

Online Global Learning Experiences Guide

*A resource for developing virtual exchange opportunities
for the classroom.*



SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Online Global Learning Experiences (also called virtual exchange or VE) promote the global mindedness of our TTUHSC community and foster global competence through increased opportunities for global and intercultural engagement that do not require an in-person experience. Planned with care and attention, these experiences can complement and/or provide a pathway to future global engagement.

Online Global Learning Experiences are a type of innovative and cost-effective educational modality in which constructive communication and interaction takes place between individuals or groups who are geographically separated and/or from diverse cultural backgrounds with the support of faculty and facilitators. Virtual exchange implements projects, activities, and initiatives that require intercultural cooperation and contribute to the knowledge, skills, and experiences needed to prosper in an increasingly interconnected world.

This guide has been designed to provide an overview of the planning process and the elements that should be considered for a successful online global experience. The information in this guide is intentionally broad in order to address an array of online global learning programs and experiences, both curricular and extra-curricular, that may occur partially or completely online, including but not limited to: collaborative project or problem-based learning, team-based projects, one-on-one or small group learning, videoconference dialogues, courses paired across institutions who work together, remote internships, electives, or rotations, consulting projects for partners located abroad, community engagement or service-learning projects conducted online in collaboration with a community partner abroad, and more.

High-quality Online Global Learning Experiences are grounded in:

- Principles of humility, mutual respect, cultural sensitivity, solidarity, sustainability, ethics, and equity
- Alignment of goals and priorities
- Recognition of the expertise of collaborative partners
- Open and frequent communication in which shared-goals are defined
- Clear expectations of the role of faculty/facilitator and participant
- Intercultural activities and experiences that promote deeper awareness of global citizenship
- Bidirectional collaboration
- Effective use of technology and other resources as tools to enhance the learning process
- Acknowledgement of challenges, including power differences, limited resources, and history of colonization, if applicable
- Accountability

More detailed items to consider when developing an Online Global Learning Experience can be found in the *Online Global Learning Experience Proposal* included in the *TTUHSC Online Global Learning Experience* toolkit. The proposal outlines unique considerations that must be taken into account when developing virtual exchange opportunities. Additional resources have been provided at the end of this document to support faculty/facilitator in their efforts to design effective Online Global Learning Experiences.

SECTION 2: DEVELOPING GOALS

- Online Global Learning Experiences are an important component of TTUHSC's globalization efforts. Although they may play a different role than in-person experiences, they complement each other, and a successful virtual exchange can encourage and enhance an in-person experience.
- When developing an Online Global Learning Experience, begin with the question, "What do I want to accomplish and how will including an intercultural experience enhance the course content?" This will ensure that your goals for the online experience are clearly established.
 - Note: The specific goals you wish to accomplish do not have to be the same as those of your partner abroad, but partners should ensure that goals are aligned, achievable, and complement each other.
 - Program goals should strive to offer mutual benefits for all participants.
- In the development phase, include time to discuss each parties' goals and ways to ensure they are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) and challenging.

SECTION 3: PREPARATION & PLANNING

- Guidance is provided in the *Online Global Learning Experience Proposal* to support communication and the development of a successful virtual exchange.
- Communication is key to establishing mutually beneficial virtual exchange. Planning and implementation includes teamwork, cultural intelligence, project management and execution, and written and oral language skills.
 - Communication between faculty/facilitators should occur frequently before the program begins and throughout the online experience.
 - Relationship building is an important component of the planning process. Include time in the planning and implementation for faculty/facilitators to get to know each other and build rapport.
- Consider how you will assess participation and achievement of the agreed-upon goals.
- Determine how you will assess the execution of the Online Global Learning Experience and incorporate what is learned into improving future exchanges.

SECTION 4: ETHICAL ENGAGEMENT

- It is important to remember that all participants must follow the ethical guidelines established by their professional organization or licensing board.
- Ethical and equitable engagement is as important to an Online Global Learning Experience as it is to an in-person experience. The ethical considerations you employ in the development and implementation phase will teach students valuable lessons about ethical engagement with community partners.
- In an online platform you may miss some of the cultural cues that are present in an in-person setting (e.g., body language, local laws & customs, experience of the healthcare system, etc.). In the absence of cultural context, it can be even more important to stress respect for cultures, values, and different ways of learning and working together.
- Because technology is a key player in online experiences, it is important to assess equitable access.
 - What various types of technology are available? If you plan to use a particular platform, check with your partner to ensure it is available in the location. Evaluate each partner's proficiency with the platform to determine training needs.
 - Don't overlook potential costs, especially for partners in resource challenged settings or in communities where internet access is less reliable. Consider using the technology platform of choice of the more tech-limited partner so that all partners and participants can engage in the experience as fully as possible.
- Discuss any cultural considerations to be aware of when determining use of technology platforms, includes the use of video.
- Equity and ethics go hand in hand.
 - Strive to ensure all planning meetings and online activities occur during times of the year/week/day that are mutually convenient (or equitably inconvenient) to all parties. This may mean varying meeting times so that the inconvenience does not disproportionately fall on participants in one location.
 - Make use of and share when possible, any available resources to ensure students of all needs and abilities are positioned for success. This could include captioning tools, screen readers or other assistive technology, and translators.
 - Decide in advance what language(s) will be used by faculty/facilitators and participants. If feasible, seek ways to incorporate participants' languages into the experience, even if they are not the primary language of communication for the program. This can be an opportunity to enhance the intercultural experience of participants.
 - Determine in advance how the faculty/facilitators will handle topics that may be controversial or

uncomfortable. Discuss and identify any topics that are not open for discussion.

- Be aware of the various ways cultures handle conflict resolution and communication.
- Determine in advance how classroom management and disciplinary action will occur in the virtual exchange space. Have mechanisms in place for students to report issues.

SECTION 5: POLICIES & GUIDELINES

- All Online Global Learning Experiences must submit to the Office of Global Health an *Online Global Learning Experience Proposal* routed and signed by the appropriate individuals.
- Be aware of any additional approvals required by the school or program.
- Training in successful virtual exchange development is offered by the Office of Global Health through the Texas International Education Consortium (TIEC) Virtual Academy. We highly encourage faculty/facilitators to take advantage of this opportunity for professional development. For more information, contact the Office of Global Health.
- Collaborate with the appropriate IT resources as needed to address any technology challenges and ensure compliance with internet and data privacy laws and policies.
- Develop a policy for open communication between faculty/facilitators and participants. Participants need to know how to report issues related to internet access or inappropriate online interactions.

SECTION 6: PRE-PROGRAM CONSIDERATIONS

- Consider participant numbers across locations and align accordingly to best meet defined goals and resources.
- Consider ways to prepare participants to navigate intercultural challenges. All global learning experiences, whether online or in-person, will encounter cultural challenges. Employing tools to address the challenges will further the chances of a successful Online Global Learning Experience.
- Virtual exchanges will require flexibility. Discuss in advance any alternate plans that may be needed for successful implementation. Communicate the need for flexibility with participants.
- Use the standardized evaluation tool provided by the Office of Global Health to collect initial data on perceptions of the culture of the partner institution and global engagement. This will allow for greater data collection of virtual exchange activities at TTUHSC and provide the ability to measure pre and post exchange knowledge. Individualized questions can be added to the standardized questions as needed.

SECTION 7: DURING PROGRAM CONSIDERATIONS

- Consider including both synchronous and asynchronous activities.
- When utilizing synchronous activities, consider the impact of different time zones and allow time for technology issues that may arise.
- Communicate the necessary technology and communication platforms that will be required to fully participate in the online experience (e.g., internet access, webcam, microphone, bandwidth, etc.)
 - Consider including a “tech rehearsal” to familiarize participants with the technology being used.
 - While requiring specific communication platforms may be necessary for projects and assignments, consider allowing participants to communicate using platforms of their choice rather than having all communication come through a pre-determined mode of communication. This may promote comfort and consistency in communication among participants.
- Establish and communicate clear expectations regarding student participation. This should include expectations around required attendance, excused absences, and as applicable, participation in both synchronous and asynchronous activities, connectedness to assigned partners, usage of video, cultural considerations, etc. Consider expectations

around frequency of communication, length and nature of contributions, and acceptable methods of communication and contribution (e.g., online chats or discussion forums, written assignments, use of LMS, due dates, deadlines, etc.)

- While clear expectations around due dates and deadlines are important, build flexibility into the plan. It will be important to consider potential issues of an online program including access to electricity, bandwidth limitations, etc.
- Openness about the process of establishing global connections and its challenges is an important component of the virtual exchange and can bolster participant patience, understanding, and buy-in.
- Include plenty of ice-breaker and team-building activities so that participants can develop comfort with one another. These activities should occur at the beginning of and throughout the online experience, and can be led by both partner faculty/facilitators to ensure representation of the different cultures. Just as relationship building is key to the planning process, it's also a key element of a successful virtual experience.
- Establish regular check-ins to assess participant progress and address challenges that arise.
- Consider designing the experience to result in a shared project or tangible deliverable. This will allow participants to have visible

evidence of what they have achieved through the online collaboration.

- Reflection is important in a global learning experience, whether online or in-person. Reflection provides participants with the opportunity to measure personal and professional growth, recognize themselves as global citizens, identify a plan for continued global engagement, and use critical thinking skills to explore the experience more deeply and honestly.
- Keeping participants motivated and engaged during an online educational experience can be challenging. Design activities that creatively promote participation and engagement.

SECTION 8: POST-PROGRAM CONSIDERATIONS

- After the implementation of an Online Global Learning Experience, assess the program for future improvement and to ensure goals have been met. Any negative outcomes or impacts should be addressed.
- Use the standardized evaluation tool provided by the Office of Global Health to assess the virtual exchange. This will allow for greater data collection of virtual exchange activities at TTUHSC. Individualized questions can be added to the standardized questions as needed.
- Offer ways for participants to stay engaged beyond the virtual exchange whether through other global health activities or with the virtual exchange participants.
- Connect students to additional online or in-person global learning opportunities offered at TTUHSC. This will build upon the Online Global Learning Experience and provide opportunities for continued global engagement.

SECTION 9: DEFINITIONS

- Online Global Learning Experience (also called virtual exchange) = Sustained, technology-enabled, people-to-people education programs or activities in which constructive communication and high-level interaction takes place between individuals or groups who are geographically separated and/or from different cultural backgrounds. ([American Council on Education](#))
- Global Competence = The capacity to examine local, global, and intercultural issues, to understand and appreciate the perspectives and world views of others, to engage in open, appropriate, and effective interactions with people from different cultures, and to act for collective well-being and sustainable development. ([PISA – Preparing Our Youth for an Inclusive and Sustainable World](#))
- Global Mindedness = A worldview in which one sees oneself as connected to the world community and feels a sense of responsibility for its members. ([PISA – Preparing Our Youth for an Inclusive and Sustainable World](#))
- Cultural Intelligence = The capability to function effectively in culturally diverse situation. ([Cultural Intelligence Research Overview](#))
- Cultural Humility = A lifelong process of self-reflection and self-critique whereby the individual not only learns about another's culture, but starts with an examination of one's own beliefs and cultural identities. The term was first coined in 1998 by healthcare professionals Melanie Tervalon and Jann Murray-Garcia, who originally described cultural humility as a process that requires humility [each has something of

great value to learn from the other] as individuals continually engage in self-reflection and self-critique as lifelong learners...to redress power imbalances to develop mutually beneficial non-paternalistic partnerships in care. ([Cultural humility: essential foundation for clinical researchers](#))

SECTION 10: RESOURCES

- [AAC&U Global Learning VALUE Rubric](#)
- [Global Leadership I Can Statements](#)
- [How To Create Team Spirit in a Global Virtual Team](#)
- [Mentoring College Students to Success](#)
- [Stevens Initiative Virtual Exchange Typology](#)
- [Virtual Exchange Annotated Bibliography](#)

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