THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT DALLAS

VE/COIL Handbook

2024-2025

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Introduction

Welcome to the Virtual Exchange (VE) and Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) Handbook. This online guide is designed to assist UT Dallas faculty members in integrating VE/COIL into their courses. Through these initiatives, students from diverse cultural backgrounds can engage in meaningful learning activities, fostering cross-cultural understanding and enhancing educational outcomes.

In this handbook, you will find comprehensive information on the fundamentals of VE/COIL, including its history, benefits, implementation strategies, and best practices. Whether you are

new to virtual exchange or looking to enhance your current programs, this guide provides the insights and tools necessary to create successful and enriching international collaborations.

From planning and managing projects to evaluating student performance and leveraging digital tools, this handbook covers all aspects of the VE/COIL experience.

What Is VE/COIL?

Virtual Exchange (VE) is an umbrella term that includes various forms of online educational international collaboration. In a Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), faculty partners from institutions in different countries co-design a course module that is incorporated into their respective classes. This structured approach not only emphasizes cross-cultural interaction and teamwork but also ensures that these experiences are a formal, graded part of the students' education. By embedding COIL projects into existing courses, educators can provide students with meaningful global learning opportunities that enhance their academic and professional skills.

Basic Features of a COIL Collaboration

COIL provides a dynamic and adaptable framework for incorporating global engagement into the classroom. Here are the basic features that define this innovative educational approach:

- **Integration into Existing Classes**: COIL modules are designed to be part of an existing course, making them easily accessible to all students.
- **Graded Activities**: Each COIL includes a graded component, ensuring that students' collaborative efforts are assessed by their respective professors.
- **Flexible Duration**: COIL projects typically last between 5 to 8 weeks, providing sufficient time for meaningful interaction and learning.
- **Applicability Across Disciplines**: COIL modules can be implemented in any academic discipline, encouraging both discipline-specific and interdisciplinary collaborations.
- **Active Student Learning and Teamwork**: COIL promotes active engagement and teamwork among students, enhancing their collaborative skills.
- **Emphasis on Cross-Cultural Interactions**: A core element of COIL is the focus on cross-cultural communication and understanding, helping students to develop cultural competence.
- **Use of Diverse Technologies**: COIL leverages various technological tools that align with learning goals while protecting student privacy, making it adaptable to different educational contexts.
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Progression of a COIL Collaboration in a Course

The progression of a COIL collaboration in a course typically includes four key phases that shape the student's intercultural learning journey:

1. **Introductions and Icebreakers**: Every COIL collaboration begins with introductory activities and icebreakers. These initial interactions are designed to build trust, foster team spirit, and promote intercultural development among students. By engaging in fun and meaningful icebreaker activities, students start to form connections with their peers from different cultural backgrounds.
2. **Comparison/Contrast/Analysis**: In this phase, students are exposed to diverse experiences and perspectives, often challenging their preconceived notions and familiar knowledge. Through comparative and analytical activities, they deepen their understanding of cultural differences and similarities, enhancing their critical thinking and intercultural communication skills.
3. **Collaborative Projects**: The core of COIL involves collaborative projects where students work together to solve problems, complete tasks, or create deliverables. The collaborative nature of these projects helps students develop practical skills and fosters a sense of global citizenship.
4. **Conclusions and Reflections**: The final phase of a COIL collaboration involves reflection activities that allow students to contextualize what they have learned throughout the module. Reflective exercises encourage students to think critically about their intercultural experiences, consolidate their knowledge, and articulate their growth.

By following this structured progression, COIL collaborations create a dynamic and immersive learning environment that helps prepare students for the complexities of a globalized world.

The History of VE/COIL

Virtual exchange began in the 1990s, primarily among language learners who used email to communicate and practice their skills with peers in different countries. This early form of virtual exchange laid the groundwork for more structured and diverse forms of online international collaboration as technology evolved.

In 2005, the State University of New York (SUNY) established the SUNY COIL Center, which significantly advanced the field of virtual exchange. The center pioneered the integration of COIL into higher education curricula in the United States, promoting collaborative online learning across disciplines and geographic boundaries. SUNY has played a crucial role in developing best practices, providing training, and fostering partnerships among institutions worldwide, thereby enhancing the quality and reach of COIL initiatives.

Over the past three decades, educational institutions in more than 150 countries have adopted COIL, creating a global network of cross-cultural learning and collaboration. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly accelerated the adoption of COIL, as institutions sought innovative ways to continue providing global experiences despite travel restrictions.

According to the Stevens Initiative, which publishes an annual report on the state of virtual exchange, the top content areas for COIL projects in 2023 included STEM (science, technology, engineering and math), entrepreneurship and business, humanities, language learning and international affairs.

VE/COIL at UT Dallas

COIL came under the auspices of the UT Dallas Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) in 2020. Since then, faculty have successfully implemented 50 COIL projects, establishing robust partnerships with 29 universities in 17 countries across Europe, Latin America, Asia, and Africa. Since the program's inception, 2,361 students from UT Dallas and its partner institutions have engaged in these enriching cross-cultural learning experiences.

- In 2023-2024, UT Dallas was selected to be part of the prestigious AAC&U COIL Institute, joining other leading universities around the world. This recognition underscores the university's commitment to international education and collaboration.
- The AAC&U VE-COIL Institute is a highly respected initiative that supports institutions in developing and enhancing their COIL programs. Participation in this institute provides universities with access to valuable resources, expert guidance, and a network of like-minded institutions dedicated to advancing global learning through virtual exchange.
- By being part of the AAC&U VE-COIL Institute, the UT Dallas team benefited from learning best practices, and refining COIL methodologies. This not only helped enhance the quality of COIL projects at UT Dallas but also strengthened the University's role as a leader in international education. You can read more about the initiative here.
- Faculty from every school at UT Dallas have incorporated COIL into their projects. Some have later traveled to the countries where they had collaborated virtually, highlighting one of the benefits of COIL: fostering connections with international partners and providing opportunities to teach, network, or guest lecture abroad.

Meet Your COIL Coordinator

Dr. Carol Cirulli Lanham, associate director of CTL and a professor of instruction in sociology, is the designated COIL Coordinator at UT Dallas. Since adopting COIL in the Spring 2020 semester when she had to pivot online while teaching a community-based service-learning course, she has incorporated COIL into her teaching every semester since. You can read more about one of her first projects here.

She also oversees COIL initiatives in her role at CTL. In 2021, she received a grant through the *UT System Curricular Innovation in the Post-Pandemic Digital Age* program, which helped establish and expand the COIL program at UT Dallas. That same year, the U.S. State Department selected her as a Fulbright Specialist In recognition of her expertise and contributions to global education. In this role, she was tasked with providing VE/COIL training to institutions of higher education in other countries.

Today, CTL serves as a resource for UT Dallas faculty members interested in integrating global collaboration into their courses. We can assist you in finding a partner, provide online training, and give you access to the digital tools needed to successfully implement your COIL.

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Logistics

Getting Started

One of the advantages of COIL is that it generally does not require formal agreements such as memorandums of understanding (MOUs) or other official documentation between partnering institutions. This streamlined approach is possible because each professor maintains control over their own grading and curricular goals during the international collaboration experience. This makes COIL an exceptionally accessible option for integrating global learning into the curriculum.

Finding a Partner

Finding a partner is easy with the help of CTL. Start by filling out a interest form with your preferences. CTL will use its international networks to advertise your course and find a partner in your preferred region of the world. If you already have a colleague in another country interested in collaboration, CTL can help facilitate the partnership and assist in setting up the framework for your joint project.

Over the years, UT Dallas professors have completed collaborations in countries as diverse as France, Paraguay, Benin, and Mexico. Many have maintained long-term partnerships, collaborating with the same institutions year after year. Click here to read about current and past collaborations.

The language of collaboration for most COIL projects is English, which facilitates easy communication and collaboration with students worldwide. However, Spanish-language COILs are also common in collaborations with Latin American institutions.

Faculty Training and Learning Communities

For faculty who are new to COIL, CTL offers an online training that typically lasts about 90 minutes. This training covers the essentials of planning and implementing COIL, providing faculty with the knowledge and tools they need to successfully integrate this pedagogy into their courses.

Additionally, CTL periodically hosts Faculty Learning Communities (FLCs) focused on VE/COIL. These communities offer a blend of asynchronous learning on Teams and in-person meetings, creating a supportive environment where faculty can share experiences, learn from each other, and develop best practices. These FLCs provide an ongoing opportunity for professional development and engagement with like-minded peers.

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COIL Project Ideas

Whether you are teaching in the sciences, business, engineering, or the arts, COIL can be seamlessly integrated into your course. You are limited only by your imagination in developing a project that aligns with your curriculum and educational goals. For inspiration, you can see the types of COIL projects done at UT Dallas in the past by clicking here. They have included everything from animations and jointly produced videos to social media campaigns and research posters.

In one of the more creative COIL projects, students in Dr. Vic Valcarcel's *Money and Banking* course at UT Dallas have been partnering since 2022 with students taking the same course at University of Monterrey in Mexico. Students are tasked with assuming the roles of central bank members in their respective countries and analyzing economic data and formulating policy recommendations.

During the live simulation at the end of the COIL, each student team presents its findings, predictions, and recommendations as if they were actual committee members. The students then engage in debates, defending their positions and providing insights into the data presented by their peers.

In the School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics' UTeach Program, which prepares students for careers in K-12 math and science teaching, faculty have been COIL pioneers for over a decade by offering students opportunities to participate in virtual teaching experiences.

In a recent initiative, Master Teacher Dr. Kate York, along with Denise Gregory and Katie Donaldson, partnered with faculty in Paraguay and Argentina who also train teachers. This collaboration allowed students in all three countries to gain valuable perspectives on their respective education systems.

No matter how creative the COIL project, the intercultural learning that occurs is just as valuable, if not more so, than the academic content itself. Engaging with peers from diverse cultural backgrounds broadens perspectives and deepens global awareness. These experiences are invaluable for personal and professional growth, making the intercultural aspects of COIL a central component of its educational value.

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Interdisciplinary Collaborations

Interdisciplinary COIL projects can also be effective, as they encourage students to think holistically and draw connections between diverse areas of knowledge.

For example, in one recent project, UT Dallas students enrolled in *Sustainable Communities* with Dr. John McCaskill joined forces with Swiss students studying Building Integrated Photo Voltaic (BIPV) at Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts in Switzerland, as well as students at two other partner universities.

Together, students worked in teams to analyze different aspects of the four universities' sustainability plans. UT Dallas students evaluated the social impact of the plans, while their Swiss counterparts assessed the technical and environmental aspects from an engineering perspective.

In another example of multidisciplinary collaboration, students enrolled in *Experimental Animation* with Dr. Christine Veras at UT Dallas paired up for a VE/COIL with students at Universidad de Minuto de Dios (UNIMINUTO) in Colombia who are enrolled in a course on agronomy and environmental engineering.

The UNIMINUTO professors and their students created instructional videos in English to provide brief overviews of three topics related to biodiversity – photosynthesis and how plants make food, the role of women in agriculture, and the impact of technology on farming. The U.S. students then created animations, which you can view here. This collaboration offered a unique opportunity for students from different backgrounds to learn from each other and contribute valuable insights to their understanding of these important subjects.

These examples illustrate the broad potential of COIL to enrich the educational experience by bridging different disciplines.

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Asynchronous COILs

While less common, COILs can also take place asynchronously, which is particularly useful when one of the partners is in a country with unreliable Wi-Fi or electricity. Asynchronous collaborations are valuable in international settings where time zone differences make scheduling live meetings challenging. In this format, students can share written reflections, responses to discussion prompts, or recorded videos. This approach encourages thoughtful engagement and provides students with the flexibility to interact with the material and their peers at their convenience.

Instructors can facilitate asynchronous communication by providing clear instructions and setting specific deadlines for contributions. This helps maintain a structured environment where students understand what is expected of them and when they need to participate. Follow-up questions and prompts can guide discussions, ensuring that conversations remain dynamic and productive.

UN Sustainable Development Goals

A unifying theme that has become increasingly popular for COIL projects is the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These goals provide a framework that is applicable to any discipline and are recognized worldwide, as they were agreed upon by nearly every country.

The SDGs consist of 17 interconnected goals aimed at addressing global challenges such as poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, and justice. Each goal provides a specific target and a set of indicators to measure progress, offering a comprehensive blueprint for achieving a more sustainable and equitable world. For more detailed information and resources on the SDGs, you can visit the United Nations' official website.

Integrating these goals into your COIL projects not only provides a common point of focus for you and your faculty partner but also engages students in meaningful work that contributes to global sustainability efforts.

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Planning Worksheet

Once you and your faculty partner are ready to work out the details of your COIL collaboration, CTL will provide you with a planning worksheet to help map out the elements. The planning worksheet includes sections for outlining the learning objectives, ice breakers, collaborative activities, and timelines for your COIL. It helps ensure that both you and your partner are aligned on the goals and expectations of the COIL project.

Remember that flexibility is key to the success of a collaboration across borders. Student numbers do not have to match perfectly between institutions, and academic calendars can differ if there is an overlapping time period for collaboration. This flexibility enables you to adapt the project to fit the specific needs and constraints of both institutions. While faculty partners often are eager to guest lecture to each other's students or share class content, this is not a requirement for a COIL.

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Learning Objectives

Learning objectives are a crucial component of every COIL project, providing a clear framework for what students are expected to achieve. While these objectives will vary depending on the specific project and disciplinary focus, CTL asks faculty to include the following three shared learning objectives to ensure consistent assessment as part of the pre-test/post-test evaluations:

1. Demonstrate respect for diversity by discussing multiple perspectives on complex issues.
2. Develop greater intercultural competence and awareness of the wider world.
3. Enhance the ability to deploy 21st-century skills (e.g., technology and teamwork).

These shared learning objectives help to measure the broader impact of COIL experiences on students' development and ensure a cohesive assessment framework across different projects.

Pre-Test/Post-Test to Assess Student Outcomes

To evaluate the effectiveness of COIL projects, CTL uses a pre-test/post-test model based on the approach outlined in the article *"Assessing exchange program building: an assessment-based approach"* by Ruther et al. (2021). This model helps measure student learning outcomes related to intercultural competence and the development of 21st-century skills such as teamwork and technological proficiency.

Before the COIL collaboration begins, CTL provides faculty with a Qualtrics link that students can use to complete a pre-test survey. This survey includes questions designed to gauge their

initial levels of intercultural competence, awareness of global issues, and readiness for working in diverse, international teams. Sample questions include:

- "The COIL component of this course will introduce me to a new outlook and new ways of thinking about how I relate to the world."
- "Learning to collaborate cross-culturally will prepare me for the global workforce."
- "I feel prepared for the cultural aspects of collaboration with faculty and students at the partner institution."

At the end of the COIL project, faculty receive a second Qualtrics link for the post-test survey, which reassesses the same areas to identify changes in students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes resulting from their participation in the project. To ensure a high response rate and accurate assessment, we suggest providing students with a few minutes in class to complete this survey.

Data Compilation and Feedback

CTL will compile the pre-test and post-test results and provide faculty with a summary of the data. This feedback helps instructors understand the impact of their COIL projects and identify areas for improvement in future collaborations. The aggregated data can also be used to demonstrate the value of COIL initiatives to stakeholders and support ongoing efforts to internationalize the curriculum.
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Preparing Students for the Collaboration

Sometimes, students may feel more confident before beginning a COIL project than after completing it, as reflected in their post-test answers. This is often because they "didn't know what they didn't know" about intercultural collaboration. While this can be a valuable lesson, helping students recognize growth areas, it also highlights the importance of preparing them for collaboration.

If time allows, Leticia Zamarripa, Director of Global Engagement in the Intercultural Programs Office at UT Dallas can arrange for her and/or a member of her team to present to your students to prepare them for COIL. This session typically takes up the entire class session and covers essential aspects of intercultural communication and collaboration.

If an in-person session isn't possible, you might consider asking students to complete online courses developed by Future Learn and available through the Intercultural Programs website. However, keep in mind that these courses require a significant time commitment.

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Next Steps: Welcome Videos

Once you have worked out all the details of the collaboration with your partner, you can begin conveying this information to students. Just as ice breaker videos are a key part of the collaboration for students, it's also beneficial if partnering faculty members record a welcome video together. This video should provide an overview of the project and outline the learning objectives. By doing so, students will have a clear understanding of what to expect from the COIL. Click here to see an example.

Posting university videos on the COIL website is also a great idea. You can use this video to showcase UT Dallas and invite your faculty partner to provide a similar video featuring their own university.

COIL Hub

To facilitate information sharing and collaboration among students, CTL helps faculty members determine the best digital platform for hosting their COIL projects. Instructors must develop a central hub where students from both institutions can access all the necessary information about the project. This hub should be password-protected to ensure student privacy as they submit their deliverables.

CTL offers guidance in selecting the most suitable platform for your specific needs. We can assist in setting up the hub to ensure it is user-friendly and meets the requirements for secure communication and data protection. This central hub serves as a reliable resource for students to find schedules, assignment details, and collaborative tools, fostering a cohesive and efficient learning environment.

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Calendar of Activities

Creating a detailed calendar of activities is the most important part of the planning process for your COIL project. This calendar should include due dates for all deliverables, ensuring that both students and faculty are clear on the expectations and timelines. It should also specify the dates

and links for both the launch and the wrap-up meetings, providing a structured framework for the entire project.

You and your faculty partner can create one comprehensive document that provides an overview of the project schedule. Within this overview, include links that guide students to documents with more detailed information on each assignment. This approach helps maintain clarity and organization, allowing students to easily navigate through the project requirements.

If this is your first time doing a COIL project, start with a simple project and build in more complex collaborative experiences over time. As you become more familiar with the COIL process, you can gradually introduce more elements that enhance the depth and scope of the collaboration. Once you've settled on the perfect formula, you can repeat it year after year, making only minor revisions with each iteration

Once you have set up a calendar of activities for a particular COIL, it’s time to let the students lead. By taking a student-centered approach, you will encourage independence and initiative among participants.

Later in the guide, we will explain how you and your teaching assistants can monitor student progress and ensure that teams are working effectively, providing support as needed to facilitate successful collaboration.

Organizing Student Teams

In COIL projects, students typically collaborate as part of an international team rather than one-on-one. Organizing teams that include members from both institutions promotes true collaboration. You can form your student teams the same way you would in a traditional class that does not include a COIL.

Due to logistical challenges, it's common for student numbers to sometimes be uneven between the two institutions. If your student numbers are vastly different from those at your partner institution, you can manage participation by selecting students through a lottery or a proposal process.

Additionally, it's always a good idea to allow your students to opt out of the COIL and complete an independent project if they are not comfortable being part of the international collaboration. This ensures that FERPA rights are protected for those who do not wish to share personal information with students in another country. However, you’ll find that few students end up opting out since most are eager to participate in a new experience that helps them build marketable skills.

Once the student teams are formed, it's a good idea to ask them to complete a Team Charter. This document outlines the roles and responsibilities of each team member, sets expectations for communication and participation, and establishes guidelines for resolving conflicts. More details on creating and using a Team Charter are provided later in this handbook.

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Ice Breakers

Once you have set up the student teams, it's time to let the students take the lead. Ice breakers are the first step in any COIL project, helping team members to get to know one another and build rapport before engaging in synchronous online meetings.

Typically, students record a short video introducing themselves and then post it on a password-protected site such as Padlet. In these videos, students can simply speak into the camera to share information about themselves. Or if they are not comfortable showing their faces, they have the option of using photos or other visual elements instead.

The prompts for these introductory videos can vary, but the key is to be creative and facilitate connection. Here are a couple of examples:

***Personal Introductions**:*

- Introduce yourself and share a few things about your background, interests, and hobbies.
- Discuss your hopes and fears about the COIL project.
- Mention what you are looking forward to the most in this collaboration.

What Do You See When You Look at Me?

- Respond to the prompt: "What do you see when you look at me?"
- Share your initial perceptions and any expectations you have about working with peers from different cultural backgrounds.

Video example

These ice breaker activities not only help students get to know one another but also encourage them to start thinking about intercultural communication and collaboration. By engaging in these introductory exercises, students lay the foundation for a successful and enriching COIL experience.

We recommend asking students to post their videos on a password-protected Padlet site, organized by teams. This approach prevents students from feeling overwhelmed by the need to watch all of their classmates' videos. As an instructor, you'll find an unintended but welcome benefit from these welcome videos. They allow you to get to know your students more personally than ever before.

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Launch Meeting

Once students have posted and watched the ice breaker videos, it's ideal to schedule a live meeting on Zoom or Teams. If you can't hold the meeting during class time, be sure to record the session for students who cannot attend.

Several important activities can take place during a launch meeting:

- **Faculty Introductions**: Faculty members can introduce themselves and the project live, providing an overview of the collaboration and its objectives.
- **Live Ice Breakers**: Students can go into breakout rooms and participate in a live ice breaker with their assigned team members at the partner institution. This helps to further build rapport and establish a collaborative spirit.
- **Team Charter –** The students can work on a team charter, which allows them to not only set clear expectations for their collaboration but also practice essential kills in planning communication and teamwork. More details on the Team Charter are provided later in this guide.
- **Exchange of Personal Information**: Perhaps most importantly, the launch meeting can provide students with the opportunity for students to share their personal information voluntarily. This avoids any FERPA concerns.

By kicking off the COIL with a launch meeting, you can set the stage for a successful collaboration, ensuring that all students are engaged, informed, and ready to work together effectively.

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Team Charter

As mentioned above, a Team Charter helps set the groundwork for effective collaboration. It is designed to outline key elements of team dynamics and can be modified to meet your needs and preferences. Here are some of the components included in the Team Charter provided by CTL:

- **Team Name and Contact Information**: Teams begin by choosing a name and listing the contact information for each member. This fosters a sense of identity and makes it easy for students to reach each other throughout the collaboration.
- **Communication Platforms**: Students agree on the digital platforms they will use for communication, such as email, messaging apps, or collaborative tools like Microsoft Teams or WhatsApp. This ensures that everyone knows where to find updates and how to connect with their teammates.
- **Meeting Schedule:** The charter is an ideal place to begin scheduling regular meeting, taking into account time zone differences and mid-semester changes in daylight savings time**.** Since the dates of the collaboration have already been set at this point, it's useful to list these weeks on the team charter. This allows students to tentatively agree on the days and times that work best for them to meet.
- **Contingency Plans**: The charter can also provide a section for students to decide what actions to take if a team member cannot attend a meeting. Will they record the meeting or use a shared document to keep absent members informed?
- **Team Roles**: Defining specific roles, such as Team Coordinator, Communications Manager, Note Taker, and Editor, helps distribute responsibilities evenly and ensures that all necessary tasks are covered.

Click here to see a sample Team Charter.

WhatsApp Groups

Students use a variety of technological tools to communicate with one another and it’s important to give them the freedom to choose what works best for them. However, WhatsApp is a popular platform familiar to students in most parts of the world. This makes it an ideal choice for facilitating team communication in COIL projects.

To help jumpstart communication among students, consider creating WhatsApp groups for each student team in advance. During the launch meeting, you can then provide a QR code that students can scan to voluntarily join their respective groups.

This approach helps ensure that all students are on the same page, literally, and prevents delays in establishing effective outside communication channels. Once the groups are established and

all members have joined, you or your TA can exit the group, allowing it to remain a student-only space. Students can also opt to communicate with each other using a different platform.
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Documenting Participation

In a synchronous collaboration, students typically are required to meet live with their cameras on at least once a week. This regular face-to-face interaction is crucial for building rapport and ensuring active participation in the COIL project. To verify that these meetings are taking place, you can ask students to provide a screenshot as evidence of their participation.

Some faculty have found it useful to go beyond screenshots by requiring students to write short reflections after each meeting. These individual reflections can be posted in eLearning or another designated platform and should include a brief summary of what was discussed during the meeting. Additionally, students can use this space to note if they missed the meeting and explain why. They can also outline any steps they are taking to catch up on missed work or contribute to the team's efforts.

This approach not only helps track participation but also encourages students to reflect on their contributions and responsibilities within the team. It fosters a culture of accountability and ensures that all students are actively involved in the learning process, even if they occasionally miss a meeting.

In asynchronous collaborations, platforms like Padlet can be used for posting discussions or brief videos each week. Students can then engage by commenting on these posts at their convenience. This method ensures that all students can participate in the collaboration, regardless of their access to stable internet connections, and provides a flexible way to document their contributions and interactions.
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Structuring Synchronous Student Meetings

When developing assignments for a COIL, ensure that the synchronous meetings are scaffolded, providing a clear progression that gradually builds toward the final project. Scaffolding helps

students systematically develop their collaboration skills and deepen their understanding of the assigned subject matter.

Including an icebreaker in each meeting is also crucial, as it fosters interpersonal connections and creates a more comfortable and collaborative environment. These structured activities ensure that students are not only working effectively on their projects but are also engaging in meaningful intercultural exchanges. Here is an example of how this structure might be implemented.

Meeting 1:

- **Icebreaker:** Begin by assigning a simple activity to help students relax and engage, such as comparing university systems. Students can discuss how their education systems work, including class schedules, grading practices, and interactions with professors.
- **Brainstorming:** After the icebreaker, ask them to brainstorm and select a topic for the project.
- **Team Charter:** If not completed during the launch, students can use this time finalize the Team Charter, which outlines roles, responsibilities, and expectations.

Meeting 2:

- **Icebreaker:** In their second synchronous meeting, students could begin by creating a shared music playlist to highlight the universality of music. Provide discussion prompts to encourage conversations about their favorite genres, artists, and cultural influences.
- **Planning:** Now that they have selected a topic, students could begin outlining the work plan for the project and assign specific tasks to each team member. This step helps organize the group's efforts and ensures that everyone has a clear role in the collaboration.

Meeting 3 and Beyond:

- **Icebreaker:** Continue with icebreakers, such as asking students to compare traditional foods from their countries and sharing photos of their favorite dishes.
- **Project Development:** Provide guidance on how they can delve deeper into the project, refining the outline, discussing research findings, and preparing deliverables.

Each meeting builds towards the final project while also enhancing the students' intercultural understanding and collaboration skills. This makes the collaborative process both enjoyable and effective.

Wrap Up Meeting

Much like the beginning of the collaboration, the wrap-up meeting brings both professors and students together again synchronously to showcase the projects developed during the COIL. This concluding session is an excellent opportunity for students to present their work, share their experiences, and reflect on the challenges and successes they encountered.

If appropriate, you can ask students to vote on the best project and award prizes, adding an element of celebration and recognition to the event. The wrap-up meeting is also a time for students to discuss the intercultural insights they gained and reflect on their learning.

Final Reflection

The final reflection is an integral part of any COIL project, similar to the other piece of bread in a sandwich where the ice breaker is the first piece. Reflection is where much of the deep learning occurs because it encourages students to think critically about their experiences and draw meaningful conclusions from their interactions.

Instructors can facilitate this reflection through guided questions, prompts, or activities that encourage students to explore their experiences in depth. Students can record a reflection video and post it on the Padlet platform.

This final step not only enhances the educational impact of the COIL project but also helps students to internalize the skills they have developed.
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Peer Evaluation

Even if you require students to write reflections after every meeting, conducting a formal peer evaluation at the end of the COIL project can provide additional insights into the collaborative process. Peer evaluations allow students to assess their own contributions and those of their teammates, offering a structured way to reflect on group dynamics, participation, and individual accountability. This process helps identify strengths and areas for improvement, fostering a deeper understanding of effective teamwork.

The results of these evaluations can inform the overall grading process. Professors can decide how to address situations where students did not perform adequately. Often, a team grade is assigned based on the collective output, with individual grades adjusted downward for those who did not contribute as expected. This approach ensures that each student's performance is fairly evaluated and that the final grade reflects both individual and group contributions.

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Grading Rubric

A well-designed grading rubric provides clear criteria for assessing various components of the project, ensuring consistency and fairness in grading. The specifics of the rubric will vary from project to project, depending on the course objectives and the nature of the collaboration. A sample project rubric can be accessed here.

By emphasizing the process of collaboration in the grading rubric, instructors can highlight the importance of teamwork, which is key component of COIL projects. This approach not only assesses the final product but also values the skills and experiences gained throughout the project.

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COIL Completion Badge

Upon successfully completing a VE/COIL project, students receive a digital badge as a form of microcredentialing recognition. Students can add the VE/COIL digital badges to their LinkedIn profiles or resumes, providing a verifiable record of their participation in this global experience. Potential employers can click on the badge to learn more about the project and the skills students developed during the COIL, making it a valuable addition to their professional portfolio.

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Faculty Recognition

Every semester, the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) hosts a Virtual Exchange Faculty Showcase, providing an opportunity for faculty members to share their experiences and best practices in COIL projects. This event often includes participation from international partners and students, offering a rich platform for discussing the outcomes and challenges of cross-cultural collaborations.

The showcase allows faculty to present their projects, discuss what worked well, and explore areas for improvement with their colleagues. It also serves as a valuable networking opportunity,

fostering a community of practice around global learning initiatives. To see past showcases and learn more about the experiences shared, you can access the recordings and materials here.

In addition to the VE Faculty Showcase, faculty involved in COIL projects are recognized at the CTL Annual Celebration of Teaching Excellence, held at the end of April. This event celebrates outstanding teaching and innovative practices, highlighting the contributions of faculty members who have successfully integrated COIL into their curriculum. The recognition at this event underscores the importance of global engagement in the university's educational mission.
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VE Faculty Lounge

Faculty involved in COIL have the opportunity to connect through the VE Faculty Lounge. This informal online gathering happens periodically and serves as a platform for discussing the latest developments in virtual exchange, exploring grant opportunities, and sharing insights and experiences from their COIL projects.

CTL also hosts happy hours and other social events for COIL faculty, allowing instructors to network and build a supportive community around global learning initiatives. Return to Table of Contents

VE/COIL Newsletter

Stay informed and connected with the latest developments in COIL and virtual exchange by subscribing to the VE/COIL Newsletter. This newsletter showcases faculty accomplishments, highlights innovative projects, and provides updates on upcoming events and opportunities. It's an excellent resource for learning about best practices, new tools, and potential collaborations.
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