

Guide to Virtual Mobility



EADTU Annual Conference 2007

8-9 November, Lisbon, Portugal

CONTENT¹

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Overview of the main characteristics of the three models of Virtual Mobility

2. The Virtual Stay Abroad

2.1 Designing the module

- 2.1.1 Format of the module
- 2.1.2 Language of the module
- 2.1.3 Assessment of the module
- 2.1.4 Academic and intercultural value of the Virtual Stay Abroad
 - 2.1.4.1 The academic value of the Virtual Stay Abroad
 - 2.1.4.2 The international experience in the Virtual Stay Abroad

2.2 Setting up the module for students

- 2.2.1 Target groups and entrance Requirements
- 2.2.2 Enrolment / registration and intake procedure
- 2.2.3 Fees
- 2.2.4 Access to library resources

2.3 Teaching and tutoring the module

2.4 Offering administrative support to students

2.5 Establishing the partnership

- 2.5.1 Decisions to make and steps to take as a group
- 2.5.2 Decisions to make and steps to take for each partner individually
- 2.5.3 Decisions to make and steps to take for an appointed partner

2.6 Informing and attracting students

3. The Virtual Seminar

3.1 Designing the seminar

- 3.1.1 Format of the seminar
- 3.1.2 Language of the seminar
- 3.1.3 Assessment of the seminar
- 3.1.4 Academic and intercultural value of the Virtual Seminar
 - 3.1.4.1 The academic value of the Virtual Seminar
 - 3.1.4.2 The international experience in the Virtual Seminar

¹ This Guide to Virtual Mobility is a print version of a web-document in a Hypertext-format. The web-address of this Guide will be disseminated at the EADTU Annual Conference 2007 and through the EADTU- web page (<http://www.eadtu.nl>)

3.2 Setting up the seminar for students

- 3.2.1 Target groups and entrance requirements
- 3.2.2 Enrolment / registration and intake procedure
- 3.2.3 Fees
- 3.2.4 Access to library resources

3.3 Teaching and tutoring the seminar

3.4 Offering the administrative support to students

3.5 Establishing the partnership

- 3.5.1 Decisions to make and Steps to take as a group
- 3.5.2 Decisions to make and steps to take for each partner individually
- 3.5.3 Decisions to make and steps to take for the central coordinator
- 3.5.4 Decisions to make and steps to take for an institutional coordinator
- 3.5.5 Decisions to make and steps to take for a partner offering tutoring
- 3.5.6 Decisions to make and steps to take for a partner offering a case study

3.6 Informing and attracting students

4. The Virtual Campus

4.1 Designing the assignments

- 4.1.1 Format of the assignments
- 4.1.2 Language of the assignments
- 4.1.3 Assessment of the assignments
- 4.1.4 Academic and intercultural value of the Virtual Campus
 - 4.1.4.1 The academic value of the Virtual Campus
 - 4.1.4.2 The international experience in the Virtual Campus

4.2 Setting up the assignments for students

- 4.2.1 Target groups and entrance requirements
- 4.2.2 Enrolment / registration and intake procedure
- 4.2.3 Fees
- 4.2.4 Access to library resources

4.3 Teaching and tutoring the assignments

4.4 Offering administrative support to students

4.5 Establishing the partnership

- 4.5.1 Decisions to make and steps to take as a group
- 4.5.2 Decisions to make and steps to take for each partner individually
- 4.5.3 Decisions to make and steps to take for an appointed partner

4.6 Informing and attracting students

1. Introduction

You are interested in Virtual Mobility? You are considering offering Virtual Mobility to students from your institution? You would like to have practical advice on what to do and how? Then this Guide will certainly help you.

It is a manual on how to implement different models of Virtual Mobility at Higher Education-institutions, no matter if these are distance teaching or traditional universities.



Virtual Mobility has a huge potential for students because it offers the possibility to have an international academic experience without giving up commitments in the home country.

Virtual Mobility is also much cheaper than a physical stay abroad!

In general Virtual Mobility is defined as an activity that *"offers access to courses and study schemes in a foreign country and allows for communication activities with teachers and fellow students abroad via the new information and communication technologies"* ([EADTU Position Paper on Virtual Mobility](#))². For this guide an additional criterion is used to further define *Virtual Mobility*.

Virtual Mobility is defined as an activity based on a co-operation of – at least two – Higher Education-institutions: two or more institutions agree to offer their students the opportunity to acquire a number of ECTS-points at one of the foreign partner universities or through a joint activity of the partners. The ECTS-points of this international experience will then be counted to the student's degree at his/her home university.

According to this definition, a student living in Spain and studying at the Open University of the United Kingdom for example is not virtually mobile. That student is having international distance education.

All three models introduced in this guide – the "Virtual Stay Abroad", the "European Virtual Seminar" and the "Virtual Campus" – have been designed in line with this definition of Virtual Mobility.

² All phrases written in [blue and underlined](#) refer to a link in the online version of this guide.

The *four major advantages* of this type of Virtual Mobility are:

- It contributes to the quality of the academic education and [lifelong learning](#) for all students. Virtual Mobility is not restricted to a specific period of time or space, which is a key-advantage for any activity in lifelong learning.
- By providing supplementary courses Virtual Mobility enables students to further individualise and specialise their portfolio.
- The concept of studying only a portion of a degree at a foreign university based on firm agreements makes it relatively easy to have an academic international experience through distance learning and to internationalise one's curriculum in an accessible way.
- For Higher Education institutions this offers the possibility of internationalising their curriculum and fulfilling that part of their mission which is about offering their students education on an international level.

The common perception is that the main [target group](#) of Virtual Mobility-schemes are those students who are not physically mobile – due to work, family and/or physical reasons – but still want to have an international experience.

In contrast to that the idea that both, [Physical and Virtual Mobility](#) have their own potential and are complementary is supported in this guide. Therefore all Virtual Mobility-schemes introduced are targeted at mobile as well as non-mobile students.

In the following you will be introduced to the main characteristics of the three models of Virtual Mobility. Based on this introduction you are asked to choose one of the models. You are then led to a step by step description of the different possibilities of how to create and implement the respective model of Virtual Mobility.

1.1 Overview of the main characteristics of the three models of Virtual Mobility

In the following table you find the main characteristics of the Virtual Stay Abroad, the European Virtual Seminar and the Virtual Campus. They are presented in a way which facilitates comparison.

The Virtual Stay Abroad

The core objective of the *Virtual Stay Abroad (VSA)* is to offer non-mobile students an international study experience similar to the Erasmus-stay abroad. The focus is on the international exchange of distance teaching course modules in the framework of a study-programme. Students can study one (or several) modules at a different European university, which is then counted towards their degree at home.

The Virtual Seminar

The Virtual Seminar is a joint course that promotes an international, multidisciplinary dialogue between students on authentic and current issues, using modern ICT and the Internet to overcome the constraints of place and time. The students participate in heterogeneous groups, in terms of nationality, discipline, institution and gender.



All three models are a very good addition to a student's education and help him or her to achieve goals like graduating, getting a job and having a career.

Virtual Campus

In the *Virtual Campus* students from the partnering institutions are invited to round-off a specific course in their curriculum with a virtual international experience. They complete one or several assignments in a virtual workspace, through collaborating in an international community of students. This model can be informally described as 'Virtual Mobility-light', meaning that it knows relatively few institutional barriers because almost no institutional agreement is required. Generally, the international experience will consist of 10% of the total ECTS-points of the original course.

Feature	Virtual Stay Abroad	Virtual Seminar	Virtual Campus
<i>Discipline</i>	Disciplinary	Multidisciplinary	Disciplinary
<i>Size</i>	One module of a degree	Joint Seminar	Course module
<i>Activity</i>	Studying a module @ a foreign university = <i>Virtual ERASMUS</i>	Working on case studies in a multinational and – disciplinary group	Working on assignments in multinational groups
<i>Enrolment</i>	@ host university	@ home university	@ home university
<i>Language</i>	1. priority: National languages 2. priority: common	Common	Common
<i>International experience</i>	Mainly through studying in a foreign language and a foreign academic system	Through communication and collaboration in an international study group	Through communication and collaboration in an international study group
<i>Assessment</i>	Virtual and/or face-to-face	Virtual	Virtual
<i>Credit Transfer</i>	Yes	No	No
<i>Fees</i>	Yes, regular fees of host university	No	No
<i>Access to library resources/course materials</i>	@ host university	Via Open Electronic Resources If needed via home university	Via Open Electronic Resources and home university
<i>Extra time to invest in teaching</i>	None	Medium	Medium
<i>Extra time to invest in administrative support</i>	Low - medium	Medium - high	Low
<i>Partnership</i>	Two and more Mainly Distance Teaching but also traditional universities	Three and more Distance Teaching and traditional universities	Two and more Distance Teaching and traditional universities
<i>Institutional agreements needed</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 1: Main features of the three models of Virtual Mobility

Please decide on one of the models and proceed by clicking on the name of your preferred model below:

→ **Virtual Stay Abroad**

→ **Virtual Seminar**

→ **Virtual Campus**

If you need more information before making your decision please click on the following links leading you to the web pages of the case studies of the different models:

Link to the web page of the **Virtual Stay Abroad**

(<http://www.eadtu.nl/academic-networks/humanities/offerings.htm>)

Link to the web page of the **Virtual Seminar** (<http://www.ou.nl/evs>)

Link to the web page of the **Virtual Campus** (<http://www.e-move.org>)

2. THE VIRTUAL STAY ABROAD

You have picked the *Virtual Stay Abroad (VSA)* as the model of Virtual Mobility that best fits your needs best and you are now looking for advice on how to realise it.

In the following six chapters you will be introduced to all relevant aspects of designing (2.1), setting up (2.2), teaching (2.3), providing administrative support (2.4), establishing the partnership (2.5) as well as informing and attracting students (2.6) to the VSA.

Each chapter/subchapter – except the last – is divided into three different parts: First you will get some general information on a specific aspect to consider for the model, leading then to practical recommendations on what to do. These recommendations are based on practical experience on the one hand and on comments from experts in teaching and administration as well as students as potential participants in the VSA on the other. You will frequently find alternative suggestions about how to decide. This offers you flexibility and the opportunity to create a Virtual Stay Abroad according to your own demands and priorities. At the end of each paragraph one specific way of realising the VSA will be introduced: The case study International Course Exchange.

2.1. DESIGNING THE MODULE

When designing a Virtual Stay Abroad-scheme several aspects concerning the format of the course, its language and assessment need to be considered. These aspects are introduced in this chapter.

2.1.1 Format of the module

In the *Virtual Stay Abroad (VSA)* the student is offered the opportunity to study a module of his/her degree at one of the partnering universities. Therefore each partner makes one or more of its already existing courses available to students of the other partners. This can happen via an [international course pool](#), an electronic database showing and giving access to descriptions of all courses available in the VSA.

The courses need to fulfil several *criteria*:

All have to originate from the same academic field of study and need to have the size of a [module](#) in the relevant academic programme.

Concerning the specific *content* of the courses there are different alternatives:

- a) The courses might represent a particular national expertise from the offering institution.
- b) The courses might have a more general or European topic, like “governance” for example.
- c) The courses might contribute contents that are not available at the other partnering universities.

While a) and c) might attract students interested in having an international experience together with working on a specific national expertise b) will be likely to be more interesting for students without any particular national approach. All alternatives affect the character of the [international experience](#).

[D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take

[D] What is the relevant academic discipline/field of study?

[D] For which academic level (Bachelor/Master) should the VSA be offered?

[D] How many courses should each partner institution offer?

[D] Should the topics of the courses represent a specific national expertise of the partnering institutions OR being chosen according to different criteria?

[S] Set up a course pool, a database with all courses available in the VSA.

Case Study: International Course Exchange

In the International Course Exchange (ICE) students have the opportunity to study one module of their B.A.-degree in Social Sciences, Cultural Sciences or the Humanities at one of the partnering institutions. Each partner university provides at least two courses of their regular curriculum in the [international course pool](#). All courses represent a particular national expertise of the offering institution. For example the Open Universiteit Nederland offers its course in “Early Dutch Painting” and the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya made a course on “Contemporary Catalan History and Art” available for the ICE.

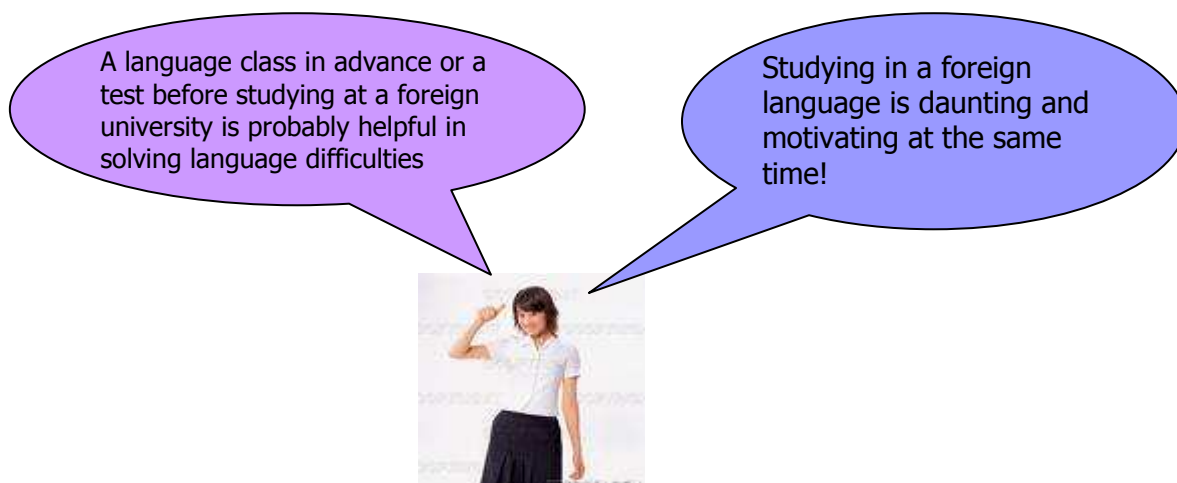
2.1.2 Language of the module

A very important feature of the different Virtual Mobility-schemes is the language they are offered in. For the participating student studying in a foreign language is not only one of the major challenges he/she has to face but also one of the major competencies he/she will acquire and prove through participating.

In the *Virtual Stay Abroad* there are two alternatives when deciding on the language:

- a) Courses could be offered in the *national languages* of the participating universities. In this case the student has to study in the language spoken at the university he/she decides to do the VSA at.
- b) The offered courses could also be designed in a *common language* not necessarily the national language at all/any of the partnering institutions.

Whether that design is also valid for the course materials, examinations and the tutorial support needs/can be decided separately.



[D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take

[D] Should the courses be offered in the national languages at the participating institutions OR should they be offered in a common language?

[D] Is this design also valid for the course materials, the examinations and the tutorial support?

[S] Set up all courses, course materials, examination and tutorial documents in the language the course/s should be in.

[S] Optional: Set up a general description in English of every course offered in the VSA and publish it in the international course pool.

[S] Optional: Inform students about possibilities to take a language course in preparation for the VSA at your or any of the partnering universities.

Case Study: International Course Exchange

In the International Course Exchange courses are offered in the national languages of the partnering institutions. Currently students can study in Catalan, Dutch, English, German, Italian, and Spanish, depending on which university they decide on:

At some of the partner universities exams are offered in more than one language. At the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya a student can also do his/her examinations in Spanish and English.

2.1.3 Assessment of the module

For students it is very important to get reliable information on the assessment of a Virtual Mobility scheme and especially the [recognition of credits](#). It is therefore important to make binding arrangements on examinations and credit transfer among the partners.

A crucial issue related to this is the location of the examination. In particular for non-mobile students it is important to know whether they have to travel for examinations or not.

During the *Virtual Stay Abroad* the student is a regular member of his/her host university. Therefore the assessment is done according to the rules and regulations of that particular institution. This includes the *location of the examinations*.

While at some universities the possibility to do a web-based exam exists, students of other universities might have to travel. But in order to consider the needs of non-mobile students, arrangements alternative to mandatory travelling abroad for exams are recommended. Students could for example take their exams at an embassy/consulate or have their oral examination via video-conferencing.

The *number of [ECTS-points](#)* for the course is equivalent to the size of a module in the corresponding academic degree.

When a student successfully passes the examination/course he/she gets the ECTS-points from the host institution. Those points will then be recognised towards the degree studied at the student's home university. This is [guaranteed](#) to the student by all universities contributing to the course pool.

For some degrees/at some universities only a limited amount of credit points from a foreign university can be recognised. If a student is interested in doing more than one VSA this should be considered.

[D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take

[D] How many ECTS-points equal the size of a module in the context of the student's academic programme at his/her home university?

[D] Should it be possible to participate in more than one VSA?

[S] Arrange alternatives to mandatory travelling for exams for non-mobile students.

[S] Set up a document for the student that guarantees the recognition of courses by the co-operating institutions.

Case Study: International Course Exchange

Participants of the International Course Exchange are assessed according to the rules and regulations of their host universities.

The size of the courses is 15 ECTS-points, which is the standard size of one module in the ICE, or a factor of 15.

At some universities individual arrangements have been made for the international students: At the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya the examination can be done in Catalan as well as Spanish and English.

It is guaranteed that the ECTS-points a student acquires through participating in a course from the international course pool will be later recognised for his/her degree at home.

2.1.4 The academic and the intercultural value of the Virtual Stay Abroad

One major drawback with Virtual Mobility-schemes is that despite their academic value, they often lack the [international/cultural experience inherent in the original Erasmus exchanges](#). But in these days of chat rooms, blogs, etc., acquiring, expanding and fostering not only academic but also intercultural competencies (also) in the virtual space and [through e-learning](#) is possible, and becoming more common.

The design of the *Virtual Stay Abroad* allows the student both: to make his/her academic portfolio more attractive and gain intercultural competencies.

2.1.4.1 The academic value of the Virtual Stay Abroad

The *academic value of the VSA for the student* is that he/she can attend courses that are not available at the home institution and build his/her individual academic portfolio. This special expertise in his/her field of study can be an important asset in their future career.

For the *participating institutions the academic value* of this course design is an extension of their curriculum up to the international level. This happens in two directions: On the one hand an institution offers its students the possibility to take courses on topics not included in their academic programmes at a partner university abroad. On the other hand, the institution can offer its own courses/modules across borders.

2.1.4.2 The international experience in the Virtual Stay Abroad

In the VSA the intercultural – or academic international – experience is based on three aspects. Depending on the specific [format](#) the course the international experience results from all or at least some these aspects:

- a) Through [enrolling](#) as a regular student at his/her host university, the student has the practical experience of being part of a foreign academic environment. Confronted with different traditions of teaching, learning and organising his/her studies the student has to actively deal with this national/ cultural difference.
- b) Studying in a foreign [language](#) is one of the key elements of an international experience and probably one of the major challenges the student has to face. If the foreign language is the national language of the host university, the student also has the chance to get a much deeper understanding of the particular foreign culture he/she is studying in.
- c) This understanding can even be intensified through studying [topics](#) representing a specific national expertise of the host university and that are a reflection of a country's history and present situation.

It is very interesting to learn about the structure of a foreign university from the inside!



[D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take

[S] Inform potential students of the academic value of the VSA.

[S] *Since some of the national differences in the academic culture are crucial for the student's success in completing the VSA:* [set up a document/website which explains the major differences of the academic systems](#) (e.g. covering topics like teaching, assessment, mentoring, and the academic calendar).

Case Study: International Course Exchange

In the International Course Exchange (ICE) the international experience consists of all three elements described above:

- a) The students are enrolling at the university they choose to do the ICE with,
- b) they have to study in the national language of that particular institution, and
- c) the courses offered represent a specific national expertise of the host institution.

2.2. SETTING UP THE MODULE FOR STUDENTS

After designing the Virtual Mobility-scheme the second major step is to set it up for students. This includes decision-making on entrance requirements as well as arranging the enrolment procedure, fees and access to study materials.

One of the most important features and a basic requirement of the Virtual Stay Abroad is that it obeys the principle of subsidiary: all partnering universities accept that for the time participating in the VSA students from their institution are studying and being assessed according to the rules and regulations of their host university. This principle is affecting most aspects introduced in this chapter.

2.2.1 Target groups and entrance requirements

Defining the [target group](#) and setting up entrance requirements for the students are important steps when setting up a Virtual Mobility-scheme.

The specific *target group* of the *Virtual Stay Abroad* are students who are enrolled in the same academic discipline/field of study on the same level at one of the participating universities.

One of the major *entrance requirements* is the language skills. Since the courses are (usually) offered in a [language](#) different from the student's native language, he/she needs to be able to read the relevant literature, write the exams, discuss and do orals in the language of study.

Additionally access to a computer and the internet as well as varying levels of computer skills are necessary.

Since the [enrolment](#) follows the rules and regulations of the host institution no additional *entrance test* is needed – but can of course be set up.

[D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take

[S] Define a target group for your VSA.

[S] Define academic, language, technical and/or personal skills as entrance requirements.

[D] *If the partnership consists of Distance Teaching and traditional universities:* Are there different entrance requirements for students from Distance Teaching Universities and traditional universities?

[D] Will there be a special entrance test for the students (e.g. a language test and/or a test on technical skills)?

[S] Inform potential participants about the entrance requirements.

Case Study: International Course Exchange

The *target group* for the International Course Exchange (ICE) are students of the Social Sciences, Cultural Sciences and Humanities as well as those students that can choose a certain number of courses freely within their academic programme and are interested in the courses offered in the ICE. Up till now the ICE is only offered at B.A.-level but it is planned to organise a similar programme for M.A.-students.

Besides a good knowledge of the language the student wants to study in and the technical skills described above additional *entrance requirements* have been set up for the ICE. These are: a good knowledge of one's own academic preferences and a high degree of self discipline/ organisation. The participating students are 25 years or older.

2.2.2 Enrolment / registration and intake procedure

In the *Virtual Stay Abroad* the student becomes a regular member of his/her host university. Therefore formal enrolment at the host university is mandatory. The actual enrolment procedure is determined by the rules and regulations of the host university.

This formal enrolment at the host university is a key element of the VSA and has a major effect on the [international experience](#) the student is having during his/her VSA.

Whether and how students have to register for the courses and if specific intake procedures are existing, is also determined by the rules and regulations of the host university.

[D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take

[D] While enrolled at a foreign university: what [status](#) should the student have at his/her home university (e.g. furloughed, leave the university)?

[S] Make an agreement between all co-operating partner institutions to accept students of both types of universities for participation.

[S] Inform the student's office about this agreement.

[S] Set up a [document with different enrolment procedures and deadlines as information material](#) for the students.

Case Study: International Course Exchange

In the International Course Exchange students formally enrol at their host university. An agreement that all partnering institutions will accept students from any other partner – no matter what qualifications are regularly needed – has been made.

2.2.3 Fees

Fees are one of the key criteria when deciding whether a Virtual Mobility-model is affordable or not and information on that is crucial for potential students.

In the *Virtual Stay Abroad* the students are regularly [enrolled](#) at the host university. Therefore they are also obliged to pay the fees valid at that university. The amount of fees is likely to vary from university to university: whilst some students might have to pay lower fees than they do at their home university, participating in the VSA might be rather expensive for others compared to their regular study fees at home.

Scholarships or mutual agreements to waive fees within the VSA – similar to the [ERASMUS-programme where this agreement has been made on European-level](#) – are not in existence yet but could be an option when implementing this model in the future.

[D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take

[D] Should/could scholarships be offered for the VSA?

[D] Is it possible to come to a mutual agreement on standardising fees in the partnership?

[S] Publish a list with effective fees at all partnering universities.

Case Study: International Course Exchange

In the International Course Exchange students have to pay the fees valid at their host university. No scholarships are available and no agreements on waiving fees have been made.

2.2.4 Access to library resources

In a Virtual Mobility-scheme the access to study materials, like books, papers and other literature is not as easy as going to the library. Students will be likely to be far away from any physical library and it is therefore important to organise the [access to library resources](#) carefully.

In the *Virtual Stay Abroad (VSA)* students are [enrolled](#) at their host university and therefore have to use the library of that particular university. In order to guarantee that international students at all universities participating in the VSA have full access to the relevant library and the literature for their course the Library and Information Support-group of the e-move-project has set up a list of recommendations.

[D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take

[S] Inform the library staff about the VSA and the courses that are offered in it.

[S] If the VSA-course is not offered in the national language:

Check if the library web site is monolingual?

Does it exist in the language the VSA is offered in or a common language?

Can subject searches on OPAC and electronic resources be conducted in that language?

[S] Check if electronic resources, at least those needed for the VSA, are available from outside the campus network, for example from the student's home Internet connection?

[S] Check if there are any restrictions on the licenses with the electronic sources providers to this type of students?

[S] Check if the student needs a login and a password to authenticate him/her to have access to restricted access resources and the personalized features and services from the library.

[S] Set up a document explaining how information resources are organized, what library services exist, as well as rules and practical information and send it to the participating students.

[S] Check if there are alternatives to on-campus services like for example loans and a [virtual information desk](#)?

[S] Inform the library staff about the VSA and the courses offered in it.

[S] Optional: Designate a support librarian at each of the participating universities to whom foreign students could turn to in case of questions and problems.

[S] Set up a Committee with professors of the VSA courses, staff and librarians to discuss practical solutions on how the basic bibliography, recommended readings, and other learning material will be provided to the VSA students.

Case Study: International Course Exchange

As students in the International Course Exchange are regular students of their host university so far no specific arrangements concerning library issues have been made. However it is planned to appoint a person at the library of each participating university the students can turn to should they have any questions.

2.3. TEACHING AND TUTORING THE MODULE

The courses made available in the course pool of the *Virtual Stay Abroad* are part of the regular curriculum of the offering institution. The students are formally [enrolled](#) and need to be capable of the [language](#) the course is offered in.

Unless the course is offered in a language different from the national language, there are no specific requirements - concerning language or didactical skills – a teacher for a VSA-course has to fulfil, nor is a special training needed.

Nevertheless informing teachers that the course is open to international students is highly advisable. For teachers which are not familiar with dealing with international students special [information on teaching and tutoring](#) in an international community could be provided.

[D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take

[S] Inform the teachers of the relevant courses that are offered in the course pool of the VSA and are open for international students.

[S] Set up [a document](#) with information on how to teach and tutor international students.

Case Study: International Course Exchange

In the International Course Exchange teaching and tutoring the courses is organised according to the general description.

2.4. OFFERING THE ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT TO STUDENTS

Enrolling in the university and signing up for an exam, paying the study fees and organise credit transfer. For these and other tasks students often need administrative support. This need can be even bigger when the student has to orientate him/herself in a foreign academic system. Therefore arrangements for the administrative support in a Virtual Mobility-scheme should be considered.

In the *Virtual Stay Abroad* this is fairly easy: the student is a regular student at the host university and following the same procedures everyone else does – only that these are not familiar to him/her and more questions might arise. Hence no special training for administrative personnel dealing with VSA-students is needed.

To guarantee a good co-operation of all personnel dealing with participants of the VSA it is advisable though to inform the administrative staff about the VSA, its concept, partners and offerings in advance.

Unless the course is offered in a common [language](#), which is not the native language at the host university, the administrative support can be in the national language.

[D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take

[S] *If the courses are not offered in the national language:* make sure that at least one of the administrative personnel speaks the language of the course well enough to give VSA-students administrative advice and provide the student with the contact details of the relevant person in advance.

[S] Inform administrative personnel about the VSA, its concept, partners and offerings.

[S] *To make orientation easier:* provide students with the name and details of a contact person in the student's office/administration.

Case Study: International Course Exchange

In the International Course Exchange the administrative support is organised in line with the general description. No special arrangements have been made.

2.5. ESTABLISHING THE PARTNERSHIP

Realising any of the models of Virtual Mobility introduced in this guide takes a partnership of Higher Education institutions. Whether the partnership is based on an (already existing) academic network or established especially for the purpose of realising a Virtual Mobility-scheme for example is of course dependent on individual factors. However: each model is based on different preconditions pertaining to the partnership needed for the specific model.

The organisational model for the *Virtual Stay Abroad (VSA)* is based on a network of higher education institutions sharing expertise and investing staff time and resources.

To offer a *Virtual Stay Abroad* takes least two partnering universities. But whilst this bilateral model could certainly work it is likely that with more partners, courses and languages available more students would get attracted to the VSA.

In terms of time planning it is quite difficult to predict how long it takes to have a VSA ready for enrolment. This also depends on factors like the composition of the partnership and the experience of the members in working with each other. But as soon as the design and the set up of a VSA-scheme have been drawn the model offers a huge flexibility in taking on more courses and new partners.

For the assignment of tasks there are no specific rules, but according to group decision and individual tasks the following suggestions might be helpful.

2.5.1 [D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take as a group

Designing the Virtual Stay Abroad

[D] What is the relevant academic discipline/field of study for the VSA?

[D] For which academic level (Bachelor/Master) should the VSA be offered?

[D] How many courses should each partner institution offer?

[D] Should the topics of the courses represent a specific national expertise of the partnering institutions OR being chosen according to different criteria?

[D] Should the courses be offered in the national languages at the participating institutions OR should they be offered in a common language?

[D] Is this design also valid for the course materials, the examinations and the tutorial support?

[D] How many ECTS-points should the module be? What is the minimum and maximum ECTS credit tariff for the courses offered?

[D] Should it be possible to participate in more than one VSA?

[S] Make formal agreements between faculty boards of the co-operating institutions to guarantee the recognition of courses.

Setting up the Virtual Stay Abroad

[S] Define a target group for your VSA.

[S] Define academic, language, technical and/or personal skills as entrance requirements.

[D] *If the partnership consists of Distance Teaching and traditional universities:* should there be different entrance requirements for students from Distance Teaching Universities and traditional universities?

[D] Will there be a special entrance test for the students (e.g. a language test and/or a test on technical skills)?

[S] Make an agreement between all co-operating partner institutions to accept students of both types of universities for participation.

[D] Should/could scholarships be offered for the VSA?

[D] Is it possible to come to a mutual agreement on standardising fees in the partnership?

[S] Set up a Committee with professors of the VSA courses, staff and librarians to discuss practical solutions on how the basic bibliography, recommended readings, and other learning material will be provided to the VSA students.

2.5.2 [D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take for each partner individually

Designing the Virtual Stay Abroad

[S] Pick courses from your curriculum to offer in the VSA and publish them in the course pool.

[S] Set up all courses, course materials, examination and tutorial documents in the language the course/s should be in.

[S] Optional: Set up a general description in English of every course offered in the VSA and publish it in the international course pool.

[S] Optional: Inform students about possibilities to take a language course in preparation for the VSA at your or any of the partnering universities.

[S] Arrange alternatives to mandatory travelling for exams (for non-mobile students).

[S] Inform potential students of the academic value of the VSA.

[S] *Since some of the national differences in the academic culture are crucial for the student's success in completing the VSA:* set up a document, which explains the main characteristics of the academic system of your university (e.g. on topics like teaching, assessment, mentoring, the academic calendar) and send it to the member of the partnership responsible for compiling a general overview.

Setting up the Virtual Stay Abroad

[S] Inform potential participants about the entrance requirements to the VSA.

[D] Whilst enrolled at a foreign university: what status should the student have at his/her home university (e.g. furloughed, leave the university)?

[S] Inform the student's office about the agreement that all co-operating partner institutions will accept students from partner universities, no matter if these are Distance Teaching or Open Universities.

[S] Check if there are scholarships available at your university that could be offered to participants of the VSA.

[S] Set up a document with the enrolment procedure and deadlines for students interested in doing a VSA at your university.

[S] Inform the library staff about the VSA and the courses that are offered in it.

[S] If the VSA-course is not offered in the national language:

Check if the library web site is monolingual?

Does it exist in the language the VSA is offered in or a common language?

Can subject searches on OPAC and electronic resources be conducted in that language?

[S] Check if electronic resources, at least those needed for the VSA, are available from outside the campus network, for example from the student's home Internet connection?

[S] Check if there are any restrictions on the licenses with the electronic sources providers to this type of students?

[S] Check if the student needs a login and a password to authenticate him/her to have access to restricted access resources and the personalized features and services from the library.

[S] Set up a document explaining how information resources are organized, what library services exist, as well as rules and practical information and send it to the participating students.

[S] Check if there are alternatives to on-campus services like for example loans and a virtual information desk?

[S] Inform the library staff about the VSA and the courses offered in it.

[S] Optional: Designate a support librarian at each of the participating university to whom foreign students could turn in case of questions and problems.

Teaching a course in the Virtual Stay Abroad

[S] Inform the teachers of the relevant courses that they will be offered in the course pool of the VSA and are open to international students.

Offering administrative support in the Virtual Stay Abroad

[S] *If the courses are not offered in the national language:* make sure that at least one of the administrative personnel speaks the language of the course well enough to give VSA-students administrative advice.

[S] Inform administrative personnel about the VSA, its concept, partners and offerings.

[S] *To make orientation easier:* provide students with the name and details of a contact person in the student's office/administration.

2.5.3 [D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take for an appointed partner

[S] Set up a course pool/a database with all courses available in the VSA and maintain this database.

[S] *Since some of the national differences in the academic culture are crucial for the student's success in completing the VSA:* set up a document/website which explains the major differences of the academic systems (e.g. on topics like teaching, assessment, mentoring, the academic calendar).

[S] Publish a list with effective fees at all partnering universities.

[S] Set up a document with information on how to teach and tutor international students.

Case Study: International Course Exchange

The International Course Exchange (ICE) is a partnership of currently six institutions. A seventh partner will join the group in a few months. The co-operation is planned and organised in the context of the EADTU Humanities, Cultural and Social Sciences Academic Network.

The members of the ICE-group meet between two and three times per year to discuss and further plan the co-operation. One of the next steps planned is the expansion of the ICE onto Master-level.

2.6. INFORMING AND ATTRACTING STUDENTS

While the ERASMUS-programme has become a kind of household name in universities and among students over the last 20 years, Virtual Mobility-schemes are not very well known yet. It is therefore important to raise the awareness level of students about the possibility of participating in a Virtual Mobility-scheme, its advantages and potential impact on their academic education and professional future.

Within the three models of Virtual Mobility different strategies of boosting visibility and providing students with information have been pursued. None of these strategies is exclusively tied to a special model, but can be individually designed and generally applied.

The following list is a collection of possible means of attracting students to and informing them about the *Virtual Stay Abroad (VSA)*:

Connect

- with students organisations at your university and on national as well as international level
 - members of your scientific community and scientific networks
- and promote your model of Virtual Mobility.

Use the web

In distance education and e-learning the web is one of the most - if not the most important – medium to advertise. You could

- publish information on the VSA on the local web pages of the partnering universities and the relevant departments,
- make announcements through the university's/department's newsletter, "What's new"-board,
- send an Email to all members of the relevant department,
- design a web page and link it to the common search engines and the university website,
- take out ads on the websites of student unions, associations and academic partners.

Speak out

- Giving presentations or just "mentioning" the VSA at conferences, educational forums/events, expositions can be a good way to spread information on the VSA.

Print it on paper

- Putting up posters at the university, especially at traditional universities,
 - distributing leaflets at the university and/or mailing them to students, e.g. with the regular mailing of study books/materials and
 - publishing articles and advertisements in student and university magazines
- are also promising means to attract students.



Currently there is a lack of information on the possibilities of doing Virtual Mobility and the different programmes

It is important to stress that even with good and extensive advertising it might take some time to get participants for the VSA – or any other Virtual Mobility scheme. Firstly, these schemes are unfamiliar to students and they probably need some time for students to get used to the idea of participating. Secondly students usually plan their university work sometime in advance. That means that despite knowing about the VSA and being interested in it, it might not fit into the schedule right away and participating might be delayed to a later point in their academic education.

3. THE VIRTUAL SEMINAR

You have picked the *Virtual Seminar* as the model of Virtual Mobility that best fits your needs and you are now looking for advice on how to realise it.

In the following six chapters you will be introduced to all relevant aspects of designing (3.1), setting up (3.2), teaching (3.3), providing administrative support (3.4), establishing the partnership (3.5) as well as informing and attracting students (3.6) to a Virtual Seminar. All information is based on the expertise and long term experience gathered through the European Virtual Seminar on Sustainable Development.

Each chapter/subchapter – except the last – is divided into three different parts: First you will get some general information on a specific aspect to consider for the model, leading then to practical recommendations on what to do. These recommendations are based on practical experience on the one hand, and on the other, on comments from experts in teaching and administration as well as students as potential participants in the Virtual Seminar. You will frequently find alternative suggestions about how to decide. This offers you flexibility and the opportunity to create a Virtual Seminar according to your own demands and priorities. At the end of each paragraph one specific way of realising a Virtual Seminar will be introduced: the case study European Virtual Seminar on Sustainable Development (EVS).

3.1 DESIGNING THE VIRTUAL SEMINAR

When designing a Virtual Seminar several aspects concerning the format of the course, its language and assessment need to be observed. These aspects are introduced in this chapter.

3.1.1 Format of the seminar

The *Virtual Seminar* is a course following an overall theme that is not necessarily tied to one specific academic discipline but following an interdisciplinary topic. All academic disciplines that might contribute to the theme can take part in the Virtual Seminar.

The content of the seminar consists of several case studies. These are open problem descriptions within the theme of the Virtual Seminar for which the students have to find the best possible solution. In addition to that background information, a general assignment, sources and web links are given.

The topic of a case study has to allow for international co-operation, i.e., it has to be known and observable in the home countries of all participants.

The studies are delivered by experts from the partner institutions and reviewed by Virtual Seminar staff before they are published.

For participating in the Virtual Seminar the students receive a specific number of [ECTS-points](#). Therefore the complexity of the case studies must be similar and the work required should represent a similar amount of hours.

[D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take

[S] Choose a theme for the Virtual Seminar.

[S] Decide on academic disciplines that might contribute to a discourse within the Virtual Seminar-theme.

[S] Design a number of case studies that

- cover topics known and observable in the countries of all partners
- allow for international collaboration between students
- allow for international co-operation between institutions
- equal the same number of ECTS-points

Case Study:

European Virtual Seminar on Sustainable Development

The topic of the European Virtual Seminar (EVS) is sustainable development in Europe.

It is open to all disciplines contributing to the societal change towards a more sustainable Europe (e.g. Economics, Natural Sciences, Agriculture, and Technology).

Topics of case studies in 2006 were for example:

Decoupling Environmental Pressure from Quality of Life: The level of decoupling in different European countries and the main factors behind that.

Integrated Water Management in the Danube basin: Implementation of the European Water Framework Directive from an international perspective.

Sustainability Communication: Strategies for Communicating the Concept of Sustainable Development.

3.1.2 Language of the seminar

A very important feature of the different Virtual Mobility-schemes is the language they are offered in. For the participating student studying in a foreign language is not only one of the major challenges he/she has to face but also one of the major competencies he/she will acquire and prove through participating.

In an international *Virtual Seminar* students from different countries communicate and collaborate. Therefore it is necessary to have a common language for the case studies as well as the course materials, examinations and the tutorial and administrative support.

Whether that is English or e.g. Spanish or French depends on the countries the participants come from.



Studying in a foreign language is daunting and motivating at the same time!

[D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take

[S] Decide on a common language for the Virtual Seminar.

[S] Set up all cases studies, materials, and examination and tutorial documents in the language of the seminar.

Case Study:

European Virtual Seminar on Sustainable Development

For the European Virtual Seminar on Sustainable Development English has been chosen as the common language. All case studies, materials, communication, examination and tutorial documents are offered in English.

3.1.3 Assessment of the seminar

For students it is very important to get reliable information on the assessment of a Virtual Mobility scheme and especially the recognition of credits. It is therefore important to make binding arrangements on examinations and credit transfer among the partners.

A crucial issue related to this is the [location of the examination](#). In particular for non-mobile students it is important to know whether they have to travel for examinations or not.

In the *Virtual Seminar* the examination can be a group report published by each student group in the [Electronic Learning Environment](#) (ELE) which is assessed by an expert. The group performance and individual contribution are also visible in the ELE and assessed by the tutor. Based on these three criteria the marks are given to the student. Unless realising the model with a different type of examination, the exam location is not regulated and this virtual exam is the norm.

Participation in the Virtual Seminar can either be

- b) a mandatory element of a degree, or
- b) voluntary. That means even without the ECTS-points acquired from the Virtual Seminar a student can obtain the degree it is offered in.

When a student successfully completes the Virtual Seminar he/she gets the [ECTS-points](#) from the home institution.

[D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take

[D] Do the assignments allow for a virtual exam or will travelling be necessary?

[D] How many ECTS-points should the assignments equal (minimum/maximum)?

[D] Should participation in the Virtual Seminar be mandatory or voluntary?

[D] If the participation is voluntary: How should the students be rewarded?

[D] Should it be possible to complete more than one Virtual Seminar?

[S] Set up principles for the assessment of the Virtual Seminar.

[S] Inform students about these principles.

Case Study:

European Virtual Seminar on Sustainable Development

In the European Virtual Seminar on Sustainable Development (EVS) the virtual exam is the norm, assessing the group report, group performance and individual contribution. An assessment protocol including criteria has been developed to assist the tutors and experts in their marking. When the seminar is successfully completed the student is rewarded with five ECTS-points from his/her home university.

To give the staff the opportunity to compare the groups and their products during the evaluation stage, usually two or more student groups work on the same case study. A set of writing guidelines (including criteria) has been developed to make sure that the case studies are well written and more or less similar to each other.

Depending on the policy at partner institutions the EVS is an obligatory course in the students' program, or is part of another course.

3.1.4 The academic and the intercultural value of the seminar

One major drawback with Virtual Mobility-schemes is that despite their academic value, they often lack [the international/cultural experience inherent in the original ERASMUS exchange](#). But in these days of chat rooms, blogs, etc., acquiring, expanding and fostering not only academic but also intercultural competencies (also) in the virtual space [and through e-learning](#) is possible and becoming more common.

The design of an international *Virtual Seminar* allows the student both: to make his/her academic portfolio more attractive and gain intercultural competencies. Both aspects are closely related and therefore presented in one paragraph.



The Virtual Seminar and the Virtual Campus are very interesting because they carry a lot cultural value and reflect the work life reality of many people who work together with people from different countries and cultural backgrounds.

3.1.4.1 The academic value of the seminar

Participation in the Virtual Seminar enables [collaborative learning](#) by geographically distributed students and students with different study schedules. This makes it relatively easy and inexpensive to bring students with different (national and) disciplinary backgrounds together.

Especially in subjects where problems are complex and 'wicked', and perspectives on the nature and the solution of these problems are likely to vary with the disciplinary background, the ability to communicate and collaborate across the boundaries of academic disciplines, is an essential competence.

3.1.4.2 The international experience in the seminar

Similar to the academic value of the Virtual Seminar topics suitable for this scheme do not only vary with the disciplinary but also the national and cultural background of the students. The best solution for the problems worked on in an international Virtual Seminar is likely to be the one taking different national and cultural perspectives into account as well.

However, working in a multinational group is a complicated skill, and becomes even more complex where different disciplines are involved. The only way of learning this type of skill is probably by giving students an opportunity to test and improve their skills at regular intervals during their education.

[\[D\]ecisions to make and \[S\]teps to take](#)

[S] Inform students of the academic and intercultural value of the Virtual Seminar.

[S] Offer students guidelines on working in a multidisciplinary and international study group.

Case Study: European Virtual Seminar on Sustainable Development

Sustainable Development is a topic that is not tied to a specific discipline or national environment but placed on a global level. Therefore the academic value and international experience offered in the concept of the European Virtual Seminar is an excellent learning environment for students to develop these trans-boundary skills: The students are directly confronted with divergent peer views on a specific topic, and their implications for a practical and joint solution for a topic

3.2. SETTING UP THE VIRTUAL SEMINAR FOR STUDENTS

After designing the Virtual Mobility-scheme the second major step is to set it up for students. This includes decision-making on entrance requirements as well as arranging the enrolment procedure, fees and access to study materials.

3.2.1 Target groups and entrance requirements

When setting up a Virtual Mobility-scheme it is important to be clear about the [target group](#) for that scheme and possible entrance requirements the students have to fulfil.

The *target group* of an international *Virtual Seminar* is wide, not less than students from different nationalities and disciplines.

Students who participate in the Virtual Seminar need to fulfil several *entrance requirements*. They should be/have

- interested in the topic of the Virtual Seminar
- willing to perform group work with students from different nationalities and disciplines
- able to read and write in the language the Virtual Seminar is offered in
- able to spend the required amount of time on the seminar
- access to a computer with an internet connection
- prior experience with e-learning and collaborating in an [Electronic Learning Environment \(ELE\)](#).

Instead of making this last criterion an entrance requirement, an alternative could be to offer special training on working in an ELE within or in addition to the Virtual Seminar.

This training is especially useful when not all of the participating students are coming from Distance Teaching Universities and have probably never been introduced to a [distance learning scheme](#).

Whether all students need to be on the same academic level (Bachelor/Master) can be decided within the partnership.

In order to guarantee that the students fulfil the entrance requirements an *entrance test* could be considered but isn't mandatory in the model.

[D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take

[S] Define a target group for your Virtual Seminar.

[S] Define academic, language, technical and/or personal skills as entrance requirements.

[D] *If the partnership consists of Distance Teaching and traditional universities:* Are there different entrance requirements for students from Distance Teaching Universities and traditional universities?

[D] Will there be a special entrance test for the students (e.g. a language test and/or a test on technical or intercultural skills)?

[S] Inform potential participants about the entrance requirements and intake procedure.

Case Study:

European Virtual Seminar on Sustainable Development

The target group of the European Virtual Seminar on Sustainable Development (EVS) are students of all disciplines relevant to societal change towards a more sustainable Europe.

The main entrance requirements are set along the criteria described above with the exception that students also have to be open to e-learning. Working in an ELE is supported by specific assignments during the EVS. Examples are:

"How to work in the electronic learning environment."

"How to introduce myself to my group members."

"How to use the electronic discussion board."

3.2.2 Enrolment / registration and intake procedure

In a *Virtual Seminar* students continue to be regular students of their home universities. Therefore no formal enrolment at a foreign university is necessary.

Interested students have to contact the [institutional coordinator](#) at their home university. Then the coordinator conducts the *intake procedure* by selecting the students who can fulfil the requirements to participate in the Virtual Seminar. The institutional coordinator sends his/her final student list (name, discipline, gender, etc.) before the start of the Virtual Seminar run to the central coordinator. The selected students are then teamed up to heterogeneous student groups mixing nationality, academic discipline, gender and age and are finally enrolled into the ELE of the Virtual Seminar.

[D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take

[S] Set up a [platform/an ELE](#) for the Virtual Seminar into which the students can be enrolled.

[S] Set up guidelines for the intake procedure.

[S] Set up guidelines for forming the student groups

[S] Inform the institutional coordinator and potential participants about the intake procedure.

Case Study:

European Virtual Seminar on Sustainable Development

In the European Seminar on Sustainable Development the enrolment and intake are done according to the general description.

The ELE used in the EVS is [blackboard](#).

3.2.3 Fees

Fees are one of the key criteria when deciding whether a Virtual Mobility-model is affordable or not and information on that is crucial for potential students.

In a *Virtual Seminar* the students are regular students of their home university and pay the regular fees at that university. Whether students should pay any extra fee for participating in the Virtual Seminar can be decided at an individual level.

[D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take

[D] Should the students pay a special fee for participating in the seminar?

[D] If "Yes": How high should this fee be?

[S] Publish a list with effective fees at all partnering universities and/or the Virtual Seminar-website.

Case Study:
European Virtual Seminar on Sustainable Development

Students of the European Virtual Seminar on Sustainable Development do not have to pay any extra fees for participating. They select the EVS as an (obligatory or optional) course from their program, and have paid already for this course at their home institution.

3.2.4 Access to library resources

When studying on a Virtual Mobility-scheme the access to study materials, such as books, papers and other literature is not as easy as going to the library. Students will be likely to be far away from any physical library and it is therefore important to organise the [access to library resources](#) carefully.

In the *Virtual Seminar* no external access to library resources and materials from partner institutions is needed. Each case study includes a list of relevant web links, and eventually web-based or electronic format materials.

However: participating students might be interested in using additional materials or the specific design or theme of a Virtual Seminar might not allow for exclusive use of web-based materials. Therefore the Library and Information Support-group of the e-move-project has set up the following recommendations.

[D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take

[S] Inform the library staff about the Virtual Seminar

[S] Publish the list of relevant web links, open electronic resources and other materials on the ELE of the Virtual Seminar.

[S] *Revise resources*: Check on the basis of the case studies if information resources (general bibliography, articles cited, etc.) needed are available at the libraries of each participating university.

[S] *Inform students* enrolled in the Virtual Seminar about library services and information resources available at each university. This could be a link to the different home university's library web site or a more complete explanation.

[S] *Post this information* on the ELE/learning platform of the Virtual Seminar.

Case Study:
European Virtual Seminar on Sustainable Development

In the European Virtual Seminar on Sustainable Development all relevant documents are given as web-links and online documents to the students.

3. TEACHING AND TUTORING THE SEMINAR

When implementing a Virtual Mobility-scheme it is not only important to properly inform, prepare and/or select students for this experience but also consider special requirements the teachers and tutors have to fulfil and – if applicable – the form of training that could be offered to them.

In the *Virtual Seminar* the student groups are responsible for their own learning process, for keeping it going and delivering high-quality products by the deadlines set. Experience shows, however, that students also need coaching (from a tutor) and in-depth knowledge (from an expert). For this reason, the staff plays a vital role in a Virtual Seminar. Each student group in a Virtual Seminar is coached and monitored by a tutor, whose job it is to solve any problems in the group as quickly as possible

Tutoring is particularly important for the success of both the group and the individual student. The two main difficulties in tutoring a Virtual Seminar are that

- students are not used to working in an Electronic Learning Environment,
- students are not used to self-guided group work (i.e. doing group research).

The tutor should therefore observe and frequently criticise, encourage and update the students on their individual as well as the performance of their group.

In order to be able to properly communicate with the students, the tutors obviously need excellent skills in the language the Virtual Seminar is designed in. And if a teacher/tutor is a member of a traditional university he/she should above all be able to prove experience with working in an ELE.

Since tutoring in a Virtual Seminar is rather challenging it might be helpful to develop [guidelines for the tutors](#), as well as a strategy for collective action in the event of problems in a group (e.g. caused by intercultural friction or “free-riders”).

[D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take

[S] Set up requirements for teaching and tutoring your Virtual Seminar.

[S] Offer guidelines and a strategy for collective action to the tutors of the Virtual Seminar.

Case Study:

European Virtual Seminar on Sustainable Development

In addition to the requirements and guidelines mentioned above, the organisation of an annual workshop for the tutors of the European Virtual Seminar on Sustainable Development (EVS) is currently under discussion. This workshop should be a platform for the tutors to share their expertise and ideas as well as discuss their role in the EVS.

4. OFFERING THE ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT TO STUDENTS

In the *Virtual Seminar* students do not have to enrol at a foreign university, sign up for exams or organise credit transfer, but the internal structure of the seminar is rather complex and probably challenging for some participants.

To support these students an institutional coordinator is appointed at each participating university. This coordinator is responsible for the management and administration issues for the students at his/her institution. The overall management of the Virtual Seminar is the responsibility of a central coordinator at only one of the partner institutions.

[D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take

[S] Set up a system of institutional coordinators and a [central coordinator](#) and appoint persons for these positions.

[S] *To make orientation easier.* Provide students with the name and details of a contact person in the student's office.

Case Study:

European Virtual Seminar on Sustainable Development

The European Virtual Seminar on Sustainable Development (EVS) has been running since 2001 and as the pilot the elaborated structure of administrative support described above has been developed in the EVS.

5. ESTABLISHING THE PARTNERSHIP

Realising any of the models of Virtual Mobility introduced in this guide takes a partnership of Higher Education institutions. Whether the partnership is based on an (already existing) academic network or established especially for the purpose of realising a Virtual Mobility-scheme for example is of course dependent on individual factors.

However, each model is based on different preconditions pertaining to the partnership needed for the specific model.

The organisational model for the *Virtual Seminar* is based on a network of higher education institutions sharing expertise and investing staff time and resources. It is a bottom-up approach with few formal, top-down institutional arrangements. In order to make the international collaboration interesting for potential students it takes at least three or more partnering universities to offer a Virtual Seminar.

Within the partnership of the Virtual Seminar there can be a clear division of tasks, visible in three different levels of membership:

- Level 1: Students and an [institutional coordinator](#) can participate
- Level 2: A tutor also participates
- Level 3: A [case study](#) is provided as well and the expert participates

It should be up to each institution to decide on the starting level and if/when to switch to another level, offering either more or less involvement in the Virtual Seminar. In principle, all partner institutions are required to invest in the management and development of the Virtual Seminar but a core of active and experienced partner institutions is needed in order to sustain the Virtual Seminar.

Responsibilities are divided between a central coordinator and other Virtual Seminar partners. The central coordinator is responsible for the overall management and control of the development of the Virtual Seminar, as well as maintaining the electronic learning environment. The other partners tutor and assess the student groups, develop the case studies, implement the Virtual Seminar at their institutions, and recruit and select students.

In terms of time planning it is quite difficult to predict how long it will take to have a Virtual Seminar ready for enrolment. This also depends on factors like the composition of the partnership, the experience of the members in working with each other and the timeframes in the different academic calendars into which the Virtual Seminar would fit. But as soon as the design and the set up of a Virtual Seminar have been fixed taking on new partners is fairly easy.

For the assignment of tasks no specific rules are recommended, but according to decision and steps taken as a group, and individual tasks, the following suggestions might be helpful.

3.5.1 [D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take as a group

Designing the Virtual Seminar

- [S] Choose a theme for the Virtual Seminar.
- [S] Decide on academic disciplines that might contribute to a discourse within the Virtual Seminar-theme.
- [S] Decide on a common language for the Virtual Seminar.
- [D] Do the assignments allow for a virtual exam or will travelling be necessary?
- [D] How many ECTS-points should the assignments equal (minimum/maximum)?
- [D] Should participation in the Virtual Seminar be mandatory or voluntary?
- [D] Should it be possible to complete more than one Virtual Seminar?
- [S] Set up principles for the assessment of the Virtual Seminar.
- [S] Appoint a Central Coordinator.

Setting up the Virtual Seminar

- [S] Define a target group for your Virtual Seminar.
- [S] Define academic, language, technical and/or personal skills as entrance requirements.
- [D] *If the partnership consists of Distance Teaching and traditional universities:* are there different entrance requirements for students from Distance Teaching Universities and traditional universities?
- [D] Will there be a special entrance test for the students (e.g. a language test and/or a test on technical or intercultural skills)?
- [S] Set up guidelines for the intake procedure.
- [D] Should the students pay a special fee for participating in the seminar?
- [D] If "Yes": how high should this fee be?
- [S] Set up guidelines for forming the study groups

Teaching a course in the Virtual Seminar

- [S] Set up requirements for teaching and tutoring your Virtual Seminar.

3.5.2 [D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take for each partner individually

Designing the Virtual Seminar

[D] On which level you would like to participate?

[S] Appoint an institutional coordinator as well as a tutor and an expert respectively.

[D] If the participation in the Virtual Seminar is voluntary: how should the students be rewarded?

3.5.3 [D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take for the central coordinator

[S] Set up an ELE for the Virtual Seminar into which the students can be enrolled.

[S] Publish a list with effective fees on the Virtual Seminar-website.

[S] Post the information on library services in the Virtual Seminar on the ELE/learning platform.

[S] Inform the library staff about the Virtual Seminar

[S] Publish the list of relevant web links, open electronic resources and other materials on the ELE of the Virtual Seminar.

[S] Offer guidelines and a strategy for collective action to the tutors of the Virtual Seminar.

3.5.4 [D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take for an institutional coordinator

[S] Inform potential participants about the entrance requirements and intake procedure in the Virtual Seminar.

[S] Publish a list with effective fees at your university.

[S] *Inform students* enrolled in the Virtual Seminar about library services and information resources available at your university. This could be a link to the different home university's library web site or a more complete explanation.

[S] Offer students guidelines on working in a multidisciplinary and international study group.

3.5.5 [D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take for a partner offering tutoring

[S] Inform students about the principles of assessment in the Virtual Seminar.

[S] *Revise resources*: Check on the basis of the case studies if information resources (general bibliography, articles cited, etc.) needed are available at the library of your university. [S] Inform the institutional coordinator and potential participants about the intake procedure.

[S] Inform students about the academic and intercultural value of the Virtual Seminar.

3.5.6 [D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take for a partner offering a case study

[S] Design a number of case studies that

- cover topics known and observable in the countries of all partners
- allow for international co-operation
- equal the same number of ECTS-points

[S] Set up all cases studies, materials, examinations and tutorial documents in the language of the seminar.

Case Study: European Virtual Seminar on Sustainable Development

The European Virtual Seminar on Sustainable Development (EVS) has been running as a pilot of the EVS since 2001. The number of participating institutions has gradually risen and is currently at 16 partners.

Once a year the staff members of the EVS meet to evaluate the EVS-run, discuss the opportunities to improve the seminar, and start preparing the next EVS. During the year there are contacts by email, phone, electronic discussion board, etc.

The partner institutions developed together the didactic concept of the EVS, and all course materials (individual and group activities, case studies, guidelines, assessment criteria, etc.).

3.6 INFORMING AND ATTRACTING STUDENTS

While the ERASMUS-programme has become a kind of household name in universities and among students over the last 20 years, Virtual Mobility-schemes are not very well known yet. It is therefore important to raise the awareness level of students about the possibility of participating in a Virtual Mobility-scheme, its advantages and potential impact on their academic education and professional future.

Within the three models of Virtual Mobility different strategies of boosting visibility and providing students with information have been pursued. None of these strategies is exclusively tied to a special model, but can be individually designed and generally applied.

The following list is a collection of possible means of attracting students to and informing them about the *Virtual Seminar*:

Connect

- with students organisations at your university and on national as well as international level
 - members of your scientific community and scientific networks
- and promote your model of Virtual Mobility.

Use the web

In distance education and e-learning the web is one of the most - if not the most important – medium to advertise. You could

- publish information on the Virtual Seminar on the local web pages of the partnering universities and the relevant departments,
- make announcements through the university's/department's newsletter, "What's new"-board,
- send an Email to all members of the relevant department,
- design a web page and link it to the common search engines and the university website,
- take out ads on websites of student unions, associations and academic partners.

Speak out

- Giving presentations or just “mentioning” the Virtual Seminar at conferences, educational forums/events, expositions can be a good way to spread information on the Virtual Seminar.

Print it on paper

- Putting up posters at the university, especially at traditional universities,
 - distributing leaflets at the university and/or mailing them to students, e.g. with the regular mailing of study books/materials,
 - publishing articles and advertisements in student and university magazines
- are also promising means to attract students.



Currently there is a lack of information on the possibilities of doing Virtual Mobility and the different programmes

It is important to stress that even with good and extensive advertising it might take some time to get participants for the Virtual Seminar – or any other Virtual Mobility scheme. Firstly, these schemes are unfamiliar to students and probably need some time for students to get used to the idea of participating. Secondly students usually plan their university work well in advance. That means that despite knowing about the Virtual Seminar and being interested in it, it might not fit into the schedule right away and participating might be delayed to a later point in their academic education.

4. THE VIRTUAL CAMPUS

You have picked the *Virtual Campus* as the model of Virtual Mobility that best fits your needs and you are now looking for advice on how to realise it.

In the following six chapters you will be introduced to all relevant aspects of designing (1.), setting up (2.), teaching (3.), providing administrative support (4.), establishing the partnership (5.) as well as informing and attracting students (6.) to the Virtual Campus.

Each chapter/subchapter – except the last – is divided into three different parts: First you will get some general information on a specific aspect to consider for the model, leading then to practical recommendations on what to do. These recommendations are based on practical experience on the one hand and, on the other, on comments from experts in teaching and administration as well as students as potential participants in the Virtual Campus. You will frequently find alternative suggestions about how to decide. This offers you flexibility and the opportunity to create a Campus according to your own demands and priorities. At the end of each paragraph one specific way of realising the Virtual Campus will be introduced: the case study Virtual Campus on Marketing.

4.1 DESIGNING THE ASSIGNMENTS

When designing a Virtual Campus-scheme several aspects, such as the format of the course, its language and assessment need to be considered. These aspects are introduced in this chapter.

4.1.1 Format of the assignments

In the *Virtual Campus* students may gain a number of [ECTS-points](#) in a specific course by doing assignments in an international community.

The general criteria for the design of the assignments are:

Concerning the content, all assignments have to fit the demands of a specific course in the same discipline on the same level, offered at all partner institutions. Ideally that course is not an introductory course but at a more advanced level. This allows students to use the knowledge they have previously acquired in their studies.

Additionally the specific tasks have to allow for international co-operation. This implies that the topic has to be well-known and observable in the home countries of all participants.

Further the assignments need to be small in size: in this form of Virtual Mobility the international assignments may be no larger than 10% of the smallest home university course in which they are embedded. Of course it is

possible to offer the students a choice from a number of assignments; in that case, students may only participate in as many assignments as fit within the 10% maximum. To illustrate: if the smallest home university course on the topic consists of 20 ECTS-points, the international assignments that an individual student takes in the context of that course may not exceed 2 ECTS-points.

The assignments can be designed especially for the Virtual Campus or, if available, suitable existing study material can be used as a starting point.

[D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take

[S] Choose a discipline, an academic level and a course offered at all partnering institutions.

[S] Design a number of assignments that

- cover topics known and observable in the countries of all partners
- allow for international co-operation
- equal the same number of ECTS-points

Case Study: Virtual Campus on Marketing

The Virtual Campus on Marketing is for students of Management Sciences at Bachelors-level enrolled in a course in Marketing.



The expansion of the Virtual Campus to other fields of study would be very interesting!!

While some assignments were designed especially for this Virtual Campus or, others are based on already available study materials.

All of them represent concepts the participants were already familiar with through the Introductory Marketing course they had joined at their home university.

International or global marketing proved ideal as a suitable international study topic. Students from all countries can relate to this topic: there is a common denominator. Also, there are plenty of differences between the countries, guaranteeing lively discussions. The topic also lends itself quite well to treating the cultural differences that are always present in Virtual Mobility; in this case they had a mirror appearance in the cultural differences between the target groups of international marketing.

All assignments had a size of one ECTS-point.

After 17 activities were considered by the partnering institutions, seven of these were actually developed and offered to students: a total of 7 ECTS-

points. Students could choose no more than two assignments (2 ECTS-points), the maximum of 10% of the volume of the smallest homeland course (20 ECTS-points). By varying the number of assignments offered, we could manipulate the size of the study groups, guaranteeing an adequate number of participants in each group.

Examples of assignments are:

iPod on Axe-advertising

Learn the smart way: Avoiding Global Marketing mistakes others made

Recent development in Marketing: Green Marketing

4.1.2 Language of the assignments

A very important feature of the different Virtual Mobility-schemes is the language they are offered in. For the participating student studying in a foreign language is not only one of the major challenges he/she has to face but also one of the major competencies he/she will acquire and prove through participating.

In the *Virtual Campus* students from different countries communicate and collaborate with each other. Therefore it is necessary to have at least one common language for the assignments as well as the course materials, examinations and the tutorial support.

Whether that is English or e.g. Spanish or French is up to the organisers and depends on the composition of the group.



Studying in a foreign language is daunting and motivating at the same time!

[D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take

[S] Decide on a common language for the Virtual Campus.

[S] Set up all assignments, materials, examination and tutorial documents in the language of the Virtual Campus.

Case Study: Virtual Campus on Marketing

For the Virtual Campus on Marketing - with participants from Estonia, Poland, Belgium and the Netherlands - English was chosen as the common language. All assignments, materials, examination and tutorial documents have been designed in or translated into English.

In order to prevent or minimize any major language problems, the tutors as a group can speak all the native languages of the participating students. .

4.1.3 Assessment of the assignments

For students it is very important to get reliable information on the [assessment](#) of a Virtual Mobility scheme and especially the recognition of credits. It is therefore essential to make binding arrangements on examinations and credit transfer among the partners.

A crucial issue related to this is the [location of the examination](#). In particular for non-mobile students it is important to know whether they have to travel for examinations or not.

In the *Virtual Campus* the examination consists of completing assignments, doing research and communicating on-line. Unless realising the model with a different type of examination, the exam location is not regulated and the virtual exam is the norm.

Each assignment has the same size.

Participation in the Virtual Campus can either be

- c) a mandatory element of the course, or
- b) voluntary. That means even without the ECTS-points acquired from the Virtual Campus a student can pass the course in which it is offered.

When a student successfully completes an assignment he/she gets the [ECTS-points](#) from the home institution.

[D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take

[D] Do the assignments allow for a virtual exam or will travelling be necessary?

[D] Will the assignments be graded by local academics (of different nationalities) or by one central academic?

[D] How many ECTS-points should the assignments equal (the minimum/the maximum)?

[D] Should participation in the Virtual Campus be a mandatory or voluntary element of the course in which it is offered?

[D] If the participation is voluntary: how should the students be rewarded?

[D] Should it be possible to complete more than one assignment in the Virtual Campus?

[S] Set up principles for the assessment of the Virtual Campus.

[S] Inform students about these principles.

Case Study: Virtual Campus on Marketing

In the Virtual Campus on Marketing the virtual exam is the norm. When successfully completing an assignment the student gets one ECTS-point from his/her home university.

The participation in the Virtual Campus is voluntary and rewarded with either a more limited workload in the course at the student's home university, or 'bonus points' for that course. The decision on this is up to each of the participating universities.

The grades were awarded by the academics that tutored the study groups; this means that the Dutch academic graded 'his own' Dutch students, and also the Polish and Estonian students that handed in papers. Of course, the Polish professor had the similar authority to tutor and grade the Dutch and Estonian students, whilst the Estonian academic could grade the Polish and Dutch students.

4.1.4 The academic and the intercultural value of the Virtual Campus

One major drawback with Virtual Mobility-schemes is that, despite their academic value, they often lack the [international/cultural experience inherent in the original Erasmus exchanges](#). But in these days of chat rooms, blogs, etc., acquiring, expanding and fostering not only academic but also intercultural competencies in the virtual space and [through e-learning](#) is possible and becoming more common.

The design of the *Virtual Campus* allows the student both: to make his/her academic portfolio more attractive and gain intercultural competencies.

4.1.4.1 The academic value of the Virtual Campus

The *academic value* of participating in the *Virtual Campus* is to increase several essential soft skills: communicating and collaborating – at a distance - with persons from different regional and/or national academic traditions. These [skills are useful in an educational as well as in a professional context](#).

4.1.4.2 The international experience in the Virtual Campus

Communicating and collaborating in an international team and in a foreign language are important features of the Virtual Campus. Thus the student increases his/her ability to communicate with persons from a different regional and national (academic) background. Furthermore the student gains an international perspective on (part of) the content matter of his/her curriculum.

To further increase the international experience it is also possible to design specific assignments on intercultural differences or call on the students to reflect on intercultural differences between the group members.



The Virtual Seminar and the Virtual Campus are very interesting because they carry a lot of cultural value and reflect the work life reality of many people who work together with people from different countries and cultural

[D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take

[D] Should specific exercises on intercultural differences be offered in the Virtual Campus?

[S] If "Yes": Design those assignments.

[S] Inform students on [do's and don'ts when communicating in an international community?](#)

Case Study: Virtual Campus on Marketing

To intensify the international experience in the Virtual Campus on Marketing one assignment used theoretically well-established concepts on intercultural differences. Several study tasks were designed exclusively for this project. Concepts of Hofstede were used, such as power distance and individuality.

Students were asked to rate themselves on Hofstede's concepts, and to compare their scores with the known scores of their fellow countrymen; also, they were asked to complete the following assignment:

Deal with cultural differences between customers and employees from different countries

In an advertisement campaign, you do not want to offend customers by ignoring a cultural taboo; you would like to know their cultural characteristics, to use this knowledge to your advantage. Even within Europe there is a need to adjust the campaigns to certain cultural characteristics of a nation.

Suppose you are designing two national anti-smoking publicity campaigns: one in a collectivistic, one in an individualistic culture. These campaigns will be likely to appeal to different values, and will use different mechanisms of persuasion. In each campaign you want to be direct, and point out the possibility of death by smoking.

Suggest possible slogans for each culture, and explain why you would use them.

4.2 SETTING UP THE VIRTUAL CAMPUS FOR STUDENTS

After designing the Virtual Mobility-scheme the second major step is to set it up for students. This includes decision-making on entrance requirements as well as arranging the enrolment procedure, fees and access to study materials.

4.2.1 Target groups and entrance requirements

When setting up a Virtual Mobility-scheme it is important to be clear about the [target group](#) for that scheme and possible entrance requirements the students have to fulfil.

The *target group* of the *Virtual Campus* are students who share knowledge of a special academic topic on the same level.

The specific *entrance requirements* are closely connected with the target group. Potential participants of the Virtual Campus need to be enrolled in a specific course at their home university. They also should have a good working knowledge of the language the Virtual Campus is operated.

Since the participants not only communicate but actually perform group work during the Virtual Campus, they should have prior experience with collaborating in an [Electronic Learning Environment](#) (ELE). This requirement is crucial, especially when not all of the participating students are coming from Distance Teaching Universities and have perhaps never been introduced to a [distance learning scheme](#).

Instead of making these skills an entrance requirement, special training on working in an ELE could also be offered within or in addition to the Virtual Campus.

In order to guarantee that the students fulfil the entrance requirements an *entrance test* could be considered.

[D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take

[S] Define a target group for your Virtual Campus.

[S] Define academic, language, technical and/or personal skills as entrance requirements.

[D] *If the partnership consists of Distance Teaching and traditional universities:* How do you ensure that the participants from traditional universities are adequately versed in the use of Electronic Learning Environments (ELE)?

[D] Will there be a special entrance test for the students (e.g. a language test)?

[S] Inform potential participants about the entrance requirements and intake procedure.

Case Study: Virtual Campus on Marketing

The *target* group of the *Virtual Campus on Marketing* are students of Marketing Sciences at Bachelor-level.

The main *entrance requirements* are a working knowledge of English, the subject matter, and experience of working in an Electronic Learning Environment (ELE).

4.2.2 Enrolment / registration and intake procedure

In the *Virtual Campus* students continue to be regular students of their home universities. Therefore no formal enrolment at a foreign university is necessary. The students are in fact *enrolled* on course level through the Virtual Campus-website and are provided with an account to the Campus.

The *intake* into the international part of the course is done by the staff of the home university courses.

[D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take

[S] Set up a [platform](#) where students can register and enrol for the Virtual Campus.

[S] Set up guidelines for the intake procedure.

[S] Inform the staff of the relevant courses and potential participants about the intake procedure.

Case Study: Virtual Campus on Marketing

Marketing students register to the Virtual Campus at their home university Marketing course. The leader of that course then provides him/her with an account to the Campus.

In the Virtual Campus on Marketing [Moodle](#) is used as a platform.

For the Virtual Campus on Marketing a special intake procedure has been set up: At each participating university, the relevant Marketing academic advertised in the university student magazine or website. In this way, each university found a group of students willing to participate.

4.2.3 Fees

The fees are one of the key criteria when deciding whether a Virtual Mobility-model is affordable or not and information on that is crucial for potential students.

In the *Virtual Campus* the students are regular students of their home university and pay the regular fees at their home university. Whether students should to pay any extra fee for participating in the Virtual Campus can be decided by the partnering institutions.

[D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take

[D] Should the students pay a special fee for participating in the course?

[D] If "Yes": How high should this fee be?

[S] Publish a list with fees at all partnering universities and/or the Virtual Campus-website.

Case Study: Virtual Campus on Marketing

Students of the Virtual Campus on Marketing do not have to pay an extra fee for participating. However, introducing such a fee to compensate for the additional work teachers and tutors have with engaging in the Virtual Campus, is under consideration.

Up to the present potential students receive the following information on this matter:

"If you are a registered student of Open University of the Netherlands, Polish Virtual University or Tallinn University, you only have to register. There is no extra fee."

4.2.4 Access to library resources

When studying on a Virtual Mobility-scheme the access to study materials, like books, papers and other literature is not as easy as going to the library. Students will be likely to be far away from any physical library and it is therefore important to organise the [access to library resources](#) carefully.

In the *Virtual Campus* the students depend on the literature resources available at the library of their home university and sources they can access via the web.

In order to guarantee that all students participating in the Virtual Campus can use the information materials the Library and Information Support-group of the e-move-project has set up a list of recommendations.

[D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take

[S] Inform the library staff about the Virtual Campus

[S] Publish the list of relevant web links, open electronic resources and other materials on the ELE of the Virtual Seminar.

[S] *Revise resources*: Check on the basis of the assignments if information resources (general bibliography, articles cited, etc.) needed are available at the libraries of each participating university.

[S] *Inform students* enrolled in the Virtual Campus about library services and information resources available at each university. This could be a link to the different home university's library web site or a more complete explanation.

[S] *Post this information* on the ELE/learning platform of the Virtual Campus.

Case Study: Virtual Campus on Marketing

For the Virtual Campus the initial plan concerning library resources was to publish all literature sources on the Campus-platform. This would have had the advantage that access to the relevant literature for students from universities with less well equipped libraries would have been guaranteed. Unfortunately, since commercial licences are at present valid for only one university, this proved impossible.

Therefore up to the present participating students have to individually use the library of their home university.

4.3 TEACHING AND TUTORING THE VIRTUAL CAMPUS

When implementing a Virtual Mobility-scheme it is not only important to properly inform, prepare and/or select students for this experience but also consider special requirements the teachers and tutors have to fulfil and – if applicable – the form of training that could be offered to them.

The main requirement for teaching and tutoring the Virtual Campus is to have excellent language skills in the [language](#) in which the model is designed. If a teacher/tutor is a member of a traditional university he/she should above all be able to prove experience with working in an [ELE](#).

If a teacher/tutor is not used to [distance teaching and tutoring](#), training and guidelines should be offered to him/her.

Since the student groups are international a teacher/tutor should also be made aware of possible intercultural friction between the participants and be alerted to possible 'free riders'.

[\[D\]ecisions to make and \[S\]teps to take](#)

[S] Set up requirements for teaching and tutoring your model of the Virtual Campus.

[S] Offer [guidelines and training](#) to those teachers and tutors not familiar with working in an ELE.

[S] Prepare teachers and tutors for possible intercultural friction between students.

Case Study: Virtual Campus on Marketing

In the Virtual Campus no additional requirements to those mentioned above have been set up. All tutors had prior experience with working in an ELE.

4.4 OFFERING THE ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT TO STUDENTS

In some Virtual Mobility-schemes students have to enrol at a foreign university, signing up for an exam. While these schemes are rather complex and administrative support is often needed, the Virtual Campus is a “light version” of Virtual Mobility.

Its’ grades are integrated into the grades for the course the Campus is part of at the respective university, the Virtual Campus’s grade being maximally 10% of the total grade. In this way no additional administrative support to that already present for the several home university courses is needed. The individual tutors who do the Virtual Campus’ grading act as a linchpin between their students (of different nationalities), and the different administrations.

If a student is nonetheless looking for more support, he/she can contact the leader of the home university course.

[D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take

[S] Offer students the possibility of contact with the leader of the course at their home university in case they experience any administrative problems.

Case Study: Virtual Campus on Marketing

In the Virtual Campus on Marketing no additional administrative support is offered to the students but they are provided with the contact details of a professor they can turn to in case of administrative problems.

4.5 ESTABLISHING THE PARTNERSHIP

Realising any of the models of Virtual Mobility introduced in this guide takes a partnership of Higher Education institutions. Whether the partnership is based on an (already existing) academic network or established especially for the purpose of realising a Virtual Mobility-scheme for example is of course dependent on individual factors.

However, each model is based on different preconditions pertaining to the partnership needed for the specific model.

The organisational model for the Virtual Campus is based on a network of higher education institutions sharing expertise and investing staff time and resources. It is a bottom-up approach with few formal, top-down institutional arrangements.

To offer a *Virtual Campus* takes at least two partnering universities. But while this bilateral model could certainly work it is likely that with more partners not only the international experience is more intensive but also that more students become interested in participating.

In terms of time planning it is quite difficult to predict how long it will take to have a Virtual Campus ready for [enrolment](#). This also depends on factors like the composition of the partnership, the experience of the members in working with each other and the timeframes in the different academic calendars into which the Virtual Campus would fit in. But as soon as the design and the set up of a Virtual Campus-scheme have been fixed the model offers a huge flexibility in taking on more courses and new partners.

For the assignment of tasks there are no specific rules but according to group decisions and individual tasks the following suggestions might be helpful.

4.5.1 [D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take as a group

Designing the Virtual Campus

[S] Choose a discipline, an academic level and a course offered at all partnering institutions.

[S] Decide on a common language for the Virtual Campus.

[D] Do the assignments allow for a virtual exam or will travelling be necessary?

[D] How many ECTS-points should the assignments equal (minimum/maximum)?

[D] Should participation in the Virtual Campus be a mandatory or voluntary element of the course it is offered in?

[D] Should it be possible to complete more than one assignment in the Virtual Campus?

[D] Will the assignments be graded by local academics (of different nationalities) or by one central academic?

[S] Set up principles for the assessment of the Virtual Campus.

[D] Should specific exercises on intercultural differences be offered in the Virtual Campus?

[S] If "Yes": Appoint a partner to design those assignments.

Setting up the Virtual Campus

[S] Define a target group for your Virtual Campus.

[S] Define academic, language, technical and/or personal skills as entrance requirements.

[D] *If the partnership consists of Distance Teaching and traditional universities:* How do you ensure that the participants from traditional universities are adequately versed in the use of Electronic Learning Environments (ELE)?

[D] Will there be a special entrance test for the students (e.g. a language test)?

[S] Set up guidelines for the intake procedure.

[D] Should the students pay a special fee for participating in the course?

[D] If "Yes": how high should this fee be?

[D] From which sources will students get the literature necessary for the assignments?

Teaching a course in the Virtual Campus

[S] Set up requirements for teaching and tutoring your model of the Virtual Campus.

4.5.2 [D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take for each partner individually

Designing the Virtual Campus

[S] Design a number of assignments that

- cover topics known and observable in the countries of all partners
- allow for international co-operation
- equal the same number of ECTS-points

Setting up the Virtual Campus

[S] Set up all assignments, materials, examinations and tutorial documents in the language of the Virtual Campus.

[D] If participation in the Virtual Campus is voluntary: how will the students be rewarded?

[S] Inform the library staff about the Virtual Campus

[S] Inform (potential) participants from your university about

- the principles of assessment in the Virtual Campus
- Do's and don'ts when communicating in an international community
- the entrance requirements and intake procedure.
- effective fees for the Virtual Campus

[S] *Revise library resources*: Check on the basis of the assignments if all information resources (general bibliography, articles cited, etc.) needed are available at the libraries of your university.

[S] *Inform students* enrolled in the Virtual Campus about library services and information resources available. This could be a link to the different home universities' library web sites or a more complete explanation.

Offering administrative support in the Virtual Campus

[S] Provide students with the contact details of the person responsible in case of administrative problems.

4.5.3 [D]ecisions to make and [S]teps to take for an appointed partner

[S] If specific exercises on intercultural differences are thought desirable in the Virtual Campus: design those assignment/s.

[S] Set up a [platform](#) where students can register and enrol for the Virtual Campus.

[S] Inform the staff of the relevant assignments about the intake procedure.

[S] Publish the list of relevant web links, open electronic resources and other materials on the ELE of the Virtual Seminar.

[S] Publish a list with effective fees on the Virtual Campus-website.

[S] Post the information on library services on the ELE/learning platform.

Teaching a course in the Virtual Campus

[S] Offer guidelines and training to those teachers and tutors that are not familiar with working in an ELE.

[S] Prepare teachers and tutors for possible intercultural friction between students.

Case Study: Virtual Campus on Marketing

The Virtual Campus on Marketing has been planned and is organised as a pilot of the Virtual Campus in the e-move-project. It is a partnership of two Distance Teaching Universities and one traditional university.

All members designed a basic template, defining several aspects of the Campus such as content and didactics. In accordance with these aspects all co-operating institutions provided several assignments that were checked by one designated group member to ensure a basic quality level. After that, the materials could be implemented in the website.

During the experiment, the website is hosted by one of the partners, PVU. After the experiment, new arrangements will have to be made to ensure that the website stays on-line.

4.6 INFORMING AND ATTRACTING STUDENTS

While the ERASMUS-programme has become a kind of household name in universities and among students over the last 20 years, Virtual Mobility-schemes are not yet very well known. It is therefore important to raise the awareness level of students about the possibility of participating in a Virtual Mobility-scheme, its advantages and potential impact on their academic education and professional future.

Within the three models of Virtual Mobility different strategies of boosting visibility and providing students with information have been pursued. None of these strategies is exclusively tied to a special model, but can be individually designed and generally applied.

The following list is a collection of possible means of attracting students to and informing them about the *Virtual Campus*:

Connect

- with students organisations at your university and on national as well as international level
 - members of your scientific community and scientific networks
- and promote your model of Virtual Mobility.

Use the web

In distance education and e-learning the web is one of the most - if not the most important – medium to advertise. You could

- publish information on the Virtual Campus on the local web pages of the partnering universities and the relevant departments,
- make announcements through the university's/department's newsletter, "What's new"-board,
- send an Email to all members of the relevant department,
- design a web page and link it to the common search engines and the university website,
- take out advertisements on websites of student unions, associations and academic partners.

Speak out

- Giving presentations or just "mentioning" the Virtual Campus at conferences, educational forums/events, expositions can be a good way to spread information on the Campus.

Print it on paper

- Putting up posters at the university, especially at traditional universities,
- distributing leaflets at the university and/or mail them to students, e.g. with the regular mailing of study books/materials and
- publishing articles and advertisements in student and university magazines are also promising means to attract students.



Currently there is a lack of information on the possibilities of doing Virtual Mobility and the different programmes.

It is important to stress that even with good and extensive advertising it might take some time to get participants for the Virtual Campus – or any other Virtual Mobility scheme. Firstly, these schemes are rather unfamiliar to students and probably need some time to get used to the idea of participating. Secondly, students usually plan their university work well in advance. That means that despite knowing about the Virtual Campus and being interested in it, it might not fit into the schedule right away and participation might be delayed to a later point in their academic education.



The e-move project is carried out with the support of the European Commission, Directorate-General for Education and Culture, under the [eLearning programme](#). However, the sole responsibility of the information contained in these pages lies with the authors and the Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information.

Author: *Christina Brey, Fernuniversität in Hagen*

With the Collaboration of all partners of the e-move-Project

Published by the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU)