Internationalising the social work curriculum

A working toolkit for higher education facilities

Dr Janet Cater, Dr Chaitali Das, Dr Anne Campbell, Dr Gavin Davidson, Dr Katharine Dill, Dr Joe Duffy, Dr David Hayes, Dr Lorna Montgomery, Professor John Pinkerton

In partnership with:

Queen’s University Belfast
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Examples of international opportunities for students
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Planning
Selection of students
Preparation of students
Enhancing student resilience and stress management

Language and cultural awareness
Learning and teaching programme
Pedagogical approaches
Assessment of student learning
Assessment of reflective learning
Follow up and review (students and staff)
Formal debriefing
Evaluation methods
Use of focus groups
Surveys and questionnaires
Host facilities (students and faculty)
Service user involvement
Prevention and management of risk
E-learning and digital technology
Electronic discussion platform
Online module material
Funding and sustainability

Section 6: Summary

Thank you to our international contributors
1. Introduction to the toolkit

This toolkit was collated by social work academics at Queen’s University Belfast (QUB), United Kingdom, in collaboration with social work educators nationally and internationally who are committed to the internationalisation of the social work curriculum. The information and examples contained in this document offer a practical guide for the development and evaluation of international opportunities for students and academics. The resources were designed with diverse educational settings in mind for the enhancement of social work learning and teaching.

Literature review

Across the United Kingdom there is growing recognition of the global context of social work practice, along with increased student mobility and interest in overseas employment opportunities. This has fuelled a need to provide international social work practicums and curricula (Cleak et al., 2011). International exchange programmes are a developing feature of social work education in the United Kingdom that aims to provide students with a unique experience that combines their awareness of local issues with a global awareness of diversity and inequalities (Cox and Pawar, 2006; Healy, 2008; Das and Anand, 2013).

The Wilson Review (2012:40) states that: “Ideally, every full-time undergraduate student should have the opportunity to experience a structured university-approved undergraduate internship during their period of study.” The 2010 International Federation of Social Work’s (IFSW, 2011) global agenda provides incentives for the growth of exchange programmes to enhance social work students’ awareness of how global issues influence local concerns and the development of cultural competence (Bell and Anscombe, 2012; Das and Anand, 2013).

The recent Higher Education Academy’s (HEA) Internationalising Higher Education Framework offers a new foundation on which to build curriculum. Educational rationales for international placements include the opportunity for students to broaden their cultural horizons (Pawar, 2000) and exposure to alternative cultural contexts, where definitions of social problems, welfare structures and interventions may differ from one’s own context (Behrnd and Porzelt, 2012). Research concludes that international locations are powerful sites for critical reflection, challenging traditional approaches to teaching and learning (Magnus, 2009; Das and Anand, 2013). Ferguson et al. (2002) argue that international placements offer students the context for understanding the critical and radical nature of social work practice that may not always be accessible to students in the local context.

Enthusiasm for international placements, however, must be balanced with consideration of the limitations of such programmes. Limited university resources, financial and practical barriers that exclude some groups of students from participating, and the potential for negative experiences and outcomes are some of the major concerns (Cornelius and Greif, 2005; Cox and Pawar, 2006; Bell and Anscombe, 2012; Das and Anand, 2013). Within the United Kingdom, international placement programmes have tended to operate on relatively fluid, ad hoc arrangements (Panos et al., 2004) and only recently have developed more comprehensive
understandings of the scope of international placements. Social work educators are increasingly under pressure to evaluate the learning outcomes of internationalising the curriculum for students. Nevertheless, difficult challenges in organising and supporting an international placement programme, such as addressing student expectations, meeting accreditation requirements and the resourcing costs for the students exist and must be addressed (Panos et al., 2004; Rai, 2004; Nuttman-Shwartz and Berger, 2011).

It is therefore timely to start collating and sharing examples of reliable practice for use within schools of social work within the United Kingdom.

**Read more**


Project aims

Given the resource-intensive nature of internationalising professional curriculum and the relatively weak evidence base, QUB social work academics devised an evaluation strategy based on their existing programme. During this process it became apparent that the quality and sustainability of our programme could be further enhanced by networking with other academics and higher education facilities involved in similar internationalisation activities. The need to work in partnership became even more apparent through our (QUB academics') participation in the HEA Internationalising the Curriculum Enhancement programme, as we interacted with academics from different disciplines and universities addressing similar issues and posing the same questions with regards to the educational quality and impact of international placements for students.

A national toolkit including resources, materials and practice guidelines for the delivery and evaluation of the internationalisation of social work education is in alignment with current professional standards and the HEA framework and represents a natural progression for the QUB social work team. The toolkit aims to provide UK social work students, academics and universities with access to selected tools and resources for the delivery of a quality international field experience and the evaluation of teaching and learning outcomes.

The objectives of the project were as follows:

- in consultation with students, key educational and professional organisations identify key values, knowledge and skills for the promotion of quality international learning opportunities;
- with permission from participating social work academics, students and service users disseminate practical examples and reliable tools;
- in collaboration with academics and students and the HEA explore the possible use of technology for promoting and disseminating material online;
- through fostering networks and communities of practice, promote the future sustainability of resources, funding and models for the internationalisation of social work education;
- promote an ongoing reciprocal learning process involving the key stakeholders.

Funding and acknowledgements

The QUB social work team would like to acknowledge the contribution and expertise of the national and international academics involved in this project, which was funded under the Strategic Enhance Programmes (Internationalising the Curriculum), HEA, United Kingdom. The practical and financial support of the School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work, QUB has also been invaluable and the work of our academic team was recognised in the QUB 2015 Teaching Awards and the Health and Social Care Board Northern Ireland Social Work Awards 2015.
Collating resources

The initial inspiration for the toolkit developed from the QUB team’s experiences of establishing international opportunities for undergraduate social work students in Northern Ireland. Many of the material and examples included is taken directly from our programme. In many respects our team of social work educators were relatively inexperienced in ‘internationalising the social work curriculum’ but were motivated to share their vision for educating students for a global profession and an increasingly global labour market.

Methodology

In the spring semester of 2015, the QUB social work team undertook a formal audit process involving input from UK, European and international schools of social work that actively participate in international exchange programmes. The audit gathered information on the types of internationalisation activities schools were involved in, the aims and objectives and procedures employed, resources and funding sources utilised, processes used for the selection and preparation of students, and evaluation strategies employed. The audit collated responses from schools of social work in Germany, Finland, Sweden, Denmark and USA.

In addition, internet searches with key words such as ‘international social work’, ‘international placements in social work’ were conducted to identify schools that seemed to have an active international programme. These schools were contacted by email and requested to participate in the audit. A brief analysis of the international programmes identified through the internet search was also undertaken using the data obtained from their respective websites. While the responses to the audit were not extensive and the findings cannot be generalised, the audit nevertheless allows an understanding of some of the impetus for internationalisation and provides a glimpse of some of the tools used. The internet-based research helped to further enhance the scope of the material provided.

Summary of the academic audit findings

The academic audit not only provided a rich source of practical material and tools but the responses also offered an overview of the current state of internationalisation across different social work programmes. Social work academics from the following institutions provided responses to the audit:

- University of Ostfalia, Germany;
- VIA University College, Denmark;
- JAMK University of Applied Sciences, Finland;
- Jönköping University, Sweden;
- Fachhochshule, Münster, Germany;
- University of Michigan, USA;
- Free University Bozen/Bolzano, Italy;
- University of New Hampshire, USA;
- Hochschule Bremen, Germany.
**Type of internationalisation:** Almost all responses in the audit indicated that the social work schools were involved in more than one type of internationalisation activity. International student placements and international student exchanges were common across all the responses in the audit, all the schools participated in one or more activities such as international seminars, international modules, planned exchanges and visits by students and academics, and ad hoc visits by students and academics.

**Resources used:** Schools used resources such as external literature, video, audio as well as other internet resources (Skype, internet tools) to support their international programme. Some also developed their own material and internet resources to support their programmes.

**Aims of internationalisation:** The key aims of internationalisation across the participating schools were:

- a global holistic approach, an orientation;
- developing competencies for global social work;
- increase in staff and student mobility.

**Sites of international activity:** All participants indicated international activity in more than one country. The audit responses indicated partnerships with a range of actors from social work schools abroad to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in other countries and international NGOs. Countries of international activity included Italy, Portugal, Denmark, France, Sweden, UK, India, China, Poland, Russia, Germany, Tanzania, Kenya, Nigeria, Estonia, Russia, UK, Botswana, USA, Germany, South Africa, Namibia, Vienna, Switzerland, Philippines, Poland, Uruguay, Spain, Australia, Hong Kong, Chile, Ecuador and Israel.

**Selection of participants:** Student participation in the international programmes was generally organised through expression of interest by students followed by a selection process that outlined certain criteria. Students were then selected by a formal application and/or interview process.

In some instances students’ grades, level of maturity and level of study (for example, final year placement) were considered. Some schools also requested students to write an essay. Group interviews and informal talks were also used by schools to ascertain interest and select students for participation in international activities. Schools mainly seemed to select students based on availability of placements.

**Preparatory tools:** While a few schools used language classes, debriefing and preparatory modules prior to student exchanges/visits or placements, and required appropriate health insurance and vaccinations, this was not a very prominent feature.

**Involvement of service users and programme evaluations:** Only a couple of schools indicated involvement of service users, primarily through the organisations in which students were placed while abroad. Evaluation of the programme was assessed in terms of student outcomes for a couple of schools and consisted of qualitative reports or anecdotes, student reports and supervision.

**Funding:** For all the schools, students bore the costs of the international activity. However, for most European schools, there was some support from the institution as well as support for funding through ERASMUS (European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) or other funding organisations such as Nordplus in Denmark and Finland.
Findings from the internet-based research on international programmes by school also indicated similar types of internationalisation activities namely student visits/exchanges through study abroad and international student placements. Some schools also offer modules, electives and programmes in international or global social work, or programmes of comparative social work between two countries. Much less common but available are inter-disciplinary projects between, for example, engineering students and social work students developing projects for sustainable communities abroad.

**Dissemination of experiences/outcomes:** Most schools seemed to provide qualitative information about the international activity through student blogs, via contact with students who have travelled abroad, students’ presentations etc. Some schools seemed to have also published in peer-reviewed journals outlining their international activities.

**Summary and analysis**

International activities within social work are largely focussed on international student visits and placements. While this contributes to some internationalisation of the curriculum, most placements seem optional and dependent on student interests and funding capabilities. European schools and students, nevertheless, receive some financial benefit through ERASMUS programmes. To what extent this internationalisation is reflected across the curriculum for all students is unclear. Some schools do offer international modules and programmes that may be more integrated in the curriculum and independent of student ability to access funding or resources for such activities.

Some schools use certain tools for selection. However, almost all schools evaluate the outcomes of such activities on students through qualitative measures or via assessments of the placement through student reports and supervisory arrangements. There is increased awareness of the need to evaluate teaching and learning outcomes for host facilities and universities. Moreover, the impact of internationalising the social work curriculum on service users remains uncharted territory. It is clear that internet technologies provide ease of access and are extensively used to market international activities (student blogs, internet information pages), design preparation tools (providing student information through specifically designed websites, downloadable checklists, resources and information that can be downloaded) as well as in evaluation and assessment (via Skype or other internet communication technologies).

**Summary of the student survey**

The survey seeking students’ perceptions received 53 responses, out of which three were practitioners in addition to being social work students. These students were attending social work or allied courses in Finland, Germany, and Northern Ireland. All but three student participants had taken part in an international social work project. These projects included attending seminars (17), attending workshops (12), attending specific modules on international social work (11), short exchanges and/or visits (11), international placements (1) and participation in international activities via social media (2).

**Importance of internationalisation in social work:** The survey responses indicated that students view internationalisation as an important activity, in particular to develop cultural competence (22), work at an international level to solve problems (25) and learn about
different methods of social work (23), as well as to build networks (35). Students also seemed to recognise the importance of internationalisation activities in developing skills such as group work (22), leadership (18), working autonomously (13), improving their self-confidence (21) and improving their career prospects (26). These ideas were further reiterated when they qualitatively commented on whether they think internationalisation is important and why. Participants’ responses included noting the importance of cultural competence (15), understanding the broad base of social work theory and practice (8), appreciating the increasing global-local connections where the local and global impact each other (11), learning from social work practices in other countries and developing better solutions and practices (21). Students seemed to appreciate internationalisation as an opportunity to cultivate new ideas and learn from each other and an overwhelming 22 participants responded that they would support internationalisation for this reason. Other reasons included cultural competence (7), to travel (4), to impact practice across countries (7), to inform their own practice (2), and to evaluate and compare (1).

What kind of internationalisation: Most students regarded placements (32) and exchange or short visits (29) as the most beneficial international activities in social work followed by conferences (23) and international speakers (22). Focussed modules (15), e-learning methods (12) and use of international texts/articles (14) received significantly lower support. Not surprisingly, in their qualitative comments as to how internationalisation could be supported, students’ suggestions included travel/exchange/placements (4), networking with international practitioners (1), modules (1), using technology (1) and focusing on the taught curriculum (1).

Perceived barriers/limitations to internationalisation: Students perceived the diversion of resources and time (26) that international activities demand as one of the greatest limitations/barriers to internationalisation, followed by unsuitability of participating in internationalisation activities for all students (17), difficulties in implementation (17), issues of risks in international activities (15), potential to be unethical (7), confusing link between theory and practice (7), potential to cause disagreements and conflicts (5), potential to be stressful and unpleasant (1). Students also identified language barriers, nationalistic thinking and media misinformation as possible barriers and limitations to internationalisation activities.

Summary and analysis: It is interesting to note that students viewed internationalisation in social work as an important activity and highly regarded the opportunities it provides to enhance cultural competence but also as an opportunity to learn, share and create better solutions for practice and networking. However, it is also interesting that most students view internationalisation activities in terms of placements and/or exchange and visits. They seemed less inclined to regard conferences, speakers, e-learning or modules that focus on internationalisation as equally relevant or important activities within internationalisation. In terms of recognising limitations as well as the ways in which internationalisation can be supported, students seemed to respond to activities that are focussed on placements, short exchanges or visits, particularly when they note that it may not be suited to all students, that there are risks involved or issues of causing confusion.
Section 2: Internationalising the social work curriculum

This section will outline the arguments for internationalising the social work curriculum and discuss different models or frameworks. The success of any international programme is dependent on successfully arguing and eventually demonstrating how internationalisation contributes to the core aims of the university and the profession. Active engagement and commitment of teachers, students and professionals is essential, together with securing organisational and professional resources to support internationalisation programmes and activities.

The first stage in the internationalisation process involves mobilising people and organisational resources and support. It is important to be mindful that internationalisation involves diverse and sometimes competing agendas (professional, university and personal).

The Higher Education Academy, United Kingdom

The HEA framework provides a rationale as to the generic benefits of internationalisation for staff and students.

Benefits for students:

- enrich and learn from the collective wealth of experience and knowledge in higher education, that draws on their personal cultural and educational backgrounds and prior learning, enhancing engagement and belonging;
- make connections with people from across the world, enhancing confidence in using and developing intercultural and interpersonal skills, leading to lifelong friendships and networks;
- experience new cultures, languages, ways of working, learning and thinking, helping to widen horizons and prepare for entry into a global job market;
- be part of an academic community with international connections and networks to draw on and contribute to, thus enriching the learning process.
- critically engage with, and assist in, addressing global issues (such as inequalities and sustainability), challenging personal beliefs, assumptions and values, helping the development of global citizenship.

Benefits for the organization:

- value and harness the breadth of insights and experience within the organisation, demonstrate a sense of pride and belonging, helping contribute to an inclusive culture;
- critically reflect upon and understand the beliefs, assumptions and values of oneself and others, as situated within personal, cultural and national contexts;
- widen experiences and appreciation of international developments and contexts of learning, in order to enhance the quality and impact of learning opportunities, teaching and research;
- enhance the occurrence, relevance and impact of the process and products of international alliances, providing potential sources of evidence to support achievement and progression in teaching and research;
- interrogate global issues (such as inequality or sustainability) through education, thus making a personal and collective contribution to wider society.
Aims and objectives
Social work academics, practitioners and students frequently subscribe to different and often conflicting aspirations and motives for promoting the internationalisation agenda. The three main positions are outlined below:

**Developing a vision of international social work**
Pursuing an all-encompassing framework for social work

**Comparing and contrasting different social work traditions**
Partialising and comparing social work across different countries

**Facilitating discourse and critical debate**
Exploring competing and interacting perspectives


The following exercise provides both students and academics with the opportunity to clarify their rationale and motives in regards to internationalisation.

**Internationalise the social work curriculum?**

Debate the pros and cons of each of the different approaches to internationalisation. Which of the three rationales appeals to you the most? Outline the reasons why.

In a small group outline a set of aims and objectives for internationalisation within your current social work programme.

**Engaging students**
For the most part students are concerned with graduating from university with skills relevant to the local employment market. An important reason for internationalising the curriculum is to prepare social work students for working across local, national and international contexts (AASW, 2003) of practice. Healy (2001) believes that international social work education includes both social work preparation for careers with culturally/ethnically diverse populations within a specific country and also with those in other countries. These aims are also consistent with the profession’s historical legacy of social development in countries around the world.

The following exercise introduces students to the notion of practising social work across different cultural contexts.

**Student exercise: What is international social work?**
Is the social work practice that you are familiar with the same as that carried out in different parts of the world?

Is there something in common that all social workers would recognise in each other’s practice in whatever country they find themselves?

What values, knowledge and skills would you need to practise social work in an international context?

Read more


Dimensions of international social work practice

The notion of international social work is difficult for students and practitioners to appreciate given that their attention is focussed on the busy demands of the local context of practice. Healy (2001) provides a useful overview of the four dimensions of international social work practice.

1. Internationally-related domestic practice and advocacy (for example international dimensions of domestic social work practice).

2. Professional exchange (for example exchange international knowledge and experiences).

3. International practice (for example international development and aid work).

4. International policy and advocacy (for example formulate and promulgate positions on social issues).

Read more


International definition of social work

The following global definition was approved by the IFSW General Meeting and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) General Assembly in July 2014:

*Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for*
diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance well-being.

It is a useful exercise to encourage academics and students to explore this definition and the concepts and underlying values which reflect diverse cultural and ideological traditions.

Read more
International Federation of Social Workers [http://ifsw.org/policies/definition-of-social-work/]

International social work organisations
The following professional organisations play a key role in promoting the professional global agenda through advocacy and education.

International Association of Schools of Social Work
The IASSW is the worldwide association of schools of social work, including tertiary-level social work educational programmes, and social work educators. The IASSW promotes the development of social work education throughout the world, develops standards to enhance quality of social work education, encourages international exchange, provides a forum for sharing social work research and scholarship, and promotes human rights and social development through policy and advocacy activities.

International Council of Social Welfare
The International Council of Social Welfare (ICSW) is an NGO that represents international, national, and local organisations dedicated to social welfare, social development and social justice.

International Federation of Social Workers
The IFSW is a global organisation striving for social justice, human rights and social development through the promotion of social work, best practice models and the facilitation of international cooperation.

European Association of Schools of Social Work
The European Association of Schools of Social Work (EASSW) brings together over 300 different schools, universities and tertiary education institutions supporting social work education throughout Europe, for the purpose of developing standards to enhance the quality of social work, encouraging international exchange and providing a forum for sharing social work research and scholarship.

The Global Agenda and Global Observatory
The Global Agenda is a call to action advocating for the universal implementation of human rights and social justice by the IASSW, the ICSW, and the IFSW. The Global Agenda, which was officially unveiled at Social Work Day at the United Nations in 2012, established a Global Agenda Observatory to monitor and report on the implementation of the agenda commitments.
Data collection is underway for resources addressing the first commitment, promoting social and economic equalities. Examples of resources that can be submitted for the Observatory include papers, videos, audio files and pictures.

**Read more**

These objectives are outlined in The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development: Commitments to Actions. [http://ifsw.org/get-involved/agenda-for-social-work/](http://ifsw.org/get-involved/agenda-for-social-work/)

**Higher Education Academy**

There are many different models on how to go about internationalising the professional curriculum. The HEA provides a framework for internationalising the academic curriculum which aims to:

- recognise, build on and enhance the quality and variety of internationalisation policy and practice in higher education;
- foster collegial approaches to education, research and partnership that transcend national and international boundaries;
- acknowledge the ongoing institutional and individual roles and responsibilities required to realise the internationalisation of higher education.

The HEA also provides a unique collection of resources, research, reports and guidance documents to support your organisation in planning and implementing its internationalisation strategy.

**An example of a model for internationalising the social work curriculum**

The QUB social work team developed an approach to internationalisation which reflected local needs and priorities. The model depicts a synergy between educational, professional, organisational and research objectives and activities. Internationalising the teaching curriculum has implications for research and theory development, postgraduate education, university profile and outreach.
Source: Professor Janet Anand, Professor of International Social Work, University of Eastern Finland
Building participation

Ambivalence and occasionally resistance from fellow academics, students and professionals who are not convinced of the relevance of international social work to the local context is to be expected. Building support and broader organisation involvement requires a strategic approach.

Examples of how to promote participation and support are given below.

*Queen’s University Belfast Internationalisation Champion*

An internationalisation champion is someone within the school or faculty who has a recognised formal role in raising and promoting the internationalisation agenda amongst fellow academics. This does not necessarily mean that they take on sole responsibility for internationalisation activities, rather that they act as in a facilitator’s role providing much needed mentorship, support, advice and information on opportunities, strategies and collaboration as well as provide feedback and report on progress. This role can be an individual’s role or a collective role shared by a committee. It has been the QUB experience that the internationalisation champion roles worked best using an inclusive approach promoting and supporting individuality, diversity and flexibility.

*Queen’s University Belfast Social Work Student Internationalisation Working Party*

The involvement of students in the development and resourcing of internationalising the curriculum is invaluable. Working as a collective, students were able to collaborate alongside academics and help address many of the practical issues relating to the sustainability of internationalisation programmes. In the QUB case the student working party was instrumental in advocating for the funding of international visits and provided a clear indication of what destinations and directions they preferred for the programme. The opportunity to work alongside academics provided new learning opportunities and promoted positive student teacher partnerships.

Source: Professor Janet Anand, Professor of International Social Work, University of Eastern Finland
**Building effective networks**

Most UK universities have extensive formal academic collaborations with national and international universities, while individual academics naturally develop professional and personal networks involving international colleagues. Universities strategically target international regions in the global south (for example, Africa, India, China) for enhanced teaching and research collaboration, and offer funding to develop such partnerships. It is also common for academics and universities to capitalise on existing links, such as a shared history of immigration and emigration or social/border issues, and develop formal academic networks from these experiences.

The most successful internationalisation programmes are frequently the product of personal and professional links between academics across different universities who share common interests, mutual benefits, two-way commitment and resourcing so as to remain viable over a period of time. Practical advice for identifying international partners, specifically for international placements and visits is provided in the next section.

The following is an example of how professional and educational organisations can collaborate to develop extensive links between social work across international borders.

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**China–United States Social Work Collaborative**

The China Collaborative is a demonstration project of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), Katherine A. Kendall Institute, the China Association of Social Work Education (CASWE), and the IASSW to foster the development of graduate social work education programmes in mainland China. The Collaborative engages American and Chinese graduate programmes in a five-year partnership. Participating US programmes are selected by CSWE, and Chinese programmes are selected by CASWE.

US programmes will assist their Chinese partners in the development of Masters in Social Work programmes that reflect the unique aspects of graduate education in mainland China. The academic programmes are committed to building capacity through faculty, staff and student exchanges; mentoring and consultation; building research infrastructure; and further strengthening social work education in an international context.

**Read more**

Katherine A. Kendall Institute for International Social Work Education

[http://www.cswe.org/CentersInitiatives/KAKI/AboutKAKI.aspx](http://www.cswe.org/CentersInitiatives/KAKI/AboutKAKI.aspx)
Section 3: International programmes and opportunities

The QUB focus on international opportunities has been an effective strategy in enhancing academic engagement, attracting university, professional and public attention to the aims of the programme and has made a contribution to the university profile nationally and internationally. International placements and visits open up new opportunities for teaching exchange, international research collaboration, postgraduate students and programmes (see model for internationalisation) and represent an important key to opening up the internationalisation of the social work curriculum.

Some of the incentives for providing international placement, visits and study abroad programmes are listed below.

*Student exercise: Why participate in international placements and opportunities?*

- opens one’s mind to diversity and new ways of learning;
- helps engage with new issues (environmental issues, terrorism, sectarianism, asylum seekers, migration, austerity) and international discourses;
- promotes an understanding that different communities are faced with similar social problems but tackle them differently;
- increases capacity to understand and critique provincial and national approaches to social issues and welfare systems;
- introduces the concepts of comparative social work practice, benchmarking and best practice;
- facilitates the internationalisation of professional education, for example across the European Union;
- enables a response to the needs of a dynamic global labour market;
- facilitates international cooperation in fighting for global social justice;
- helps with understanding of the development of social work practice.

Source: Adapted from Ife, 2007

*Read more*


**International social work practicums**

The variety of models or approaches to international practicums, visits and study abroad programmes reflects the experiential nature of adult teaching and learning opportunities.
Different types of international opportunities are summarised below.

**Academic courses abroad**
Academic courses abroad are approved by an accredited programme/university and conducted by a programme outside the home country or by a foreign entity in collaboration with, or approved by, the sponsoring domestic programme.

**Field practicum or placement abroad**
Practicums or placements are designed to provide opportunities for students to apply and integrate social work knowledge, skills and values gained in academic coursework through agency-based practice experience in other countries. Students are placed in an international social service organisation in which they can fulfill the field education expectations of the sponsoring home programme and receive supervision by field instructors who meet the criteria of that programme and home country accreditation standards. This option may be part of a required practicum which has integrated domestic-international components. The field director at the sponsoring home programme or a faculty member at a host country social work programme performs the role of field liaison.

**Optional practicum abroad**
As with a required practicum, this option is a structured, agency-based practice experience but in a foreign setting and is completed in addition to the required domestic or integrated domestic-international practicum. Within the same principles and practices that apply to required field instruction, the specific field education goals and competencies to be achieved are individualised and collaboratively determined by the field director (or designee) at the sponsoring home programme, the student and the agency-based field instructor. As in the required practicums, the field director (or designee) at the sponsoring home programme or a faculty member at the host social work programme performs the role of field liaison.

**International service learning projects**
International service learning is an experience that takes place in a foreign country at a local or community level within a collaborative relationship with a group or an organisation representing that community or a particular population in that community. The objectives of the experience, and the nature of student participation, are determined by the needs of the community and in that way differ from practicums, internships and other individual and group learning in which a determining factor is the learning needs of students. Therefore, service learning is often supplemented by additional activities provided or approved by the sponsoring home programme in order to make them eligible for academic credit.

**International internships**
International internships are opportunities, which may not be limited to social work students, to experience working in a non-governmental, governmental or intergovernmental organisation in a foreign country in a structured role that is determined primarily by the organisation providing the opportunity and by its needs. To the extent that the work performed does not meet student learning needs, international internships must be supplemented by additional activities provided or approved by the sponsoring home programme in order to make them eligible for academic credit.
Independent learning abroad

Independent learning abroad is designed to broaden and/or deepen the social work knowledge, skills and/or values of the participant through exposure to social issues, policies and practices within a foreign cultural context. Independent learning abroad is a faculty supervised, individualised course of study. The learning goals and competencies to be achieved by the participant are developed by the student and faculty through a collaborative process. Students study abroad independently or through involvement with a local, national or foreign-based organisation that provides the opportunity for students to achieve their learning goals.

Group study abroad

Group study abroad is designed to broaden and/or deepen the social work knowledge, skills and/or values of the participants through exposure to social issues, policies and practices within a foreign cultural context. Group study abroad is directed and facilitated by faculty who identify learning objectives, determine competencies to be achieved by the students, design the study abroad curriculum and accompany the programme participants.

Social work values and ethics

Participation in any internationalisation programme involves a specific set of values which translates across different cultural contexts.

The HEA, UK (2014) provides a set of generic values.

Key values include:

**Respect:** show consideration for individual, cultural and linguistic diversities.

**Equity:** ensure parity and fairness in approaches to, and opportunities for, participation and success.

**Ethical:** act with integrity and transparency with regard to moral, social and legal considerations.

**Openness:** be receptive to different ideas and ways of working across cultures and learning contexts.

**Reciprocity:** mutually generate and exchange knowledge, ideas and resources within and across cultures and intellectual traditions.

Higher Education Academy website: [https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/resources/internationalisingtheframeworkfinal.pdf](https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/resources/internationalisingtheframeworkfinal.pdf)
Values and ethics reflect specific cultural conditions and although the concept of universal values is contentious there are three basic principles of social work practice that transgress national borders. These are as follows.

**Human rights and human dignity**

Social work is based on respect for the inherent worth and dignity of all people, and the rights that follow from this. Social workers should uphold and defend each person’s physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual integrity and well-being. This means:

- respecting the right to self-determination;
- promoting the right to participation;
- treating each person as a whole;
- identifying and developing strengths.

**Social justice**

Social workers have a responsibility to promote social justice, in relation to society generally, and in relation to the people with whom they work. This means:

- challenging negative discrimination;
- recognising diversity;
- distributing resources equitably;
- challenging unjust policies and practices;
- working in solidarity.

**Ethical engagement**

Social work programmes abroad should be developed in ways that emphasise a mutual partnership, not a patronising or exploitative relationship. The interdependence of nations, cultures and peoples should be a core factor of study abroad programmes and be used to highlight the important role that social workers can play in bringing people together when human relationships are strained or damaged. Study abroad components should provide social work students with opportunities to learn from host sites and also to share their knowledge and skills with host sites. Efforts should be made to develop goals and objectives of the home study abroad programmes as well as those of partner institutions abroad. Some of these goals and objectives may be achieved during the visit while others will require preparation prior to and subsequent to the visit. Institutional relationships should emphasise relationship building through ongoing student and faculty interactions.

It is therefore important to promote ethical debate and reflection on the provision of social work in different contexts and countries.

Common ethical dilemmas encountered by students on international visits or placements include:

- social workers function as both helpers and controllers;
- there is conflict between the duty of social workers to protect the interests of the people with whom they work and societal demands for efficiency and utility;
- the fact that resources in society are limited.
The following exercise encourages social work students to consider the relativity and universality of social work ethics and values across diverse cultural contexts.

*Student exercise: Unpacking professional values*

Discuss the core values that inform social work practice in your country. Consider the core values of social work practice in the selected or host country.

Outline some of the similarities and differences. What are the implications, if any, for your value base?

*Read more*


**International conventions**

International human rights declarations and conventions form common standards of achievement, and recognise rights that are accepted by the global community.

Documents particularly relevant to social work practice and action across international borders are:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
- The International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights;
- The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination;
- The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women;
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention.

**Key international organisations**

In preparation for, and whilst participating on, their international placement or exchange social work students should consider the involvement of key United Nations and European organisations that address international social issues.

Relevant websites are listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>International Labour Organization</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>United Nations Development Fund for Women</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
### National professional organisations

One of the most effective ways of learning about social work practice and codes of practice in another country is to access the website of the national professional organisation.

One of the national social work organisations is provided below.

An example of one

**Canadian Association of Social Workers**

The Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) is a federation of nine provincial and one territorial social work organisations. It provides a national leadership role in strengthening and advancing the social work profession in Canada.

**Visit Link**

Canadian Association of Social Workers

http://www.casw-acts.ca/
A useful activity to prepare students prior to travelling abroad or whilst on an international placement opportunity is outlined below.

*Student exercise: Comparing social work practice in different countries*

Select a national social work professional website and compare and contrast the vision statement, codes of ethics and current practice issues with those of your national professional website. From the material on the website can you identify similarities and differences?

*Values and ethics*

Knowledge and theoretical tradition

*Skills*

Role, scope and status of social work practice
Section 4: Knowledge and skills for international placements and visits

When confronted with the complexity of unfamiliar political, social and cultural contexts and diverse social work traditions, students require practical frameworks and models for interpreting and comparing the role of social work. Frameworks for the comparative analysis of social work across different countries offer tools to examine diversity across social work practice internationally. An understanding of welfare regimes provides students with a basic understanding of the historical and ideological development of social work in relation to political states and social policies within European contexts, however, it is less effective when applied to non-Western countries. Comparative frameworks may also focus on the historical development of social work, dominant theoretical and practice traditions, role, status and occupational space of the profession.

The table below describes perspectives in international social work using frameworks that are relevant globally.

**Perspectives in international social work**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Global</th>
<th>Ecological</th>
<th>Social development</th>
<th>Human rights</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Globalisation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Holism</td>
<td>Social inequalities</td>
<td>Values and principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Localisation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>Legal, political, economic social and cultural rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-colonialism</td>
<td></td>
<td>Equilibrium</td>
<td>Social action</td>
<td>Universality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenisation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>Prevention</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World citizenship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Multidimensional</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Example of a comparative framework**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>European contexts</th>
<th>Global south contexts</th>
<th>British and post-colonial contexts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specific cultural, political, social and historical conditions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare state/regime, legislation and social policy context</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional status and role</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major theoretical influences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Key interventions and practices

### Future issues

### Implications for local practice

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**Source:** Professor Janet Anand, Professor of International Social Work, University of Eastern Finland

**Read more**


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**Skills base**

Social work operates at the interface between people and their social, cultural and physical environments. Human needs are always seen in the context of socio-political and environmental factors. While social work practice is diverse, it can generally be broken up into the following areas of practice.

- **Micro Practice:** Work with individuals and families
- **Mezzo Practice:** Work with groups & communities
- **Macro Practice:** Work with management and at a structural or social policy level

The above framework is a useful model for exploring and comparing the role and skills of social workers across different contexts.

These areas of practice are not mutually exclusive and social workers frequently work across different levels of practice at any one time. International social work encompasses all three and also includes the activities of education and training, social policy development, research and evaluation.

Students should be encouraged to consider how the knowledge and skills gained in their social work may be transferable, perhaps with some modifications, to other social and cultural contexts.

Below is an example of how an approach to assessment can be translated into a broader context.
A framework for social work assessment in an international context: Widest perspective for assessment

Before embarking on a personal assessment ask the question: How am I influenced personally and professionally by this question or problem?

Review the value base, history and culture of the others concerned with the ethical question. Question geocentrism and the impact of the location of people involved: What would be different if this dialogue were happening elsewhere in the world and why?

Inclusion of the service user in dialogue and decisions

Discuss the ‘right of reality’ of the service user and their family or community: spend time defining this reality.

Acknowledge the ‘power’ of the professional. Attend to the use of clear language.

Consider the question of ‘conscientization’: to what extent is the immediate ethical tension reflective and part of wider society and global issues?
Section 5: Delivering international placement opportunities and visits

Delivering an international placement, visit or study abroad programmes involves many stages. However, planning and delivering international placements or visits is not a linear process and it may be necessary to revisit and reflect on the stages involved.

Examples of international opportunities for students

There are advantages and disadvantages of either long-term or short-term programmes. Because of accreditation and course restriction, Queen’s University Belfast developed short-term programmes and found them to be effective in achieving student learning objectives.

**Short-term academic programme and agency visits:** Students are accompanied by a social work academic and undertake a series of lectures and agency visits provided and organised by the host academic facility.

*Practice example: Exchange programme between Münster University of Applied Sciences (Fachhochschule Münster) and Queen’s University Belfast (ERASMUS funding for academics only)*

Reciprocal visits involving at least two members of staff and up to 20 students to Münster, a city in the North Rhine-Westphalia state of Germany. This week-long visit is part of an ongoing connection with Münster that has involved staff and student exchange since 2000. The visit usually involves a combination of seminars with German students and staff, visits to social work organisations and some social activities.

Source: Dr Gavin Davidson, Senior Lecturer in Social Work, Queen’s University Belfast

*Practice example: Exchange programme between Karve Institute of Social Services, Pune and Queen’s University Belfast*

A small group of students and academics are involved in an intensive one-week session of academic lectures, presentations and community agency visits followed by one week of cultural experiences organised by the students. This model has offered mutual exchange opportunities (Indian students and academics visiting QUB), international conferences, publications, research projects and ongoing personal contact across faculty and student participants. The impact of using such a model for the development of critical cultural competence has been discussed in academic publications (Das and Anand 2013).

Source: Professor Janet Anand, Professor of International Social Work, University of Eastern Finland

**Short-term internship practice model:** Students undertake a short-term placement in an agency and are mentored by a social work practitioner.

*Example: The CODA Social Work Scholars Project*

The demand for research, teaching, and evidence-based treatment in the addictions field is growing and it is global. The CODA Social Work Scholars Project believes that collaborations crossing geographic, political and economic boundaries have the best potential for success. The
QUB/CODA Social Work Scholar Project was created to provide opportunities for international students and their professors to observe clinical services in the areas of addiction and mental health treatment. A travel grant from QUB has made this event possible although students are encouraged to raise funds themselves. CODA, Inc., Oregon’s oldest opioid-addiction not-for-profit agency, works closely with more than 3,000 service users per annum, providing innovative, evidence-based treatment supported by an internationally recognised Research Department. The students from QUB are training to serve a population that faces the same addiction/mental health conditions that manifest in Portland, with the additional challenge of addressing the effects of trauma following generations of unrest and violence in Northern Ireland. In August 2014, ten students (nine female and one male) and one member of staff travelled to Portland to engage in an intensive two-week programme with CODA. This was the first international opportunity as part of QUB’s cooperation with CODA. The students learned about behavioural health and social justice in the States, and reciprocated through sharing their unique experiences with their counterparts in the Portland-based agency. CODA reports it has also greatly benefited from the experience of working with students from Northern Ireland and the exchange of ideas on harm reduction and abstinence based approaches.

Source: Dr Anne Campbell, Lecturer in Social Work, Queen’s University Belfast

**Formal field placement model:** Students usually undertake a formally-assessed three-month placement as part of their professional qualification.

**La Trobe International placement programme for social work students**

The social work course at La Trobe University has been placing students overseas in a formalised programme for 30 years, with a particular emphasis on the Asia Pacific region. Between 1998 and 2015, a total of 80 students have been sent to the human service agencies in the Philippines, Cambodia, Indonesia, Macau and India, and most recently to Fiji and East Timor. Over the years, the School has learned a great deal about how to make these placements successful and rewarding for students, and has extended the programme to also include students from other Australian universities as well as students from Ireland. The international placement has clear documentation, procedures and policies around selection and travel documentation, including ongoing evaluation through regular briefing and debriefing sessions with returning students. Although the university offers some financial reimbursement, students must have the ability to fund their travel, accommodation and living expenses whilst on placement overseas.

The main elements of the programme include the following:

Students undertake an international fieldwork placement as an optional, academic requirement for the completion of their social work degrees. Therefore the content and processes of the 70-day placement have to comply with the course guidelines such as length of placement, the demonstration of learning and knowledge and the completion of assessment documentation. It also has to meet the professional accreditation guidelines, such as number of days, appropriate supervision by an accredited social worker, etc.

Students have to complete an application form, supply relevant documentation and attend an interview with the coordinator of the programme. Students must have a good academic and
attendance record and must pass health and safety checks required by the university and the placement agency. These may include police checks and immunisations.

More importantly, students have to demonstrate their interest and outline how they intend to achieve their identified learning goals in an overseas context. This includes the ability to demonstrate an interest in international/cross-cultural practice and the ability to handle cross-cultural work and foreign environments.

Students need to agree to study relevant material prior to departure and to attend formal briefing and debriefing sessions organised by the university, and to be available to share their experience and knowledge with other students who are selected the following year.

Preference is given to final year students as from experience, we have found that they can better integrate their learning from their first placement and be generally more prepared and able to contribute to the tasks of the placement agencies.

The programme needs to provide up-to-date information about all aspects of the application process as well as maintaining formal and informal contact with students throughout the placement. La Trobe has developed a manual which is available online and is regularly updated to ensure that students have essential information and returning students contribute useful ideas about accommodation, transport and food tips. Face-to-face agency to assess the progress of student learning and dealing with any issues is desirable but funding often prohibits this and has been substituted by emails, phone calls and Skype.

Source: Associate Professor Helen Cleak, Queensland University of Technology, Australia

Selection of destinations

International links may develop organically on the basis of individual academic’s connections and interests. However, it is useful to consider factors which contribute to the sustainability of each international link or connection and perhaps more proactively plan what connections might work best for your students and university. These may be considered somewhat mundane and practical and there may be other educational considerations which override them but they may still be important.

Some practical factors to consider when establishing international partnerships are outlined below.

- Is there a direct flight, and/or a relatively straightforward journey to the partner?
- Related to this, how much does it cost to get and stay there?
- Unfortunately it is usually necessary to consider if sufficient English is spoken in the destination and/or if someone can facilitate communication.
- Does the partner have a sufficiently similar educational interest/focus/course?
- Is there a positive reciprocal relationship between the link people?
- Are students interested in going there?
- Are there other connections, such as research interests and projects, which will help build and reinforce the connection?

Source: Dr Gavin Davidson, Senior Lecturer in Social Work, Queen’s University Belfast
Increasingly, the possibility that international connections will contribute to attracting international postgraduate students may be a further consideration in selecting links.

**Planning**

Most international opportunities start out as ‘good ideas’ between academics from different institutions, however, the challenge is to convert a proposal into a well-organised teaching and learning programme, delivered annually with minimal effort. Many international student programmes are organised by academics in addition to their teaching and research workload, although we have found that establishing an international opportunity requires considerable time and effort, coordination and negotiation between the home and host institutions and staff.

A common problem encountered between collaborating institutions is the synchronisation of the academic timetable, including academic terms or semesters, holiday periods and exam timetables. This is a particular challenge when collaboration involves institutions from the global north and south given the different academic term schedules. A checklist provides an opportunity to set the timeframe between the international partners and address any potential problems.

An example of the planning required to organise international placements is given below. It is based on the experience of the University of Michigan.

**Planning checklist September-October**

- Students to contact the field instructor to indicate interest in a global field placement.
- Students applying for a global field placement must fill out an application form and the field instruction for review and approval.
- Students should meet with their faculty advisor to discuss course planning related to the global field placement and career aspirations.
- In September students attend the information session on global social work options.
- Students who are unable to attend must contact the field instructor to make alternative arrangements.
- Deadline for the completion of online applications (including the selection criteria) is the end of October.

**November–January**

- Students respond to the email regarding scheduling an interview time with the selection committee.
- Student attends scheduled interview in November.
- Students begin exploring funding opportunities and deadlines.
- Students will be notified by email of the results of their application with acceptance letters sent out in early January. The application materials, interview, recommendation forms, funding strategy, academic standing, and performance during the Fall field placement are all taken into consideration for this decision. Accepted students must be in good academic standing throughout the Fall and Winter terms.
☐ Students to enroll in Global Social Work Practice Course before they depart for their global experience.
☐ Students apply for additional funding opportunities.
☐ Students to begin trip preparations:
  - research placement and country;
  - purchase flights;
  - obtain a passport and/or visa if necessary;
  - secure travel and health insurance.
  - comply with immunisation and travel health recommendations;
  - consult the national website for current updates on local conditions.

**February**

Travel stipends will be dispersed to student accounts in February once all required paperwork has been submitted.

☐ Students to enroll in the appropriate number of advanced field credits for Spring/Summer Term in consultation with the academic advisor.
☐ Enroll in Issues in Global Social Work Practice in the Fall semester.

Source: Dr Larry Wood, Lecturer in Social Work, University of Michigan, USA

**Read more**

University of Michigan Adapted from Global Field Placement “To-Do” List, School Of Social Work, University Of Michigan, 2015

**Selection of students**

Selection processes require students to demonstrate an interest in global practice, an elementary understanding of what international social work means and some idea of what they hope to gain from participation. The QUB summer short-term international visits are advertised to all students, although priority for places is given to first and second years. This is mainly because of opportunities for these students to apply and share the international experience in the classroom, thus benefiting fellow students in the remaining years of the course. In some universities international placements are only offered to final year students given the students’ level of maturity and accreditation requirements to complete at least one domestic placement. Short-term international opportunities range from a few days to a couple of weeks depending on the personal and learning needs of different students.
**Questions and scoring sheet**

Social Work Intensive International Exchange Programme Applications and Interviews **Student’s**

**Name:** _________________________________________________________ **DOB:**

____________________________________________________________________

**Year:** __________________________________________________________________

1. **Interest in area (score out of 20)**

   **Identified clear rationale and motivation for participation** Circle 1 2 3
   4 5 6 7 8 9 10

   **Outlined possible contribution**

   Circle 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. **Presentation and interview (score out of 30)**

   **Provided knowledge of chosen subject area**

   **Comments:** _______________________________________________________

   Circle 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

   **Demonstrated a commitment to actively participate in the programme**

   **Comments:** _______________________________________________________

   Circle 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

   **Identified future implications/activities as the result of involvement in the programme**

   **Comments:** _______________________________________________________

   Circle 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

   **Total / 50 total % score** ____________________________________________
3. Any significant issues identified for example clash with coursework, field placement, financial barriers, visa, health issues

   Comments: ____________________________________________________________

Would this restrict the student’s ability to participate in the programme identified? Circle

   Yes    No

4. Would the student consider another exchange programme?

   Comments: ____________________________________________________________

Name and signature of the interviewer:

Source: Dr Anne Campbell and Dr Gavin Davidson, Queen’s University Belfast

**Preparation of students**

Preparing students for international opportunities and practicums involves the following considerations and processes:

- encourage students to openly discuss their fears and concerns prior to the placement;
- provide pre-placement training on communicating their needs with the host/supervisor and on how to respond to critical feedback;
- workshop or role play possible tensions or conflicts and help students to build their own skills of negotiation and conflict management and effective communication when dealing with difficult issues during the placement;
- work with students on their communication skills, including, if necessary, language pronunciation and intelligibility (suggest that they audiotape themselves and practise).

*Read more*

Source: Higher Education Academy

[https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Professional_placements.pdf](https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Professional_placements.pdf)

**Preparing for an international placement – one-day briefing session**

The following topic areas are typically covered:
‘get to know each other’ exercise with students who give a brief summary of their background, experiences, destinations etc;
- current research on the value of international placements and the importance of preparation;
- examining personal values and expectations of an international placement;
- the humanitarian context;
- keeping safe: exploring personal safety strategies and resources to use;
- the cross-cultural context: living and studying in another country;
- tips and suggestions: practical advice and support from past students on having a successful placement;
- stress management and critical incident stress.

Important aspects of the briefing include:

- meeting students who have completed placements in previous years;
- inquiry and critical reflection on personal values and beliefs and reasons for doing an international placement;
- exploration around the practicalities of living and studying overseas;
- pre-class activities that students completed beforehand that set the scene for each topic;
- having important documentation available together in a manual and online for easy reference.

Source: Associate Professor Helen Cleak, Queensland University of Technology, Australia
Enhancing student resilience and stress management

While international contexts provide exciting cultural and professional experiences for students, they also have the potential to expose both faculty members and students to stressful and conflictual situations and even traumatic incidents (Das and Anand, 2013). It is difficult, if not impossible, to anticipate and prevent all possible negative experiences thrown up by an international field placement. To enhance the experience abroad and prevent traumatic experiences, as much as possible, it is important to reinforce students’ stress management.

Resilience is the ability to adapt or rebound quickly from change, illness, stress, adversity or bad fortune. A model to promote resilient travelling is outlined below.

Example: Resilient travelling

**SKILLS**

**ASSERTIVENESS**
The skill of assertiveness involves confidence in communicating personal needs and wants, while respecting the needs and wants of others. It is important not only to be aware of our needs, but to be able to effectively communicate these needs while strengthening a relationship.

**DEEP BREATHING**
Deep breathing fosters regulation and self-soothing. It can be used as an in-the-moment coping strategy for distress, and can make the other skills more meaningful.

**COGNITIVE DEFUSION**
Also termed thought distancing, cognitive defusion focusses on recognising thoughts and emotions as internal constructs that should be acknowledged, but should not be the basis for behaviour.

**MINDFULNESS**
To be mindful is to be fully engaged in the present moment. It involves intention, acceptance, non-judgement and gentle curiosity. Mindful attention fosters self-awareness, regulation and flexibility.
**REFLECTION**

To be reflective is to have a balanced perspective of the past and present, as well as thinking about opportunities for future change. Reflection fosters optimism, flexibility and connectedness. Reflection allows for balanced thinking and the possibility to problem solve.

**VALUES-BASED ACTION**

Values-based action requires an awareness of personal values as well as an intention to commit to those values, despite difficulties, instead of reacting to our own thoughts and feelings. It can be used with the other skills to help us respond in a way that is in accordance with our values.

Source: Dr Larry Woods, Lecturer in Social Work, University of Michigan, USA

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**Read more**

Resilient traveling, University of Michigan

[http://resilient-traveling.umich.edu/](http://resilient-traveling.umich.edu/)

**Language and cultural awareness**

Consideration should be given to culturally appropriate student conduct and behaviour, including establishing new relationships and appreciating cultural differences and other world views.

A typical pre-placement/visit orientation covers the study abroad schedule, academic expectations, costs, staying safe while abroad, health and evacuation insurance, lodging, what to take, adapting to the local culture, basic introduction to language and key phrases (non-English speaking countries).

Each student should take on the responsibility to read widely on the host country – its history, people, mores, customs, music and language. Meeting up with students from the host country who are studying at one’s own university is a great start, or alternatively making contact with students from the host country or institution via Facebook.

It is common for visiting students to start acting according to national stereotypes once abroad or alternatively, inappropriately adopt the negative behaviours of the country in which they are in, in an effort to be accepted. Students often forget that they are outsiders and that they are seen and judged on everything they do. Students are ‘ambassadors’ for their country, whether they want to be or not. It’s important for students to be comfortable with themselves and to accept that they are being observed and judged.

It helps if students learn in advance what is expected in a professional and personal transaction and how it takes differing amounts of time and attention to the rituals in dissimilar cultures. To ethically engage with a new culture requires both cultural and linguistic competence.

**Learning the rules of engagement**

The Queen’s University Belfast team was fortunate in having the resources of a language service available to students embarking on international visits. Students visiting India and
Germany were provided with an introductory session on the language and culture of the relevant country. In these sessions students were introduced to cultural practices, dress and social etiquette as well as very basic phrases in the appropriate language. This proved to be a useful process as it helped students identify what aspect of the travelling they might find difficult, for example, eating a spicy food, dressing appropriately in monsoonal weather, rules of communication and engagement with different categories of people. It is also an important opportunity for the student group to start bonding as a group.

Source: Professor Janet Anand, Professor of International Social Work, University of Eastern Finland

**Learning and teaching programme**

Opportunities to study abroad should initially aim to integrate the historical, cultural, socio-economic and political context of the host site using various forms of teaching mediums, for example multi-media outlets, assigned readings, and direct experiences for knowledge acquisition. The next step in the teaching-learning process is to encourage students to apply this knowledge to skill development and the home context. For example, different comparative approaches regarding sources of knowledge, diverse societal perspectives of similar issues, cultural notions of responsibility, problem identification and assessment. The students gain a deeper understanding of international development challenges and opportunities, including, but not limited to: cultural differences and similarities, global health challenges, governmental and non-governmental development agencies, the role of social work in development, human rights, war and conflict, child labour, AIDS, issues affecting women, and globalisation.

There are personal and professional benefits from the exposure to diverse populations in other countries through international placements, visits and study abroad programmes. Expanding one’s experiences can broaden perspectives regarding people’s attitudes, values, problems and solutions to problems. Based upon findings from her qualitative study of the consequences from a social work study abroad programme, Lindsay (2005) identifies such benefits to students as new ways of thinking and increased social awareness, appreciation of differences and cultural sensitivity, among others. Interests in working with cross-cultural and/or cross-national populations can lead to rewarding career paths for social workers in a variety of settings. Social workers from one country might contribute new insights and models for work with populations in other countries. As importantly, there are advantages to be gained from effective practice efforts with diverse populations in other countries.

It is important to acknowledge that the direction of cross-national social work knowledge transmission is not limited outward from the UK, but that there are always lessons to be learned from other countries. Study abroad programmes provide opportunities for social work students and educators to exchange ideas, research findings, and experiences with regard to problems faced by those working with people in different countries.

**An international fieldwork programme in the Philippines**

Since the mid-90s, the social work programme at La Trobe University, Victoria, Australia, has been organising international placements for students enrolled in the first or final year fieldwork
subject. There have been longstanding relationships with a number of overseas agencies situated in the Asia Pacific region, but many social work students have undertaken their placements at Community and Family Services International (CFSI) in the Philippines.

CFSI is a humanitarian agency based in Metro Manila. The population of the Philippines is over 78 million people and one-third of them are defined as living in poverty. The organisation works from a holistic and structural basis and offers services to disadvantaged people by introducing programmes that build capacities of families and communities. Some of the programmes that students have been involved in include micro financing ‘Cash for Work’, housing cooperatives, mentoring young people, such as the ‘Park Avenue Initiative’ and working with displaced people, such as the ‘Urban Refugee project’. Students have more recently become involved in disaster relief after a number of typhoons required massive evacuations and resettlement of affected communities.

Every year, two to four students undertake their 70-day placement at CFSI. They have to go through a rigorous application and interview process to be selected as well as attend compulsory briefing and debriefing sessions. CFSI have the final decision as to whether to accept the potential students and the Department provides a small monetary contribution of $500 to cover some of the administrative costs. Because students are undertaking a core social work subject, the placement has to conform to the academic and accreditation requirements of the university and the professional association. This requires CFSI to provide appropriate social work tasks and the allocation of a qualified social worker who can supervise them on a regular basis. The supervisor has to also complete the documentation for assessment of their level of performance in the placement. Liaison visits used to be conducted face-to-face but Skype has been used more recently. Students also Skype into integration seminars organised by the university as part of their placement subject.

The feedback from students who have had their placements at CFSI has always been positive. The organisation has many trained social workers so there are lots of opportunities to observe professional practice as they share a common knowledge, skills and value base. Their office is located in the centre of a very deprived urban community so students can immerse themselves in the cultural realities of other people’s lives. Many residents come to CFSI for information, education and support as well as sharing special events such as Christmas.

Source: Associate Professor Helen Cleak, Queensland University of Technology, Australia

**Pedagogical approaches**

International exchanges, visits and practicums are powerful sites for teaching and learning (Das and Anand, 2013). The following box lists different frameworks and perspectives from which an international opportunity can be interpreted and analysed for teaching and learning purposes.

- Comparing welfare typologies Regimes, Discourses and Social Movements (Lorenz, 2006)
- Cross-national comparisons of social work as a profession (Weiss et al., 2007)
- International context for critical reflection and cultural competence (Das and Anand, 2012)
- Understanding different ways of knowing, thinking and doing (AASW–Indigenous practice)
- Racism, diversity and critical cultural competence
• Social work across social domains (macro, mezzo, micro) (Dominelli, 2010); and occupational spaces (Pinkerton and Campbell, 2002);
• Human rights based approach (Ife 2010).

Source: Dr Gavin Davidson, Senior Lecturer in Social Work, Queen’s University Belfast and adapted by Professor Dr Janet Anand, Professor of International Social Work, University of Eastern Finland

Assessment of student learning

Assessment of the applicability of an international placement, visit or study abroad programme would necessarily involve the following:

• carefully consider what are the core elements and requirements of the placement and which elements can be flexible or negotiable;
• in earlier placements, consider assessing the amount of learning and personal development that has taken place during the placement, rather than assessing all students against the same criteria;
• if an international student has received a poor assessment for the placement by a mentor or clinical supervisor, this may need to be moderated by member of university staff if it appears that irrelevant or discriminatory attitudes are present.

International placements provide opportunities for traditional and innovative, formative and summative forms of assessment. Some options to consider are listed below. In addition to conventional forms of assessment, which tend to be individual and summative in nature, for example exams, essays and minor dissertation, multiple choice tests or a range of more formative and summative approaches should be considered.

The following is a list innovative assessment activities.
**Critical incident accounts / journals / blogs**

Students working on placements keep diaries, journals or blogs in which they record their experiences. They can be asked to write about a critical incident in terms of context, what happened, the outcomes, how theoretical material they have learned underpins the process and how they would do things differently in future.

**Learning logs, written / work placements / practical**

These are lists of activities and outcomes which students check off during a period of learning. For example, students could be asked to indicate competencies which they have practised to a specific level during a work placement.

**Make or design something**

Students are required to make or design something reflecting their learning, for example radio broadcast, video clip, web page etc; useful as a group-work exercise.

**Online discussion boards**

Students are assessed on the basis of their contributions to an online discussion, for example, with their peers; this could be hosted on a virtual learning environment.

**Patchwork texts**

Students write a number of small pieces of work (‘patches’), which they then have to later ‘stitch’ together in a reflective commentary. The patches and the tasks upon which they are based are discrete and complete entities in their own right, but they can help contribute to a holistic understanding of the module content.

**Portfolios / e-portfolios**

Students provide evidence for their achievement of learning outcomes; these commonly incorporate a reflective commentary.

**Posters**

Students are asked to produce a poster (either real size or as a PowerPoint file) on a particular topic. Can be used individually or in groups to assess a range of activities.

**Reflective diaries**

Students record their learning over a period of time, interspersing narrative with a reflective commentary which could support the development of an action plan.

**Research projects / group projects**

Potential for sampling a wide range of practical, analytical and interpretative skills. Can assess a wide application of knowledge, understanding and skills.

**Wiki / blogs**

Students are required to keep an individual blog, for example to record their progress on a project, or a wiki; could be used as part of a group project exercise.
Assessment of reflective learning

Academic learning is enhanced with student reflection exercises prior to departure, while abroad, and upon return. A combination of written and verbal exercises and assignments as well as opportunities for individual and guided group reflection facilitated by faculty ensures attention to individual student needs.

Prior to departure student reflection centred on practical aspects of preparing to travel abroad is necessary, along with developing a plan for cross-cultural interpersonal engagement skills with persons encountered abroad. Journaling assignments completed while abroad can provide material for group reflection sessions.

Upon returning home, post-trip written reflections integrated into more academically focused written assignments, such as a social issue or service analysis paper, allow the student to demonstrate how personal experiences abroad shaped their understanding of the host country.

Reading exercise

Student name:

Topic:

**EIGHT COMMENTS/THOUGHTS/QUESTIONS ON THE READING**

*Use your own words.*

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 

5. 

6. 

7. 

8. 

**THREE OF THE MOST INTERESTING AND IMPORTANT POINTS MADE IN THE READING**

*Please avoid choosing minor points of detail.*

1. 

2. 
ONE ISSUE THAT IS WORTH DISCUSSING FURTHER

Source: Centre for the Development of Teaching and Learning, Engage in Assessment Reading University

www.reading.ac.uk/engageinassessment

Read more

- HEA Centre for Bioscience Assessment Briefing (2009) www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/ftp/resources/briefing/assesbrief.pdf

Follow up and review (students and staff)

It is critical to allow some time to elapse between returning from the study abroad programme and presenting a review of the study abroad experience to the home community. This allows students to conclude their formal research for the academic course and to consider how their understanding of the host country and their intercultural competence has evolved since returning. Faculty may use this time to distil common themes in understanding the host country and the social issues derived from student assignments, course evaluations, and personal experiences teaching the course.

A follow-up celebration and review of the achievements of the study group offered to the entire home social work programme community is appropriate. This activity should feature not only photos and travel stories, but a review of group challenges and themes related to respectful engagement with host country facilitators. A formal description of social issues and service delivery investigated during the academic course abroad allows students to share their knowledge by engaging their peers who did not participate in the study abroad activity.

Formal debriefing

Debriefing can be understood as a critical conversation to reframe the context of a situation and to clarify perspectives and assumptions (National League for Nurses, 2015). It is routinely offered to volunteers returning from overseas placements with NGOs, and is stipulated as good practice in the internationally recognised tool for supporting humanitarian aid staff and
volunteers (People in Aid, 2003). It has also been recognised as a valuable intervention for social work students returning from international visits (Heron, 2005; Pawar et al., 2004; Wehbi, 2009). Such students, particularly those visiting non-Western settings, may experience situations as shocking, and struggle to deal with issues of poverty, social justice and conflict. They may question their own use of resources and awareness of privilege. In this context, debriefing seeks to ask how the experience was for the student, aims to help students integrate the experience into their life as a whole, perceive the experience more meaningfully, and if necessary, bring a sense of closure (Lovell-Hawker, 2010).

This can be seen as a conscious-raising process (Rotabi et al., 2006), helping to build on the group dynamic and to integrate student learning.

A range of individual and group debriefing models exist, ranging from unstructured to highly structured. The facilitation of group debriefing utilises core group-work skills and may follow a structured based on Gibbs’ model of reflection (1988), as outlined below:

Source: Gibbs’ model of reflection (1988), adapted.

Read more
Evaluation methods

As noted in the aims and objectives section of this toolkit, flexibility and adaptability should be maintained while also ensuring that students are held to a high degree of accountability and competence in any international opportunity. One common strategy is the establishment of an international committee within the school, facility or university structure that has oversight regarding the creation, evaluation and maintenance of international programmes. The committee may be a subcommittee of the larger curriculum committee or another body with responsibility for the consistency of the programme.

The evaluation should be ongoing to be able to detect problems early in the programme, and may be a mix of both informal and more formal methods. Depending upon university resources and the individual setting and course, there may also be a mix of traditional pencil-and-paper evaluations as well as electronic methods that may include video conferencing, audio taping or videotaping. The evaluation tools and methods should be clearly communicated in advance to all parties involved and be subject to ethical approval, for example school ethics committee.

The evaluation of international visits and placements can be a relatively simple matter or multi-dimensional as illustrated in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation options and measurements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participants/comparison groups</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own students and own institution control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own students with a</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partner institution comparison</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Own students with more than one partner institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own students with a partner institution comparison and own institutional control</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Dr Gavin Davidson, Senior Lecturer in Social Work, Queen’s University Belfast

**Use of focus groups**

Focus groups are a practical and effective way to evaluate student and staff experiences in further depth. The following boxed examples outline focus groups questions pre and post an international visit designed for students.

*Pre-exchange focus group questions*

1. What is your motivation for participating in this student exchange programme?
2. What are your fears and hopes for participating in this exchange programme?
3. What do you think it will be like travelling with an academic colleague?
4. What do you think it will be like travelling with your peers?

*Post-exchange focus group questions*

1. Do you feel that your personal and professional goals were achieved in this international exchange experience?
2. If so, in what way?
3. What was it like travelling with your academic colleagues?
4. What was it like travelling with your peers?

Source: Dr Katharine Dill, Lecturer in Social Work, Queen’s University Belfast

**Surveys and questionnaires**

Evaluation surveys and questionnaires are also effective and efficient means of evaluating the international programme. Questions should naturally link with the teaching aims and objectives of the international placement, visit or study abroad programme. Surveys can be administered pre, post and during an international programme.

Survey Monkey is a free online survey tool. It offers free, customisable surveys, as well as a suite of paid back-end programs that include data analysis, sample selection, and data representation tools. [https://www.surveymonkey.com/](https://www.surveymonkey.com/)

**Host facilities (students and faculty)**

The impact of student placements, exchanges and study abroad programmes on the host agency or higher education facility should not be overlooked. Seeking feedback from the host organisation is an essential part of the evaluation process and can be undertaken either using qualitative or quantitative methods depending on what type of feedback is required.

Qualitative feedback can be very effective and encouraging as illustrated below.

**Practice example: Seeking feedback from host agencies**

"CODA has benefited greatly from the presence of Queen’s students and faculty. The enthusiasm, intellectual curiosity, and commitment to academic excellence demonstrated by the students is inspiring to staff throughout the agency. Further, the dialogue about addiction issues and the ways in which they are researched and treated in our two countries is rich, productive and ongoing."

--Tim Hartnett, Executive Director of CODA, Inc., Portland, Oregon, USA. CODA is a non-profit agency that serves more than 3,000 people each year whose lives and health are compromised by alcohol, drug and mental health challenges.

Source: Dr Anne Campbell, Lecturer in Social Work, Queen’s University Belfast

An appropriate balance of planned social/cultural activities complement academic learning. Planned social activities with residents of the host site, as well as visits to the host site’s cultural
institutions, readings, and opportunities to explore the culture are good ways to encourage this type of knowledge development in study abroad programmes.

Joint classes or group discussion sessions with university students from partner institutions abroad foster acquisition of intercultural competence by providing opportunities to practise respectful engagement with the host country. Planned social/cultural activities should be paired with assignments to further develop students’ social work skills and values.

**Service user involvement**

The involvement and participation of service users, clients or patients is more challenging to introduce to the evaluation programme and many require a creative approach.

The use of video, YouTube clips, pictures and recordings has proven to be not only effective ways of capturing and collaging service user feedback but a very powerful medium for further teaching and learning purposes. Of course there are important ethical considerations to consider in the collection of such data.

**Service user involvement**

In 2013, Dr Joe Duffy, Lecturer in Social Work, QUB led an international team of academics from Slovenia and Spain in the production of a short IASSW-funded DVD entitled ‘International messages on service user and carer involvement’, which examines service user and carer perspectives on key aspects of social work knowledge, skills and values. This film was launched at the European Network for Social Action (ENSACT) European Social Work conference in Istanbul in April, 2013 and is widely used as an international social work education teaching resource.

See more at: [https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/person/joe-duffy#sthash.srykm2V.dpuf](https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/person/joe-duffy#sthash.srykm2V.dpuf) Source: Dr Joe Duffy, Lecturer in Social Work, Queen’s University Belfast

**Prevention and management of risk**

Academic leaders and accompanying academic staff are responsible for ensuring a safe and productive education experience which involves emergency preparedness, identification of potential risk to student and strategies that empower student to take responsibility for their own health, safety and well-being. It is useful for both academics and students to consider the following factors:

*List of potential risks*

- drugs and alcohol;
- sexual harassment;
- assault;
- loss and theft of property;
- accident and injury;
- illness and medical evacuation;
• detention and abduction;
• act of terror;
• natural disaster;
• student death.

Prior to departure, academics should consider the following activities:

• work with college ‘crisis team’ to make sure policies and procedures are clear;
• monitor and analyse events in country;
• prepare emergency action plan and procedures;
• ensure faculty leaders know elements of emergency response;
• provide pre-departure health and safety orientation for students;
• ensure and test reliable emergency communications;
• orient students to Emergency Action Plan prepared during pre-departure;
• have each student carry information card with the following:
  Name / Date of birth / Citizenship / Programme name / Abroad programme emergency contact / Abroad housing emergency contact / Home emergency contact / Family emergency contact / Insurance company, etc., / Emergency number abroad / Nearest hospital abroad / Passport number / Blood type / Special medical conditions / Wishes in event of serious injury or death

Most universities have travel and health insurance coverage in place for travelling academics and staff.

**E-learning and digital technology**

Due to the significant costs and resources involved in international travel and the personal commitment of student to take time away from employment and family, it is not always possible for all students to participate in direct international visits or placements.

E-learning and digital technology offer sustainable alternatives as well as a means of enhancing an international opportunity. Technological advances have created a new range of possibilities for enabling international travel, collaboration, communication and dissemination. Examples include: provision of distance learning and supplemental online material via recorded classes, and other asynchronous material (Levin et al., 2013; Okech et al., 2014); use of filmed vignettes. Movements towards digital learning platforms and internationalisation would seem from the outset to be a mutual fit.

**Simple e-learning applications**

• Create an FAQ wiki online – get students to contribute questions and answers.
• Use Padlet to create a collaborative visual representation of a topic.
• Use Jing to create ‘how-to’ videos for students.
• Hold a Google Hangout with academics in other universities.
• Flip your class–students watch the lecture before class, class time is used for discussion and active participation.

An advantage of a digital resource is its ability to transcend borders (Anand and Clarke, 2009). Thus, first-hand experiences and perceptions of students and educators in response to specific examples of social work practice can be captured and shared with colleagues across different
countries and continents. However, there are risks involved, such as persistent ethnocentrism and lack of critical and cultural reflection and reflexivity amongst students and educators.

**Use of Skype-based seminars**

Online technology has been utilised consistently in the development of the internationalisation project, both via social media and through the use of online interactive teaching methods. For example, the International Social Work in NI Facebook page (ISWNI) was established in April 2015 and has provided students and tutors from the partner universities in Portland, Belfast, Münster and Pune with relevant and updated information on the projects as well as articles of interest relating to international social work. In addition, interactive Skype-based seminars have been conducted on a regular basis with academics from Oregon Health Sciences University and Portland State University. As part of the International Social Work annual event, students from QUB were afforded the opportunity to interact with Portland-based academics and discuss social work issues which were pertinent to the US and Northern Ireland.

Source: Dr Anne Campbell, Lecturer in Social Work, Queen’s University Belfast

**Audio-visual presentation to teach globally minded social work**

Direct experience of social work in another country is making an increasingly important contribution to internationalising the social work academic curriculum. However in QUB, this opportunity is still restricted to a limited number of students. The aim of the project was to reflect on the production of an audio-visual presentation as representing the experience of three students who participated in an exchange with a social work programme in Pune, India. The project involved the production and use of video to capture student learning from the Belfast/Pune exchange and to evaluate its use in a classroom setting with a year of social work students. This video was designed to stimulate students’ curiosity about international dimensions of social work and add to their awareness of poverty, social justice, cultural competence and community social work as global issues. Feedback from the class informed the technical as well as the pedagogical benefits and challenges of this approach. It was concluded that there was some benefit from audio-visual presentation in helping students connect with diverse contexts, but that a complementary discussion challenging stereotyped viewpoints and unconscious professional imperialism is also crucial.

Source: Dr John Moriarty, Research Fellow, Queen’s University Belfast

**Read more**

- Moriarty, J., Carter Anand, J., Davison, G., Das, C., Pinkerton, J., (under review),
Audio-visual presentation to promote globally-minded social work practice, submitted to Journal of Practice, Teaching and Learning.

Electronic discussion platform

Electronic mediums such as university-based discussion platforms, Facebook and Skype provide an opportunity for students from different countries and regions to interact without having to travel. Carter Anand and Clarke (2009: 595) also explored the potential of discussion fora to facilitate social work education across different countries (Ireland and the United States of America) and found that the ‘interpersonal contact between the students certainly raised consciousness of the diversity of global- local social work issues’.

*Comparing European students of children at risk using an electronic discussion forum*

A vignette questionnaire was distributed to students across three participating European universities involving anonymised versions of real referrals on child protection. Students were asked to assess the level of risk to the child/children in each vignette on a six point scale ranging from No Risk (0) to Very High Risk (5).

In the second stage of the project, the students from each of the participating universities were allocated to 10 discussion groups which each consisted of students, one from each country. The online discussion platforms were provided by the participating university and the students were asked to discuss three of the vignettes in greater depth. Specifically, students were asked to discuss the degree to which the child involved was at risk and the rationale for their assessments. One student from each of the groups was asked to provide a narrative summary of their group’s discussions of each of the three vignettes.

As educators we may have a tendency to think that all students have knowledge of, and are comfortable with, negotiating social networking platforms. Online discussion fora can, however, unintentionally disengage students if the process is complicated or time consuming. The discussion platform proved to be difficult to navigate for some students and the physical requirement of having to register and navigate a new site may have demotivated some of them. There were also some technical difficulties for students accessing and using the online discussion fora. The instructions provided for students both for the use of the fora and on the nature and scope of the tasks could also have been clearer.

The task, for example, required students from different cultural and welfare contexts to summarise their opinions on each of the vignettes within a group forum. This appeared, however, to result in a virtual form of ‘group think’ as students attempted to highlight the similarities in their perception of risk rather than the differences. The use of technology did allow students to exchange views and perspectives but it may have been more interactive if it had been structured to allow them to do this in real time and possibly via some form of video conference/discussion rather than in the written format. The project also highlighted the importance of providing students with the opportunity to reflect on the experience, to assess their own learning and comment on how useful they found this international experience.

Source: Dr David Hayes, Senior Lecturer in Social Work, Queen’s University Belfast, UK
Online module material

Extensive teaching and learning material is available online for both educators and students to access and adapt to their needs. A simple Google search will provide both visual and auditory material.

The Katherine A. Kendall Institute for International Social Work Education is an excellent site for useful resources, examples of which are listed below. In addition to more traditional fields of practice, international social work involves a broader range of skills including comparative policy and practice, trauma and disaster work, community work and social development. Teaching and learning material is translatable and adaptable across different borders and contexts.

Funding and sustainability

Securing reliable ongoing funding for both faculty and students is essential to programme sustainability. Within the European Union, social work students and faculty have the option of using ERASMUS + and Erasmus Mundus programmes to fund teacher and undergraduate and postgraduate student exchange networks involving student placements within Europe and other parts of the world.

Because the QUB programme involves short-term visits, placements and internships we have had to consider alternative sources of funding from the university, charity agencies and international companies and philanthropic organisations. The student working party has been keen to engage in fundraising activities to cover travel costs. It has been our experience that students are generally willing to contribute to the cost of travel to international visits.
Section 6: Summary

This toolkit has largely focussed on international student visits and field placements. While international student opportunities contribute to the internationalisation of the curriculum, most placements are optional and dependent on student interests and funding capabilities. Hence, the critical question remains as to what extent do international visits, placements or internships impact across the curriculum for all students. Without further research and evaluation the answer to this question will remain tenuous and unclear.

This toolkit was compiled in consultation with national and international stakeholders. Through the development of this toolkit we have fostered networks and communities of practice for internationalising social work education, promoting the future sustainability of resources, funding and models and ongoing reciprocal learning processes. We envisage that the toolkit will be a working document made accessible through the HEA website and updated by students, academics and practitioners with a passion for internationalising the social work curriculum through the provision of international field placements and opportunities for students.

Thank you to our international contributors

Associate Professor Helen Cleak, Associate Professor in Social Work, University of Queensland, Australia

Professor Robert Chaskin, Deputy Dean for Strategic Initiatives at the School of Social Service Administration, University of Chicago, USA

Professor Silvia Fabron, The Free University of Bolzano, Italy

Dr Philip O’Hare, Principal Lecturer, University of Central Lancashire, England

Dr Larry Woods, Lecturer in Social Work, University of Michigan, USA
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