



CIDDD NEWSLETTER

News from the Consortium of International Double Degrees



How to help Students Develop Soft Skills

Soft skills are like the secret sauce for success. They are not about what you know but how you handle yourself and others. A hard skill is the ability to do something, like design a website or fix a car. By contrast, soft skills are the ability to understand ourselves and relate to others. They include introspection, emotional intelligence, communication, collaboration, and leadership.

Soft skills can help us adapt to new environments and thrive in various situations. For most employers, having the right soft skills is more important than having technical skills or knowledge. In fact, according to the National Association of Colleges and Employers, the most important skills employers are looking for are the ability to solve problems, work in teams, have strong work ethics, do quantities analysis, and communicate clearly. In other words, four of the top five skills that employers are searching for are soft skills.

Universities should do more to help students develop soft skills. In a world where information is readily available, memorizing answers for tests is not a particularly good use of students' time.

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We should teach students how to communicate, collaborate effectively, and adapt. Moreover, we should help students gain credentials in soft skills that employers seek. How many students take a class on collaboration, leadership, or work ethics? Universities also need to adapt to new forms of media. Many universities teach business communication, but how many teach how to create engaging blogs, vlogs, podcasts, and social media posts? It seems like universities have some catching up to do to help students develop the skills they need for the 21st century.

There are several ways universities can help students develop soft skills. We can offer more courses that matter to employers, including courses on problem-solving, collaboration, business ethics, leadership, emotional intelligence, and communication. We can also teach in ways that are more experiential and require students to use soft skills by working on cases for real companies, collaborating in teams, and making presentations.

As educators, we should not be focus on the end product – the student making a good presentation – instead, we should focus on the process. We need to teach students how to solve problem, managing their time, collaborate well, and deliver engaging presentations. Developing these skills is more important than delivering an A-quality report. Additionally, we need to modernize our curriculum to include modern tools. For instance, I recently got students to create videos and podcasts for their journal assignments instead of writing.

Offering or requiring students to engage in experiential programs can also help them develop soft skills. Students who complete internships, work on community service projects, and study abroad can develop a myriad of soft skills. However, engaging in these programs is not enough. Students should reflect on their experiences and communicate what they learned.

Yoav Wacshman
Coastal Carolina University





Introducing Bonn-Rhein-Sieg University of Applied Sciences

Bonn-Rhein-Sieg University of Applied Sciences, founded in 1995 in North Rhine-Westphalia, has established itself as a dynamic and innovative educational institution. Its aim is to offer practical and future-oriented education, promoting both academic and practical skills among students. The university places particular emphasis on interdisciplinary approaches and international cooperation. The current university's strategic plan emphasizes sustainability, digitalization and social responsibility.

The university is particularly strong in the fields of computer science, engineering, and management sciences. Through cooperation with companies and international universities, it offers excellent career opportunities and contributes to the development of qualified specialists who are in demand both regionally and globally.

The Department of Management Sciences is characterized by its practical relevance and close cooperation with industry. The range of courses includes Business Administration, International Business, and Business Informatics. Innovative teaching methods and the integration of digital technologies optimally prepare students for the digitalized world. Cooperation with renowned companies enables valuable internships and projects that promote practical experience and business contacts. In addition, international exchange programs broaden students' global perspective. In addition to traditional economics courses, the department also offers specialized programs such as business psychology, which deals with the interfaces between economic activity and psychological processes. The focus is on the influence of psychological principles on behaviour in organizations and markets. Finally, the Department of Economics offers English-language and globally oriented courses such as International Business (B. Sc.), Marketing (M. Sc.) and CSR & NGO Management (MBA). With the Codeshare Summer School, a digital English-language format has also been established that is accessible to all partner universities. The codeshare program allows students to take week-long online courses for free with professors from around the globe. It gives students the opportunity to interact with teachers and students from other countries and to learn about subjects that are not available in their university.

The university is located on its two campuses in Sankt Augustin and Rheinbach, each of which has its own focus: Sankt Augustin with a technical focus and Rheinbach with an ideal scientific learning environment for courses such as business psychology. Both locations promote a versatile education that allows graduates to react flexibly to the job market.



The Rheinbach campus suffered considerable damage in July 2021 due to a flood catastrophe in Europe. Several European countries were affected by floods that started in the United Kingdom, including Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. In Germany, several cities and villages suffered severe damage. The floods were the worst natural disaster in Germany for almost 60 years, causing over 180 people to lose their lives, over 750 people to be injured and thousands to be affected economically. The floods highlighted the need for the world to be ready for extreme weather events in the future due to climate change. After the catastrophe, volunteers and donations made it possible for the cities to recover from the floods. The need for more actions against climate change was highlighted in Europe. In 2023, The European Union declared 15 July as the Annual EU Day for the victims of the global crisis, to commemorate the floods of 2021.

The catastrophe made extensive renovations necessary also for the Rheinbach campus, and the renovation work has been progressing according to plan. The biology labs and some seminar rooms have been restored to the latest standards and lectures are again taking place on campus. The consequences of the floods have not yet been eliminated, but some parts of the building are gradually being added and alternative facilities have been rented to ensure that teaching can continue. The library has returned to the campus in January 2024. After the catastrophe, the university has invested in flood prevention and sustainable technologies to future-proof the campus. These modernizations not only improve the teaching and research infrastructure, but have also strengthened the community as students, faculty and administration work together to overcome the challenges.



References:

<https://www.h-brs.de/en/campus-rheinbach>

<https://www.dw.com/en/the-2021-flood-catastrophe-a-protocol/a-62467263>

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**Hochschule
Bonn-Rhein-Sieg**
University of Applied Sciences

Using Global Exchanges to Develop Soft Skills



International exchanges are like immersive training grounds for university students, offering a unique opportunity to develop a wide range of soft skills crucial for personal and professional growth. These experiences go beyond just academic learning; they provide a dynamic environment for honing adaptability, communication skills, collaboration, leadership, and emotional intelligence.

Adaptability is perhaps one of the most essential skills fostered during international exchanges. Imagine being dropped into a completely new country, where the language, culture, and customs are unfamiliar. For many students, living abroad challenges them to adjust their thinking and behavior. They often must navigate cultural differences, learn a new public transportation system, and figure out how a different education system works. Finding a place to live, for instance, can be a vastly different experience across countries. Adapting to a foreign environment requires flexibility, resilience, and an open mindset. Leaving our familiar comfort zone forces us to grow.

International exchanges also help students develop essential communication skills. When students find themselves in a diverse environment with peers and professors from different cultural backgrounds, they must learn to communicate effectively. Whether they are making an academic presentation, collaborating on group projects, or socializing with new friends, students must learn to convey their ideas, listen actively, and navigate cultural nuances. Through these interactions, they develop a heightened awareness of communication styles, linguistic differences, and nonverbal cues, becoming more adept communicators.



SPRING 2024

Students often have to collaborate more when they study abroad. Working with peers from diverse backgrounds requires students to embrace teamwork, respect differing viewpoints, and leverage individual strengths. Whether collaborating on group assignments, participating in extracurricular activities, or organizing cultural events, students learn to bridge cultural divides, navigate interpersonal dynamics, and achieve common goals through collaboration. Students on global exchanges usually find themselves connecting more easily with other exchange students from around the globe.

International exchanges also offer leadership opportunities. Exchange students often join international clubs and other organizations in the host institutions. Away from their family and in an unfamiliar environment, they must take initiative, make decisions, and navigate cross-cultural challenges. When they return home, they often get to talk to others about their experience and incorporate what they learned. These leadership experiences not only bolster their resumes but also cultivate essential leadership qualities such as initiative, adaptability, and resilience.

Emotional intelligence is perhaps one of the most profound outcomes of international exchanges. Living and studying in a foreign country can be emotionally challenging, from dealing with homesickness and cultural shock to navigating interpersonal relationships in a new environment. Students must recognize and manage their emotions, develop empathy for others, and build resilience. Through reflection and self-discovery, students can gain a deeper understanding of themselves and the world around them.

While soft skills can develop organically during study abroad experiences, sending institutions can do a lot to help students cultivate them. First, international offices can include information on adaptability, resiliency, intercultural communication, and other soft skills in their orientation. Secondly, the sending university can require students to reflect on their experiences abroad and what they learned from them during their stay or after they return. At Coastal Carolina University, every student who studies abroad is required to write a report about their experience and discuss the skills they developed. The receiving institutions also have a role to play. They should encourage international students to stay engaged and promote opportunities for leadership like community engagement projects. Also, they can encourage discussions among students to discuss their experiences, challenges, and coping strategies.

International exchanges offer a rich and multifaceted learning experience that extends far beyond the classroom. By fostering adaptability, communication skills, collaboration, leadership, and emotional intelligence, these experiences empower students to thrive in an increasingly interconnected and diverse world. Whether through semester-long exchanges, short-term academic programs, or double and joint degrees, international experiences provide students with the skills, perspectives, and confidence they need to succeed in today's globalized society.

Erasmus+ Funding



Erasmus+ is a program provided by the European Union to support education, training, youth, and sport in Europe. The Erasmus program was established by the European Union in 1987. The idea was to promote closer cooperation between universities and higher education institutions in Europe. Therefore, an organized and integrated system of cross-border student exchange was established.

The name “Erasmus” was inspired by the Dutch scholar Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam, who was a leading scholar and lecturer during the Renaissance period. Erasmus travelled in Europe and taught in various universities. The word “Erasmus” also serves as the acronym for The European Region Action Scheme for Mobility of University Students. The “+” at the end indicates that the program supports more sectors than just higher education as it did originally.

The program was originally established to create more cooperation in Europe, but today, the program offers opportunities outside of Europe as well. It evolved from its initial focus on higher education, to a program that now spans education, training, youth, and sport.

Erasmus+ funding provides various opportunities within higher education. For individuals, these opportunities include student exchanges, internships abroad, teaching periods abroad, and staff training abroad. Meanwhile, organizations can benefit from learning mobility initiatives for both staff and students, as well as opportunities for cooperation with other organizations.

So far, over 13 million people have participated in Erasmus+ opportunities over the World. In 2022, Erasmus+ had a total budget of €4 billion, supported 26,000 projects and 1.2 million learning mobility opportunities around 73,000 organizations. The Erasmus+ 2021–2027 program has a budget of about €26 billion, and offers more mobility and cooperation opportunities than ever before. The 2021–2027 program focuses strongly on social inclusion, the green and digital transitions, and promoting young people’s participation in democratic life. The program continues to grow and is impacting positively the lives of millions of people who participate in.

Fun fact: Rotterdam, where Erasmus is originally from, is near The Hague, where the next CIDD General Assembly will take place in June 2024.

Visit the Erasmus+ website for more information: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/>

Double Degree Experience: Pratick Dey

The CIDD interviewed a Double Degree student Pratick Dey about his experience. Pratick is completing his Double Degree at RISEBA University of Applied Sciences, Riga Latvia (home university), and Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, Helsinki Finland (host university).



Pratick Dey

Can you tell us a bit about yourself?

I am Pratick Dey, a native of Mumbai, India. My higher education led me to Riga, Latvia to RISEBA University of Applied Sciences, where I am pursuing a professional Bachelor's Degree in European Business Studies. And as a Double Degree student I am currently pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in International Business at Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences in Helsinki, Finland. I love reading books, networking, swimming and cooking.

What motivated you to pursue a Double Degree program?

I have an adventurous soul by nature. Upon hearing about the wonderful tie up between RISEBA and Haaga-Helia, I was immediately intrigued. The opportunity to explore a new country, its people and culture made me rush to the opportunity. The support from Erasmus program was a cherry on the ice cream sundae that it is.

Could you tell us about your Double Degree experience so far?

I am a month away from finishing one of my two semesters I'll be spending at Haaga-Helia. And my time here has been filled with great joy, friendships, and excellent education. The flat hierarchy in Finland and at Haaga-Helia is fairly new to me and I love it. I love the wonderful collaborations Haaga-Helia has with tons of organizations.

What Soft Skills have you developed during your Double Degree journey?

The biggest skill I've developed is networking. The ability to meet people at events and contribute to each other's growth is a wonderful feeling. Working in teams of students diverse in both background and age. The multiple perspectives have given me the chance to better my problem solving, team collaboration and communication skills.

What advice would you give to students considering a Double Degree program?

Don't let the opportunity pass by! Grab it tight and enjoy the ride! It's an experience you won't regret.

Would you recommend a Double Degree program to others, and why?

Absolutely! The program gives you the opportunity to widen your horizons and grow as an individual and have lots of fun with new friends!

Summer School 2024 - University of Economics in Bratislava



Business and Leadership in Central Europe 15 - 26 July, 2024



Students at EUBA Summer School last summer 2023

University of Economics in Bratislava is organizing another edition of Bratislava Summer School 2024 – Business and Leadership in Central Europe, held on from July 15 to July 26, 2024. In previous years the summer school was attended by students from several prominent European universities, namely ISEG - Lisbon in Portugal, KU Leuven in Belgium, SGH - Warsaw School of Economics in Poland, and the University of Applied Sciences Bochum in Germany. There was also an extracurricular program including the tour in Bratislava City Centre.

The topics for this edition are Managing People in Digital Era and International Business Management. Digitalization changes not only the functions and tools of management, but also attitudes, values, perceptions of people in general. Students will learn what is behind the change and options of attitudes applicable to managing people in companies caused by the emphasis on competitiveness today. The course International Business Management offers the opportunity to develop a global mind-set and cross-cultural awareness in order to be successful in international business.

COURSES AND DATES

15 - 19 July 2024

Managing People in the Digital Era

22 - 26 July 2024

International Business Management

CREDITS

3 ECTS per completed course (6 ECTS in total)

FEES

2 courses - 450€

1 course - 250€

The fee includes tuition, a welcome pack, certificate of attendance and transcript of records, professional administrative support before, during and after the program.

The fee does not include visa, travel, accommodation, living costs, insurance, and other related costs.

CONTACT

summerschool@euba.sk

+421 2 6729 5306

REGISTER BY MAY 13, 2024 AT

<https://summerschools.euba.sk/>

