



# **INTERNATIONALISATION TRAINING AND BENCHMARKING REPORT**

## **MUST IUC-UCoBS PROJECT**

To: IUC Project 6 Team leaders

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**Date of submission: 16<sup>th</sup> December 2022**



	<p>international collaborations and partnerships</p> <p>4. Review the different tools in use for catalogue, feedback, international webpage and international newsletters</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documented ICT based good orientation practices</li> </ul>
<p>To strengthen MUST's communication capacity for enhanced public attention at the international level</p>	<p>1. Benchmarking good practices of organizing and hosting ICT based international conferences and webinars in disseminating sub-project results</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documented good practices of well-organized international conferences</li> <li>• Customized tools for best practices to strengthen communication of the MUST International Relations Office</li> </ul>
<p>To strengthen MUST's key strategic international partnerships and collaborations</p>	<p>1. Review the existing internationalization policies/agenda/guidelines of project partners</p> <p>2. Work with international office staff in the host Flemish institutions in developing a draft outline of the internationalization policy/guidelines</p> <p>3. Discussions on formalising MUST partnerships with AP and Thomas Moore</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drafted ideas of the Internationalization policy/ guidelines</li> <li>• Reviewed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) drafts</li> </ul>

## 2.0 Details of Activities Undertaken

### Under Objective 1: To digitalize the international orientation programmes and processes within MUST

#### *a) Digitalized orientation manual*

It was observed that all the four universities utilize online information for their students and other stakeholders that can be accessed easily. The different lay outs and information packages were identified and discussions held. This provided a good benchmark for MUST to develop digitalized information guides and improve the IRO webpage. The information given ranges from pre-arrival, on boarding processes to during stay updates, events offered and feedback surveys, information tool kits, brief videos giving relevant information.

The international 'welcome days'/orientation activities were well explained and how these enable students to settle in the new university environment. Creative ways of involving international students to understand the university and the country at large were elaborated such as short lectures on particular topics, info-sessions, video sessions, visit museums and country side, photo competitions of their view of the world or places they have been too. Short and doable activities that can be easily organized and result oriented are undertaken.

One of the beneficial strategies used is the buddy system that provides incoming international students an opportunity to get in touch with identified already enrolled students on campus ready to support and guide them. These are the buddies, available for the freshmen to respond to their inquiries and help them understand the university surroundings.

Another strategy is Slack – a communication (messaging) platform that improves how communities communicate. This is a good option to engage the international community at MUST. There were good ICT facilities that enable communication processes.



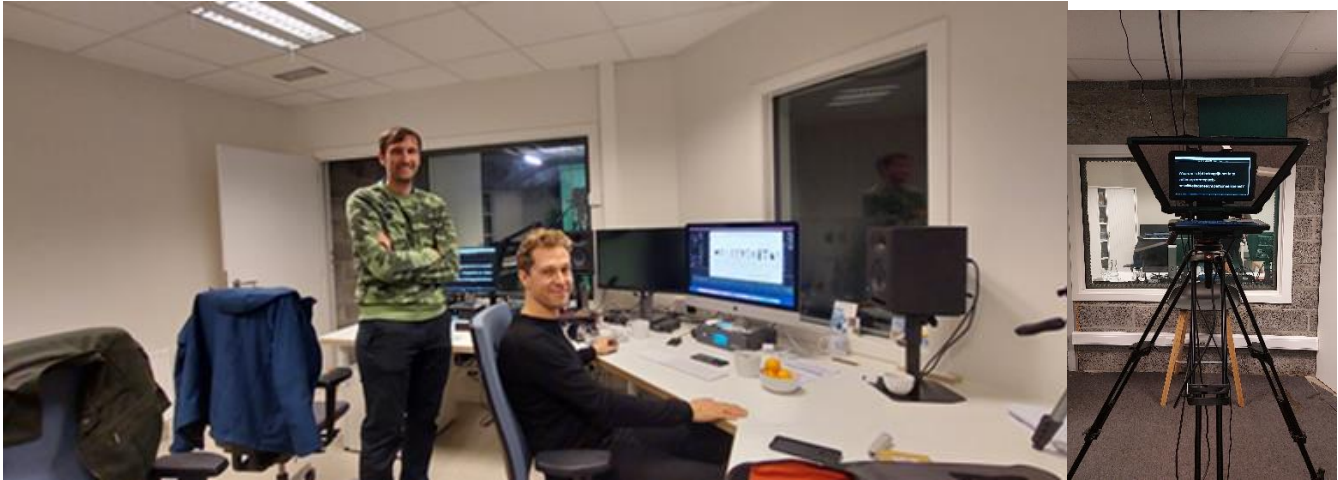
*Photo above: Sheila with Mr. Dirk Van Merode from AP University after visiting ICT department*

## **Under Objective 2: To strengthen MUST's communication capacity for enhanced public attention at the international level**

### ***a) Utilising online avenues for dissemination of information***

For strengthened communication capacity for staff and students, Ghent University has dedicated space for internal and external communication. Studio Team Multimedia at Ghent University records video clips for staff (both academic and administrative staff) and students. The knowledge clips and recordings for lectures are of high quality and market the university.

Some of the cost friendly alternatives materials were discussed and can be attained under the MUST IUC-UCoBS project. These are: camera, camera stand, rode wireless Go II microphones, studio led light panels and the Bresser BR 225B led daglicht set.



*Left: Mr. Rudy Gevaert the Project 6 team leader with Mr. Yves De Mol at the UGhent Multimedia centre*

*Right: A projector screen used during recordings*

To improve communication, it was observed that there are IRO staff-based at Faculties that support various facets of IRO. They use various tools to feed information to the IRO database. A number of design tools, software platforms and content management systems that ease international relations work were deliberated on. Among these are Notion, Canva, Word press, flex mail and mailchimp. These help to send group and specific information, improve the outlook of fliers, online news letters and reports.



*Photo above: Sheila with Dr. Frederik D'hulster -Vice Rector of Education and International Affairs-HOWEST University of Applied Sciences after the Ambassador's meeting event at Ghent University*

***b) Career Development and Scholarship opportunities for enhanced MUST visibility***

In order to increase MUST presence at the international level, a number of opportunities were documented to strengthen the capacity of MUST;

The European Association for International Education (EAIE) focuses on internationalising higher education through collaboration, knowledge exchange, life-long learning and professional development. Some of the trainings to enhance skills in internationalisation of higher education are in management, intercultural communication, student services, policy and strategy among others. The great opportunities for international learning and attaining skills to manage international relations offices can be got in the annual conferences, online learning and webinars provided. These can only be fully utilized when one is a registered member. Below is the link;  
<https://www.eaie.org/join-us.html>

The Erasmus + AK171 funding opportunity was discussed with partners and a call will be submitted with AP University of Applied Sciences. The Erasmus AK171 enables student and staff exchanges between universities. This is vital for MUST to provide an opportunity for international exposure in different countries. HOWEST University of Applied Sciences, which has an institutional Memorandum of Understanding is ready to network with MUST to exploit the Erasmus + AK171 annual calls. Below is the link to the Erasmus website;  
<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/>

Master mind scholarships were also explored and these can always be disseminated for MUST community and alumni to benefit from. The Belgium government awards scholarships to outstanding students to study in Flanders and Brussels. Applications need to be submitted by the Universities in Belgium. Below is the link  
<https://www.studyinlanders.be/scholarships/master-mind-scholarships>

Different funding opportunities apart by VLIR-UOS apart from the Institutional University Cooperation (IUC) and teams' projects were discussed. Among these are Masters programmes opportunities and the International Training Programme that focuses on an intensive, interactive, and practice-oriented training courses under particular themes. The current themes are; sustainable development, transversal skills for higher education (HE) management and transversal or priority themes. Below are the links for more information.

<https://www.wemakescholars.com/trust-foundation/vlir-uos/scholarships>  
<https://www.vliruos.be/en/ongoingcalls/opencalls/call-international-training-programme-projects-itp-2023>



*Meeting part of the international team at "The Level Campus" at HOWEST University of Applied Sciences*

### **Under Objective 3: To strengthen MUST's key strategic international partnerships and collaborations**

#### ***a) Ideas for Internationalisation Policy generated***

All the four universities did not have a documented internationalisation policy although there are a number of internationalisation guides. For instance, the vision of international office of HOWEST was reviewed and the elements of internationalisation were discussed with AP University staff. The generated ideas will inform the development of MUST internationalisation policy.

#### ***b) MoUs discussed***

Discussions were held to develop the MoU between MUST and Thomas More University and is now in final stages. After discussions with Ms. Inge Verhaert, the Director of Student Affairs and Education at AP University, the MUST MoU template was shared for further engagement.

### **3.0 Conclusion and Recommendations**

The visit to the Flemish institutions was timely, relevant and informative to strengthen the operations of the IRO at MUST. The benchmarking visit created a window for formalizing partnerships and collaborations such as AP University of Applied Sciences, Ghent University and Thomas More University of Applied Sciences. The onus is now on implementing what was benchmarked to inform; digitalization of international tools and processes; increase communication capacity for enhanced MUST visibility at international level and augment international partnerships.

Given various ICT tools and applications available to strengthen the international relations digital and communication capacity, the ICT department at MUST needs to support the IRO in using these avenues for increased visibility of MUST internationalisation.

Since there are various faculty-based staff in the international relations office at the visited Flemish universities, an international relations forum comprised of Faculty coordinators is vital to advance the internationalisation agenda at MUST. These can be trained to support the international relations office. These ably enable us to know what is on ground and needs to be communicated on website and social media platforms.

There are highly placed skills at Ghent University for establishing a recording studio which sub-project 6 can harness. This should be worked on to strengthen the must eLearning and international conferencing.

Though I have been part of the EAIE for over 3 years subscribing to their on line- news updates, I have not fully benefited because of lack of funds of being registered as an EAIE member. I propose that through the UCoBS-IUC, I will be considered for this annual membership and participating in the annual conferences. The reduced individual membership fee for countries with low-income economies is €130 per year to applicants. The next meeting will take place in Rotterdam, Netherlands from 26<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> September 2023 under the theme connecting currents.

#### **Acknowledgement**

I appreciate the Prof. Celestino Obua, the MUST Vice Chancellor for allowing me to travel for this benchmarking visit. I am grateful to the MUST-IUC-UCoBS Local Coordinator, Project Support Unit and in particular Project 6 team leaders for organizing the visit. Special thanks to Mr. Rudy Gevaert and the Flemish university international office staff for coordinating the different visits I had. I am indebted to Ms. Inge De Keyser for hosting me while in Belgium.

Succeed we must.