



InComm
Feel at Home

**Teaching in the
International
Postgraduate Learning
Environment:**

A one-day workshop

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union





Objective of the workshop

Creating the ideal learning environment for postgraduate students at any university requires a multitude of different skills from teaching professionals. As our lecture halls and seminar rooms become more international, awareness of what we need to create the best kind of educational culture becomes paramount. This brings additional challenges as managing different learning styles and attitudes of Master and PhD students towards university work and life can be culturally dependent and vary significantly from student to student. In turn this can affect the dynamic and productivity of the learning environment.

This one-day workshop explores different approaches and methods for educators to help create a new kind of teaching environment whereby international postgraduate students feel at home.

Outline

Here you will find the topics we worked on and the activities we chose to do so in chronological order. Breaks should be included individually.

Introduction and discussion with participants

Context and definitions: Clarify key terms such as: Learning environment, intercultural and community.

Case examples of different experiences of postgraduate students taken from a range of PhD students and Masters students, all in first person, and showing the particular challenges faced by students in terms of:

- Learning needs and requirements
- Specific situations facing international postgraduate students throughout their learning process
- Educators teaching styles
- Resultant issues facing educators in the first semester

Individual exercise: Each participant has to reflect upon their own teaching styles and consider what kind of teaching environment they provide to Master and PhD students. This is then shared with other participants to spark discussion.

Duration: 90 mins

Number of participants: all

Tools: presentation, note paper



Input on international learning types and intercultural aspects of the classroom

Duration: 120 mins at least

Number of participants: all

Tools: Presentation with workshop content. Discussion breaks every 30 minutes

An **input presentation** is given on the following topics:

- Models of intercultural theory which are useful for teaching postgraduates
- Regional and cultural learning styles
- Classroom dynamics: scenarios and solutions
- Roles of the educator

Each topic has a lot of content and information so to ensure participants process the content effectively it is important to have a pause in presenting every thirty minutes and then start a **15 minute discussion** as it is useful to sense check and allow time for participants to reflect on the material and discuss pertinent topics.

Afternoon workshop: student personas

Duration: 240 min at least

Number of participants:

All participants

Tools: Group work and presentations back to the group

Set up:

Small groups designated by university

Each group can choose from a range of seven characters or “personas”. These characters are Master and PhD students and created from an amalgamation of real student experiences and put into invented characters with name and age. Out of the seven personas each group can choose one or two. Each character has the following information:

- Name, age and cultural background
- Type of study
- Background information
- Reasons for doing the postgraduate program
- Specific cultural learning style
- Specific generational learning style
- Personality type
- Typical role in the classroom



Each group then has to consider the following questions for their character and consider how best to create the right kind of learning environment for their needs from the perspective of their home university.

- Potential strengths and weaknesses for the personas learning needs
- How their background or learning styles etc. might impact interaction in the classroom dynamics
- What support should be given to the student from the educator
- What steps should the educator take to support the student more effectively in the first semester

This strategy is then presented back to the class for feedback and discussion

Final task

Participants reflect on what needs to be done back at the home university to ensure ideas are implemented in the first semester.

Lessons Learned

Having postgraduates attend is an absolute must so that their voices are heard. In the afternoon workshop it is important to mix them with different university groups so that their opinions can be fully listened to and their ideas can be well integrated into the resultant university strategy.

This workshop is designed for educators. However, if you get university support staff attending the workshop please ensure that the material is adapted for their specific situation.

Author: Sarah Schantin-Williams MA
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