

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' ACTION FOR
ADAPTING CROSS-CULTURAL ACTIVITIE

GUIDE BOOK OF “DOS AND DON'TS FOR UNIVERSITY STAFF





I02: Practical guide for university staff

Project: International students' Action for Adapting Cross-Cultural activities (ISAAC)

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CHAPTER 1

FOREIGN STUDENTS

GENERAL OVERVIEW

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

An international student requires different standards. He/she has different needs in terms of planning the trip, explaining all procedures, deadlines and support throughout the study program, from recruitment to graduation. The way the service is organized: recruitment, integration, activities during the stay, information are critical to the success of the student and the quality mark of the host institutions. Educational systems, the national regulations that govern them in each country, the rules and conditions of access of individual universities, can challenge students and their future decisions.

Therefore, it is particularly important that host institutions are properly organized, both in terms of adequate human resources, work culture, infrastructure, communication inside and outside the organization, which constitute the international success of the university.

The moment a potential candidate opens the university's website, he or she should find himself or herself "virtually taken care of." The ease of finding the necessary information, the clarity of messages and the clearly visible strengths of the university undoubtedly contribute to a smoother decision-making process. Proper identification of the needs of such a candidate is the key to developing appropriate support mechanisms. This principle is equally important for students on short-term mobility programs as well as those participating in full degree programs.

The efficiency and transparency of the entire process from the moment of application through the entire formal recruitment process, registration in the student system to familiarization with the university and integration of the student into the local environment makes it easier for incoming students to adapt to their new environment, and for the staff dealing with the process to be more efficient.

This chapter describes the basic issues in this regard. In everyday life, in a new city, away from the support of family and peer groups, some doubts and concerns may arise. In the case of students deciding on a whole period of study - there are concerns about adjusting to a new place and re-planning their entire lives in a new place, in a foreign language or culture, outside their comfort zone. Therefore, it is critical to the success of mobility or the implementation of a full program of study to take into account all the details of the host institution, which in most cases include information on legislation, accommodation, living conditions and costs, health framework and health institutions, visa framework, work opportunities, language(s), etc.

The end of a mobility or full study program is also a difficult time for a foreign student. The stronger and more intense the experience of studying abroad, the greater the challenges of returning home, to family, to friends, to the university of origin, when it comes to students participating in

in short-term mobility. Months or years away from home allow them to gain all sorts of experiences, new competencies, skills, especially compared to students who have not participated in such exchanges/stays. They return full of stories, impressions, tales, ready to share their experience. The task of the employee dealing with foreign students is to properly prepare and inform students about all procedures, formalities, which will allow the smooth completion of the study period.

Each type of academic exchange or full course of study involves specific procedures. It is very important that the various units of the university, such as the Dean's Office, the International Cooperation Department, and the Erasmus+ Program Office cooperate in order to properly inform themselves about the whole process. The experience of with the handling of incoming students is also an excellent source of knowledge, observation of what problems, challenges may be encountered by students of a given university interested in going to other countries. Interdepartmental cooperation and a culture of knowledge sharing within an organization are key elements in supporting students.

1. FOREIGN STUDENTS – GENERAL OVERVIEW

An international student is outside the standard of the domestic students. He/she therefore has additional needs for guidance, support and follow-up since the application moment to the Diploma Celebration. The way the reception is organised, the integration, the follow-up during the stay, the information that is made available are decisive for the success of the student and the quality label of the host institutions. The education systems and the legislation which governs them in each country, the rules and conditions of access, may be challenges for the students and their pathway. For this reason, students must be guided from the very first moment and the Host Institutions must invest both in human resources and in infrastructure so that the experiences are full of success.

The follow-up of the incoming student does not begin at the moment he/she arrives at the host university, but at the moment he/she is considering an exchange to your university. This is why it is essential to identify the specific needs of the student prior to his or her arrival. This principle is transversal to students in mobility to students in the process of applying for a Full Study Programme. The more the whole process of incorporation is facilitated, the better prepared, with better predisposition and more calm he/she will be able to arrive. This section aims to shed some light on this important issue.

The daily life, living in a new city, away from the regular support structure one might have, where the language spoken is different from the one from the foreign student, some doubts and concerns might arise. This may be an even more complex time for a student who moves for 3, 4 or 5 years to live in a new country, out of their comfort zone. They will necessarily have to create a "lasting" structure - housing, health, culture, social relations. It is, therefore, determinant for the success of the mobility or the residence for complete studies, that all details are considered for the host institution, which, for the most part, masters the information regarding laws, accommodation, living conditions and costs, health framework and health institutions, visa legal framework, work possibilities, language/languages...

Return - the most complex time for international students. The stronger and more intense the experience of studying abroad, the greater the challenges of returning home, to family, to friends, to the University of origin when it comes to mobile students. Months or years away, lived intensely, are in terms of experiences and changes ten times those experienced by those who stayed. Those who return expect to find in "their world" the same changes that happened in themselves. They go full of stories to tell - which they repeat over and over again until they are no longer heard. Often, the changes brought about by mobility make them strangers to those who welcome them back. They have to be prepared for this moment.

At the same time, you have to take into account the procedural and legal formalities, which are different for mobile students and for International Students completing a full degree. In the case of mobile or free mover students: closing of Learning Agreements;

Certificates of Stay; Transcript of Records. For foreign students completing a full degree: recognition/ certification requirements at the origin country.

1.1 – Definition and Types of Foreign Students

There are various types of foreign students according to where they come from. This definition is important to guide them on how to apply for your institution, since the procedures might differ. It is also important to identify these groups since the legal framework might be different too.

Bellow you can find different types of foreign students:

- Students from EU Member-States:
 - They can arrive within a mobility programme (Mobile Students);
 - They can arrive to attend a full study programme (International Students attending a full Programme).
- Students from outside the European Union:
 - They can arrive within a mobility programme (Mobile Students);
 - They can arrive to attend a full study programme (International Students attending a full Programme).
- Students coming from any country/region your institution might have a protocol with:
 - They can arrive within a mobility programme (Mobile Students);
 - They can arrive for a Joint Degree (Mobile Students).
- Free Movers;
 - They arrive for a mobility programme (Mobile Students);

However, it is also crucial to take into consideration the type of foreign student since the paperwork will be different according to the situation: the application; the legal framework; the students' needs in terms of support and guidance.

The country of origin, nationality largely determines the complexity of the process of applying to study, recruitment, obtaining a visa or residence permit in another country. An effective international cooperation or international recruitment officer can explain all the procedures to a prospective student and provide the necessary brochures or links to websites. The origin of the student also determines what kind of acclimatization activities are needed and what forms of support are most appropriate. In addition to general measures tailored to the students as a group, it must also be taken into account that, each case is unique. For both groups, it is also very important to realize that the autonomy and personality of each student has a direct impact on the processes and that the procedures, while cross-cutting, should be tailored to the student profile and the needs that each student reveals during the process. For a university employee, each student, is an administrative process, paperwork and related tasks. For the student - the period of study, however short term, is an adventure, a time for change and new experiences, administrative issues, are a secondary matter, so it is the

employee who should be vigilant, efficiently enforce all the requirements for documentation and proper implementation of the program of study.

GOOD PRACTICES TO CONSIDER:

For Mobility Programmes: A good practice is to keep the process simple. To use as a basis (adapting) the models used by the European Union for the Erasmus+ Programme - we know that they cover all the needs and that they respect the national allocations of all the Union countries - using them as a basis is a way to avoid difficulties for the technicians and the services and, at the same time, if some adjustments are needed for countries outside the Union, they will always be very small.

When working with foreign students from the International Relations Office, there are marked differences depending on the profile of the incoming students. One of the things that startled us the most was the fact that for students coming from outside the European Union, especially from the United States, the cultural shock can be such that it is necessary to provide them with psychological help. To this end, a special mental health unit was opened a few years ago specifically for foreign students.

For International Students Attending a Full Programme: the legal framework is decisive in all stages of the process. 1) the legal requirements in terms of documentation at the time of entry into the Institution/Host Country; 2) the legal requirements in terms of Diploma recognition in the home country at the time of completion.

TIP: The changes during university years

Keep in mind that the university years are often a time of transition and adjustment to all kinds of changes. Many students are away from home, meeting new people, and getting used to different social dynamics. New demands in time can challenge even the most organized students.

1.2 – Students’ Needs

The following section of the guide provides information on the needs of students, at all stages of their studies, taking into account the period before arriving in the new country, during their stay and at the end of their studies or short-term trip. Surveys conducted in IV-VI 2021 in the project among students from Poland, Spain, Greece and Portugal show that the main factors deciding to go to study in another country are: modern curricula, attractive fields of study, opportunities for professional development or academic career, prospects for employment in the destination country or the prestige of the university. These ambitious goals are verified by everyday experience, the supportive environment in difficult moments of stay, especially for young people who leave home and family for the first time.

REMEMEMBER:

It is important that host universities provide a safe environment to the foreign students throughout their whole mobility or Study Programme time. Understanding foreign students’ needs will help them to adapt easily to their new university and everyday life in the new city/country.

IMPORTANT:

The needs of students/candidates for study also arise from the culture, local conditions of the country, organization of the educational process. Prepare for your work by using the possibilities of the Internet. If you know, for example, what documents are recognized in given countries, types of diplomas or other documents with which a student can come - you will more efficiently close the entire recruitment process.

CULTURE:

Learn about the cultural model developed by Geert Hofstede. Research on cultural differences by this scientist, includes representatives of many nationalities and shows how different behavioural models operate in communities.

1.2.1 – Before coming to new country

Moving to another country involves all sorts of formalities, procedures and, above all, meeting all applicable deadlines. The task of the university recruiter is to sensibly plan information for prospective students, university applicants about the various procedures and applicable documents. It is his experience that determines how successfully a university candidate will be guided through the entire process.

REMEMBER:

Well-informed students will make your job easier!

TIP:

Consider how to communicate information to candidates/students. Should the information be divided into detailed "packages" providing step-by-step information about each stage? Is a full guide covering all possible procedures a better option.

To make the process easier, it is worthwhile to prepare yourself appropriate informational materials as a set to support conversations with candidates or newly admitted students. The basic issues that should be on such a list are:

- Providing information about the host institutions and possibilities of study programmes;
- Providing information about the different possibilities in the host countries (cultural, political and social situations);
- Providing information regarding the documents necessary to formalise the application;
- Provide a deadline calendar;
- Assisting applicants in filling in the registration/enrolment forms, as well as train them on the digital platforms the institution might use;
- Provide information on where to stay and if the host organisation has any protocols with accommodation services;
- Provide information on living costs;
- Provide information on access to health services (Example: European Health Card);
- Provide incoming students with practical information before arriving;
- Provide information about security key issues (taking into consideration the host country and also the behaviours to adopt on Social Media during mobility);
- Provide incoming students with useful links;
- Provide incoming students with useful contacts.

TIP:

Infographics are a modern and very practical way of explaining various types of content. In the case of a process that takes several weeks or even months (e.g. in the case of university applicants from other continents applying for a visa) they can support the explanation of the entire process.

REMEMBER:

(for Erasmus + mobility staff)

The basic requirement for student exchange is to have a learning agreement between the home university and the host university. This agreement establishes what subject's students will take abroad and what they will be approved for. For this, it is necessary, on the one hand, that the subjects correspond in both universities, and on the other hand, that they have the same number of credits. This is a tedious and bureaucratic process, as it requires, prior to the student's arrival, coordination between the two educational institutions and the approval of the designated tutor. In many cases, we have noticed that this process causes problems for some students who arrive in destination countries without a final study agreement. Streamlining this process is one of our priorities in managing the student's needs prior to arrival in the destination country.

The process of defining on the final list of subjects should involve the active participation of all units involved in the student's subsequent education process. Failure to ensure the conditions of arrival-departure is additional administrative work, and for the student a big and unnecessary stress.

1.2.2 – In new place and city

The first weeks in a new country in a new environment can cause a lot of stress to newcomers. It does not matter whether a student comes for a three-month internship, one semester or a full study cycle. Remember that your support is very valuable during the first days. Good communication and finding the best way to share information with students will make your work as well as the student's adaptation easier. It is very important that, upon arriving, foreign students feel welcomed. Institutions should organise activities and events such as:

- Welcome days;
- Meetings with the university's students;
- Meetings with the city's student's organizations;
- Meetings with any clubs the university might have;
- Meetings with the Organizational Unit Coordinators and Programme Directors;
- Debate sessions;
- Conferences;
- Sessions with the public security services;
- Sport activities;
- Monthly networking and follow-up meetings;
- Weekly face-to-face office hours to deal with administrative issues;
- Weekly face-to-face office hours to deal with academic issues;
- Support for Visa procedures (when needed);
- Organisation of events in the country's festive celebrations;
- Celebration sessions at the end of semesters and farewells.

For students pursuing full degrees, the following should be added:

- Labour market presentations;
- Company visits;
- Organisation of networking sessions with labour market representatives;
- Liaison with visa authorities (when necessary);
- Liaison with possible employers for part-time employment;
- Insertion in thematic groups/student associations.

TIP: Information to help students

Make sure that students know who should be contacted for the specific activity or problem. You should have the information form with names of departments and contact details of the people working in the specific departments and you can share it with student at the beginning of his/her stay.

If there are any mandatory procedures that foreign students should know about, it is important to have this information available.

They might need to know about:

- **University information:**
 - Where the library is;
 - Where the canteen is;
 - How to get the student's ID card;
 - How to log in to the university services;
 - Rules of the exams after each semester.

- **Getting a VAT number:**
 - Where should they go to get one?
 - Is it free of charge?
 - Why do they need it?

- **Getting Visa and residence permit:**
 - Where should they go to get one?
 - Is it free of charge?
 - Why do they need it?
 - Documents they must take;
 - Deadlines to apply;

- **Opening a bank account:**
 - Where should they go to open one?
 - Is it free of charge?
 - Why do they need it?
 - Documents they must take.

- **Registering at a Health Centre:**
 - Where should they go to register?
 - Is it free of charge?
 - Why should they?
 - Documents they must take.

TIP: City information for students

It is also very important to display some curiosities about the country/city that the students go to. You could provide information in the most diverse areas, such as security, political system, gastronomy, art, culture, sports, and leisure activities.

TIP: networking

A good solution is to cooperate with various types of entities - both institutions providing various services, organizations working for domestic and foreign students, and cultural, sports, recreational institutions. Then informing students about various types of events will be easier and conducted in multiple ways.

GOOD PRACTICES:

For many years, our university (the University of Thessaly) has been inviting representatives of all institutions that are important, from a student's perspective, to meetings. In the first weeks of the new academic year, we hold "Orientation Days" meetings with representatives of banks, public services, health services and student organizations operating in our region.

1.2.3 - After

Completing a study or short-term exchange program also requires an amount of administrative work, good planning and cooperation with the student! A well-informed student, knows how to plan the whole process, when to report to the Dean's Office, what to ask, what to make sure. Your key task is to inform them about the dates of exams or other forms of course credit. At the end of their stay, international students may need help with procedures related to recognition of mobility, semester/year or degree equivalents they have completed at your institution. The responsible department should be ready to assist in this matter by providing the information listed in the checklist below.

CHECKLIST:

- Time taken for documents to be issued (by administrative departments);
- Procedures for requesting documents;
- Official procedures in the origin country for recognition of documents (where applicable);
- Official procedures in the origin country for the recognition of Diplomas (when Full Degree);
- List of necessary documents;
- Information on any charges (diplomas, certificates, translations, etc...).

IMPORTANT:

Remember that your responsibilities, such as: collecting signatures, making copies of documents or other information you need from the student leaving the walls of the university. Completion of studies or exchanges is a process, administratively important for both parties. A student who returns to his or her home country will not be able to come at our request to complete overlooked documentation or additional paperwork.

GOOD PRACTICES:

"Alumni" Network

Take into account that not every student part ways with the university. Many academic centres in Poland run programs called "Graduate" or "Alumni", which bring together graduate students from one university. Such networking is an effective method of promoting the university, supporting "fresh" graduates on the job market by older colleagues. For the university, it's constant contact with students and knowing how their professional career is going on. It is especially important to conduct such activities for foreign students, so that the "university family" is visible both in the country and abroad.

TAKE INTO ACCOUNT:

Erasmus + mobility students

The students will be required to submit a final report. They will receive the report at the end of the mobility period. It is mandatory that mobility periods are recognized by both higher education institutions as stipulated in the Inter-Institutional Agreement and in the Learning Agreement. The sending Institution must fully recognize the activities successfully completed by the student during the mobility, and register them in the student's Transcript of Records. The submission of the report will trigger the payment of the final grant instalment to the student.

For students coming from outside the European area to do a full study programme there will certainly be a need for recognition of the Diploma, so that it is valid in the country of origin. It is important to know the necessary procedures to support the student in this phase.

IMPORTANT: If you work in another unit supporting foreign students and do not deal with such tasks on a daily basis it is important to have a basic knowledge of the subject. Any student who is lost will then be properly informed, and YOU, knowing what situation you are dealing with will efficiently inform the student where he/she will get the appropriate help.

CHAPTER 2

UNIVERSITY STAFF

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2. UNIVERSITY STAFF WORKING WITH FOREIGN STUDENTS

“Choose a job you like and you will not have to work a day in your life”. Confúcio.

Working in the international field, with international students is a job that requires a set of skills, which go far beyond those that can be acquired in the classroom: knowledge of languages is important, knowledge of legislation is important, knowledge of programmes is fundamental, communication skills; the ability to manage crisis situations - but the essential skills in this field go further: social skills; cultural skills; emotional skills - they are decisive! The taste and the will to learn every day, in formal and informal situations; the permanent availability and the taste to travel... are fundamental characteristics of the employees in this area! Depending on the type of organization, whereas it is small or large organization the number of people working with foreign students can be different. In smaller organisations all works are consolidated in one unit/department, while large universities have separate departments dealing with different activities related to foreign students. Remember that well informed students will make your work easier!

When dealing with foreign students, a series of intercultural competencies are necessary to make their experience easier and more enjoyable. Some of these skills are acquired through the practice of direct interaction with the students, therefore, it is very important to be able to interact with them normally and regularly.

Each member of the academic staff is expected to enhance the learning environment through instruction, applied research, scholarly activity, and service that support the institutional mission. Primary duties of faculty include effective classroom teaching, academic advising and counselling of students, participation in departmental committee work, continuous development of the curriculum through assessment, applied research or scholarly activity, and service such as assisting in recruitment of students and initiatives designed to help students succeed academically, as well as other assigned duties. When we talk about education, the performance of professionals in educational institutions is decisive for the success of students' goals. The Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions is a process under construction, in response to the needs of society in accelerated transformation.

Training is, therefore, decisive. For International Relations professionals there are many training offers available and also many training possibilities in non-formal environments that constitute important moments of acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary for the performance of their activities. Mobilities, such as mobility for training should be a constant

because it allows the acquisition of transversal skills that is so necessary for the performance of these functions. However, technical training for platform management, language training and legislative training are also crucial.

You have to remember to be patient and open minded in your daily work. When there are a lot of things going on and many people coming to ask questions, it is easy to get bored or anxious. Take a deep breath or have a break to deal with another task or problem. If people feel overwhelmed by the information or do not trust its validity, it can have the opposite effect. Be sure to carefully identify and present the information to successfully encourage others to approach other ideas with an open mind. Daily work of the staff working with foreign students and staff requires skills, knowledge and understanding. You have to know how to use different online tools for communication. Team work is essential in the daily work management. Being in contact with other co-workers and helping each other for sure will make your work more efficient.

2.1 – Profiles

Working in an international environment, with students or also employees from other countries requires a lot of preparation and an appropriate set of competencies. This is unconventional work, based primarily on: knowledge of foreign languages, knowledge of the law in different countries, knowledge of various types of programs, support mechanisms, scholarships, and knowledge of higher education that allows to efficiently explain to the student the most difficult issues for him or her, and the employee to move freely within the framework of his or her tasks.

IMPORTANT:

It is worth taking part in training courses! The opportunity to exchange experiences as well as talk to experienced people in the field will allow you to change your point of view, open up to new solutions, notice what solutions work elsewhere. Especially if you got a new assignment or find it difficult to find yourself in a new situation - look for solutions outside.

The second set is soft skills, as important as knowledge resources or organizational procedures. Key are good communication skills that affect the overall work, i.e. appropriate communication with students, support of dialogue between students and university staff, lecturers and, if necessary, communication outside the university. An employee of the department of international cooperation, recruitment of foreign students or their service should be open to multiculturalism but also promote Polish culture, customs, promote events that affect the development of the student and his smooth acclimatization to the new place.

GOOD PRACTICES:

There are universities in Europe which organize regular meetings of people from different departments dealing with international cooperation in order to exchange information, experiences, and, above all, the problems they encounter. The apparent benefits of such meetings are better knowledge of students, joint search for solutions, learning from each other's effective working methods, and better understanding of the work of individual positions.

An emotional intelligence is also important, managing one's own emotions when difficult or stressful situations arise for everyone. The ability to manage with emotions, crisis situations, the ability to find solutions, compromise is very valuable and certainly makes everyday tasks easier.

REMEMBER:

Students' problems can affect their behaviour and communication. It is necessary to be vigilant and pay attention to whether a person needs specialized help in a particular area. This is an important task - informing other employees about the situation noticed and look for appropriate solutions.

Depending on the size of the organization, the number of departments or employees delegated to support foreign students sometimes varies. Small universities have multi-tasking units to handle different types of tasks. Larger universities have a more diversified division of responsibilities, e.g. separate departments for recruitment, international research cooperation, academic exchanges, sometimes some of the responsibilities are carried out by people working in individual departments and dean's offices.

REMEMBER:

If your responsibilities involve working with other foreign entities in Europe or around the world, it is helpful to know how the entities in question work. This will facilitate the exchange of information, as your questions or information will go to the in the right place. It is worth organizing an online meeting at the beginning of the cooperation to get acquainted with the employees, to know a common language. What is most important: Don't avoid direct contact! A phone call or meeting can do more than hundreds of e-mails.

Cooperation with foreign students is difficult and requires openness and understanding of other cultures. Some of the skills, attitudes in this regard are acquired through practice, direct contact with students, so it is worthwhile to engage in the organization of various events, carried out jointly. This will allow better communication and understanding of both sides. In addition to the support of the university's administrative staff dealing with foreign students, the proper preparation and involvement of lecturers is equally important. It should be remembered that the primary goal of the student is to obtain the chosen diploma, expand knowledge, acquire new skills and attitudes. Tasks carried out as part of the study program such as: additional career guidance, participation in conferences, seminars, workshops, training courses, study circles should include opportunities for interaction and cooperation between domestic and foreign students.

The process of internationalization of the university should take into account the appropriate support of lecturers in response to their needs for the implementation of the above activities. Very important in this regard is the participation of lecturers in mobility programs - exchanging good practices with employees of other universities or conducting classes/lectures in other academic centres.

IMPORTANT:

The international cooperation unit supports the lecturers of each university in organizing bilateral exchanges. It is crucial to exchange information between lecturers and staff what activities are expected and what offers of cooperation are needed in the field.

Mobility, especially staff mobilities for training and teaching should be a permanent element supporting the internationalization of the university, as it allows for cross-cutting skills, greater openness to the diversity of student groups. Regardless of the experiences of the university, and in this case, proper communication between units is key, only then will each department be able to take action, such as organizing mobility trips in accordance with the in accordance with the expectations of other employees.

Equally important as the other factors are the character traits of anyone involved in working with people, working based on relationships, mutual interaction and being in constant contact with others (including their problems, barriers, concerns, etc.). It is important to remember to be patient and open-minded in your daily work. When there are many things going on at the same time: a flurry of students, difficult issues to solve, upcoming deadlines causing increased student activity, it's easy to get frustrated, bored, anxious.

Your job is to stay calm. The solution is not always obvious that's why it's a good idea to pause, ask for advice from another employee, talk about the problem out loud, listen to another point of view. Another conversation with the student should bring a solution that satisfies both parties. If people feel overwhelmed by the information or don't understand its importance, it can have the opposite effect.

REMEMBER:

Carefully present information to help solve the problem situation. Do not take anything as "obvious." Your task is to explain step by step what the student does not understand, even if it seems that everything has been communicated, said, do it again. Ask follow-up questions to see if your information has been understood. Sometimes the way you communicate is also important - for example, try to speak slower, louder - maybe the problem is different than you thought at first.

The daily work of staff working with foreign students and employees requires skill, knowledge and understanding. It is very important to be able to use modern technologies in daily work: various types of online communicators that support long-distance communication. An employee who is proficient with various tools and applications will quickly find a solution - for example, if one system does not work smoothly, he knows how to use another and how to implement, explain the change to a student or other employee. Modern communication is also about the way information is presented and diversity in the forms of communication. Not every student remembers everything he or she hears with as much accuracy as we expect, not everyone understands the "slogan" message found on posters or flyers. Your task is to reach everyone in every effective way.

IMPORTANT:

If your email information has caused several students to come in asking additional questions - then recheck all the information provided and confront the message with the questions the students asked. Consider what other form might be clearer. Ask students what they don't understand and don't hesitate to with arranging a short meeting and clarifying doubts live. Even if you don't like public speaking, remember that this form will save you a lot of time and students will have the opportunity to ask questions and understand the message in the most optimal way.

Communication with the student - this includes the university's online resources. What if a student asks you to explain how the university's e-learning works, or how the library's resources work? The knowledge base of your own organization is very important. It's a good idea to know the basics or arrange a meeting with staff from another department. Being in touch with other colleagues and helping each other will definitely make your work more efficient.

GOOD PRACTICES:

The University of Volos will involve all newly hired employees of the university in the organization of "Welcome Week." They then have the opportunity to go through the entire welcoming process for new students and learn as much about the university as a newly arrived student. This is an opportunity to ask questions, exchange knowledge, get to know the employees with other units.

Partners involved in the ISAAC project agree that there is no uniform description of the profile of an employee dealing with foreign students. It is not the education or the knowledge of multiple foreign languages that determines the effective implementation of tasks, nor soft skills alone. All elements are important, and it is up to each individual employee to determine which will be his or her greatest asset.

EDUCATION - most universities pay attention to the following areas:

- International Relations;
- Economics;
- Management;
- Human Resource Management;
- Linguistics Studies;
- Political Geography;
- Law;

EXAMPLE:

Employees of our Office of International Relations (Lusofona University in Portugal), at management positions have primarily a business background in management. Lower-level employees represent a variety of fields of study, an asset of the team as a whole - is the diversity in educational background, which is used in daily work. The key is how each new wasp will contribute to the development of our unit and, consequently, the university as a whole.

- **Additional industry knowledge related to the field of study, general knowledge related to responsibilities and knowledge of the organization is also important:**
 - Economic and geographical knowledge of the world;
 - Political knowledge about the world;
 - General knowledge of the type of admission conditions for international students in different countries;
 - General knowledge of the framework areas of study in different countries;

- **SKILLS - the majority of domestic and foreign students surveyed and foreigners indicated:**
 - Language skills - especially English at a level good enough for effective communication;
 - Communication skills;
 - Skills related to preparing content and coherent information;
 - Analytical skills;
 - Conflict management skills;
 - Timeliness;
 - Work planning skills;

- **ATTITUDE - Below is a list of qualities of an international cooperation worker developed with students.**
 - Knowledge of social framework;
 - Openness in communication;
 - Patience;
 - Tolerance;
 - Building relationships devoid of prejudice, disparagement;
 - Accessibility - to students;

There are also a lot of important factors and specific characters of the staff working in international environment:

- **Self-knowledge:** It is fundamental for any professional to be aware of their personal value, capacities and potential. Cultivating self-esteem and believing in oneself and respecting one's limits, namely the capacity to deal with stressful situations, to manage emotions in a productive manner.
- **Communication Skills:** Express ideas and opinions in a clear and objective manner. Argue coherently and persuasively. Speak and write correctly, always adapting the message to each situation and context.
- **Interpersonal relationships:** Interpersonal relationships are an essential competence for a professional in this area: students, colleagues, technical and academic staff, partners.

- **Teamwork:** The ability to work in a team is one of the main professional skills, knowing how to listen and respect divergent ideas, to share and develop solutions in partnership is challenging and enriching.
- **Proactivity:** This is one of the key professional skills. Solving problems, making consistent and appropriate choices, anticipating problems. Making and introducing suggestions for improvement, taking initiative towards improving the working environment and good results for the team, is a skill to be cultivated.
- **Digital and technological competencies:** Today, all internationalization activities at HEIs are based on technology and digital technology, knowing how to use technological tools is a condition for carrying out the activity and a determining factor in contact with students and partners. Social networks are also a differentiating requirement.
- **Networking:** In an international relations office this is the basis of the work -- the sharing of knowledge among peers and all professional contacts are of crucial importance in this area.
- **Project management:** Scholarship programmes for mobile students or even scholarship programmes for international students on full study programmes require this competence. From researching the possibilities of applications, to carrying them out, to managing budgets, deadlines and teams in order to generate results, it implies mastering management principles and tools and is one of the very necessary skills in this area.
- **Leadership:** To lead and motivate the team; to guide and be a reference for students; to be heard and considered by peers inside and outside the institution is determinant! For this, it is important to be inspiring, a good communicator, confident, confident, well-informed, passionate about work, without losing humility and respect for others.
- **Global vision:** There are increasing challenges in the current scenario - finding new partners, establishing new relationships to attract students implies a global vision of the Higher Education world and a broad knowledge.
- **Resilience:** Think positive! Don't give up in the face of adversity! Finding new opportunities in times of crisis is also one of the most important professional skills that will help you to make a difference in your daily work, in your relationship with students, with national and international partners and even within the institution.

TIP:

Always invest in your foreign language skills since you have to communicate and help students from different countries.

REMEMBER:

Never be in a hurry! Everyone you welcome should feel that they are unique and that you are there for each of them! There are many things you don't know! Stop! Go and learn and get back to your student! The greatest competence of an International Relations professional is to know how to be present, interested, involved!

2.1.3 – Training

It is important that all institutions provide their employees with training, regardless of the department and the target group that they directly or indirectly work with. However, it is especially important that the staff working with foreign students are trained to do so. Nonetheless, when we talk about Staff for foreign students support activities, the best training is the opportunity to participate in mobility activities, in events outside the country (conferences, fairs, workshops, etc.) that promote contact with their peers and with the cultural realities of other countries. To visit foreign Educational Institutions, to stay there, even if for short periods, decisively contributes to the acquisition of technical and transversal skills crucial for the staff good performance.

Internationalization of the university is a process that requires continuous improvement of skills, investment in human resources of the university. Participation in training - domestic, international, regardless of age, experience, position allow for the development of employees' own development and the dynamic development of the unit as a whole. Participation in events outside the country, such as trade fairs, conferences, workshops, events held stationary, online, hybrid - for teaching staff, administration, general events - all these experiences will allow you to better understand the specifics of the work of international departments and find good practices that can be transferred to the organization. The availability of such activities also provides contact with employees of other organizations, strengthening university relations and interpersonal contacts. Visiting foreign educational institutions, staying there, even if for a short period of time, definitely contributes to the acquisition of technical and cross-cutting skills crucial to the good functioning of personnel.

STORY:

Humboldt University of Berlin has recently organized a group of internationalization coordinators at university level. A representative group was formed bringing together staff from the Erasmus offices of the faculties and the main Erasmus coordinators from the main International Office of the University as the head/responsible person of this group. The meetings focused on identifying and solving the main problems in the area of internationalization and sharing best practices in their meetings. Additionally, indexes were created for the evaluation of the current status.

GOOD PRACTICES:

When I receive colleagues on staff mobility for training in my institution, we always organise a dinner in the city centre. Of course, we do it for the pleasure of being together, but this kind of activity is also a part of the training: what we eat, what we wear, the conversations in informal environments, what we do in our free time, the music, the night life in the cities... these are opportunities to acquire transversal knowledge that is crucial to understand the host culture.

ADDITIONAL TRAININGS TO BE CONSIDERED:

- English language training, industry-specific, job-specific;
- Language training - other languages tailored to the profile of the admitted students;
- Working in a multicultural environment;
- Diversity and inclusion courses
- Managing a multicultural team;
- Communication in a multicultural team;
- Modern Data Presentation;
- Marketing and advertising;
- Social media content management;
- Time management;
- Online workplace management;
- Dealing with stressful situations;
- Working with project-based method;

2.2- DAILY WORK / DAILY LIFE

The work in this area can be divided into two big blocks: reception/monitoring and paperwork. When we talk about the first one, we think about international students, we think about inbound and outbound students, but we also have to think about mobile staff, local, national and international partners - it is very easy to use the working day for "front desk and reception" - professionals in this area are never in a hurry, availability is one of their main characteristics. However, the paperwork is significant, process management, internal reports, external reports, applications, the world of email management, WhatsApp replies - an endless world that is difficult to manage.

At any workplace or department, it is mandatory to be able to properly manage the daily work, but when working with foreign students it is essential for various reasons. First of all, these departments deal with application deadlines, checking the compliance of documents with the law, recruitment rules or study regulations. In addition, they deal with students for whom most of these procedures are new, sometimes difficult to understand. The employee's task is to find the right way to communicate and direct the student accordingly. All administrative activities should be recorded, monitored, accounted for. In this area, knowledge of project management and skills in managing one's own work and planning tasks for students are very useful.

The second area is the work at the interface of communication between other units of the university, entities outside the university and cooperation with students. In this area, a very wide group: foreign students - incoming, outgoing, collaborative staff, various types of services that monitor migratory movements in each country. A professional employee knows the answer to the questions asked and knows how to convey the necessary information. Accessibility and efficiency in presenting information are key strengths. Most importantly, patience, courtesy and a little curiosity will allow you to deal with any situation. If you are not sure what to do, just ask the team members.

TIP: Time Management

Training on time management and organisation is key! You have to learn how to organise your day, how to distribute tasks. Look for special training in this field!

Good balance between work and family, between the time for the others and the time to for "yourself" is crucial to your balance - good results at work also result from this balance.

TIP: Suggestions of training for staff members

The following list is a suggestion of trainings for these staff members:

- English language training;
- Training on a language that is widely spoken by the foreign students;
- How to act on a multicultural environment;
- Diversity and inclusion courses;
- Training course on managing and leading a multicultural workplace;
- Marketing and Advertisement;
- Social Media;
- Time Management;
- Email Management;

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

The new technologies can help mobility staff's everyday life to be easier and more effective. For example, a priority ticket machine would help foreign students know when they can visit the mobility staff's office and the mobility staff would also be better prepared to help foreign students with their problems.

A good management platform is key.

However, the best way to streamline communication with students is through social media, in particular, WhatsApp - they allow you to always be connected, in many cases (Facebook for example) they allow sharing and communication within groups.

2.2.1 – Daily Work management

Remember that patience, courtesy and a bit of curiosity go a long way. And, if you are unsure of any differences that might exist, simply ask team members. Again, this may best be done in a one-on-one setting so that no one feels "put on the spot" or self-conscious, perhaps even embarrassed, about discussing their own needs or differences. In any job position or department, it is mandatory to be able to manage the daily work properly, however, when working with foreign students, this is indispensable for various reasons.

First of all, these departments work with deadlines for applications or any other legal or bureaucratic documentation they deal with. Secondly, since they are dealing with students who for the most part are not acquainted with the procedures they should be able to guide them. Last but not least, since it is mandatory for them to constantly report on the work done, management skills are very important.

REMEMBER:

- Make sure that you maintain a balance between working time and rest time.
- Organize your calendar - get ready for the week! Plan the most important events every month;
- Prepare the year based on key dates and reserve the necessary time for activities

THINKING ABOUT STUDENTS:

Remember that some of them may feel homesick and need some additional support. Being away from the loved ones (family, friends or partners), the traditions might be difficult while being in a different country and culture, and sometimes even a new language. Be patient and try to understand what is going on and how you can help.

Prepare the list of the extra curriculum activities, such as event at the university or in the city or share this information in the Internet. You have to know what to offer to your students.

2.2.2 – Managing Daily Life

Employees working in international relations offices need to have problem solving skills at the top level! You never know what can happen! Studying abroad can cause a lot of problems, especially for people coming from different cultures and having less understanding of the culture of the host organisation. Balance is necessary, especially because it translates in everything one does. If your institution ensures that the balance between professional and personal life exists, overall results will be better. Productivity will increase and staff will be more prone to help others.

REMEMBER:

Time management has been a very important skill since the dawn of times. Many employees need to learn time management skills in order to effectively balance their studies, work, social life, and various day-to-day activities. Time management is important in the successful completion of complicated tasks, relieving stress, and spending time more efficiently. In today's world, managing work life balance can be tough if we do not know what we are doing. Work is such a large part of our life that it may seem easier to forget about the other areas such as recreation, spirituality and family, just to name a few.

An analysis of the responsibilities of staff involved in international cooperation, or in recruiting foreign students at ISAAC project partner institutes, shows a certain set of tasks common to different types of positions and departments:

- Dealing with inquiries from students, their parents, sponsors;
- Dealing with communications from lecturers, so-called "guest lecturers";
- Handling inquiries from university staff regarding international students;
- Processing and analysing documentation from prospective students and students as part of academic exchanges;
- Organizing "orientation days" for new international students;
- Preparing information for new students (pre-arrival information and advice);
- Organizing integration events for international students;
- Assisting with visa inquiries, such as extensions or deadlines;
- Managing a "student drop-in" center for international students;
- Supporting international students throughout their study or exchange period;
- Coordinating exchange programs with countries around the world, communicating with international cooperation staff in Europe or around the world;
- Promoting the university - through trips and receiving guests at the institution;
- Participation in international exhibitions and meetings;

- Communication with foreign branches of the university (depending on the university);
- Developing promotional materials for use in other countries;
- Participation in communications/marketing departments - providing information on planned, ongoing events;
- Developing newsletters on the work of the unit;
- Preparation of reports, analyses, statistics used in cooperation with other departments.

Employees working in offices related to international cooperation should have top-level problem-solving skills. One never knows what can happen when working with people, especially those coming from different parts of the world. Studying abroad can cause many problems, especially for people coming from different cultures and with less understanding of the culture of the host organization or the local language in the new country.

2.3- COMMUNICATION

Cross-cultural communication is the process of recognizing both differences and similarities among cultural groups in order to effectively engage within a given context. In other words, cross-cultural communication refers to the ways in which people from different cultural backgrounds adjust to improve communication with one another. In today's rapidly changing professional world, it is critical to gain an understanding of how cultural elements influence communication between individuals and groups in the workplace. Developing strong cross-cultural communication skills is the first step in creating a successful work environment that brings out the best in all of an organization's team members. When you communicate cross-culturally, make particular efforts to keep your communication clear, simple and unambiguous. And (sadly) avoid humour until you know that the person you are communicating with "gets it" and is not offended by it.

TIP: Good Communication

Learn about the different cultures and how to communicate with them. Knowing the main features of different cultures, customs and norms will help you to adjust your behaviour and communication.

2.3.1 – Within the Institution

Effective internal communication is key for any institution. If within institutions, there is not a good established communication line there could be many miss conceptions that may lead to bad results. Institutions, departments and staff should be able to clearly get their point across and should be able to easily contact any colleague, when needed. Prepare your own email group, contact group for any emergency situation to inform everybody what is going on.

TIP: Good Communication

While it is good to maintain constant communication with all university departments, with some of them it is crucial. Especially the General Secretary's Office, the Board, the different Dean's Offices and Student Orientation.

The person in charge of incoming students should be the person in charge of communicating with the rest of the university services and channelling the doubts and demands of the newly arrived students. A good relationship between the directors of the different departments of the university is also crucial, for which interdepartmental dialogue spaces within the institution are essential.

2.3.2 – With the Students

As mentioned above, communication skills are necessary to any work environment, especially in an environment where it may be harder to get messages across due to different national languages. Communication with students it is not an easy work! Especially if they speak in a language you do not know and English is the only solution. Remember to speak slowly, get some extra time to rephrase what you would like to communicate. Confirm the final conclusions. This is a smart habit to get into regardless of who you are communicating with. When you have completed an exchange—whether written or oral—take a brief moment to confirm your understanding of what was discussed. This can be as simple as saying, “To summarize, you’re going to complete the slides for the presentation and I will put the finishing touches on the talking points. We’ll both have these pieces completed by Monday so we have time to rehearse and refine ahead of the meeting.”

REMEMBER!

Getting to know who the students are and what countries they come from can help ensure integration, shaping a respectful and accepting environment. Understanding the interests of students will be crucial in ensuring that the teaching process is of high quality. It is important to use different types of mechanisms to support the acquisition of information - starting with surveys, interviews, and faculty involvement.

It is also important to take time to acclimatize, get acquainted with the university and clarify one's expectations. Genuine answers can only be obtained when the student feels comfortable and understands that his or her opinion will not be geared towards criticism.

TIP: When communicating with students, it is important that

- The message is clear;
- The students understood your message;
- Your message is not offensive to other cultures;
- That you understand their message.

GOOD PRACTICES:

As part of the summary of the results of the ISAAC project in Poland, the project staff at WSEI Lublin Academy developed the gameplay of an intercultural game based on KAHOOT applications.

The development of questions for the game involved student volunteers representing countries from around the world, such as the Philippines, India, Ukraine, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Ghana, and Poland. Integration, cooperation, expansion of knowledge about different countries, their cultures, geography, etc. took place from the moment working groups participating in the project were established. For both university staff and students, it was an opportunity to expand their knowledge of the students' countries of origin, and for students to experience cooperation and co-organization of the event.

2.3.3 – With Partners

An academic exchange cannot be understood if it is not based on the relationship between two or more educational institutions. This is why the relationship between partners is of vital importance. Expanding the university partners network in terms of academic exchanges not only involves opening new channels of inter-student mobility, but also maintaining a healthy relationship and fluid communication with new institutions.

REMEMBER:

An important way to communicate is non-verbally.

A SMILE solves many problems; the welcoming person's availability is decisive at all times.

When communicating with partners, you should take into account that they may have a different work methodology. Also, many times, partners are from different countries, which means the culture will differ from yours. There are number of organisations supporting each university in their daily works. Starting from the law enforcement services, students' organisations, volunteer organisations, NGOs, etc. Try to get to know them all and know the contact persons.

TIP:

Search the list of organizations that play an important role in your country and share it with the students.

Make sure you know the rules of the organization you work for and the people in other departments, and invest some time getting to know them to make sure you know what they are responsible for. Don't shy away from team-building meetings or other opportunities to talk to employees with whom you don't interact on a daily basis.

REMEMBER:

Remember that you work in a team! Even if you sit alone in a nice office, your workplace is "everywhere". To get things done efficiently for students, you need cooperation within the organization and communication with other units.

Make sure that you use an established mailing group and share important information with both your superiors and the team you work for. It is also a good idea to develop a list of emergency/additional contacts who should receive information according to an established protocol.

Staff working with foreign students are constantly dealing with different situations, people, cultures, expectations, emergency situations about which there is no obvious solution. In a "crisis" situation, good communication within the organization is an asset and the possibility of efficient intervention. In addition, such an organization of work - is also a support for each individual employee, who in the face of a new difficult situation is not left alone with the problem.

An important tool in day-to-day work is up-to-date contact information of units inside the organization. Remember to have at hand the contact details of your colleagues, information on what they do and how to find their office. Equally important and necessary is information about the university, the city, student services in the form of printed materials, information on the bulletin board or published on the website.

REMEMBER:

Remember that some students may feel homesick and need extra support. Separation from loved ones: family, friends, partner, partner, being away from traditions, native habits, can cause all sorts of problems with finding their way in a new place. At the same time, lack of knowledge or understanding of the culture of a new country can further intensify the feeling of separation or loneliness. Try to remain patient and show understanding. The more information you get from the student, the easier it will be to assess how to help the situation.

Prepare a list of extracurricular activities, such as events at the university or in the city, or make this information available on the Internet. Try to arrange a meeting with older students, or students from the same country.

Recruitment of students from other countries, organization of the process of academic exchange, is based on international contacts and cooperation with employees of other institutions. The scope of cooperation, the size of the partner network is an excellent picture of what stage of development a university is at and how advanced the process of internationalization is undergoing. Relationships between partner entities are of key importance in building mutual institutional capacity. Expanding the university's partner network, involves not only opening new channels of mobility between students, but also maintaining good relations and smooth communication with new institutions, benefiting from new experiences or cooperation strategies. When communicating with partners, it is important to take into account that their way of working, rules of communication within the university may differ from those adopted at your university. The attentiveness, observation and sensitivity to diversity that guide your work with foreign students should also apply in cooperation with institutions. Communication in the international area is the most difficult part of communication outside the organization.

TIP:

While it is good to maintain constant communication with all university departments, it is with some of them is crucial. In particular, with the Office of the Registrar General, Council, the various deans' offices and Student Orientation.

The person responsible for incoming students should be the person responsible for communicating with the rest of the university's services and clarification of the concerns and requirements of newly arriving students. Good relations between the heads of the various departments of the university are also crucial, for which spaces for interdepartmental dialogue within the institution are essential.

GOOD PRACTICES:

Face-to-face meetings play an important role in building relationships. Many European universities organize annual "Staff Weeks" events, bringing together colleagues from partner universities. Such meetings provide an opportunity to get to know each other, better understand the functioning of the partner organization and thus facilitate daily work through emails and online conversations.

Communication outside the organization is also communication at the national level. Each university works with a list of entities such as law enforcement, health services, student organizations, NGOs, organizations/institutions supporting foreigners, subcontractors, service providers. It is a good idea to have your own list of contacts, information on who is the decision maker within the institution and what method of contact they prefer.

TIP:

Prepare your own list of organizations that might be useful to students at your university. Familiarize yourself with their offerings, websites, and think about how these resources can be used.

2.4- CRISES MANAGEMENT

Sooner or later, there will be a crisis to manage! It may be a conflict between students, between students and teachers, between colleagues, between institutions. It could be a problem with a grant, with a document, a car accident, or an earthquake. It is just a matter of time. When it comes to a crisis, you have to be prepared to manage it, according to its dimension and to the effects it will have on your students, their families, your campus, your city, your country.

CHECKLIST:

In order to deal with a crisis and be able to manage it, staff should be:

- Ready to communicate clearly, concisely, and in a timely manner during times of crisis;
- Be able to remain calm and deliver pertinent information in a timely manner;
- Be able to adapt to different situations in the event of a crisis and approach problems in a different way;
- Be able to manage relations and conflicts;
- Take into account that each student's experience and culture of origin conditions the perception of the "dimensions" of the crisis;
- Assess the legal effects of the situation on the nationalities involved (the dimensions of the crises are different and so are their effects);
- To immediately open a direct communication channel for students, families and partners (where size justifies);
- Be creative.

2.4.1 – Communication

Communication is key in crisis management. During a crisis, it is always preferable to communicate too much rather than too little, as long as the communication is clear, concise and assertive.

TIP: THINK ABOUT YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

- Immediately open a direct communication channel for students, families and partners (where size justifies);
- Identify one or two people to communicate outwards;
- Ensure immediate responses;
- Ensure that information, directives, recommendations are understandable and appropriate to the different cultures involved;
- Clarify on immediate effects; communicate in line with official communications/national authorities (where appropriate).

2.4.2 – Relations (National / International Authorities)

When a crisis strikes, managing as many relations as possible is mandatory. Strategic authorities should be clearly identified. Information regarding to whom should people go to in the most varied sectors should be made available, as well as the contact information. National authorities are partners - also in times of crisis - working together is not only decisive in managing the process, but also decisive in bringing it to an end.

TIP:

For students, families and academic partners – your link with the National Authorities is a source of confidence.

STORY:

The most difficult moment of my career in international relations happened when one early morning I received a call from the Portuguese Embassy in Budapest. One of my mobile students, after a night of partying, had jumped from the Elizabeth Bridge into the Danube River. He was missing. In the wallet he had left on the bridge with his clothes, there was the emergency phone number -mine.

What to do? Who to call first? Get on the plane and go? Contact the ERASMUS agency? The Ministry of Foreign Affairs? His/her parents? The parents! What to say? How to say it?

- Conclusion: working in international area requires a lot of extra skills, understanding as well as predicting. Those people have to have great understanding of various unexpected events and situations and know how to deal with it effectively.

CHAPTER 3

STRATEGIC

PARTNERSHIPS

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3. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

INTRODUCTION

The "International Relations Office" of a Higher Education Institution can only fulfil its mission and achieve its objectives when in permanent relationship with all the stakeholders in Internationalisation: within the Institution (Board; Rector; Students Associations; Departments, from Security to Financial) within the City (From the City Council to Banks, and other existing HEIs, Health Services, Police, accommodation providers or even sports entities) and within the Country (Agencies, Ministries). Internationalisation is transversal to all areas - a hosted or sent student is in themselves the sum and summary of the openness and the relationship that the IRO Service builds every day.

The International Relations Office should not be limited only to interacting with students who are going to or are doing an exchange or with other university institutions around the world. Neither the greater success of the International Relations Office will also depend to a greater extent on the relationship it has with institutions that are outside the educational process but are, in one way or another, affected by it. This section presents a guide to help direct these relationships. Host universities should provide all the useful information about the local health care system, as well as emergency numbers in order for the foreign students to be prepared in case of emergency. Public safety entities play an important role in societies and also with international students they can play a decisive role in their integration and daily life.

There can be a lot of paperwork involved in studying abroad, but one of the top things on your to-do list should be opening a bank account in your study abroad destination country. Managing your finances with a foreign bank account while in the foreign country can be inconvenient and can add up over time, as many banks charge foreign transactions and automated teller machine (ATM) fees. There are plenty of reasons why you will want a local bank account as an international student: save money on cash conversions, build a local credit history, benefit from foreign exchange services, security, etc. Keeping a close relationship with the National Erasmus + Agency, other International Mobility Programs Agencies, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Health or travel agencies will help you guide your work when it comes to hosting international students.

3.1- CAMPUS

It is important that all departments are in sync in order to better perform. It is also very beneficial that the institution's departments have a close relationship with the student body. When it comes to working with foreign students, the departments presented in this section are worth considering. Collaborations in this sense can promote a better decision-making process and implementation.

GOOD PRACTICES:

University of Catania: There are Erasmus coordinators and administrative units (IDU International Didactic Units) at each department, nominated by the directors. The coordinators provide political and strategic orientation in order to implement the internationalization strategy at department level (e. g. cooperation and agreements, policy and monitoring, selection criteria for students and staff mobility) and also provide support to students/staff mobility (e. g. contacts with academic supervisors, coordination of welcome services).

CHECKLIST:

- Other departments, due to their more specific purposes, may be more appropriate for exchange students to solve certain problems;
- Maintaining a good relationship with the other departments will ensure that the problems of international students can be accommodated and solved more efficiently by the University;
- The International Relations Office can act as an intermediary between the student and the relevant department.

GOOD PRACTICES:

Humboldt University in Berlin has organized a group of internationalization coordinators at the university level. A representative group was formed, bringing together staff from faculty Erasmus offices and chief coordinators of academic exchanges, departments responsible for recruiting foreign students, and units responsible for key internationalization decisions. The meetings focused on identifying and solving the main problems in the internationalization area and sharing best practices in their meetings. In addition, an analysis of the current state of internationalization and strategic goals for future activities were developed.

STORY:

Lusophone University: Each unit has mobility coordinators appointed by the authorities at the faculty level. The cooperation between the Office of International Cooperation and the mobility coordinators is very close: they receive regular information about mobility opportunities, deadlines, required documents, any changes in this regard, etc.; regular meetings are held (at least, twice a year); they are encouraged to ask questions, give comments, make individual appointments, if in doubt, fill out evaluation surveys after each coordinators' meeting. Consultations are held, on various occasions, such as when new procedures are proposed or when a new cooperation agreement is to be signed.

3.1.1 – Board

The internationalization strategy of the institution is crucial for the future of the institution, its positioning among its national and international peers, but also for the establishment of work plans for the services, the determination of the allocation of human and technical resources, the allocation of spaces and conditions for carrying out activities, as well as the training of employees. The Services/Board relationship is, therefore, essential for the achievement of the institutional objectives in this matter and should be regular, not only in the preparation and closing of academic years, but on a weekly basis. Incoming students may also face a wide variety of administrative and logistic issues, mostly upon arrival. Knowledge of the administrative issues concerning foreign students is crucial.

University directors develop and coordinate the academic and student programmes at universities and colleges. Their responsibilities and duties vary, but might involve curriculum choices, financial aid, student recruitment, admissions, scholarships and student's affairs. The cooperation role with the Board is even more decisive when we talk about international students attending a full programme. This concerns not only the specific needs of these students, but also the preparation of the educational offer - in particular, with regard to the language in which the programmes are taught, as well as the recruitment of these students, which requires specific investment, continuous communication and the allocation of additional financial resources.

GOOD PRACTICES:

The organization of meetings or working groups, bringing together staff at various levels, dealing with various activities related to the internationalization process of the university supports the appropriate exchange of information and has a positive impact on decision-making processes.

An important element of cooperation between university management and employees is knowing the organization's Development Strategy, how employees identify with its goals. Presenting the goals of the organization and the results achieved to all employees during meetings allows building a consistent information strategy at the level of the institution's management. The same principle applies to information about the university's educational offerings, planned or implemented changes, as well as welcoming new employees within the various teams. Informational activities provided by people at the management level give a sense of cooperation, responsibility of all employees for the goals set and the quality of the tasks carried out.

Focusing on the level of quality of work, the quality of programs offered, especially the offer for foreign students increases the recognition of the university at the international level and the acquisition of highly qualified young staff for the university and the region.

Today, more people than ever are living in a country other than the one in which they were born. According to the IOM World Migration Report 2020, as of June 2019, the number of international migrants was estimated at nearly 272 million worldwide, 51 million more than in 2010. Nearly two-thirds were labour migrants. Europe and Asia led the way, receiving some 87 million and 86 million international migrants respectively, accounting for 61% of global migration. Long-term data show that international migration is not uniform around the world, but is shaped by economic, geographic, demographic and other factors. Taking into account the above factors, building a strong position of the university is a long-term strategy to develop international cooperation, market position and attract new students.

The monitoring of ongoing activities, and the involvement of staff at the strategic level has a decisive impact on important elements of the university's operation in terms of promoting equal access to services, integrating the entire academic community, introducing improvements in processes and procedures within the university, and supporting the improvement of the competence of academic staff in areas related to internationalization.

3.1.2 – Rectory

Academic pathways are the core of the activity. The programmes offered, the classes, the teachers assigned to international students in the institution are crucial to success. It all starts there at a decision making level whether the aim of the University is set into attracting and retaining international students which can contribute with substantial financial incomes. Thus, it may help in expanding the skilled workforce in the country if we consider option that a number of international students may stay to live and work in country where they studied first.

Therefore, the Rectory should always develop a strategy to attract a bigger number of foreign students. Promotion of attractive programmes should be the first incentive for successfully attracting international students but good quality of higher education programmes is crucial for successfully attracting and expanding the skilled workforce. We have to be aware of current migration policies, which may have positive effects on economic growth through higher earnings. The demand for highly qualified workers requires that economies attract skilled migrants, especially for countries with an aging working-age population. Having in mind all the above, the next step is to suggest opportunities for education and after graduation offer for work places where their net income will be maximized at home country as well and abroad. Theoretically, individuals first choose where to live and work, and then decide whether and where to pursue their education.

The involvement of the Rector's Office in the mobility activities is decisive to define and adjust them:

- equality of access
- integration
- fine-tuning of processes and procedures
- training of teaching staff to welcome these students

Tuition fees may have significant effects on the decisions made by international students. They should be sufficient to cover key elements of their programmes and academic life, as well as core services related to students' wellbeing and experience on campus. Therefore, equality of access for international students as well as their integration should be a priority for the Rectory. Well-developed fine-tuned processes and procedures for the same opportunities to enter the University are crucial as well. Training teaching staff to welcome students in order to help them integrate and successfully finish their education is also very important.

3.1.3 – Students clubs

The integration of international students will always be composed of two fundamental parts: the institutional welcome (institution's body and services in articulation with internal and external partners), which we have already referred to, and the welcome and integration by peers. In the second case, the students associations and the different students clubs within the Campus play a decisive role with regard to:

- proximity in language and interests;
- proximity in the vision of the world;
- proximity in difficulties and in sharing solutions;
- occupation of free time;
- development of parallel activities;
- integration in campus and city life;
- establishment of informal networks;
- development of transversal social skills.

Working together with student's associations and students clubs is very important for the services dedicated to foreign students, full programme students and mobility students. First of all, to ensure that the activities necessary for the effective integration of international students are promoted, that the students involved meet the necessary conditions to receive, guide and accompany international colleagues but also to guarantee the safety and rules of

the activities to be promoted. It is important to take special note that students involved in a full study programme need long-term activities and projects. Their involvement in existing clubs and associations is the first step towards community involvement.

IMPORTANT:

The European Students Network is the strongest student organization operating throughout Europe, in Poland for 20 years. ESN consists of about 15,000 members with more than 500 sections established at universities in 40 countries, including more than thirty sections in Poland. The main goals of the organization are to support international student exchange programs, especially the Erasmus + program, and to take care of incoming students on various exchanges. Check out how ESN works in your city and how you can invite ESN to cooperate with you!

GOOD PRACTICES:

Many universities, such as the University of Granada, combine the work of individual university units with the activities of student interest groups. For example, students maintain a separate section of the university's website where a calendar of cultural, sporting, artistic and integration events is published. As a result, students are directly involved in planning and promoting the activities they implement.

REMEMBER:

It is important to provide courses in international languages in order to make the curriculum more attractive to foreign students. This will also help domestic students to improve their foreign language skills.

STORY:

One of my main supporting roles in the International Relations Office during 2021 was to integrate international students with the various student initiatives present on campus. This was also the first year that exchange students began to arrive after the outbreak of the pandemic. The collaboration became very effective especially with the Alpha Sigma Nu honour society and with the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) groups, which organized various activities, dynamics and events in which both national and foreign students were present. The collaboration greatly facilitated the integration and work carried out by the Office.

3.1.4 – Administrative staff

The University is a living and dynamic organism, everyone needs everyone, international students are students of the institution and for that reason they use all the services and benefit from all the resources. Articulating the students' arrival with the other services is essential for the good functioning of all the services, but also to make international students feel at home.

CHECKLIST:

We can find administrative staff in services such as:

- Library;
- Academic Services;
- Security Services;
- Laboratory Management;
- Mail Service;
- Equipment Management;
- Space Management;
- Cafeteria and food services.

At the beginning of each semester, sending an updated directory is crucial to ensure the success of all.

GOOD PRACTICES:

When organizing events for foreign students, WSEI Lublin Academy engages employees from various departments: university authorities, foreign student recruitment department, international cooperation department, promotion department, etc. This allows the employees to share their experiences and use their "everyday" knowledge in the implementation of tasks. For students, it is an opportunity to get to know the university's staff, which facilitates later communication and cooperation with students.

3.2- CITY

A very important part of their exchange will depend directly on their daily activities in the city they are in, from the most basic things like shopping to visiting tourist attractions. This means that institutions should also partner with key services in the city where they established. These partnerships will allow institutions to provide a better experience to their foreign students who most certainly will have to use the services presented in this section. Having international students, in long term perspective create the possibility of having international graduates and future employees in the city, region. Number of the metropolies seek for young researchers, young people with passions and innovative ideas to strenghten the local economy. Good hospitality of the city gives more perspectives for newcomers to stay in as graduate.

COOPERATION:

Lublin City Hall has been organizing a competition under the banner of "Academic Lublin" for 2 years. The most interesting initiatives integrating students with the local community, promoting the city, culture, the local job market receive funds for the implementation of such initiatives.

REACHING THE COMMON GOAL:

Wsei University together with foreing students – volunteers and with the Lublin City Hall prepared video about the labour market in Lublin. This initiative integrated WSEI staff, students, employers, administration, City hall and number of other people. It was the chance to learn new things for everybody as well as have fun and integration.



LINK to the video:



Welcome to Lublin. Welcome to WSEI.



Lubelska Akade...
627 subskrybentów

Subskrybuj

18



Udostępnij



3.2.1 – City Council

Nowadays, all cities with universities are aware of the reality of "welcoming international students". They are an important driver of the cities' economies. City Council, the Municipality plays a crucial role in fostering academic cooperation at local and sometimes at regional level. Universities are an important element that determine the development of the city. Today, ambitious academic cities expand the traditional catalogue of the educational offer with international education measures and scale research worldwide. Leading academic centres in the world gain international students and participants join the global publication circulation. The symbiosis of the university with the city and its inhabitants is one of the foundations of the development of modern dream cities, as well as one of the three missions of modern universities.

REMEMBER:

Working with people from other countries, you are an "ambassador" for both the university and the city. It's a good idea to stay informed about concerts, exhibitions, job fairs, and places worth visiting both in the city and the immediate region.

However, international students are at the same time "people who come from abroad", with their own needs and particularities. These include issues like accommodation, safety and mobility. But also the most basic issues, such as language or religion. A University, aware of the diversity that it welcomes, should articulate the preparation of its academic year in articulation with the City Council. Adequate services provided by the City Council are determinant for the success of international students, whether they are mobility or full programme students.

TIP:

The University should ensure that foreign students know where the City Council building is located and how and when to contact it. Depending on the city, foreign students may be provided with a student card for public transportation. They can also be supported with the visa or equivalent, in case they need it, so that students can better interact with the public administration.

International students are at the same time "people who come from abroad," sometimes from very distant countries, not always familiar with the reality of the country they are coming to. They have their own needs, expectations, such as language or religion, accommodation, security. For university candidates, the choice of the city in which they will study is as important as the choice of university. Foreign students from Poland, Spain, Portugal, Greece who took part in the survey confirmed that opinion on the destination country, city, safety, prospects for further professional development are factors taken into account when choosing their future place of study.

GOOD PRACTICES:

One of our first activities to support newly arriving students is to help them obtain a public transportation card in cooperation with the City Hall. Our task is to explain the procedures step by step and provide the student with the appropriate package of information. Students go to the City Hall with completed documents and know how to go through further procedures and get a public transportation card. With our help, the employees at the office have an easier task and our students get special discounts. Great transportation service, special prices for students. (Loyola Andalusia University).

TIP:

Remember to have prepared tele-address data of the City Hall and other public entities necessary from the perspective of a foreigner: where to make a PESEL, residence card, where to apply for a visa, temporary residence permit, how to deal with registration. Also important is information on how to behave in these places and how to prepare for a visit.

The idea of the infographics/edugraphics prepared within ISAAC project was very appreciated by WSEI University students. The group of students, members of the Student's Council organised extra meetings to discuss the further development of the designs and illustration of the topics, which are important from their perspective. Among other areas – cooperation with city hall, employment services, health care units – so all organisations around the university were considered as the most important ones. The new materials which was developed together is uploaded and will be updated on ISAAC's website under edugraphics section: <https://isaac.wsei.eu/en/files-to-download/>

GOOD PRACTICES:

The StudyInLisbon project (<https://studyinlisbon.pt/en/study/>) is a good example of the synergies that can arise from the cooperation of the city's universities. In this case, the City Council, the universities of Lisbon, the ERASMUS+ Agency and a number of ERASMUS associations are working together to promote the full admission of not only Erasmus+ students, but all foreign students who come to the city each year. At the same time, the project is an important communication tool that can be used by all universities to facilitate the admission and tracking of students. Accommodation, visas, health, culture, scholarships.... all in one place, with the participation of many people, so that everyone can feel at home in Lisbon.

Job centres, career placement services are, in addition to City Hall, another key partner for any higher education institution. Information on employment opportunities, arranging meetings with employers enable the retention of highly skilled workers and strengthen the local economy.

STUDENT'S STORY

One of the first things we help foreign students to do when they come to our office is to apply for a public transportation card through the City Council. For this, we make the process easier by guiding them through each step, which includes providing information about how to get to the City Council building, how to apply for the card and how to get the card.

The importance of small things....

A great transport service, special prices for students. But there are no English language forms for foreign students to make their requests and get their benefits.

3.2.2 – Universities and HEIs

Universities sharing the same territory are in many cases competitors. However, when it comes to international students, it is proven that working together benefits all institutions - from recruitment to full integration. A rational sharing of resources and efforts is beneficial for all HEIs involved in this process, namely:

- ❑ preparation and participation in international fairs and exhibitions;
- ❑ organisation of joint hosting activities;
- ❑ pressure on the authorities to implement new policies relevant to this activity;
- ❑ working together with national authorities, Government, Agencies and Education and Higher Education Departments;
- ❑ organisation of joint information sessions;
- ❑ joint presentation of needs to local and national authorities;
- ❑ sharing of good practices;
- ❑ sharing accommodation, among others.

3.2.3 – Health Services

It is essential to provide a list of health support institutions located near the University. Where possible, protocols should be established with these institutions to promote easy access for international students. Foreign students should be informed on how to access health services, whether they are public or private, if they need a European Health Insurance Card, or, if they are private, which ones they can go to in order to be covered by insurance. The European Health Insurance Card is the personal and non-transferable document that certifies the right to receive the health benefits that are necessary from a medical point of view during the temporary stay for reasons of work, studies and tourism in the territory of the European Union, the European Economic Area and Switzerland, taking into account the nature of the benefits and the duration of the stay, in accordance with the legislation of the host country.

IMPORTANT:

The European Health Insurance Card is a personal and non-transferable document certifying the right to receive medically necessary health services from a medical point of view during a temporary stay due to work, study and tourism on the territory of the European Union, the European Economic Area and Switzerland, taking into account the nature of the benefits and the duration of the stay, in accordance the legislation of the host country.

International officers should provide ongoing guidance, news, and statuses relating to the incident or emergency; and suggest protocols for students to follow in a range of situations. At the same time, it is necessary for the university to communicate with its foreign students during the application process, whether for mobility or for a full programme, informing them about what kind of conditions it offers to students with special needs. Ramps, escorts, accommodation and adequate transport, classrooms equipped for hearing or sight problems, etc. More than just communicating, it is important that Universities contemplate these supports, which are essential to inclusion and, therefore, decisive in welcoming and integrating students.

TIP - IMPORTANT:

Language plays a crucial role in these cases, therefore, ensuring that the health entities can guarantee the required communication is determinant.

3.2.4 – Banks

Opening a bank account in a foreign country is not always a straightforward process. A partnership with a Bank can make the difference in a student's life and make the integration process easier. Understanding the required documentation, how it should be prepared and presented, eliminating unnecessary bureaucracy for these students and informing students in detail is a good practice. At the same time, a list of available banking institutions in the country should be provided.

TIP: Partnership with banking entities

Some universities have partnerships with certain banking entities and even have offices on campus or offer advantageous and accessible conditions for students when opening a bank account. If this is the case, foreign students should be informed upon arrival.

Most countries require an initial deposit, the student's passport and proof of residence to open a bank account. Some countries may also require a certified copy of the birth certificate or a second form of identification. In some cases, there is a need to provide a statement justifying the reason for opening the account. Universities should help with the required documentation for students. The main problem is for non-residents to open a bank account. For example, some existing laws in a particular country may forbid bank accounts for non-residents. That is why partnerships with certain banking entities or/and even offices on campus may be of great assistance to international students

REMEMBER:

Nowadays, foreign students can find many online banking solutions without additional exchange or maintenance costs. These are secure, internationally recognized solutions that allow students to keep their home country accounts connected to these systems. There is no need for country-specific documentation and this can be handled in advance.

3.2.5 – Security Authorities

Security authorities play a role in social organisation, namely with regard to public space. It is important that international students are aware of the basic rules of life in the public space in their host country. The promotion of sessions between international students and these professionals is essential for the presentation of:

- legal situations;
- safety situations (at home, on the street, on public transport);
- procedures to be adopted in case of need.

It is important to make sure that students are aware of the basic information (e.g. in a form of brochure given to each newcomer) such as: emergency numbers, documents they have to have with them, how they should behave in specific situation or what kind of emergency policies the university has to follow.

GOOD PRACTICES:

Some of the Universities provide a range of safety and security services to ensure students are safe while studying on campus. For example: lists of emergency contacts (Police, Ambulances or Fire Stations), security on campus, online resources with safety details.

3.3- COUNTRY

Your country, which you know so well, is a foreign country to the international students you host. Everything is new to them! Everything is different. For some, it will only be their host country for a short period of time, for others, it will be their home for several years. It is important to provide the students you host with as much information about your country as possible: history, culture, institutions, legal aspects that involve these students.

It is important to help with information about simple things: schedules, holidays, transportation, costs, food, health centres, safety. This work that seems simple is huge and can only be done well in articulation with all internal and external partners. Keeping a close relationship with the National Erasmus + Agency, other International Mobility Programme Agencies, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Health or Travel agencies will help you guide your work when it comes to hosting international students.

TIP:

A Welcome Guide is an important tool in welcoming students. Create one! Here you can put all the information of interest about the country. Developing such material will save you time. Instead of solving students' problems due to ignorance and lack of information, you will be able to effectively guide them through all the paperwork with the help of a "guide". Keep an eye on your students and update the information according to their needs, it's an investment of time that will no doubt pay off in the years to come.

An info-pack for a student - this includes a set of general information about the country. Remember what might be useful for university applicants or students interested in mobility:

- information about holidays, days off;
- information about local, national traditions;
- basic information about the country's history;
- information on where to get legal advice;
- information on transportation within the country;
- culinary guide;
- apps useful for traveling and exploring the country;
- information on shopping (e.g., what times stores are open)
- basic weather information;

Good preparation and professional service for foreign students or visitors as well from other countries requires building professional relationships with all internal and external partners. Cooperation with the Erasmus + National Agency, institutions offering other grant programs, Ministries, labour market institutions, travel agencies will facilitate the exchange of information and thus effective support for students.

TAKE INTO ACCOUNT:

Every country is a challenge for the student when it comes to formal, legal issues, applicable regulations, procedures. These processes directly affect foreign students. Legal issues can be particularly important and anxiety-provoking for students. It is worth investing time and resources in preparing materials to support the communication of these requirements so that they are clear to all study/mobility applicants.

3.3.1 – National Agencies, institutions responsible for international exchanges

A good relationship with the Programme Agencies at the national level is crucial for the successful implementation of the Mobility Programmes in the University Campus and there are several reasons for this:

- ❑ permanent updating on the programme's rules and procedures;
- ❑ programme implementation management;
- ❑ sharing of challenges and constraints to the implementation of the programmes;
- ❑ sharing of good practices;
- ❑ proximity in crisis management;
- ❑ proximity and openness in the difficulties management;

TIP:

Check this link for the contacts of all National Agencies managing the programme in programme countries: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/contacts/national-agencies>

In order to find more information about grant programmes follow the specific university website. You can find there different instruments and initiatives to participate in.

National Agencies are responsible for cooperation and communication with international relations offices, assisting them with the implementation of Erasmus+ programmes. They should also provide all the useful information on Erasmus+, as well as maintain contact with local authorities and EU Delegations. National Agencies in different member states are responsible for numerous of initiatives at national level, including operating other financial mechanisms than Erasmus +.

STORY

University of Warsaw: As part of the cooperation between mobility coordinators and the International Relations Office, the several groups are invited for National or local specificities that influenced the testing of this action such events as mobility days, orientation meetings for international students, dissemination events; they receive information on any information sessions or workshops that may expand their knowledge on mobility programmes, e.g. organized by Erasmus+ National Agency, Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange, or International Relations Office.

3.3.2 – Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The relationship between foreign students and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is usually the most intense and necessary at the level of national institutions. It is also the one that usually generates the most problems. Therefore, facilitating the students' contacts with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will greatly enhance and improve their experience. The relationship with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is necessarily formal. However, it is essential and must be established and nurtured on a regular basis since it is fundamental:

- ❑ inbound student visas
- ❑ monitoring outbound students by official representations;
- ❑ crisis management:
- ❑ public health
- ❑ natural disasters
- ❑ conflict situations

REMEMBER:

Each country is a "whole world" in terms of structure, culture, processes, procedures, laws and regulations. International Students are directly affected, in particular, by the laws and regulations inherent to academic processes. More than the culture - which they take for granted - the legal aspects can be a constraint and a reason for disquiet, stress and anxiety.

Staff members are also affected by this reality, both in the process of learning about legal aspects and in the process of accompanying students. Therefore, it is important to invest seriously in preparing materials to support the communication of these requirements so that they are clear to all and, preferably, easily understandable.

GOOD PRACTICES:

In our university we put a lot of attention to make sure that our students traveling abroad get all the information and paperwork they need from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the host university. This is a communication process between institutions, although in most cases, the host universities themselves initiate the process directly.

USEFUL TIPS:

- encourage outbound students to notify the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of their exit (this is crucial in election years);
- let your inbound students know about your Ministry of Foreign Affairs website
- create a list of Health Services in the city;
- create protocols with private entities;
- add the basics about access to health care in the country and in the city to the information for students.

3.3.3 – Ministry of Health

Direct contact with the Ministry of Health is important. Inbound students often need additional support in this area and it is not always simple to guide students through these processes. An official support is always an added value. Foreign students often need a piece of advice in terms of health care. Knowing the basic policies related to getting the insurance or any other health-related issue is crucial to your work. The most important is to know where to find information in English or other languages, where to find the newest regulations and policies to follow.

TIP:

- ❑ prepare a list of health institutions in the city
- ❑ prepare a document with the necessary access procedures
- ❑ provide your students with an emergency contact so that they can be helped in case of need and urgency
- ❑ create your own network of contacts in the area to have support in case of need

GOOD PRACTICES:

A good practice in this regard is to include in the application forms a Medical Statement issued by their doctor in their home country, which students bring with them when they arrive. This Statement can be fundamental in several cases, from simple things like the practicing some sports to more complex situations such as health problems.

3.3.4 – Travel Agencies

Currently in all countries there are associations/institutions dedicated to foreign students, which provide specialised welcoming and integration services. This process was and is an important support for Educational Institutions in the implementation not only of the Mobility Programmes - as they provide support to inbound and outbound students, but also in hosting foreign students for a full programme. Many of these institutions also offer special travel packages. However, where possible, the HEI's should have an agency to work with on a regular basis and provide special conditions to their students. It is an additional security in terms of travel arrangements.

There are many profits coming from the cooperation with the travel agencies. As professionals in this area, they can always support with the tips and recommendations, connections, required documents or insurances. Your foreign students might need this kind of support, so even if you will not need the travel agencies services for your own work purposes, perhaps you will need one to recommend to your students.

TIP:

Search for the top rated travel agencies in your country and share the information with students, if needed.

CHAPTER 4

Dos and Don'ts

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4.1 WORKING WITH STUDENTS

All incoming and outgoing students look for a strong point of reference that can support them in educational and social activities as well as attend to their overall well-being in a new academic environment. As individuals away from home, incoming students will turn to international office staff members for advice, support, and inspiration for gaining maximum benefits from their mobility in terms of academics, culture, and life experiences.

For outgoing students who wish to engage in mobility abroad, it is important to provide all the information they need on the availability of educational programs in different countries and cultural environments, which will help them make an informed choice that will advance their career objectives as well as personal interests. In addition, it is important to help outgoing students through the mobility preparation process, which includes academic aspects such as selecting courses to attend and communicating with educators to ensure the recognition of ECTS points upon return, as well as practical everyday life aspects, such as finding accommodation, being informed of work options for financial support, becoming familiar with health care services in advance, be aware of security aspects, networking with student associations before the mobility, and more.

For incoming students from other countries that aim to attend courses at your university, prepare to help upon arrival as you will be the first line of contact. Students will look to you to help them become integrated into the educational environment by providing practical information on reaching their department of choice, getting in touch with student networks and interest groups for socialization and support purposes, becoming aware of points of interest in your area, finding accommodation and possibly work, becoming familiar with the culture, and more. Be open to the diversity of student cultural backgrounds. Communicate clearly and do not take for granted any information of use, which may not be evident to incoming students as it is for locals. Be tolerant and patient, as students may need additional support to adapt to an unfamiliar environment and encourage your students to be equally open-minded to other cultures. Be aware that students may face language difficulties and try to communicate them in a language that they understand.

In all cases, be ready to address a crisis and support students through it. This may include health concerns, safety, security, or other issues, for which it is a good practice to have established a network of contacts in advance that you can reach to for quick response. It may also include injustice, to which you need to be empathetic, guide, and advise for promoting a safe multicultural environment.

DO'S CHECKLIST:

- Be proud of your students, both inbound and outbound;
- Have a tolerant attitude;
- Be open minded;
- Communicate clearly;
- Promote a safe multicultural environment;
- Accommodate all susceptibilities;
- Sent all available materials to students;
- Organize community and orientation events;
- Call out and stick up for injustice situations you might witness;
- Be proactive;
- Display useful information;
- Build and promote a network of international students;
- Be patient with international students, they may feel a bit lost at times;
- Encourage the students to pursue their interests;
- Monitor and evaluate student experience in order to improve the activity at the International Office;

ADD YOURS:

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DON'TS CHECKLIST:

- Don't make fun of cultural aspects;
- Don't deliver false information;
- Don't use stereotypes or generalizations;
- Don't treat someone differently because of their religion, ethnicity or background;
- Don't impose your own set of values on others;
- Don't be in a hurry when meeting students;
- Never say yes without explaining;
- Never say no without justifying;
- Never say no without seeking a solution;
- Never look at your watch when you are answering someone;
- Try not to communicate in a language that is not accessible to students;
- Don't block or slow down students' administrative processes; on the contrary, make them more dynamic;
- Don't have what should be a private conversation in front of other students;

ADD YOURS:

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4.2 WORKING WITH OTHER UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENTS

Supporting student mobility is a collaborative effort. It is likely that the international students office will be the first university that students will be engaged with. However, after this initial welcoming, students will become part of the larger student body and will be in contact with all university services. This may include the secretariat of their department, the professors in their department, the university library, the university career office, student associations, the university health services, the university sports associations, and more. Most university services will already have some experience in working with international students through past mobility initiatives. However, they likely may not have the experience developed in an international student office in terms of addressing the needs of a multicultural student body, as their exposure with students is not as frequent.

To enrich student experiences in a new academic environment, you as an international student office representative may need to also support other university staff members or offices in the services they provide. You can achieve this formally, through awareness and skill building events that target university staff, or informally through more laid-back activities in which personnel feel comfortable to share ideas and experiences and seek the counsel of co-workers in addressing common students challenges and needs as well as being prepared to effectively mitigate a crisis.

Be proud of your work and execute as well as you can with integrity. Don't give up in difficult situations. Be open-minded, which will help in introducing solutions to difficult challenges. Your competences are unique and complementary to those of colleagues. Together, you constitute a team that foster the multicultural dimension of your organisation. Remember that your work makes mobility experiences positive for participants, who develop lifetime skills, experiences, mindsets, and memories.

TIP:

Be proactive and provide all relevant information, both academic and practical, in advance to both incoming and outgoing students. This may be achieved, for example, through your organizational portal or through email lists.

TIP:

Don't increase the student's load, if there is something you can do better than him or her and it is within your scope, do it.

GOOD PRACTICES TO CONSIDER:

Organize an orientation week for incoming students, in which they have the opportunity to meet professors, staff, other incoming and local students, and mentors. During the week provide all necessary information, such as course availability or restrictions, registering to courses, receiving mentorship, joining clubs and student bodies, becoming aware of local supporting authorities and services, such as police, banks, health care providers, and others, ensuring a balance between academic work, socialization, and cultural experiences, and more. You can also prepare a similar orientation week for outgoing students, providing them with counsel and directions for becoming integrated into their academic environment abroad.

TIP:

Develop and nurture good working relationships with colleagues in all university departments and services. Trust and effect communication can go a long way in addressing challenging situations for the benefit of students.

GOOD PRACTICES TO CONSIDER:

Organize training activities for university staff members in all departments and services. It is better to not perceive that colleagues are aware of all aspects of supporting international students and to not take their familiarity with working in a multicultural environment for granted. Training activities may involve advise and good practice information on how engage international students and making them active members of learning, cultural, and social activities of the academic community. Effective training may not be a one-time activity; effective staff preparation may require recurring events, in which university personnel can reinforce knowledge, share experiences, and support each other for creating a supportive and inclusive environment.

DO'S CHECKLIST:

- Display honesty, integrity, and perseverance;
- Invest in staff training;
- Create a sense of awareness in your workplace;
- Praise your colleagues in all services;
- Build strong and trusting relationships with colleagues;
- Go to as many trainings as you can be innovative;
- Be happy! Appreciate your work in making the world a better place!
- Go on all the trips you can to see the world;

ADD YOURS:

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DON'TS CHECKLIST:

- Never think "I can't do it";
- Never give up;
- Don't miss goals or deadlines;
- Don't copy other faculty or staff members;

ADD YOURS:

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4.3 WORKING WITH EXTERNAL STRATEGIC PARTNERS

Universities are not isolated environments. They are integral part of the wider surrounding community ecosystem. Student mobility experiences are not only related to their life on campuses, but also to all aspects of cultural and everyday life. To make student experiences more positive, it is advisable to develop a professional network of partners in organizations that students may engage with directly or indirectly. For example, students may directly engage with banks, health providers, security authorities, employers, or travel agencies. On the other hand, you as a member of the international student office may need to collaborate with other organisations that are not direct stakeholders in student mobility but indirectly support student wellbeing, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, Erasmus+ National Agencies, and more.

All of the above organizations are strategic partners in mobility. A strategic partner, both local or international, can offer services that your organization cannot, can expand your organizational reach, can enrich shared resources, and can help address shared risks. It is always better to have established a professional network and effective working relationships in advance when addressing a particular student challenge. The communication channels developed can help in empathy, understanding, and introducing solutions on broad aspects. Be proud of your organization and demonstrate a high work ethic that develops the trust and, thus, the willingness of professionals in other organizations to work together for student wellbeing.

Developing professional relationships takes time. Make sure to put to work your professional contacts and relationships inside your university for building a network beyond your organization. You may also organize events and work meetings, in which you reinforce communication, share knowledge, build synergies, and understand each other's perspectives on mobility and its benefits.

TIP:

Do your research before contacting a strategic partner. Understand their motivation, interest, and needs in relation to supporting mobility. Make sure that the strategic collaboration is mutually beneficial. This way, a strategic partner will be more willing work together for creating an inclusive environment for students.

GOOD PRACTICES TO CONSIDER:

Consider creating a memorandum of understanding with each strategic partner, which outlines the shared interests and goals related to mobility and potentially terms of collaboration. In addition to being a good reference point that supports good working relationships, a memorandum of understanding can also promote commitment of a strategic partner as it typically is signed by a person of high responsibility who becomes aware of and supports the shared goals. Make sure to honour the agreement and nurture the relationship.

DO'S CHECKLIST:

- Be proud of your institution;
- Be proud of your work and maintain a high work ethic;
- Be proud of your country;
- Build strong and trusting relationships with strategic partners;
- Be and demonstrate your trustworthiness;
- Always follow-up on agreed tasks;
- Maintain open communication channels and strive to continuously foster working relationships;
- Understand that strategic partners may have complementary views on mobility and try to find common interests;
- Use your organizational contacts for developing a network beyond your university;
- Build synergies on mobility with external parties;
- Honour agreements and nurture relationships;
- Establish clear shared goals;

ADD YOURS:

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DON'TS CHECKLIST:

- Don't neglect tasks;
- Don't break work promises;
- Don't engage in actions that can hurt a long-standing strategic relationship;

ADD YOURS:

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