



TEACHING AWARD PLUS CONCEPT SUBMISSION
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**Supporting Sustainable Development
through
Internationalisation at Home**

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List of Abbreviations

COIL	Collaborative Online International Learning
IaH	Internationalisation at Home
IFSW	International Federation of Social Work
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SWSE	Social Work Student Exchange

Introduction

Over the following 4 pages, I will show how the concept of Internationalisation at Home (IaH) has been integrated into my courses at the FH Joanneum by using Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL). I will demonstrate how this relates to Agenda 2030 and implementing several of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). First, I will briefly outline my general approach to integrating the SDGs into my courses, before moving onto an overview of IaH and its contribution to fulfilling the SDGs. Next, the opportunities of successfully implementing IaH presented through the application of COIL are considered. I will demonstrate how this works in practice by using the concrete example of one of my fourth semester courses. In particular, I will look in more detail at two simple and yet successful examples of COIL which were used in the summer semester 2022. Finally, I will present some feedback from students and a summary of the ways in which IaH is relevant to the SDGs. I would especially like to share this concept because of its universal relevance and the fact that it can easily be adapted to other departments and institutes at the FH JOANNEUM.

Introducing the SDGs in the curriculum

The first step in integrating the SDGs into my lectures and seminars at the FH is to find out what knowledge students already possess. At the beginning of each year, I ask students to complete a short questionnaire. The results make bleak reading since on average over 75% of first semester students have never even heard of Agenda 2030 or the Sustainable Development Goals. Defining the term “sustainable” can also be a challenge. Here the definition provided in the Brundtland report, which says that sustainable development “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987, p16.) is as relevant and useful today as it ever was. Once the concept of sustainability and the goals have been introduced, students are generally amazed that they have not heard of them and unanimous in wanting to support them. Note is also taken of which goals students find are most relevant to their studies and future careers. Overwhelmingly, the so-called ‘social goals’ are named by students. The fact that the SDGs are founded on the three pillars – environmental protection, social progress and economic development – which should all be considered equally is often overlooked. Students are introduced to Elkington’s triple bottom line which clearly demonstrates that all dimensions (also referred to as the 3 Ps: people, planet and prosperity) need to be considered and none negatively affected if something is to be called ‘sustainable’.

In order to illustrate how and why social work and sustainability go hand in hand some time is spent on this topic in initial lectures. Social work is a profession that promotes “social change and development, social cohesion and the empowerment and liberation of people” (IFSW 2014). Its central principles are “social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities” (IFSW 2014). These elements clearly align with promoting several of the SDGs, especially those which include or relate to the social dimension. The principles of social work will, when put into practice, aid in fulfilling numerous goals. As Jayasooria points out:

“The SDG and social work values concur. For instance, the Agenda 2030 uses terms such as human dignity, inclusivity, respect for diversity, equality and non-discrimination, empowerment, reliance, resilience, and self-help and realisation of full potential. Social workers identify with these values for practice.” (Jayasooria 2016, p21)

Once students are aware of the SDGs and once they understand the close connections between social work and the SDGs, they also realise that social work can use the SDGs as a framework to guide their future professional activities.

Internationalisation at Home (IaH)

The internationalisation of higher education, which dates back to the beginning of the 20th century has constantly changed and adapted to the different circumstances and challenges of the time. Many universities developed exchange programmes after the second world war to promote peace and

understanding among nations. The FH Joanneum homepage mission statement asserts “Our university supports cultural diversity, an international outlook (...) we believe diversity is enriching”. One of the main aims of the Bologna Process was to promote international cooperation and encourage student mobility. Such internationalisation and mobility have been very successful and are funded by programmes such as ERASMUS. However, internationalisation and mobility are not unproblematic in some regards. Rumbley (2020, p33) talks about “Internationalization’s Dirty Little (Climate) Secret” and points out that student mobility is highly damaging to the planet – in 2014 global greenhouse gas emissions connected to student mobility were “at a similar level to the greenhouse gas emissions outputs of entire countries, such as Croatia and Tunisia.” This is detrimental to **SDG 13** – Climate action. Another SDG which illuminates some problems with student mobility would be **SDG 10** – Reduced Inequalities – not all students are in a position to be able to undertake an exchange programme – meaning this goal is not being achieved. Of course, the ongoing pandemic we have experienced since 2020 has also restricted the opportunities of student mobility.

Internationalisation at home is a game-changer here. It reduces mobility (positive for **SDG 13**) yet still ensures international and intercultural learning (**SDG 4**). It is also more inclusive and accessible to all students (**SDG 10**). A useful definition of IaH is given by Beelen & Jones (2015), “*IaH is the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments.*” (p. 69) This definition serves well to explain the rationale of the COIL concept presented below.

Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL)

According to the State University of New York COIL¹ is “a teaching and learning methodology which provides innovative cost-effective internationalisation strategies.” COIL fosters interaction between faculty members as well as between students making use of co-taught multicultural online and blended learning environments.

Examples of COIL in Practice

Online teaching became the norm in 2020 and although initially a challenge, not just to teachers but also students, in retrospect this phase has had some positive side effects. In the case at hand, it is important that not just in Austria but worldwide more people are digitally literate and have access to the tools needed to communicate with each other online. My aim was to use these new and ubiquitous means of online communication to connect students across borders. Two forms of COIL are presented below:

Joint Classroom

This is a whole group activity facilitated by the teaching staff from the countries involved. The joint classroom in questions was a collaboration between myself, from the FH Joanneum, and a colleague from the Social Work department at Northumbria University, UK. The class from Northumbria is an international group of students which means that not only Austrian and English but also other nationalities (e.g. American, Indian, Nigerian ...) are represented. All students were asked to prepare a scientific article in advance of the class, related to the field of social work. During the online class, before discussing this article and completing various related exercises together, there was time spent getting to know each other. This informal ‘welcoming’ part led to exchanges about a wide variety of topics ranging from different governments’ handling of the COVID crisis and differences in healthcare systems, to gender equality in the different countries, to traditional festivals and food. During a reflection and feedback session several students expressed the wish to exchange numbers privately and stay in contact with their peers.

Social Work Student Exchange (SWSE)

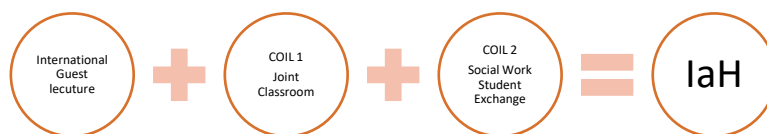
This is a more student-centred activity which students largely carry out independently. The course I

¹ <https://coil.suny.edu/>

was teaching to 4th semester students has as one of its main aims that students become informed about different social work systems found across the globe. Aspects students are asked to consider about various countries include: social work education and the history of social work in the country in question, country specific social problems, the influence of the political situation and its effects on social work/social issues, health care systems, etc. This year rather than researching in books or on the Internet, or being given information in a lecture, students had the task of connecting with their peers in different parts of the world and exchanging information. The countries involved were: Uganda, Kenya, the Netherlands, Bosnia and Herzegovina. There were 3 Phases to the SWSE:

Preparation	Exchange	Follow-up
Exchange of contact details	Carry out 1 st online meeting	Poster presentation of findings from meetings to other students in the group
Schedule online meeting (generally 2 Austrian students and 2 Peers)	Reflect on meeting with Austrian colleague and write minutes of meeting	In-class discussions and reflections – similarities and differences between all countries.
Research general information about chosen country	Follow-up meeting to address unanswered questions;	Written reflection of what was learned during the process
Prepare interview questions for online meeting (general and social work specific)	Reflection and minutes of second meeting with Austrian colleague	Anonymous feedback questionnaire about the Social Work Student Exchange Experience.

As well as the two COIL elements presented above, I was also able to offer students of this course another international perspective by inviting a guest lecturer from UK to participate in a session.



Feedback from the Students and Outcomes:

I believe this course is a good practice example of Internationalisation at Home and had many benefits for the students. Below is a small sample of quotes from student feedback which should serve to illustrate the different areas in which students' learning was enriched by the experience.

- "From a book or the internet, it would not be possible to get such direct and honest explanations and information about Kenya from people my age"
- "It was uncomfortable but important to talk about colonialism and how poverty in Africa is related to the welfare we have in Europe."
- "One skill I improved was organising the meeting and accepting the complications that come with this – different time zones, different schedules, different cultural ideas of punctuality, different reliability of internet connections ..."
- "She shared her personal life stories and her personal view and attitude towards the life she is living"
- "I now feel more trust in human kind and see that there are nice people all over the world."
- "This wasn't just a task that needed to be done for a class, but a new opportunity to discuss values and rules in a country and one's own life."
- "I got more confident speaking English"
- "Personal contact with actual students can be much more interesting than reading a research paper as there is a direct connection and you can ask questions in between to get a clearer view on things."
- "I think in a country like Austria we often feel bad for people in African countries, because we have a higher standard of living. So, I loved to hear how happy the other student is in Uganda and the passion she has for her country."

The following competences were certainly fostered in the course described above: tolerance of ambiguity and frustration, empathy and change of perspective, communication and media use,

cooperation in (heterogeneous) groups. Students were provided with the opportunity for real life interaction with their peers in several countries across the globe. Students made the most of these opportunities to discover and learn new things not only about different countries, different systems of social work, different ways of life but also about themselves.

Relevant Goals and Targets impacted by IaH

Goal	Target	Description of Target
Goal 4: Quality Education <i>Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.</i>	4.7	By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development
Goal 10. Reduced Inequalities <i>Reduce inequality within and among countries</i>	10.2	By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status. (IaH covers all students – none are excluded)
Goal 16. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions <i>Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels</i>	16a	Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries , to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime
Goal 17. Partnership for the Goals <i>Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development</i>	17.6 17.16	Enhance North-South, South-South and triangular regional and international cooperation on and access to science, technology and innovation and enhance knowledge-sharing on mutually agreed terms , including through improved coordination among existing mechanisms, in particular at the United Nations level, and through a global technology facilitation mechanism Enhance the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in all countries, in particular developing countries

Conclusion

The close cooperation with international colleagues was beneficial not only for the students but also the teaching staff involved in these collaborations. In today's globalised society, developing intercultural competence is more necessary than ever. Accepting diversity and understanding the differences between different cultures is one of the challenges of globalisation that higher education should react to. I believe that more Internationalisation at Home is an effective way of integrating international and intercultural dimensions into higher education as well as contributing to fulfilling the Agenda 2030 by implementing several of the SDGs.

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International Federation of Social Work: <https://www.ifsw.org/>

SUNY Coil Center: <https://coil.suny.edu/>

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/>