, undertaking training in developing global skills for business and collecting data through documentation research. These are expanded upon in the following four skills enhancement and knowledge acquisition areas.

Skills Enhancement and Knowledge Acquisition Area 1: International learning and sharing

The first part of the applied research was to examine innovative and effective approaches for developing global virtual collaboration skills to inform a best practice approach for VET students in Victoria. This was enacted by attending two International conferences on virtual collaboration in the Netherlands.

The first international conference, Beezr: Virtual Collaboration across Cultures, was held at the University of Applied Sciences Amsterdam (UASA) in November 2016. It attracted 100 attendees from 15 different countries to hear about developments in global virtual collaboration from both the business and education perspectives.

The second international conference, Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) Europe, was held at The Hague University of Applied Sciences (THUAS) in The Hague in December 2016. It attracted 200 attendees from 60 different institutions and organisations in over a dozen countries. The main focus was on the importance of COIL as a tool for meaningful intercultural learning as well as a secondary focus on understanding and developing the skills and knowledge required to facilitate COIL. The fellow was invited to present a workshop on using free digital technologies for collaborating at the COIL conference.

Skills Enhancement and Knowledge Acquisition Area 2: Understanding practice through interviews

The second knowledge acquisition approach was to interview leading practitioners who had experience with developing global virtual collaborations. This primary research was undertaken to obtain first-hand accounts of what did or did not work to encourage and enable students to participate in and develop skills for global, virtual communicating and collaborating. A series of open ended and semi-structured questions were asked (see 3.2 Research methodology) and responses are reported in section 5 below. Six practitioners from five universities in four countries were interviewed to understand a variety of perspectives and experiences.

Skills Enhancement and Knowledge Acquisition Area 3: Training to understand business needs

The third approach to Skills Enhancement and Knowledge Acquisition involved undertaking the IRC Licensing Programme to become a certified Intercultural Readiness Check (IRC) trainer. The IRC is a tool that has been used by more than 40,000 people internationally to help them better connect to people from other cultures and perform more effectively in intercultural business teams. The IRC was created and is administered in the Netherlands, where the training also took place, however, it is available all over the world and in eight languages.

The IRC training helped to provide an understanding of how business approaches developing skills for collaborating with other cultures as well as approaches taken for assessing intercultural capabilities.

Skills Enhancement and Knowledge Acquisition Area 4: Scoping Review for Developing Framework and Guides

The final area of knowledge acquisition was to scope academic and business literature for data relevant to developing intercultural communication skills for tertiary graduates. This involved conducting a scoping review of the literature more akin to an environmental scan. A scoping review is not a systematic review, rather it is a broad survey of the literature without in-depth evaluation.²¹ Business reports, business websites and business research was accessed along with government and educational policies and projects and also academic journals. Parameters applied to the review included:

- » Currency: Must be from the past ten years
- » Relevance: Must be concerned with developing intercultural communication skills for employability (rather than sojourning)

- » Technology: Must explore or access the digital environment and/or technology tools to conduct intercultural communication or develop skills for working in global virtual teams.

The findings from this scoping review are reported on in Section 3 below.

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Martin-Misener, R. and Valaitis, R., 2009. A scoping literature review of collaboration between primary care and public health. A Report to the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation 2008 February.

3. International Experience and Discovery

The Fellowship provided the opportunity to travel to Europe to gather data through attending two international conferences, conducting interviews at four universities in two countries and undertaking an intercultural readiness training course.

The international conferences provided valuable insights into how educational institutions have approached internationalisation and in particular, the development of global skills through global virtual collaborations. The interviews provided more in-depth exploration of personal experiences of undertaking global collaborations and developing students' intercultural communication skills. The intercultural readiness check training offered a business perspective on analysing and developing intercultural skills for global business.

The data was analysed using a thematic analysis approach and is reported upon in section 6, under the main themes that arose.

3.1 International conference summaries

Beezr: Virtual Collaboration across Cultures conference was the culmination of a two-year EU ERASMUS+ funded project across five universities: Austria: University of Applied Sciences (BFI), Vienna, Croatia: University of Zagreb (FOI), Varazdin, Croatia, Denmark: Business Academy Aarhus (BAA), Aarhus, Netherlands: Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (HvA), Amsterdam and Poland: Kozminski University, Warsaw.

The aim of the project was to create a community of students, teachers, businesses and organisations focused on virtual teamwork, shared learning and creative problem solving and knowledge sharing. The outcomes included a suite of tools and processes for students from EU countries to engage in global virtual

collaborations hosted on <http://www.beezr.eu/>, these were launched and shared at the Beezr Conference.

The conference highlighted the urgency of the message from business that virtual teamwork is an expected skill for working not in the future but right now. The CEO of Cisco summed this up by stating that students need to be taught the skills for how to function in global virtual teams consisting of colleagues in many different countries and from many different cultures as this is now the business norm.

Practitioners from institutions in over a dozen countries showcased how they were developing students' cross-cultural competences and virtual teamwork skills through students collaborating across different countries, disciplines and courses on research projects or business cases. There was particular emphasis on how they were using online tools such as Skype, email and social media to work together without having to travel, which was relevant to the Fellow's project.

The Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) Europe conference represented the first time Europe was exposed to the USA-developed COIL approach. Established by the State University New York (SUNY) COIL centre, the COIL approach fosters cross-cultural student competence through the development of multicultural learning environments that link university or college classes in different countries. In the COIL model, students from different cultures undertake shared learning experiences with faculty members from each country co-teaching and managing coursework.

Jon Rubin, Founder of the SUNY COIL center, opened the conference with a presentation that highlighted the importance of COIL as a tool for meaningful intercultural learning. This set the tone for the conference where international

education experts including Darla Deardorff, Rick Arrowood and Robert O'Dowd expanded on how intercultural collaboration can be used to make people aware of their 'bubbles,' and embrace different perspectives.

There were many sessions on different international approaches for working collaboratively online and the enablers, blockers, challenges and rewards of this emerging internationalisation strategy. SUNY COIL were making concerted efforts to expand their Global Partner Network and encourage the COIL modality to become widely adopted in the field so there was also match making sessions, with strong encouragement for institutions to partner up and work together. The fellow obliged by connecting with three institutions in the Netherlands which resulted in four COIL projects for VET students in the school of Vocational Business Education at RMIT University, Australia.

The outcomes from the two conferences included forming valuable contacts, the delivery of four COIL projects in 2017, gathering of resources and models for collaborating in global, virtual teams and data for the Good Practice Guide and Instructional Design Framework.

3.2 International Practitioner Interviews

Four face to face interviews were conducted in Netherlands and Belgium and two interviews were conducted via Skype with Vietnam and USA with practitioners who had notable experience in developing and delivering global virtual collaborations. The aim was to understand different learning design approaches taken for international collaborations and to unearth the critical success factors for a successful global collaboration. The open-ended questions were outlined in the previous section and the findings from the interviews are incorporated in the themes section below.

3.3 Intercultural Readiness Check training

The Intercultural Readiness Check (IRC) is a tool that examines what makes people effective when working across cultures. Developed by Brinkmann & Van Weerdenburg²² the Intercultural Readiness Check captures four intercultural competences, which can be developed.

1. **Intercultural Sensitivity:** The degree to which a person takes an active interest in others, their cultural background, needs and perspectives.
2. **Building Commitment:** The degree to which a person actively influences the social environment, concerned with integrating different people and personalities.
3. **Intercultural Communication:** The degree to which a person actively monitors own communicative behaviours.
4. **Managing Uncertainty:** The degree to which a person is able to manage the greater uncertainty of intercultural situations.

The IRC helps business to better understand how their employees approach intercultural interactions and how they can be supported in developing the intercultural competences they need. It has been developed over a 15-year series of studies, through assessments of 45,000 members of international organizations, testing their competence in working across cultures.

The IRC certification course involved training to understand how to administer the IRC test, create and interpret an IRC profile, design improvement plans and provide feedback and recommendations. Eight people from five different countries were in the same training program so there was an added opportunity to learn from each other's cultural differences as well. The outcomes from the Training included the Fellow being certified as an IRC licensed facilitator, the establishment of a network of intercultural practitioners and the gathering of data for the Instructional Design Framework.

22 Brinkmann, J., 2002. Business Ethics and Intercultural Communication. Exploring the overlap between two academic fields. Intercultural Communication, 5, p.2002.

4. Themed Findings from Knowledge Acquisition

Two weeks of discussions, presentations and interviews from two international conferences on intercultural competence and global skills development was collated and added to the findings from the scoping review of practices concerning operating in global virtual teams, and the intercultural readiness training to arrive at three themed findings summarised here under:

1. The importance of global virtual collaboration education
2. Educational strategies for developing global virtual collaboration
3. Critical success factors for global virtual collaboration

4.1 Theme 1. The importance of global virtual collaboration education

1a: Employability

Employability was a key driver for institutions to develop opportunities for students to partake in global virtual collaborations. Having the skills to work in global virtual teams was seen as an employability skill that could help graduates gain employment and economies to prosper.

1b: Equity and scalability

It was recognised that global virtual (online) collaborations provided options for addressing issues of equity in international learning experiences. Traditional international learning approaches have required travel (study tours or exchanges) which favoured those with the time, funds, mental or physical ability to travel.

Ambitious targets are being set by governments and educational institutions for international mobility experiences. The European commission, for example, stipulates that all universities must have 20% of students having a mobility experience. With 2014 rates of European students studying abroad topping out at 4.2% for Germany²³ the challenge of reaching this mobility target through travel (study abroad) is an issue of scalability. Only so many students can or will travel (due to work, family, financial or ability limitations) so alternative approaches are required. Digital technologies are being harnessed to provide 'virtual mobility experiences' where students connect, learn and collaborate online with other students around the world. These global virtual collaborations are being developed to ensure they can provide a sufficient alternative international experience to count as a 'mobility experience'. In many instances, it is found that they are in fact providing a more relevant international experience as they also develop 21st century employability skills for working in global, virtual teams.

1c: World Peace

Global virtual collaboration is seen to have a role in contributing to world peace through encouraging broader understanding.²⁴ Collaborating with other countries and cultures can break down conflict and misconceptions and grow understanding of other perspectives.²⁵

Immigration and refugee crisis is changing the multicultural composition of many countries and global virtual collaborations present an opportunity to develop empathy and acceptance of these new members of societies by learning more about the global conflicts and the cultural heritage of immigrants or refugees without incurring travel risks to unsafe environments.

4.2 Theme 2. Educational strategies for developing global virtual collaboration

Students have been learning from and with each other for over a century. Collaborative ways of learning began through the mail, then moved to the airwaves via radio or telephone then to TV and now, collaborations are increasingly occurring online via digital devices such as smart phones, tablets or computers. Rapid development in digital technologies has accelerated the speed and ways in which students can connect and collaborate and this is putting demands on education to create new strategies that keep pace with digital advances changing how global virtual collaborations are conducted.

There have been many different models, each termed in their own way, for collaborating online, and this has made this way of working difficult to curate. Disparate names and approaches also make it hard to locate a body of work

surrounding global virtual collaborations for research. It was suggested at both international conferences the Fellow attended, that a more unified naming convention and approach be adopted to assist with understanding what has been achieved and what needs to be further investigated and developed. Some of the more popular terms and approaches used for developing students intercultural competency over the past decade are listed below.

Globally Networked Learning Environments (GNLE)

Globally Networked Learning Environments (GNLE) are the broader category that most global-partnered online learning approaches fall under. GNLE's focus on collaboration and mutual learning, including collaboratively developed curricula, pedagogies, and learning spaces.²⁶

Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL)

The State University New York (SUNY) Centre for Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) developed COIL to provide cost-effective internationalisation strategies. COIL fosters faculty and student collaboration with peers abroad through partnered learning experiences. Potential partners attend the annual COIL conference to meet other institutions to work with and co-develop experiential and collaborative student learning experiences.

Global Virtual Work Integrated Learning (WIL) Project

The global, virtual WIL project (GVWP) connects students and industry internationally to collaborate on solving a live industry problem in need of a global solution. Students from multiple educational institutions around the world form global virtual teams and use online digital technologies to develop a response to a

²⁴ Taras, V., Caprar, D.V., Rottig, D., Sarala, R.M., Zakaria, N., Zhao, F., Jiménez, A., Wankel, C., Lei, W.S., Minor, M.S. and Bryla, P., 2013. A global classroom? Evaluating the effectiveness of global virtual collaboration as a teaching tool in management education. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 12(3), pp.414-435.

²⁵ Dill, J. S. 2013. *The longings and limits of global citizenship education: The moral pedagogy of schooling in a cosmopolitan age*. New York, NY: Routledge.

²⁶ Starke-Meyerring, D., & Wilson, M. (Eds.) (2008). *Designing globally networked learning environments: Visionary partnerships, policies, and pedagogies*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers

live client brief. This approach was designed by RMIT University, which has a strong focus on both work integrated learning and internationalisation of the curriculum, to provide a more scalable, accessible approach to providing international learning experiences for improved global employability.

eTwinning

eTwinning offers a platform for staff working in a European school, to communicate, collaborate, develop projects and share in an online learning community in Europe. eTwinning promotes school collaboration in Europe through the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and offers opportunities for free and continuing online Professional Development for educators. Launched in 2005 as the main action of the European Commission's eLearning Programme, eTwinning has been firmly integrated in Erasmus+, the European programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport, since 2014.

Telecollaboration

Telecollaboration is a term applied to international collaborations supported by ICT in Foreign Language and Learning contexts. In most instances, international partnerships are formed between institutions in two countries and students learn language skills from each other through sharing ideas or working on projects using electronic communication tools such as e-mail, synchronous chat, threaded discussion forums.

X-Culture

X-culture is a global competition for students studying international business which involves students and professionals from over 40 countries. Using Information Communication Technologies, they work together on business projects presented either as case studies or real live projects. Students compete, collaborate and learn the challenges and best practices of international business consulting. Teachers can apply to have their students join an X-Culture project and students

must pass a readiness test before the competition starts. X-Culture is a not for profit project administered through Dr Vas Taras in the USA. Dr Taras also uses X-culture as a research platform and invites research collaborations.

Uni-collaboration

The uni-collaboration platform is aimed at supporting university educators and mobility coordinators to organise and run online intercultural exchanges for their students. In these exchanges, students from universities in different countries use online communication tools to carry out collaborative projects and to learn about each other's language and culture. By taking part in such projects, students can develop foreign language skills, intercultural awareness, electronic literacies as well as learning more about their particular subject area. The platform has a focus in Europe however a teacher working at any university worldwide is invited to use the platform to help to find partner teachers and classes in other countries, to read about tasks, successful projects and evaluation tools and to exchange questions and experiences with an experienced community of practitioners in the field of globally networked learning environments.

Global SchoolNet

Global SchoolNet is a non-profit education organisation which uses technology to engage educators and youth in learning projects worldwide, to develop science, math, literacy and communication skills, foster teamwork, civic responsibility and collaboration, encourage workforce preparedness, and create multi-cultural understanding. They aim to prepare youth for full participation as productive and compassionate citizens in an increasingly global economy. The focus is on working with primary and secondary schools however they also cater for universities and business as well.

4.3 Theme 3. Critical success factors for global virtual collaboration

This applied research study collected evidence from international conferences, interviews and a scan of the literature to determine the critical success factors for developing students' skills for collaborating in global virtual teams. These are presented below in the three stages in which they occur:

1. The **Design** (before) stage: Secure institutional support, find partners and resources, prepare teachers and students

2. The **Delivery** (during) stage: Enact communication and collaboration in global virtual teams supported by coaching and scaffolding of learning by educators.

3. The **De-brief** (after) stage: Reflect on experience and knowledge and skills acquired and how these can be applied in job applications and careers.

Critical success factors for Global Virtual Team Education				
Design				
Educators collaboratively design the purpose and parameters of the project, securing support and resources from each institution.				
Define Aims	Choose Partners	Co-design Project	Select IT Resources	Determine educational resources
Purpose of collaboration	Find client /case study partner	Duration of project	Learning Management System	Identify skills and knowledge required to prepare each cohort to: Work with other cultures Use online collaboration technologies Run online meetings
Select discipline(s)	Find education institution partner(s)	Purpose of project	Collaboration tools	
Define deliverables	Consider:	Choose a client	Video meeting platform	
Set outcomes (these may be refined once partner secured)	Cultural and language difference Different time zones and academic calendars Discipline compatibility and course content	Set tasks/ assessment Determine grading Design Evaluation	Project Management tools Communication streams	

Delivery					
Educators facilitate the global virtual collaboration providing coaching and support to students where required.					
Team Charter Agree on team goals, deliverables and communication protocols	Scaffold Learning Teachers deliver skills and knowledge as required	Intercultural Understanding Develop intercultural skills, attitudes & behaviours	Technology Choose appropriate ICT and manage its usage	Relationships Establish sociability and trust to enhance motivation and contributions	Temporal Differences Manage different time zones, academic calendars, public holidays
Debrief					
Stakeholders reflect on the global virtual collaboration and how the experience can be utilised in future careers.					
Reflection On Experience	Articulation Define what was achieved		Application Apply knowledge to further collaborations or career		

Figure 1: Critical success factors for Global Virtual Team Education

DESIGN STAGE

At this first stage, the focus is on planning and preparing for a global virtual collaboration. This usually requires 2-6 months for teachers and 2-6 weeks for students, depending on the size and nature of the global virtual collaboration. It is important to secure institutional support as global virtual collaborations require an investment in time and resources and each institution needs to allow for allocation of infrastructure, training, time, technical assistance, L&T, academic planning and work planning to enable a global virtual collaboration. Any international policies and strategic goals of the institution that relate to global virtual collaboration should be identified and how this learning approach can help to achieve such goals should be made apparent.

Define Aims

One of the first things to consider is the purpose of the global, virtual collaboration. Educators should ask what a global virtual collaboration will achieve for the student

cohort(s) and the learning goals of the course it will be located in. The time and skill demands of a global virtual collaboration need to be taken into account when deciding if it is suitable for the discipline, course or academic level.

Find the right partner(s)

Most institutions do not require memorandums of understanding (MOU) or agreements to set up a global collaboration as there are no costs or awarding of qualifications involved. Due diligence must still be done however when it comes to choosing an institution to work with or indeed a faculty, academic, teacher or client. Some things to consider include:

- » Where possible, educators should attend conferences or match-making events for global collaborations. Ironically, face to face initial meetings can progress a global virtual collaboration project a lot faster than emails and video meetings.
- » Make the use of online platforms or resources for finding global educational

partners. Such as Uni-collaboration, Beezr, X-culture or COIL.

- » Understand time zone differences and be clear on semester dates, holidays, exam periods of each partner.
- » Understand available technology platforms in each partners' countries.
- » Establish the importance of a common language.
- » Consider the client brief (if applicable) and what countries they wish to hear from or interact with.
- » Leverage each institutions alumnus, industry affiliates or global partners to secure a business/client for the global virtual collaboration or consider using platforms such as Telanto which matches academics with business for university collaborations.

The student cohort participating in a global virtual collaboration needs to be carefully considered to ensure they have the motivation and 'buy-in' required. It is generally accepted that students should be encouraged to 'opt-in' or apply to be part of a global virtual collaboration to ensure they seek the experience rather than have it thrust upon them. This helps to ensure there is a shared interest in and desire for learning global virtual teamwork skills. It also gives the student control over what they choose to learn. If they feel like they're being forced into learning something they're less likely to enjoy the process.

Co-design the Project

Once institutional partners are secured it is important for the educators or facilitators to meet (usually online) and discuss the purpose and parameters of the project. There should be equal distribution of responsibilities and even contributions from all partners to ensure all needs are covered and all parties have collateral in the project.

Use a project planning template to capture stakeholders aims and objectives and get signed off agreement on:

- » Timing and duration of project
- » Purpose of project
- » The client (if there is one), including who will secure and manage the client
- » The tasks/ assessment to be completed
- » Approach to assessing, grading and moderating
- » Project evaluation

The choice of tasks/assessment mode and type in a global virtual collaboration is particularly important as students need to be reassured that working with unknown team members from other countries will not be detrimental to their grades. The focus for assessment therefore should be more on the process of the collaboration rather than the output. It is important that the teams produce 'something' together, particularly if working for an industry client, but how and what they learn rather than what they produce is the valuable part. Grading or marking of assessments should consider:

- » Grading at least one component of the collaboration locally to fulfill local course requirements.
- » Moderate grades with all teachers to ensure even distribution of grades.
- » Grading one element of the collaboration individually to recognise individual efforts
- » Consider marking by peer review and teacher observation.
- » Grade the competence of intercultural collaboration skills rather than technical skills
- » Do not peer review early or first tasks to avoid conflict and loss of confidence.
- » Provide formative feedback early so they can understand how and where they need to improve on working together.
- » Think about how best to grade the projects, the criteria they are being graded

on. Is it based on their interconnectivity and collaboration or on their theoretical understanding of content? Evaluate the process as well as the progress and also the outcome (to a lesser degree) that they produce.

Additionally, teachers and students should make sure they discuss performance expectations and contributions at the planning stage of a global virtual collaboration and there should be incentives to motivate team members to commit to contribute and reach team goals. Incentives, or motivational strategies, need to take into account the cultural background of the team members and may need to be adjusted to each cultural context. For example, in a collectivist culture like Vietnam, a group prize would be valued whereas in a more individualist culture such as USA, individual recognition would be more appropriate. Motivation can also come from understanding the value of what you are learning so teachers should make a connection between the learners and the material, such as showing how undertaking a global virtual collaboration will develop in-demand skills for global employability.

Select IT Resources

Once the global virtual collaboration has been defined, the technology required for conducting the project needs to be agreed on and secured. Educators need to establish:

- » The Learning Management System for storage of learning materials and its accessibility to all stakeholders globally.
- » Information Communication technology tools and platforms for communicating, collaborating and conducting video meetings and their accessibility and degree of difficulty to master.
- » Project Management tools including file management and project tracking software.
- » Any IT support required.

Determine educational resources

Teachers and students both require a range of skills and knowledge to conduct or participate in a global, virtual collaboration.

For teachers: The teachers or educators may require training before they design or deliver a global virtual collaboration. The educational experience must be at the centre of a global virtual collaboration so careful consideration needs to be given to social and cognitive learning and assessment approaches that will provide a relevant, meaningful, international learning experience.²⁷

As global virtual collaborations rely on information communication technologies, teachers need to have currency and agility in using ICT and be able to teach others how to choose and use a variety of digital platforms.

Planning skills and adaptability are required for working with different time zones, negotiating different education systems and schedules and meeting deadlines and expectations.

Leadership skills will need to be adjusted for working in a virtual environment and with a variety of different leadership styles. The different requirements for eLeadership need to be understood. Whilst global virtual collaborations should be co-designed and co-delivered, they will often emanate from a central leader or facilitator who drives the collaboration across all institutions.

Most importantly, understanding cultural differences is crucial for planning and setting goals for a global virtual collaboration. Teachers need to be aware of the other cultures' education systems, assessment and grading approaches. Working with teachers in other countries and cultures requires an understanding of each other's communication style and teachers need to know how to communicate with other cultures and be willing to adapt both their teaching and communication styles. As a client project is usually involved, teachers also need to be willing

to learn about the cultural context to be able to advise on projects in different countries and the appropriate student project responses.

For students: Students need a range of skills and knowledge for participating in global virtual collaborations. However only some of these skills and knowledge are required beforehand, in preparation for a global virtual collaboration. The very purpose of this international learning approach is for students to develop global skills through an action learning cycle that occurs as they actively participate in a global virtual collaboration. However, students will need to be equipped with the following skills and knowledge before undertaking a global virtual collaboration:

- » **Situate the learning:** Students need to understand the goals and benefits of the global virtual collaboration and how it will assist them to develop valuable employability skills. How the course content is interwoven amongst the global skills development needs to be explained in addition to experiential learning theory.
- » **Intercultural competencies:** Understanding other cultures, in particular their communication styles and education systems will prepare students for interacting effectively with their global virtual teammates.
- » **Information communication technologies:** Knowing what to choose and how to use ICT effectively will help with communicating and driving project work forwards.
- » **Global virtual teamwork:** Coordinating globally distributed team members to work together to produce a single outcome requires an understanding of how to work in and produce outcomes in global virtual teams.
- » **eLeadership:** A key part of global virtual teamwork is leadership and students need to know how to lead in a virtual team as well as take direction from other leaders.
- » **Time zones:** disparate time zones require time management skills and an understanding of how and when to use synchronous versus asynchronous

communication modes for coordinating discussion and contributions to meet deadlines and deliverables.

- » **Reflection:** It is important that students know how to reflect on experiences to move towards deeper cognition of learning from a global virtual collaboration.

The amount of training and educating the students require will depend on the level of skills and knowledge each student cohort already possess for working across cultures and using technologies. The educators in each institution can provide these details or students can be asked to complete a survey (a skills audit) or use an intercultural readiness assessment tool or application. Once the gaps have been identified, educators need to design a plan for coaching and supporting students with the required skills and knowledge to prepare them to participate in the global virtual collaboration.

DELIVERY STAGE

This stage sees students (and teachers) put their preparation for a global virtual collaboration into practice. Teachers will need to apply many of their own intercultural communication and global collaboration skills but the focus at this stage is on delivering the student learning experience. A range of factors come in to play as students collaborate in their global virtual teams and students will need to manage these in a fluid rather than linear manner.

It is important that a team charter is set up to guide how each team communicates and works toward agreed goals and that the teachers in each country scaffold learning in a way that allows students to apply new knowledge or skills to allow them to move progressively toward stronger understanding and, ultimately, greater independence in collaborating in global virtual teams. There are four factors that are seen to be of particular importance to effective global virtual collaborations and they are the level of intercultural understanding, how technology is utilised, managing temporal differences and establishing and maintaining relationships. A graphic depicting this is provided in Figure 2.

A team charter establishes communication protocols, goals and deliverables



Educators in each country scaffold learning throughout the collaboration

Figure 2: Factors assisting the delivery of a global, virtual collaboration.

Team Charter and communication protocols

One of the first, and most important actions a global virtual team needs to undertake together is to set up a Team Charter. This encourages discussion around expectations and allows members to get to know each other's skills, and know each other's skills and ways of working. This is particularly important for working effectively in virtual teams where team members cannot physically meet, making it more difficult to build trust which can cause uncertainty about responsibilities.

It is ideal to use a collaborative document tool such as Google Docs to create the Team Charter to ensure transparency and provide tracking of members' contributions. In order to make group work successful, all group members must agree to abide by norms established in the Team Charter.

Some of the items a global virtual Team Charter might include are:

Team Name(s). Choose a name for the team and names members prefer to go by.

Team Purpose. Why is the team being formed and what connects them? What do they need to achieve? For example, the purpose of _____ team is to _____ so that _____. The purpose should also include the outcomes the team expects to produce and the goals they will set to achieve these outcomes.

Team Goals: The goal setting process is critical in geographically distributed, culturally diverse teams. Research shows that setting goals can improve productivity, motivation, perseverance and overall virtual team efficacy.²⁸ Furthermore, as global virtual teams tend to be self-managed, members need to collectively engage in decision-making, task planning, and execution and having clear, agreed-upon goals help with all three. It is also important that goals are set in a participative manner, to ensure all team members are committed to the goals. Furthermore, it helps to simplify the work and break it down into tasks and that there is clarity about who does what and when.

Communication protocols: Communication in virtual teams is vital as interactions are often less frequent and non-visual so you have less contextualized information from visual cues that provide information about emotional states. So, it is important to discuss and agree on communication mode, frequency and format i.e.:

28 Hardin, A., Looney, C., Fuller, M. and Schechtman, G., 2013, January. Participative goal setting in self-directed global virtual teams: The role of virtual team efficacy in goal setting effectiveness and performance. In System Sciences (HICSS), 2013 46th Hawaii International Conference on (pp. 363-372). IEEE.

- » Communication Mode - be clear about how the team will communicate. For example, through a discussion board, email, online app such as Slack, Messenger, WeChat etc., video conferencing or a combination of methods? include guidelines on which communication modes to use in which circumstances, for example when to reply via email versus messaging versus taking the time to create and share a document.
- » Communication Frequency – decide on how often members meet, discuss, communicate and the best times for asynchronous communication to be conducted (live chats or video meetings). Also, agree on how quickly group members should respond to emails or postings.
- » Video Meeting guidelines - establish norms of behavior when participating in virtual meetings, such as limiting background noise and side conversations, talking clearly and at a reasonable pace, listening attentively (no multi-tasking) and not dominating the conversation, and so on. Also, determine who sets up and chairs the meetings to ensure all team members get a chance to lead meetings.
- » Communication participation – agree on level of commitment to attending video meetings, contributing to any conversations and checking and responding to posts and emails.

Scaffold the learning of key skills and knowledge

A range of specific skills and knowledge are required for working effectively in global, virtual teams and for producing the required outputs. The particular skills and knowledge required for each global project needs to be identified and developed by a facilitator(s). The facilitator(s) may be teacher(s) or project manager(s) who design the learning content and where possible this should be done collaboratively with all facilitators from all institutions involved with the project.

Teachers should consider scaffolding the learning so that students are given the theories and knowledge just prior to an opportunity to apply it. For example, before they meet their international team members in a video meeting online they

should learn about intercultural communication, the culture they are working with and how to use technology for a video meeting.

Global, virtual team projects employ both action learning and experiential learning approaches and as such much of the learning will happen as students put their knowledge into practice. The broad knowledge and skills areas necessary for, and developed through, participation in global, virtual team collaborations are listed in Figure 3 below.

Skills	Knowledge
Time Management	Cultural Understanding
Project Management	Intercultural communications
Video meeting facilitation	Time Zones
eLeadership and negotiation	Synchronous v asynchronous communication
Operating Information communication technology	Global business communication processes
Reflective writing	Project specific knowledge for client brief
Meta-communication skills	Information Communication Technology Tools

Figure 3. Key skills and knowledge required for participating in global virtual collaborations

Scaffolding the learning of these skills and knowledge is central to maintaining students' contributions and participation in the collaboration. Students need to believe they have the knowledge and skills necessary to be able to collaborate in global virtual teams, as well as the resources required to learn this way.

Intercultural Understanding

Cultural understanding can make a big difference to the relationships global virtual teams form, the trust that develops and the communication levels they achieve. Working collaboratively in culturally diverse small groups is a highly complex, socially and emotionally demanding experience²⁹ that can be ameliorated by an understanding of and acceptance of different cultural norms. Theories and learning exercises which explain the differences and find similarities in how each culture operates can help equip students for communicating and collaborating with their global teammates.

The virtual environment also needs to be considered when developing intercultural understanding as it may be necessary to make explicit to students that they are working with, and effectively in, other cultures. When students go abroad on a study tour or exchange they expect things to be different but when they stay at home and interact globally with others, whilst remaining in their regular setting, it is easy for them to also remain in their local cultural context and not comprehend the differences in their teammates settings. Without the different smells, sounds and sights of new surroundings the stimulus to change or adapt to another culture can be missed.

This can be overcome by teams sharing their cultural setting at the start of the collaboration. Videos of where they live, work or study, audio posts of their surroundings, photo boards or blogs of food, transport, lifestyles and beliefs can create a space for differences to be explored and commonalities found.

Technology

Technology is an enabler of global virtual collaborations and the right technology needs to be chosen to ensure communication and collaboration goes smoothly.

Task-Technology-Fit theory claims that information technology (IT) is more likely to have a positive impact on individual performance if the capabilities of the IT match the tasks that the user must perform.³⁰ Therefore, it is important to consider how students in each culture use technology, what skills they have and what technology is most suitable for the project and virtual mode of communication. Based on this information, educators may need to provide students with coaching on how to use ICT for business and to practice using business communication technologies across the institutions before trying to use them to complete project work.

Studies have shown that global virtual teams have a much higher chance of meeting their goals when they're provided with a virtual environment that supports face-to-face communication and real-time collaboration. Visual, synchronous video technologies are able to deliver live, real time, real people interactions in global virtual teams that provide non-verbal signals such as tone of voice and facial expressions that help provide feedback and a common understanding.³¹ These visual cues are particularly important for high context communicators (Asia and Latin America), whom rely on nonverbal cues and focus more on the relationship, the setting, and previous interactions to interpret what someone means.

Relationships

Relationships give meaning and significance to work in global virtual teams and strong working relationships between team members is vital for team efficacy. Relationships are built on communication and trust with trust often referred to as the "glue" that holds relationships together in virtual teams.³² Trust, in turn, develops through meaningful intercultural communication that includes trying to understand different perspectives, interests, feelings and working practices.

29 Kimmel, K. and Volet, S., 2012. University students' perceptions of and attitudes towards culturally diverse group work: Does context matter?. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 16(2), pp.157-181.

30 Goodhue, D.L. and Thompson, R.L., 1995. Task-technology fit and individual performance. *MIS quarterly*, pp.213-2

31 Johnson, G.M., 2006. Synchronous and asynchronous text-based CMC in educational contexts: A review of recent research. *TechTrends*, 50(4), p.46

32 O'Hara-Devereaux and Johansen 2004 phone

Developing relationships in global virtual teams needs to be managed carefully allowing for team members to be at different stages of readiness for working with and connecting to other cultures. Some useful models to consider are Bennets' ³³developmental model of intercultural sensitivity which explains how people behave at different stages of intercultural development. For example, if students are at the defensive stage (that their culture is best) then the focus of the relationship building should be on similarity so they can find familiarity before moving them on to the next stage of understanding. Kuhlmann and Stahl's³⁴ seven intercultural behaviours skills and attitudes can also assist with understanding the behavioural traits students will need to exhibit for successful intercultural relationships and interactions.

Students should be guided towards establishing personal connections and relationships at the very beginning of the global virtual collaboration. When you put students together who, at first glance, have nothing in common it is important for them to find common ground through other interests. One way to do this is to encourage students to share their lives via a video or photo story of their campus, their favourite local café, a pet or even what motivated each student to be part of the team.

Teamwork is at the heart of a global virtual collaboration and effective teamwork relies on relationships, which are built on trust and communication. How groups develop into functional teams and select group processes to accomplish their tasks has been widely studied. One well known depiction of how a group functions is Tuckman's³⁵ model which highlights the four sequential stages of forming, storming, norming, and performing. This model could be useful for helping both teachers and students understand the stages their global virtual teams are likely to go through.

Teachers also need to build relationships and know how to work with other teachers from different disciplines, cultures and pedagogies in order to deliver a seamless and consistent student learning experience. It is important to discuss and define why teachers and institutions have chosen to work together, the aims and expected outcomes of the collaboration and to identify a shared context that motivates teachers to want to spend the extra time and effort to work with each other.

Temporal differences

Temporal differences include differences in time zones, academic calendars, and even seasons. All of these can disrupt work flow and communications. Students may be located in different hemispheres with opposite seasons which affects hours of daylight, academic calendars and public holidays. The greater the geographical separation, the greater the reliance on project and time management skills. There are some tools to assist with managing time zones such as the Time Zone Converter, Every Time Zone, and World Time Buddy. Also, most smartphones have a world clock option that creates alternate clocks for different time zones around the globe. However, students may require training in time management and keeping track of project deadlines.

DE-BRIEF STAGE:

Most global virtual collaborations utilise Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle with students having concrete experiences of interacting and collaborating with team members online which they reflect on to extract concepts to inform the actions they will take the next time they interact with international team members. This process of reflecting and distilling what is learnt should be made explicit by encouraging students to write critical reflections of what they learn throughout the

33 Bennett, M.J., 2004. Becoming intercultural competent. *Toward multiculturalism: A reader in multicultural education*, 2, pp.62-77

34 Mendenhall, M.E., Kuhlmann, T.M., Stahl, G.K. and Osland, J.S., 2002. Employee development and expatriate assignments. *The Blackwell handbook of cross-cultural management*, pp.155-183.

35 Tuckman, B.W., 1965. Developmental sequence in small groups. *Psychological bulletin*, 63(6), p.384.

global virtual collaboration. Students need to be taught how to reflect to gain the most from the process and there are a number of models available to facilitate this such as the DIEP model and the Gibbs' Reflective Cycle. It can be useful to capture reflections at the start, middle and end of a collaboration to help students understand their learning journey.

At the conclusion of a global virtual collaboration all stakeholders should be encouraged to do a post-evaluation of the project. It is good practice to provide an evaluation sheet or online survey to encourage feedback and reflection on the experience which can be used to build improvements into next delivery. Types of evaluation could include:

Client Evaluation – seek feedback from the client (if present) on what they learned from the students' work and being involved in a global virtual collaboration. This could encourage further collaborations from this client or used to encourage other businesses to be involved.

Educators Evaluations – these might be a critical reflection to learn from own experience, a skills analysis to identify further skills or knowledge required to make collaborations more effective or an evaluation of the process to identify areas that did or didn't work for future adjustment.

Assessment – It might be necessary to assess how effective the collaboration was for developing certain skills such as intercultural competence, eLeadership or technology skills to fulfill institution requirements or secure further support or funding from an institution or the government.

Student evaluation – it is useful to capture what students thought did or did not work in a global virtual collaboration as well as the skills and knowledge they developed – or needed more of. This can help inform the next delivery. It is also useful for students to consider the relevance of their global virtual collaboration experience for graduate education or employment. Workshops that help students articulate what they learned in a resume or portfolio could assist with achieving this.

Summary of findings

The international conferences, intercultural training and educator interviews provided valuable insights into the processes as well as the skills and knowledge that are required to design and deliver effective global, virtual collaborations. These include the need to consider and prepare for cultural diversity, the ability to use digital communication technologies and how to manage deadlines when operating in multiple time zones. Equally as important was the need to build relationships and establish trust in order to motivate students to contribute to producing the outcomes the team desires. Finally, it was clear that educators needed to coach students' in a range of skills and knowledge throughout the collaboration in order to equip students to manage the many dilemmas of producing work in a geographically dispersed team.

Most importantly, it was evident that central to most global virtual collaborations was a person, whether teacher, manager, administrator or learning and teaching staff, who has a passion and keen interest in making sure the collaboration succeeds and who drives the project forward across multiple countries. These were the people who mostly attended the conferences and who were keen to find more collaboration partners and tips for improving their global virtual collaborative approaches. This team of 'champions' act like project managers and are one of the most important factors for successful and ongoing global virtual collaborations.

5. Personal, Professional and Sectorial Impact

5.1 Personal and professional impact

There has been very little research into the how to develop global business skills for students in vocational education and the ISS Institute Fellowship allowed the Fellow to build knowledge and expertise in this area. Travelling to a variety of countries allowed the Fellow to gain first-hand experience of different cultural approaches to global skills education. It allowed the Fellow to observe intercultural skills development in practice and to build a valuable network of educators who are specialising in developing global skills for graduate employability. Professional benefits have included:

- » Expanded global networks through contacts made at two conferences
- » Increased exposure of Fellows work on global virtual collaborations through a presentation at the Beezr conference and conference discussions
- » Invitations to share experience at conferences and forums
- » Invitation to write a book chapter on the topic of global virtual collaborations (published 2018)
- » Awarded a nurturing employability award by Reimagine Education at the 2017-18 international awards for the design and delivery of global virtual learning
- » Accredited as an Intercultural Readiness Check (IRC) trainer
- » Secured six COIL collaborations from the COIL conference in The Hague for VET students in the programs the Fellow managed.



Image 1: The Hague University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands, which hosted the COIL conference.

The Intercultural Readiness Check certification course provided the Fellow with an opportunity to learn with and from people from 6 different cultures which provided insights into how other cultures train and assess intercultural competency at the business level. The certification also provided the Fellow with an international accreditation to deliver training in developing intercultural readiness.



Image 2: The Fellow undertaking the Intercultural Readiness check training in Amsterdam

The Fellow has been invited to present the learnings from the international experience at internal university forums, learning and teaching events and vocational education workshops. The Fellow has also presented outcomes from Fellowship learnings interstate at the International Education Association (IEAA) research forum in Queensland, the Australian International Education Conference in Tasmania, and the Graduate Employability Forum in NSW. The Fellows work in the design and delivery of global virtual collaborations has received international recognition with the Fellow awarded a gold award for nurturing global employability at the international Reimagine Education Awards held in the USA.

5.2 Sectorial impact

The outcomes of the Fellowship have the ability to address graduate employability which is a growing concern for business, government and education in Australia. The Fellowship aims to make it easier for tertiary institutions to prepare graduates

for operating in a fully globalised and technologically advanced business world, by providing assistance to educators to design and deliver global virtual learning opportunities that develop global virtual teamwork skills.

This Fellowship learnings are particularly relevant for improving access to global skills development in the vocational education sector, which has not had the same access to international learning opportunities as the Higher Education sector to date. This is particularly important given the Australian government has identified equity and access to learning as one of its education priority areas.

Increasing access to development of global skills creates a flow-on effect into industry where graduates with work-ready skills for communicating and collaborating in global virtual teams are in high demand. Victorian companies looking for employees with global collaboration skills will have a greater pool of local talent to draw from and Victorian graduates' will also be able to look globally for employment whilst still residing at home.

Increasing graduates' global competency has the ability to improve harmony in society as intercultural understanding promotes global citizenship and world peace. It is incumbent on tertiary education institutes to prepare students to live and work in a world that, due to advancements in technology, is increasingly interconnected and interdependent.³⁶

6. Considerations and Recommendations

This Fellowship targeted two key focus areas for VET; 1) Delivering innovative and quality training that meets current and future industry needs and 2) Developing greater employment and further educational outcomes, through an investigation of international educational approaches to building students global virtual work skills.

In order to achieve this, the Fellow attended two international conferences on global virtual collaboration to enhance skills for and knowledge of educational methodologies being undertaken to develop students global virtual work skills. An international training course was also undertaken to understand business methodologies for intercultural work skills development.

The Fellow found there was a lot of interest and activity around developing graduates' skills for working with other cultures, particularly in global virtual teams. This was being driven by government, education and business sectors and the two key foci were 1) improving global citizenship and 2) enhancing global employability skills.

Despite the high level of interest in and recognition of the need for developing intercultural competency and global virtual collaboration skills, most institutions were still formulating their andragogy for building graduate's skills in this field. Experiential learning or action learning was the preferred methodology as it was seen to provide an authentic experience of collaborating globally, which was seen to assist with deeper, cognitive learning. However, how these experiential authentic international learning opportunities should be designed and delivered to achieve the desired global work skills was still unclear. The main issues educators were struggling with were:

1. How to find an authentic client with a relevant problem or case study
2. How to find suitable student groups to form the global virtual teams
3. How to secure the necessary time allocation/support/resources to run a global virtual collaboration (this included upskilling educators, allocating time allowance in teacher's work schedule, providing incentives to encourage staff and student participation and providing IT support.)
4. How to make the learning of global skills explicit and transferable to job applications

Development of the following resources is recommended to assist with addressing these issues.

A) An Instructional Design Framework, to provide guidance on how to design and deliver education for global virtual skills development (see Appendix 3).

B) A Quick Guide to Managing Global Virtual Team Work, to assist teachers to manage students working in global virtual teams (See Appendix 4).

These two resources would help to achieve the HESG and Victorian governments' objectives identified earlier in the report, to deliver innovative and quality training that meets current and future industry needs and develop greater employment and further educational outcomes by:

- i) Improving educators' interest in and capabilities for designing, developing and facilitating student global virtual collaborations

- ii) Increasing VET student engagement and participation in global virtual learning experiences
- iii) Providing opportunities for intercultural learning that does not rely on exchange or travel, to overcome the difficulties of exchange for VE students.
- iv) Developing students and educators technology skills and digital literacy.
- v) Equipping VET graduates with the skills to work across cultures at home or in global virtual teams, internationally.

The two recommended resources are tangible items that require support from key industry bodies to produce. The following industry bodies and organisations, which the Fellow is a member of, have been identified as relevant to assist with this:

- » The International Education Association of Australia (IEAA), which is the primary organisation representing international education in Australia. IEAA sponsored the original Learning and Teaching Across Cultures (LTAC) project which developed Good Practice Principles for learning and teaching across cultures and 5 quick guides to help apply the principles. The proposed Quick Guide to Managing Global Virtual Team Work would extend the LTAC work conducted in 2013 by the IEAA. IEAA have supported the Fellow's research into global virtual collaborations as an internationalisation strategy and have expressed interest in helping to produce a hard and soft copy of the recommended resources.
- » The Australian Collaborative Education Network (ACEN) which is a professional association for practitioners and researchers from the tertiary education sector, industry, community and government representatives, involved in work integrated learning (WIL) in Australia. ACEN have shown interest in the virtual global WIL project the Fellow has developed and also expressed interest in assisting with dissemination of the recommended resources.

Further Recommendations:

Microsite: It is also recommended that a micro website be created to host the two resources as well as a range of digital resources to guide educators on how to design and deliver a global virtual collaboration.

Funding: The Funding from the Australian New Colombo Plan should be expanded to include grants for educators to develop and deliver global virtual collaborations. These could include funds to subscribe to client sourcing applications such as Telanto, funds for educators to attend international symposiums and conferences to source industry partners, institutional partners and students, and funds to provide information communication technologies and train teachers and students in digital literacy to prepare for working in global virtual teams.

7. Knowledge Transfer, Application and Dissemination

The Fellow proposes the following course of actions to develop the Instructional Design Framework and the Quick Guide to Managing Global Virtual Team Work.

1. The Fellow will write the guides with assistance and overseeing from IEAA.
2. IEAA will publish the guides in hard copy and create a soft copy.
3. The following organisations be approached to assist with disseminating the Instructional Design Framework and Quick Guide across education and business:
 - » Australian Collaborative Education Network (ACEN), which has a focus on Work Integrated Learning (WIL) including global WIL.
 - » International Education Association of Australia (IEAA) and two of their special interest groups (SIG):
 - » Internationalisation of the Curriculum SIG
 - » Student Mobility SIG
 - » LocalGlobal learning network, which was formed at the Global Perspectives Symposium in Sydney in 2016.
 - » Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), a US driven global network of educators developing internationalisation online.
 - » The Victorian TAFE Association, the peak body for Victoria's TAFE network has a research gateway and applied research events that could be utilised for dissemination.

- » TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) the national body representing TAFE institutes in Australia. TDA has a newsletter and the TAFE Futures magazine that could carry a news item on the framework and quick guide. TDA also convenes the Australian TAFE International Network (ATIN) with a focus on providing international education services through policy advocacy, research, communication and projects.
- » The National Centre for Vocational Education and Research (NCVER) has two newsletters: VOCEDplus News and NCVER News which could carry items on the framework and quick guides.
- » The VET Development Centre (VDC) has a newsletter and runs training that could incorporate the framework and quick guides.

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9. Acknowledgements

The Fellow would like to thank the following organisations who have supported and encouraged the Fellow throughout the Fellowship program:

RMIT University

The Fellow appreciates the opportunities RMIT University has provided for this applied research study and professional development opportunity. The College of Business and the School of Vocational Business Education have been particularly supportive and provided time for the Fellow to travel and conduct research for the Fellowship. The Fellow would also like to acknowledge the Global Experience Office, the Research and the Careers and Employability departments at RMIT University and the following people who provided advice and support; Professor Sandra Jones, Associate Professor Chris Ziguras, Dr. Eugene Sebastian and Judie Kay.

IEAA

The Fellow would like to thank the International Education Association of Australia (IEAA) for their early support of the Fellow and the Fellowship and for their further support with producing and disseminating the Quick Guide to Managing Global Virtual Team Work, a proposed outcome from this Fellowship.

Supporters:

The Fellow would like to thank the following people and organisations who supported the Fellows initial application and provided support throughout the Fellowship

- » International Education Association of Australia (IEAA) in particular, Chris Ziguras who was the President at the time of this study.
- » The Australian Collaborative Education Network (ACEN) and in particular, the President, Judie Kay.
- » The Victorian TAFE Association and in particular, Andrew Williamson, Executive Director, Victorian TAFE Association
- » The TAFE Directors Australia and in particular, Jen Bahen Director, International Education, TAFE Directors Australia.

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10. Appendices

Appendix 1: Abbreviations and Acronyms

Beezr	Virtual Collaboration across Cultures	NCP	New Colombo Plan
COIL	Collaborative Online International Learning	OLT	Office of Learning and Teaching
ERASMUS	EuRopean Commity Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students	PWC	Pricewaterhouse Coopers
GNLE	Globally Networked Learning Environments	SIG	Special interest groups
GVWP	Global, virtual WIL project	SUNY	State University New York
HE	Higher Educations	VET	Vocational Education and Training
HESG	Higher Education and Skills Group	VTG	Victorian Training Guarantee
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies		
IEAA	International Education Association of Australia		
IRC	Intercultural Readiness Check		
LTAC	Learning and Teaching Across Cultures		
MOU	Memorandums of Understanding		

Appendix 2: Interview Questions

The Good Practice Principles for Teaching Across Cultures were developed to guide program leaders and teachers to design, implement and evaluate curricula and teaching practices that involved working across cultures.

The 6 good practice principles for Learning and Teaching Across Cultures are:

1. Focus on students as learners
2. Make adjustments for student diversity
3. Provide context-specific information and support
4. Enable meaningful intercultural dialogue and engagement
5. Is adaptable, flexible and responsive to evidence
6. Prepares students for life in a globalised world

The Interview Questions

A. General open ended questions to understand different practices and approaches:

1. Intercultural biography: Nationality? Languages? Travel/work experiences?
2. What models and approaches for developing Intercultural communication skills do you use?
3. Why have you chosen these approaches?
4. What elements do you think are valuable or necessary for developing intercultural communication skills in GVT's?

5. What role does technology play in any of your approaches to developing ICC skills?
6. What technological tools have you used? Why have you chosen these tools?
7. Do you have any kind of assessment for staff or students that measures their intercultural abilities, or readiness to work in a global collaboration?
8. Does your institution provide teachers with any guidance or training for how to operate in Global Virtual Teams?

B. Semi-structured questions to gather data for a Good Practice Guide for working in Global Virtual Teams. Practitioners were asked how their approach for developing Intercultural communication applied to each of the 6 Good Practice Principles for teaching across cultures.

How does your approach for developing students' Intercultural Communication skills for working in Global Virtual teams apply to each of the 6 Good Practice Principles for teaching across cultures?

1. Focus on students as learners?
2. Make adjustments for student diversity?
3. Provide context-specific information and support?
4. Enable meaningful intercultural dialogue and engagement?
5. Is adaptable, flexible and responsive to evidence?
6. Prepares students for life in a globalised world?

Appendix 3: The Instructional Design Framework Stages and Considerations

Critical success factors for Global Virtual Team Education					
Design					
Educators collaboratively design the purpose and parameters of the project, securing support and resources from each institution.					
Define Aims	Choose Partners	Co-design Project	Select IT Resources	Determine educational resources	
Purpose of collaboration	Find client /case study partner	Duration of project	Learning Management System	Identify skills and knowledge required to prepare each cohort to: Work with other cultures Use online collaboration technologies Run online meetings	
Select discipline(s)	Find education institution partner(s)	Purpose of project	Collaboration tools		
Define deliverables	Consider:	Choose a client	Video meeting platform		
Set outcomes (these may be refined once partner secured)	Cultural and language difference	Set tasks/ assessment	Project Management tools		
	Different time zones and academic calendars	Determine grading	Communication streams		
	Discipline compatibility and course content	Design Evaluation			
Delivery					
Educators facilitate the global virtual collaboration providing coaching and support to students where required.					
Team Charter	Scaffold Learning	Intercultural Understanding	Technology	Relationships	Temporal Differences
Agree on team goals, deliverables and communication	Teachers deliver skills and knowledge as required	Develop intercultural skills, attitudes & behaviours	Choose appropriate ICT and manage its usage	Establish sociability and trust to enhance motivation and contributions	Manage different time zones, academic calendars, public holidays
Protocols.					
Debrief					
Stakeholders reflect on the global virtual collaboration and how the experience can be utilised in future careers.					
Reflection		Articulation		Application	
On Experience		Define what was achieved		Apply knowledge to further collaborations or career	

Appendix 4: The Quick Guide to Managing Global Virtual Teamwork outline

This guide is intended to assist teachers to cater for cultural and linguistic diversity when designing and implementing global virtual teamwork in tertiary classrooms. This guide may be used to evaluate current activities, identify areas for improvement and find examples of best practice for setting up and managing global virtual teamwork. It extends the Quick Guide to Managing Group Work developed in 2013, into the digital environment where added challenges need to be addressed including using technology, synchronous and asynchronous communication and building team trust online.

Cultural diversity in the student population is now the norm rather than the exception in Australian universities. It is also the norm in the workforce where student graduates will need to be able to operate and interact. Culture is not only defined by nationality or ethnicity. The term culture is a very broad concept that encompasses the lifestyle, traditions, knowledge, skills, beliefs, norms and values shared by a group of people. Cultures are most often recognised by shared patterns of behaviours and interactions, cognitive constructs and affective understandings. These are learned through a process of socialisation. However, within different cultural groups, individuals are unique. Meaning is continuously constructed through human interaction and communication within and across cultural groups. Cultural learning is a dynamic, developmental and ongoing process for students and teachers.

Cultural diversity in a face to face classroom presents significant challenges for teaching and learning and this has been addressed in 6 Good Practice for Learning and Teaching Across Cultures Quick Guides developed in 2013 by the Australian International Education Association (AIEA) drawing on current literature on learning and teaching across cultures as well as on findings from relevant projects funded by the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching and the Australian Learning and Teaching Council from 2006-2012. Full summaries of these projects in the Good Practice Report Learning and Teaching Across Cultures available

at <http://www.olt.gov.au/resource-good-practice-report-learning-and-teaching-across-cultures-2011>. Due to the increased usage of online teaching and learning and global virtual student collaborations, a new Quick Guide that addressed the challenges of learning and working with culturally diverse students online.

The Quick Guide to Managing Global Virtual Teamwork is organised around the same six principles of good practice for teaching across cultures utilised in the original guides and interprets good practice principles as they apply to managing group work.

Principle 1: Good teaching across cultures will focus on students as learners

Principle 2: Good teaching across cultures will respect and adjust for diversity

Principle 3: Good teaching across cultures will provide context-specific information and support

Principle 4: Good teaching across cultures will enable meaningful intercultural dialogue and engagement

Principle 5: Good teaching across cultures will be adaptable, flexible and responsive to evidence

Principle 6: Good teaching across cultures will prepare students for life in a globalised world

You can find a detailed description of each Principle at ieaa.org.au/ltac.



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