



# Opportunities and challenges in the multilingual and multicultural learning space

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Final document of the IntlUni Erasmus Academic  
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## Introduction

### IntlUni aims

In 2012-15 IntlUni has addressed the challenges and opportunities in the multilingual and multicultural learning space with the aim of

- identifying the quality criteria that should characterise teaching and learning in the multilingual and multicultural learning space; and of
- developing recommendations for how higher education institutions may develop and implement quality teaching and learning in this space.

The term multilingual has been used to describe the situation where teachers and students, despite their similarities, have different first languages, none of which need to be the language of instruction; multicultural has been used because, in addition to other factors such as gender, religious beliefs, etc., students and their teachers have different ethnic backgrounds (cultures), but meet in the local culture of the higher education institution (HEI) where they teach and learn. The HEI, in turn, is characterised by a specific academic culture at the same time as there are similarities and differences between the disciplinary cultures represented on campus. It is no exaggeration to talk about linguistic and cultural diversity at any HEI that has internationalization as part of its mission.

### Why IntlUni?

The IntlUni project addresses challenges and opportunities in international higher education. It has been carried out at a time characterised by a growing interest in the quality of education, demonstrated – for instance – in the EAIE Barometer (Engel *et al.* 2014) where it is indicated that quality of education is considered the most prominent driver of international education today. Similar findings are reported in the most recent IAU Global survey (Egron-Polak & Hudson 2014).

Previous decades have seen a constant focus on the rising numbers of internationally mobile students and academic staff and a steadily increasing interest in the organisation and management of international education and in the quality of the services provided. While the internationalization of higher education has been considered a positive development, less attention seems to have been paid to the quality of the teaching and learning – to what actually goes on in the international classroom.

That being said, a fair amount of literature devoted to teaching and learning in the international classroom has in fact been published in recent years but, with a few notable exceptions, it seems to focus on interventions developed and carried out by individuals or small groups of teachers in a specific disciplinary or local context, but without a clearly defined conceptual framework; in addition, a major part of it originates in those English-speaking countries, notably Australia, the UK and Canada, that also top the list of countries and higher education institutions that receive mobile students from across the world, and where higher education teachers typically – but not always – teach through their own first language (English).



## IntlUni Recommendations

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### Introduction to the recommendations

The ultimate aim of IntlUni has been to develop a set of recommendations that may enable higher education institutions (HEIs), and the actors therein, to address the challenges and opportunities of the multilingual and multicultural learning space and to pursue quality teaching and learning in this space. The final outcomes of IntlUni are the result of an iterative bottom-up process, drawing on experience gathered in the HEIs involved, and coming full circle with the development of a set of recommendations directly linked to real examples and best practices.

The *IntlUni Recommendations* target not only the three dimensions within the HEIs (the institution, the HE teachers and the students), but also the national or regional and European levels. In most European countries, HEIs are legally autonomous, but at the same time most of them are also state-funded and must adhere to national or regional laws, rules and regulations. Some of the recommendations are therefore targeted at these levels above the HEIs and at the European bodies engaged in the development of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and financially supporting collaboration within European higher education.

It should be noted that, given the complexity of the multilingual and multicultural learning space and the diversity in institutional settings across Europe, a set of recommendations that immediately fit all HE institutions cannot be provided. Rather, the IntlUni recommendations are a set of guidelines for the three target groups to take into account, negotiate and suitably implement in their respective contexts.

Inevitably, there will be some overlapping of recommendations across the three levels, as all three groups of actors may contribute to their manifestation. Recommendations directed at the HEIs are developed further than those directed at the national, regional or European levels as a result of the direct autonomy and authority that HEIs most often hold in the decision-making processes.

### Recommendations for higher education institutions (HEIs)

IntlUni recommends that HEIs

1. Adopt the *IntlUni Principles for quality teaching and learning in the multilingual and multicultural learning space* and provide an inclusive learning space for all students.

2. Provide the appropriate support needed for HE teachers to consider these principles in their teaching, for administrative staff in contact with students, and for the students to develop their cultural identity and intercultural competences as well as extend their knowledge base in the multilingual and multicultural learning space – in particular:
  - a. Develop an inclusive and enabling language and culture policy that clearly defines the role of the language(s) of instruction, or the *lingua franca* chosen, in relation to the national language(s) and to other possible languages and cultures.
  - b. Guarantee and monitor the implementation of such a policy by ensuring that students as well as academic and administrative staff have the requisite language and academic communication skills for the students to successfully complete their academic programmes; provide appropriate language support measures when needed.
  - c. Integrate home and international students, that is, all students in their social and cultural structures by providing an inclusive culture for all.
  - d. Develop measures to manage and leverage diversity in order to help all actors increase their awareness of the effects of cultural diversity in the multilingual and multicultural learning space and move towards intercultural learning outcomes.
3. Develop internationalized curricula, where appropriate, including internationalized learning outcomes which are aligned with adequate assessment pedagogies, to enhance the graduate profiles of students and the employability of graduates.
4. Provide the necessary professional development and teacher training programmes that will allow HE teachers to appropriately develop their language proficiency as well as their professional and pedagogical knowledge, skills and competences and thereby empower them to ensure the quality of their teaching – and their students’ learning – in the multilingual and multicultural learning space.
5. Ensure that adequate language tests and screening procedures are used to select both students and staff.

## Recommendations for national / regional authorities

IntlUni recommends that national / regional authorities

1. Reconsider the legal policies that may prevent HEIs from developing appropriate study programmes in the national, regional, or other languages, such as specific requirements regarding the language of instruction.
2. Where this is a national or regional responsibility, provide the necessary professional development and teacher training programmes that will allow HE teachers to appropriately develop their language proficiency as well as their professional and pedagogical knowledge, skills and competences, thereby empowering them to ensure the quality of their teaching in the multilingual and multicultural learning space.
3. Develop certification or accreditation systems for academic staff that may be enacted to guarantee and coordinate quality standards in internationalized programmes.
4. Have measures in place, including the financial means, to support the implementation of the IntlUni Quality Principles in the HEIs of the country or region.

## Recommendation for European actors

On a European level, there are several actors that may support development at institutional, national or regional levels. Initiatives that facilitate the sharing of knowledge and experience as well as joint new development projects may be taken by the key organisations in the Bologna Process: the European University Association (EUA), European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), and European Students Union (ESU) in addition to the national and regional governments; the European Commission can also support such initiatives through its funding schemes (e.g. Erasmus+).

IntUni recommends that European actors support the implementation of the above recommendations, in particular through

1. Promoting the development of teaching and learning methodologies with the aim of creating an inclusive learning space.
2. Fostering the development of internationalized curricula and learning outcomes in joint projects.
3. Endorsing the professional training of educational developers, programme directors and HE teachers as well as the establishment of networks within which educators could disseminate and share good practices.
4. Enabling the development and recognition of a European academic staff certification and accreditation system that may be enacted to guarantee quality standards also in internationalized programmes. If such a system were created at European level, national systems that adhered to such European standards and guidelines, would allow academic staff to have their certification or accreditation recognized across national and regional borders.
5. Prioritizing actions and new initiatives that support the development of the multilingual and multicultural learning space in European HEIs where inclusive language and culture policies are developed and quality standards for international programmes are met.

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## IntlUni in Context

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IntlUni is relevant to the internationalization of higher education, and the last couple of decades have seen a profound change in the European higher education landscape – not least due to the introduction of the European Commission’s programmes that support student and staff mobility, and to the development of the European Higher Education Area.

### Internationalization

Internationalization of higher education is characterised by diversity and complexity; it is therefore worth clarifying what is meant by *international* and *internationalization* in the IntlUni project. Knight’s generic and widely accepted definition of internationalization will serve the purpose of defining the context of the project:

*Internationalization at the national/sector/institutional level is the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of higher education at the institutional and national levels. (...) International carries the sense of relationships between and among nations, cultures and countries. However, internationalization is also about relating to the diversity of cultures that exist within countries, communities, institutions, and classrooms, so intercultural seems the best term for addressing aspects of cultural diversity. Finally, global is included to provide the sense of worldwide scope. (Knight 2008:21f; 2012)*

Internationalization may in fact be considered a process that develops continuously and comprises the actors involved as well as the core activities of research and education at a given higher education institution (HEI).

While internationalization may be measured in quantitative terms such as the number of incoming and outgoing exchange students of a given HEI (also referred to as horizontal mobility or credit mobility) or international full degree students (also referred to as vertical mobility or degree mobility), the IntlUni project focuses on more qualitative aspects in the curriculum and in the teaching and learning processes, including the institutional context in which the teaching and learning takes place. There are several reasons for this: First of all, internationalization of higher education encompasses much more than the mobility of students and staff, cf. Knight’s definition above. Mobility is not an end in itself; rather, it is one of the means of internationalization. In Europe only 10-20 per cent of students actually study abroad, and 80-90 per cent of students stay in their home country (European Commission 2013). It is therefore important that there is an international and intercultural dimension in the design and content of curricula and in the teaching and learning processes of all higher education so that all students are able to acquire the international skills that are crucial to have for graduates in a globalised world, irrespective of whether or not they themselves are internationally mobile.

## Internationalization of the curriculum

As regards the international and intercultural dimension in the design and content of curricula, IntlUni has adopted Leask's concept of the internationalized curriculum:

*(T)he incorporation of an intercultural and international dimension into the content of the curriculum as well as the teaching and learning processes and support services of a programme of study. An internationalised curriculum will engage students with internationally informed research and cultural and linguistic diversity. It will purposefully develop their international and intercultural perspectives as global professionals and citizens. (Leask 2009:209).*

In IntlUni, focus has been on the teaching and learning processes, and in the recommendations, HEIs are encouraged to address issues related to the content of the curriculum and to the intended learning outcomes of a programme of study.

## Multilingualism and the language of instruction

The language of instruction is crucial in the international classroom. In the countries of the less widely used and taught languages in Europe, and in addition to the programmes taught in the language(s) of the country or region in question, the medium of instruction is very often English (English Medium Instruction or EMI; cf. Wächter & Maiworm 2014). However, in all countries – and not least the countries of the major European languages – the language(s) of instruction in programmes attracting international students, is (are) also the official language(s) of the country or region in question, and while many or most of the teachers may have these as their own first languages, the internationalization of higher education has also resulted in more and more teachers teaching through a language other than their own first language and in a culture different from their own.

In addition to the language of instruction, whether or not this is the student's or teacher's first language, it is important to consider the importance of individual multilingualism in order for students to be able to navigate and communicate within the linguistic diversity of our multilingual global society. Though English seems to be ubiquitous, the majority of the world population does not speak English, and students and teachers alike will need to master the local language to a certain level wherever they may be (cf. European Commission 2013).

## IntlUni work packages

Work developed within IntlUni has taken Knight's definition of internationalization and Leask's definition of the internationalized curriculum above as its points of departure, zooming in on the opportunities and challenges of the multilingual and multicultural learning space (the international classroom). With 38 HEI partners in 27 countries, the project has been able to paint a broad picture of the state-of-affairs in the international classrooms across Europe. One might say that IntlUni in itself has been a microcosm of European higher education; the partner institutions have been able to function as a reservoir of ideas and good practice and as a test bed for the ideas developed within the project, and the outcomes may

therefore be considered relevant for HEIs engaged in internationalization processes everywhere (cf. also the section on IntlUni methodology below). At the same time, and because of the wide geographical scope and cultural diversity across project partners, the outcomes are necessarily fairly general and should be considered a conceptual framework and a set of guidelines that may inspire and function as a platform for discussions, negotiations and decisions to be taken within the local context of a given HEI.

IntlUni work packages have dealt with the institutional level, first and foremost in relation to the programmes offered to both local and mobile students and to the actors – the HEI, the teachers and the students. The project has been centred round what goes on in the classroom – the multilingual and multicultural learning space – where students and teachers represent diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, but have to operate within given academic and disciplinary cultures of the HEI in question and through the means of one shared language (the language of instruction). The focus of attention has thus been all students and all teachers, not only those who are mobile, as well as the institutional capabilities necessary to make teaching and learning in the multilingual and multicultural learning space successful.

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# The IntlUni Principles for quality teaching and learning in the multilingual and multicultural learning space

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## Introduction

In the development towards the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), many Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are facing new challenges: Students and teachers in higher education form much more heterogeneous groups than ever before, using a wide spectrum of languages and representing a wide spectrum of cultural backgrounds in what may be termed the Multilingual and Multicultural Learning Space (MMLS). To address these issues, the IntlUni project has produced a set of guiding principles for teaching and learning in the MMLS, which describe the development of quality in these highly diverse contexts in the EHEA.

In the MMLS, as in any educational environment, certain conditions for learning must be in place for the students to meet the intended outcomes of the courses taught. However, the MMLS is distinguished by the use of an academic *lingua franca* and by students with different knowledge systems and diverse ethnic, academic, disciplinary and linguistic backgrounds. The IntlUni Principles therefore reflect the diversity of the actors and contexts in the MMLS, which not only poses special challenges to learning but also creates rich opportunities for enhancing learning and intercultural competence. These challenges and opportunities have resulted in a wide variety of innovative and locally viable practices among the IntlUni partner HEIs. Project partners have provided substantial evidence of these practices in the form of examples relating to the institutional environment, educational processes (teaching and learning) and students' educational outcomes, and this has provided a significant foundation for the development of the IntlUni Principles. Yet it is also apparent that these practices are often localized or individual solutions produced by teachers or programme managers, whose dependence on specific local contexts may preclude transfer into different learning environments in other institutions.

We believe that the guiding principles which this project has derived from the examples of practice deserve greater and more explicit attention from all stakeholders, and that the implementation of such principles needs to be embedded in policy at institutional level and supported by adequate funding. Nevertheless, we recognize that when addressing quality issues in the MMLS, the local environment must be taken into consideration, as the achievement of quality depends on the requirements and conditions within a specific context. This project has included participating institutions from across Europe, and the

contexts in which these institutions operate vary enormously – as do the contexts of HEIs everywhere. This means that it is difficult to provide concrete recommendations for specific measures.

This has two consequences for the future implementation of such principles. Firstly, every institution needs to make its own local definition of the stakeholders involved in the educational process, and then to ensure that these stakeholders are involved in making meaningful local interpretations of the principles in each specific context. Secondly, we cannot prescribe the means for implementation of these principles because every institution has its own organizational and decision-making structures. Needless to say, implementation and funding will depend on the support of the individuals, committees and other bodies that make the decisions in each institution, and this is what we mean in this document when we refer to the institutional level.

### **Development of the IntlUni Principles**

The IntlUni Principles are the result of a process of sample collection and analysis, consultation and validation in the group of IntlUni partners and among external stakeholders. They derive from almost a hundred different examples of local practices developed to meet a wide variety of challenges posed by the Multilingual and Multicultural Learning Space (MMLS) at the 38 European partner HEIs in the IntlUni network.

The practice examples were collected to illustrate institutional or individual solutions to the linguistic, cultural and didactic challenges identified in the first year of the project and subsequently synthesized in a report that was presented to and discussed by the whole partnership in a workshop. After further feedback from partners and external experts at a second workshop, the final version is presented here.

Each of the practice examples is obviously geared to a given context in which it has provided a good solution to the challenges at hand. While no one hat fits all, the one-year process described above establishes some general quality principles that could – and should – work in different educational contexts across linguistic and cultural borders.

In addition to this process, a smaller number of illustrative samples – each of them based on one or more of the original practice examples – was compiled in order to illustrate each of the principles. These illustrative samples can be used as a point of reference by institutions when applying the principles in their further development of the MMLS.

### **The IntlUni Principles**

The table below provides an overview of the interdependence of the different elements of the MMLS learning environment. These elements consist of three dimensions involving three corresponding focuses of activity and quality principles. For each dimension there is an actor – the institution, the teacher and the student, respectively – who influences a process which is described as the focus of activity. The quality

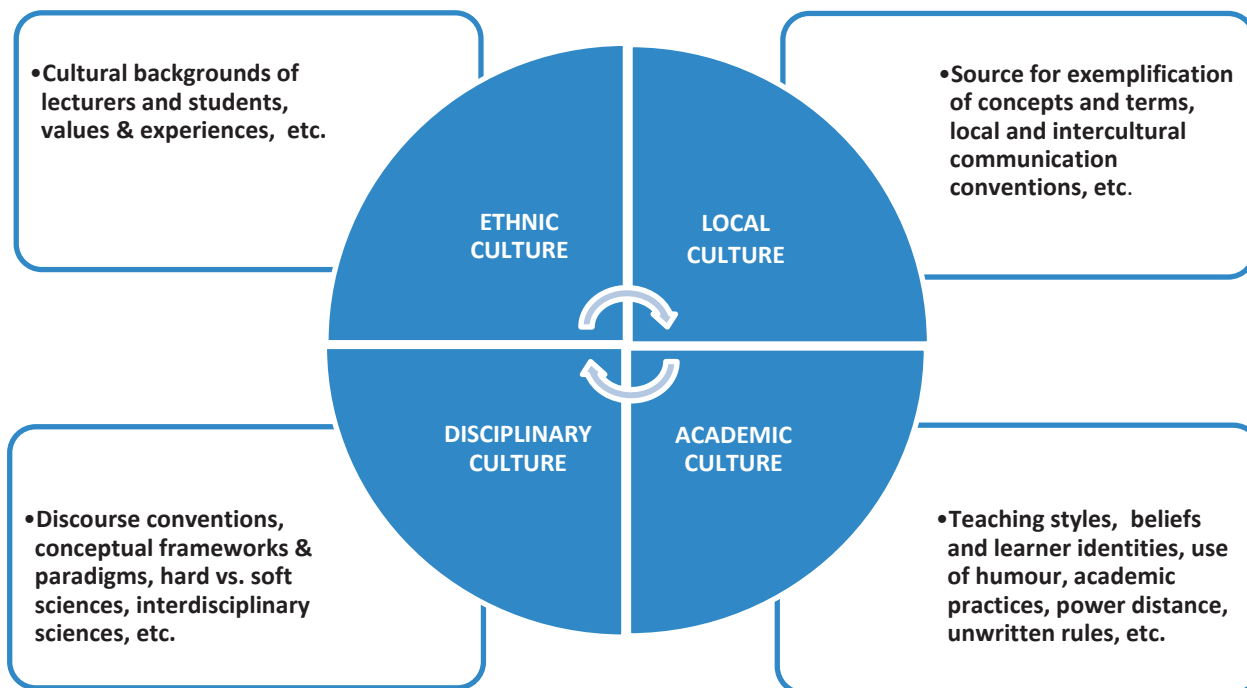
principles describe the conditions under which these processes can lead to the successful fulfillment of learning outcomes in all disciplines across the curriculum.

Dimension (actor)	Focus of activity (process)	Quality principles (conditions)
1. The institution	Educational context & institutional environment	1. Providing an inclusive learning space 1.1 Providing institutional support for learning-conducive environments 1.2 Integrating students and staff in the institution
2. The teacher	Educational processes	2. Raising awareness about teaching and learning processes 2.1 Reflecting on teaching approaches and negotiating learning processes 2.2 Managing and leveraging diversity
3. The student	Educational outcomes	3. Developing one's own cultural identity and extending one's knowledge base 3.1 Benefitting from awareness of cultural differences and the ability to deal with linguistic diversity 3.2 Acquiring and applying contextual and intercultural knowledge to different cultural contexts

The approach to culture adopted by this project is illustrated by the following model for culture in the internationalization of higher education, which was highlighted during Work Package 3<sup>1</sup> (1).

This broad, multidimensional concept of culture encompasses the different practices and underlying assumptions and attitudes that HE teachers and students bring to the international classroom. This understanding of culture applies throughout the text below.

<sup>1</sup> The culture model is based on Räsänen, A. 2011. International classrooms, disciplinary cultures and communication conventions: a report on a workshop for content and language teachers. *Quality Assurance Review for Higher Education*. Bucharest: ARACIS, Vol.3, No. 2, pp 155-161 and Flowerdew, J. & L. Miller. 1995. On the notion of culture in L2 lectures. *TESOL Quarterly*, Vol. 29/ 2, pp 345-373.



## The Institution

### Principle 1: Providing an inclusive learning space

#### Principle 1.1: Providing institutional support for learning-conducive environments

To establish the necessary conditions for learning in environments that are characterized by diversity, all stakeholders in the institution (managers, administrators and teachers) must cooperate to provide an inclusive learning-conducive environment. Strategies for ensuring this kind of environment include providing the teaching staff with appropriate didactic training in how to deal with diversity and how to teach in international settings, clearly communicating standards and expectations to all students, and linguistically and culturally preparing relevant administrative staff, teachers and students to function interculturally using an academic *lingua franca* in a multilingual and multicultural environment.

Above all, to ensure the successful implementation of the MMLS, institutions should develop an inclusive and enabling language and culture policy, in which the role of an academic *lingua franca*, other languages and cultures is clearly defined. Such policy decisions need to be supported with communication and training initiatives for all teaching, managerial and administrative staff, so that they are made fully aware of the MMLS and its implications for their daily work, and that they are equipped with relevant language and diversity management skills.

It is important that institutions guarantee and monitor the implementation of such a policy by ensuring that all students have the requisite language and academic communication skills to commence studying

in international programmes. Students also need support in developing their study skills, including academic language training, and they need support in the discipline-specific language that they will use to communicate in their future careers. As well as the regular classroom, students should be provided with virtual and other digital learning spaces that allow them to learn while making wider connections.

### **Principle 1.2: Integrating students and staff in the institution**

The institution should take specific measures to pave the way for the social and cultural integration of students outside the classroom, thereby establishing a welcoming culture for foreign students. These measures could range from appropriate information materials (both before and upon arrival), support with administrative matters outside the institution (such as housing, financial issues, transportation, etc.), specifically trained staff with relevant language skills for counselling and coaching, and the provision of places and events where local and foreign students can meet and learn to live and study together. In this way, HEIs should become platforms for international living and learning.

## **The Teacher**

### **Principle 2: Raising awareness about teaching and learning processes**

#### **Principle 2.1: Reflecting on teaching approaches and negotiating learning processes**

To further “level the playing field” and ensure that the knowledge and resources of all students are valued, teaching staff should take the time to discuss the teaching and learning processes in the international classroom. The teaching staff should explicitly communicate standards and expectations to all students. This involves being explicit about and discussing teacher roles, approaches and expectations. It also involves adjusting and individualizing teaching styles and foregrounding differences between national/local and disciplinary academic cultures and knowledge systems.

This also involves a process of negotiation or co-construction to ensure that the strategies of learners and teachers are compatible with the constructive alignment of teaching, learning and assessment. This may also mean embracing a change in methodologies, such as team teaching (language and subject teachers), peer-tutoring, and tandem learning, as well as reflection on these processes. All of this should also entail an appropriate integration of technology into the teaching and learning process.

#### **Principle 2.2: Managing and leveraging diversity**

Teachers must also aim towards integrating all students in the learning environment. This involves not only managing but also leveraging the diversity to help students develop intercultural competence, empathy and knowledge of the effects of cultural diversity. This can be achieved by promoting interactive learning through teambuilding and collaboration, using the cultural diversity of the students as a resource, and openly discussing cultural differences and cultural expectations.

Strategies for integration and inclusion might include teaching the history and culture of the host country to all students and giving students the opportunity to present their own cultures. This can be combined with or support the teaching of the national/local language at all levels, as well as the discussion and acceptance of code-switching practices.

## **The student**

### **Principle 3: Developing one's own cultural identity and extending one's knowledge base**

#### **Principle 3.1: Benefitting from awareness of cultural differences and the ability to deal with linguistic diversity**

Students should be given the opportunity to reflect on and enrich their identities by learning about culture and language through a mutually supportive group process. This involves bringing linguistic and cultural diversity to the forefront through such activities as encouraging language learning in combination with reflection on identity, explaining cultural differences and discussing cultural and conceptual differences. For example, students may be explicitly asked to develop an analysis that is different to the one they would instinctively develop on the basis of their own culturally-embedded understandings. This also involves including open-mindedness and tolerance as educational outcomes, developing empathy, and integrating languages into the curriculum of all subjects.

#### **Principle 3.2: Acquiring and applying contextual and intercultural knowledge to different cultural contexts**

The knowledge base of students can be broadened by encouraging peer learning and extending course content and materials across borders. This results in the relation of educational outcomes to other, often less familiar contexts. In the MMLS, students are not only confronted with the cultures that other students bring with them but also with the (conceptual) contexts from which those students come. They learn that ideas or applications that are relevant in their own contexts may not work in other contexts for reasons of, for instance, infrastructure, technology, geography and climate. Students and their teachers need to take into consideration both the intercultural and contextual aspects of this "otherness". Students from other countries become a resource in the extension of knowledge, and interaction needs to be designed purposefully so that this process is made explicit to all parties.

## Illustrative Samples of Good Practice in the Multilingual and Multicultural Learning Space (MMLS)

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*In 2013/2014 examples of good practice were collected at the partner institutions and subsequently used to develop the IntlUni principles for quality teaching and learning in the multilingual and multicultural learning space. Some of these examples have been rewritten as illustrative samples of good practice. While one hat does not fit all, and not all of the examples can be transferred into another educational context and academic culture without changes at all, there is a richness of ideas and inspiration to be gleaned from them, and they are therefore made available as part of the IntlUni final outcomes.*

### Dimension 1: Educational context & institutional environment

#### 1.1 Providing institutional support for learning-conducive environments

The following example describes a program at an institution which is focused on providing a learning conducive and supportive space for incoming international students. The program described below represents an almost ready-to-use example of how institution-wide strategies can be implemented on the ground to produce a learning-conducive environment. It also extends from the classroom into the informal curriculum.

One of the basic challenges for the MMLSs is creating a framework where educational experiences between students can be exchanged and shared. A safe zone needs to be established where international students can reflect on the knowledge, beliefs and experiences they each bring with them as guest students and then subsequently consider these against the new learning culture they are encountering.

To meet this challenge, one university in northern Europe offers an introductory course for all new international students entitled the *Foundation Course*. The course emphasizes academic preparation for addressing, e.g., the university's specific learning culture that focuses on problem oriented project work and group work, and, most of all, students' responsibility for their own learning.

At the heart of this university's educational philosophy is the belief that learning takes place in a community with others. This philosophy runs through the entire university, from the learning cultures where educational activities are organized in project groups (also formally assessed in groups) to the university architecture where educational activities are organized in units, so-called houses, with group rooms, kitchens and local staff.

A great deal of important knowledge exists informally in these communities and it is therefore of great importance that the international students get access to it very quickly. From the first course day, the

students encounter activities aimed at assisting them to access existing communities and create new networks. Local volunteer students participate actively with social and academic activities. Inclusion of both these elements, social and academic, leads to success for student integration.

The ultimate goal of this course is to empower the international students, to a greater extent, to consider themselves as a part of the local learning culture, and develop more confidence using peer learning. This is achieved through a transfer of knowledge about university learning in informal knowledge networks via introductory lectures in problem oriented project work. Experience has shown that this is generally a challenge, since most international students have worked with problem-based learning (PBL) – just not to the extent or format that it is practiced at this university. In addition, in instances when lectures alone do not meet student needs, this institution has the capacity and vision to experiment with inclusion of methods from collaborative and narrative learning theories.

Implementation of this type of institution-wide initiatives, based on the idea of authenticity and equality, takes time. Most local volunteers are only active for a course or two, resulting in a great deal of reinvention from semester to semester. In particular, the content in the narratives often need to be recreated every time in order to match the student population. Therefore, the focus for the course teacher must also take into account not only teaching students but also teaching the volunteers.

This university's experience and student evaluations show that in most cases this strategy leads to success regarding the student's integration. In addition, successful implementation of the *Foundation Course* has resulted in a profound knock-on effect. New evaluations show that the networks created throughout the course also benefit the students who do not participate in the course. The combined social and academic behavior introduced in the *Foundation Course* is reproduced by course participants actively transferring their acquired knowledge in the various environments they occupy: the academic houses, the dormitory, social media space such as Facebook, etc. While this synergic effect was not expected, it supports the hypothesis that it pays off working for a community creating culture.

## 1.2 Integrating students in the institution

This example adds an explicit condition for providing an inclusive learning space. The course activities described below show how in-class activities can promote a multiplicity of perspectives and move students away from habitual stereotyping.

Based on experience from a previously taught course, a lecturer at a university wanted to expand a dialogue that developed on the topic "Encounters with the Foreign". So, in her advanced European Studies course, this lecturer focused on the relationship between the home and the foreign, on all its levels, self/other, us/them, etc., and assigned a book written by a cultural anthropologist that discusses one's relationship to space after a war, in particular, a war from the local region. The discussion of the chosen text was left to the end of the semester.

With about 40 students enrolled in the course, 8 of which were Erasmus students and the remainder local students, the lecturer separated the book in parts with mixed groups of students (both Erasmus and local) responsible for each of these parts. Their task was to write a short critical summary of the part they were



responsible for and generate four critical questions for discussion. The lecturer felt it was vital to mix the students in their groups. Having Erasmus students in each of the groups provided a new lens through which to view the text. She stated that “the Erasmus students lacked knowledge of how history/politics about the [local] conflict is taught in [local] schools and due to this they were more receptive to the [foreign] point of view.”

As was expected, the Erasmus students read the text with an openness one has when one reads something that is distant and foreign. Because of this they were more able to remain focused on the issues raised by the book as opposed to assuming, presupposing, filling in the blanks, projecting or personalizing which was a tendency evident in some of the local students’ assessment of the book. In other words, what the Erasmus students brought into the discussion of the book was a strong sense of measure and balance that would not have been possible had the group consisted of only local national students. The presence of the Erasmus students in the classroom allowed the multiplicity of perspectives on a controversial issue to be heard and for a productive discussion to be effected. More importantly, it allowed a number of local national students to engage with the book in more thoughtful ways as the classroom environment was established in such a way that it did not require the local students to respond to the text in an “expected” or stereotypical way.

According to the lecturer, the local students “felt free, in other words, to think about alternative takes on the issue in a new way, and enter the space of difference emanating from this book with openness. The culturally diverse environment of that particular course was beneficial culturally and educationally to all students in that it allowed them to see the difference in terms of receptivity to texts that are closer to home as opposed to those that are foreign to us.”

## **Dimension 2: Educational processes**

### **2. Raising awareness about teaching and learning processes**

The following two examples show how specific opportunities may be used to make what is often tacit knowledge more explicit. Through direct intervention, activities at these universities seek to raise awareness about issues related to language proficiency and the teaching and learning process.

#### **2.1a Reflecting on teaching approaches and negotiating learning processes**

In this case, the challenge relates to dealing with linguistic/academic cultural issues encountered by a native English speaking (NS), Australian lecturer at a non-Anglophone, European university; the lecturer taught EMI humanities seminars where discussion and debate form the basis of knowledge transmission.

This particular BA program was comprised mostly of local non-native English speaking (NNS) students and a group of Erasmus students, made up of a few NS students as well as a blend of NNS, mostly from the Mediterranean countries. At this university, lecturers are only obligated to accept exchange students with formal learning agreements, especially in the introductory seminars, which can have 40+ students.

However, it can be difficult to turn away students who want to take a specific course. Still, the more advanced undergraduate seminars should ideally be smaller, because they're dealing with much more difficult material. With this in mind, lecturers are required to close class enrollments and turn students away who do not possess appropriate pre-requisite skills for success in a course. This is often difficult to negotiate with students and manage with administration.

In addition to the usual issues of sufficient English-language proficiency of some Erasmus exchange students, issues regarding student/teacher roles and expectations also arose. The academic culture of this university is very traditional. Students maintain a respectful distance from their lecturers, including using titles and surnames when addressing them in class. The local educational system also tends to utilize traditional teacher fronted lecturing as a didactic style. The local system typically does not require students to articulate unique arguments in their written work, but instead relies on standardized writing assignments and exams. In comparison, in terms of teaching style and an academic history with the Australian higher educational system, the lecturer for this specific course favors an Anglo-American approach, which she describes as "more provocative" and "encourages students to come up with their own ideas and think". She enjoys being on a first-name basis with the students and encourages interaction in her classes to as great an extent as possible.

In order to generate more discussion and debate in her classes, the lecturer explained her teaching style at the beginning of the seminar and made her expectations clear regarding how students should approach their reading assignments, ways to participate in class (oral participation), and how to complete written assignments. In addition, she conferred with her colleagues in the department who had had international teaching experience and also preferred a more Anglo-American approach.

As a result of this experience and intervention, course admission policy has changed. Now, in order to enroll in the seminar, participants must have a minimum of CEFR C1 level English language proficiency (all home students on the program are tested prior to admission). In addition, the seminar now begins with an introductory session outlining the student/teacher roles and expectations. These initiatives have been put into place to create a more homogeneous group, in terms of both language proficiency and awareness of the differing teaching style and/or academic culture.

### **2.1b Reflecting on teaching/learning styles and negotiating learning processes**

The following example reflects the use of peer interaction to lead to greater awareness and student autonomy. Through peer counselling, students become aware of differing learning styles and can draw on each other's experience for greater academic success.

The Language Centre (LC) at one university hosts many foreign students. They come from different learning cultures and have specific learning experiences. Sometimes it is difficult for them to use their own learning strategies in the foreign language courses at the Centre. They need help. There are, of course, also local students who need support for exam preparation or want to improve their foreign language learning. Working with these heterogeneous groups of students presents a challenge in the classroom.

To address this challenge, 8 students were employed as peer tutors at the LC's Self Learning Centre. The peer tutors work 6 hours per week, providing individual language learning advice to students. Students at the Language Centre come to the tutors with different concerns: some want to talk about their language learning difficulties, others want to expand their repertoire of language learning strategies, while the others want to speak about their motivation or search for specific materials for exam preparation. The peer tutors support the students by helping them to help themselves; this is achieved by means of conducting personal conversations based on the principles of non-directive counseling. The students become more autonomous in learning, self-confident and can achieve better results in learning foreign languages.

Both the students and the peer tutors have benefitted from this project. Besides the obvious benefit to the students, who are supported in their learning outside of the courses, the experience of the tutors is an additional benefit of the project. The tutors find their work fulfilling, and discover the new skills that they acquire, particularly communication and autonomous learning skills, useful for their personal development and future professional work.

The project has shed light on the various needs of students learning languages in different ways. Moreover different language learning biographies allow the students to be treated individually, creating an atmosphere of respect and acknowledgement.

## **Dimension 3: Educational outcomes**

### **3. Developing one's own cultural identity and extending one's knowledge base**

The following three examples offer insight into the challenges and opportunities for raising learners' and instructors' awareness concerning different general academic cultures and also awareness of language-specific disciplinary cultures.

#### **3.1a Benefiting from awareness of cultural differences and the ability to deal with linguistic diversity**

In an English-medium instruction course, the students' various approaches to the course material and their divergent academic cultures are expressed and can be discussed and explored in the course.

The particular course mentioned concerns "advertising meaning", the meaning of images, brand reputations and product or company identities. The main challenge in the course concerns establishing the basic background for key questions concerning their purposes such as "what do we talk about when we talk about meaning?", "what do we refer to when we refer to a brand's reputation," and more specifically "how is this reputation measured, and how is it grasped?"

It is through dealing with the basic questions that students' academic cultural orientations are revealed. Students from an Anglo-American background consider meaning to be countable and apply quantitative measures to grasp it, such as questionnaires, large-scale surveys and even quantitative content analysis. On the other hand, students from other backgrounds see meaning as something which is uncountable

and which can be grasped from a qualitative approach, and thus they use other methods of analysis to approach the basic questions.

For lecturers, the challenge has been to be aware of these differences, to let them come to the surface and then to make students aware of the consequences of carrying out research from these different points of view at different research institutes and in different countries. For students, a common practice is that they are asked to approach the problem from a point of view other than the one they would initially adopt. In that way, the students who would naturally use a quantitative approach are asked to develop a qualitative approach, and vice versa.

A result of this process is commonly the understanding of differing approaches used to measure “meaning”, a general understanding about how to carry out research concerning advertising campaigns, and more importantly, a full awareness of the consequences of using one approach or another. Thus, students are not only made aware of their own academic approaches to problems, but learn how to expand and develop their repertoire of approaches in a mutually supportive environment.

### **3.1b Benefiting from awareness of cultural differences and the ability to deal with linguistic diversity**

At a university in northern Europe, a Master’s program integrating business and environmental approaches attracts a combination of local and international students from a variety of linguistic and disciplinary backgrounds. Although all students must pass certain entrance exam requirements, they all may not have the academic language skills for learning content in English.

To address this situation, an instructor from the English Language Center and one from the Master’s program merged two complementary classes together to create a language and content integrated course where the learning outcomes and skills required overlapped and complemented each other. Integration was carefully planned; both teachers learned what the other one was actually teaching in his/her sessions and both observed each other’s teaching: learning outcomes, teaching methods, activities, major assignments were negotiated.

Learning outcomes for both language and content were developed side by side, and students were carefully informed about the joint course structures. While learning about content, students also learned how to communicate professionally both orally and in writing following the field-specific, academic conventions. The results of integrating content and discipline-specific language were quite positive: integration was seen as useful, meaningful and motivating, and using authentic materials and scaffolding and incorporating assignments were seen to support learning when it comes to content and language. Furthermore, the skills learned in the integrated course have added to the quality of Master’s theses and aided in the transition to work life.

### **3.1c Benefiting from awareness of cultural differences and the ability to deal with linguistic diversity**

At one university, differing interpretations of what constitutes academic culture in the international university have led to problems for both students and staff. These problems include failed examinations, low marks, and misunderstandings in relation to academic expectations. In an effort to address these problems, a cross-discipline and university-wide program of sharing information and ideas has been established and a professional advisory board and student advisory board are planned.

The goals of these steps are to make explicit different expectations for academic writing and communication due to differences in disciplinary, academic and national cultures, to offer activities that encourage and develop different academic writing and thinking skills, and to create a space for discussing and exchanging information among students and lecturers. These initiatives are driven by a process- and reflective approach to writing and communication and involve cooperation with a variety of degree programs across the university.

This strategy, which is currently under development, envisages knowledge concerning academic expectations, skills and communication to be disseminated via workshops, events and a blog. Furthermore, it is a goal to increase networking via these activities among international students and staff. Also it is a goal to use user-generated content concerning these issues in the classroom context.

### **3.2 Acquiring and applying contextual and intercultural knowledge to different cultural contexts**

The following example provides an explanation of the extension of context and culture across borders, and shows the value of diversity as a resource for this extension in the classroom.

At one university's Medical Bachelor's program, professional development is emphasized throughout the semesters. Groups of ten students work with a medical doctor, who acts as a coach, to investigate what it means to be a professional in the medical world. Professionalism is defined "as a phenomenon with three domains: a personal domain, an interpersonal domain, and a societal/organizational domain," and coaching meetings allow students "to develop accountability and reflection skills in those three domains."

Reflection skills are addressed in assignments in the coaching meetings which are designed specifically for the medical context. In one example, students watched two documentaries concerning cultural approaches towards dealing with the terminally ill. One documentary was set in the local university culture, and the other was set in North Africa. With this strategy students are encouraged to reflect on sociocultural contextual factors that affect medical practice. This experience may help students develop intercultural awareness and transparency and give the students a broader context for discussion.

This particular experience has led students to reflect on a variety of cultural perspectives in a constructive exchange, moving beyond the local cultural context. For example, one student described his experience in working with this assignment noting that it was important not only to integrate medical issues with cultural ones, but the students themselves realized that they are part of a multicultural group. It was also reported that valuable learning happened in these meetings not necessarily when participants agreed on

issues or experienced things in the same way, but when issues were seen and discussed from different angles.

## IntlUni – process and working method

*Karen M. Lauridsen, Aarhus University, DK & IntlUni Coordinator*

The working method of the IntlUni project has been one of progression from the identification of challenges (problems) in the multilingual and multicultural learning space (MMLS) to the development of the quality principles and recommendations presented in this document. This process has comprised three stages: (i) the identification of cultural, linguistic and didactic challenges; (ii) the identification of examples of good practice to meet these challenges, and finally (iii) the development of quality principles and recommendations:



In the first year of the project, and based on a literature review as well as a survey among all partner institutions, the cultural, linguistic and didactic challenges were identified. The results of this exercise was synthesised in reports of two work packages (WPs): WP 2 primarily identified the scope of internationalisation and the linguistic situation in the participating HEIs; the results are synthesized in the report [Identification of HEI Scenarios](#) and in a [Spectrum of modalities – the medium of instruction](#).

WP 3 supplemented the results of the survey with qualitative data in the form of narratives from partner institutions. These two data sets were analysed and synthesized in the [IntlUni Catalogue of Challenges in the Multilingual and Multicultural Learning Space](#) and in the report [Identification of linguistic, cultural and pedagogical / didactic challenges](#); in order to describe the cultural aspects, a model on [Culture in the internationalisation of higher education](#) was adopted.

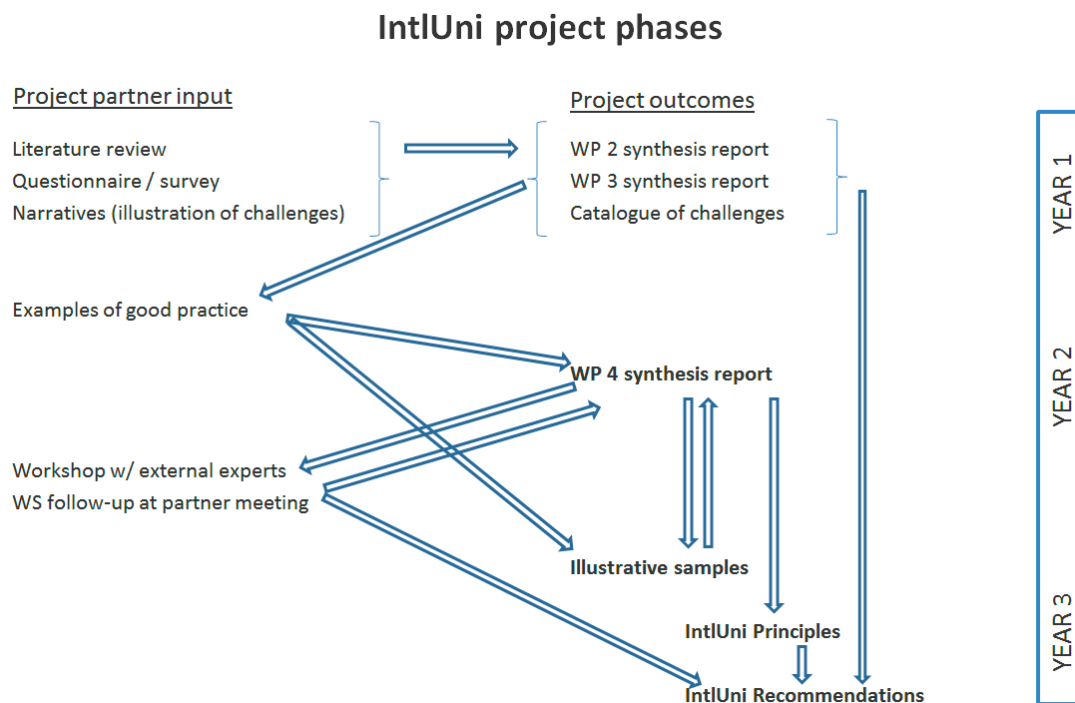
Following the mapping of challenges, the second year was devoted to identifying examples of how these challenges might be met. At the same time it was decided that it was a far too reactive a process to respond to challenges only, and that the project should more proactively address the opportunities as well as the challenges in the MMLS.

This more proactive approach was evident in the process where close to a hundred examples of good practice were collected from the partner HEIs. An obvious challenge in this part of the process was to decide to which extent an example was “good”. IntlUni was a development project, but also very much an exploratory study, and there were no general criteria in existence that could be immediately applied to evaluate the practice examples.

Considering the diversity that characterises European higher education, it was decided that the criterion for an example to be considered good was that the initiative, activity or intervention in question had proven its value and served its purpose in the local context from which it arose: It had to be fit for purpose, clearly explained to all actors, and meaningful in relation to the educational context and the intended learning outcomes of the programmes of study to which it was applied.

The practice examples were analysed, interpreted and synthesized, and the results of this process were distilled into the IntlUni Principles and supplemented with the set of Illustrative Samples exemplifying each of the principles.

The process described is illustrated on more detail in this diagram:



The development from the raw input to the final outcomes took place in an iterative bottom-up process characterized by continual interaction between the work package leaders and project management on the one hand, and the partner representatives and their local working groups on the other. In this way it was possible to involve all partners throughout the project and ensure that the final outcomes truly captured and reflected the diversity that characterizes the internationalisation of European higher education today.

As it can be seen in the diagram above, the principles were first developed in the form of a synthesis report for WP 4. This report was presented at a workshop with external experts and a partner meeting at the end of the second year, and as a result of these events the final versions of the IntlUni Principles and



the Illustrative Examples were completed – again in an iterative process – at the beginning of the third year.

Finally, in the third phase of the project, the IntlUni Recommendations were developed on the basis of the synthesis reports from WPs 2 and 3, the IntlUni Principles and the Illustrative samples.

Despite the great diversity among the IntlUni partner HEIs, the iterative bottom up approach that has been adopted throughout the project has led to a set of outcomes that, although they may also be considered fairly general, truly captures the diversity of European higher education today. It is now up to the individual HEIs to discuss these outcomes and decide how they may be implemented in their local contexts.



## IntlUni partner institutions 2012-15

Representatives of the following higher education institutions have participated in the IntlUni project:

- Aarhus University, DK (IntlUni coordination and project management)
- Vienna University of Economics and Business, AT
- Vrije Universiteit Brussel, BE
- KU Leuven, BE
- Agricultural University Plovdiv, BG
- University of Lausanne, CH
- University of Cyprus, CY
- Charles University in Prague, CZ
- Freie Universität Berlin, DE
- University of Freiburg, DE
- European University Viadrina Frankfurt (Oder), DE
- Roskilde University, DK
- University of Copenhagen, DK
- University of Southern Denmark, DK
- Tallinn University, EE
- Pompeu Fabra University, ES
- Complutense University of Madrid, ES
- University of Jyväskylä, FI
- University Bordeaux, FR
- University of Szeged, HU
- Waterford Institute of Technology, IE
- Sapienza University of Rome, IT
- University of Trento, IT
- Vytautas Magnus University, LT
- University of Latvia, LV
- Radboud University Nijmegen, NL
- University of Groningen, NL
- Maastricht University, NL
- Oslo and Akerhus University College of applied Sciences, NO
- University of Warsaw, PL
- University of Minho, PT
- Babes-Bolyai University, RO
- Stockholm University, SE
- University of Ljubljana, SI
- Virtual University of Tunisia, TN
- Koc University, TR
- University of Essex, UK
- University of Southampton, UK



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