Activity 2.3 - Internationalisation at home strategy

Designed by Elodie Ernoult, University of Montpellier (WP2 leader)

Written by Dorsaf Ben Malek, Virtual University of Tunis

Based on a self-evaluation and a SWOT analysis done under work-package 1, and after conducting internal round-tables derived from the 4 webinars organised under work-package 2, each partner institution formalizes here its strategy to reach its objectives in terms of Internationalisation at Home

INTRODUCTION

- Vision, mission, values of your institution

- Why is it important for your institution to settle an IaH strategy now

- Which state of development of IaH has your institution already reached and where do you generally want to

The UVT has recently sought to open horizons to partnerships beyond its classical ones. Indeed, French universities and organisations have always been the UVT exclusive partners on the academic and professional levels. Nevertheless, there have been some attempts to settle partnerships across the Mediterranean region, Asia, and Africa. These attempts were not only in line with the general strategic vision of the UVT, but also with its mission and values that are closely embedded within distance learning. To this end, the UVT set up a network of African university consortium in the years that preceded the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019. In fact the role of the UVT within the African consortium is to mobilise its efforts and expertise to support African universities in setting up their solid distance learning foundations. However, what the UVT really lacks is offering its students avenues for internationalisation let alone internationalisation at home (IaH). The necessity of internationalising UVT students stems from the global tendency to account for international experience as a potential condition for recruitment. In fact, the UVT did not settle on a clear official strategy for IaH despite some individual efforts to engage UVT students in virtual exchange programmes.

CURRENT SITUATION, IDENTIFIED PROBLEMS AND GENERAL TRENDS

- SWOT analysis made under WP1

- Main indicators of progress taken from self-evaluation tool 1.1 (evolution of the number of international students enrolled, evolution of the number of students in outgoing mobilities, evolution of academic staff mobility, evolution of academic cooperation partnerships etc.)

SWOT Analysis of the UVT

Strengths:
- The Virtual University of Tunis has already set up virtual exchange projects that have as a major objective developing local students' global citizenry skills. This helps the Virtual University of Tunis to build on its initial experience in virtual exchange in order to make this latter a well-established practice within its programmes and curricula.
- The Virtual University of Tunis is an EPST institution that has its own budget, hierarchical structure, and curricula, which can consolidate its orientation towards internationalisation at home.
- The Virtual University of Tunis is a university that encourages innovation on the institutional and educational levels. It always looks for new initiatives and fresh avenues for development and progress. That is why all members of the institution welcome implementing such a new strategy of internationalisation.
- Being the unique virtual university that has an official status in Tunisia makes the UVT a pioneer in internationalisation at home through online channels. Therefore, the Virtual University of Tunis should stress the importance and the potential of virtual exchange in developing students' global

- Sharing experience and knowledge with foreign partner universities is a real opportunity to have insights on what is done in internationalisation within these institutions.

- Exchanging data and internal evaluation reports between partner universities will certainly widen the vision of each one of them on internationalisation at home and its impacts.

- The UVT participation in several international conferences and webinars may give greater opportunities to fathom in a deeper and more practical way the best practices of internationalisation at home. This will help us design our internationalisation strategy and action plan.

Threats:

Threats can be categorised into two categories, namely national and international threats.

1. National threat:

- Opportunities for physical mobility are very rare in Tunisia because of the degrading situation of the Tunisian currency. This situation makes it very difficult to involve Tunisian students in exchange programmes in foreign universities.

2. International threats:

- COVID-19 made staff and students' physical mobility even more difficult because of travel restrictions worldwide. The threat in this case will further deprive local students and staff to participate in exchange programmes in foreign universities. Consequently, they might not be able to develop their global citizenry skills that are highly solicited for internationalisation.

- The current risk of cancelling study visits abroad may hinder the internationalisation process. In fact, the people involved with designing and implementing the internationalisation strategy might not be able to understand the different phases and tools to implement this internationalisation strategy on the ground.

- Each university has its specific national context including the educational policy, the economic situation, the cultural and religious aspects, and the political and legislative dimensions. Therefore, it is not always affordable and advisable to transfer internationalisation experiences from one institution in one country to another institution in a different country. There should be some adjustments and adaptations to local contexts. The real threat would be to copycat other successful internationalisation experiences without considering the above-mentioned specificities of each university.

Main indicators of progress taken from self-evaluation tool:

The UVT does not have many incoming students from different nationalities. Some students come from sub-Saharan countries. However, students of the UVT are regularly put into contact with foreign students of other universities abroad via online channels to provide them with a multicultural environment of exchange. Nevertheless, management admits that it is not enough. The UVT in its strategic plan is planning for a multicultural student population in the years to come. This would only be made possible through flexible policies of integration.

Since its foundation, the UVT has had online teaching mainly blended as a general orientation. It has its own Moodle platform on which all courses are placed. All transactions, evaluation, courses, and

Nevertheless, because of the specific nature of distance learning at the UVT, the physical presence of the students is scarce and events dedicated to them are even scarcer. That is why among the implementation steps of the UVT strategic plan the **revitalisation of student life** is put forth. This can be made possible through **adapting the programmes and engaging its students into extracurricular activities and events** in order to provide them with greater opportunities for internationalisation.

Therefore, it was agreed that **virtual mobility and cultural diversity on campus** should be integrated as major pillars in the UVT internationalization strategy. We can adopt internationalization requirements to the specificities of the Virtual University of Tunis as an online teaching institution.

Regarding the annual action plan and budget to support internationalisation activities, The UVT participates in several networks. These are Erasmus+Ka1 (mobility for learners and staff, Erasmus+ Ka2, CBHE (reinforcing the capacities of higher education, ELIVES (eLearning innovative engineering solutions), SAGESSE of UNIMED (to ameliorate the governance of the higher education system in Tunisia), GEOMAG under Erasmus+ (reinforcement of geomatics capacities applied to agriculture and environment, RAQMYAT (digital teaching and learning). These networks of international projects provide the UVT with interesting funds:
- ELIVES: 57.630 €
- UNIMED: 17.035 €
- RAQMYAT: 15.298 €
- MED2IaH: 50.595 €

It was agreed that all stakeholders in the university should be involved as partners in setting the major goals and the action plan. The administrative and the academic staff as well as the teachers should be actively engaged in them. Therefore, the UVT provides a sound institutional organization for the implementation and evaluation of the strategic plan. This organisation is a hierarchical one in which all the institution is involved from the presidency to administrative staff members. In fact, the staff responsible for internationalisation is threefold: a) Those who set the general rules and guidelines of the internationalisation strategy; the deans and rectors and policy advisors for internationalisation. b) Those who manage the internationalisation strategy namely the heads of international office. c) Those who execute the internationalisation strategy namely administrative staff and members of the administration council.

MED2IaH Mediterranean Countries Towards Internationalisation at Home

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

OBJECTIVES	ACTION	ALREADY IN PLACE	WILLING TO DEVELOP	SHORT-TERM / MI-TERM / LONG-TERM
Embed IAH in the curriculum development process	Design well-defined learning outcomes to develop international/ intercultural competences. Integrate intercultural communication, language studies, international literature, texts, and research, mandatory course(s) in intercultural communication into core curricula.	Integration of intercultural communication in some of the advanced Business English courses	- Integrate developing the local students' global citizenry skills especially intercultural communicative competence as an official learning objective in the official curricula of the UVT. - Integrate 21st century skills in the students' certification process. - Boost research on methods to develop global citizenry skills	mid-term (2022-2023)
Improving the academic success of international students	with the help of supervision and integration measures	Scarcity of international students are integrated in the UVT.	- Allow for cultural diversity within the student population. Being a virtual university will make it even easier to attract students from all over the world.	mid-term (2022-2023)
International Degrees	Complete academic degrees taught in a second language. Classes, teaching materials, references, etc. are all in English or another foreign language.	Some students prefer to continue their studies in foreingn languages.	- Encourage local and international students to defend their master's or doctoral thesis in a foreign language, especially	short-term (2021-2022)

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			-Enrolling the students into MOOCs that have global citizenry skills and intercultural awareness as themes	

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND RECOGNITION

OBJECTIVES	ACTION	ALREADY IN PLACE	WILLING TO DEVELOP	SHORT-TERM / MI-TERM / LONG-TERM
Promote multilingualism : encourage language upskilling for staff	Investing financial and human resources to develop language skills of teaching and / or administrative staff (English as well as other languages)	Some individual attempts of the staff to enhance their linguistic skills through language training sessions inside or outside the UVT.	- Systematic and regular linguistic training that integrates the intercultural aspect of the language (lingua franca). - Encourage staff to interact and write in the English language.	short-term (2021-2022)
Support and enhance the teaching staff capacity to understand and implement IAH practices	IAH-based criteria in teachers' career models, job descriptions and performance evaluations Reward academics for innovative IAH practices through existing institutional infrastructure	Participation of some of the UVT teaching staff in basic and advanced training sessions on the design and implementation of virtual exchange .	- Offer certificates, financial reward or physical mobility to academics as a reward for conducting innovative IAH practices.	long-term
Design a specific recruitment strategy	New recruitments to have a defined set of language and	Recruitment of teaching staff on the basis of educational	- Include international experience (studies, training,	long-term

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Objective	Activity	Action	Timeframe
		- Involve al UVT staff in job shadowing in international universities - Involve all UVT staff in international projects.	short-term (2021-2022) mid-term (2022-2023)
Give the possibility to share mobility experiences	Bringing together teachers and administrative staff members who have returned from stays abroad to share experiences and practices	The formulation of a document by the teaching staff to report back their experience abroad over their return to the UVT. - Afford a rubric in the UVT website to publish UVT staff testimonials on their mobility experience. - Share staff testimonials on/ pictures, videos of their mobility experiences on Trello and Linkedin. - Publish staff testimonials on their mobility experiences on the UVT facebook page. - Provide a regular press release that summarises the mobility experiences and what the staff learn from them.	
Promote networking at institutional level of existing international projects	Bringing together teachers, researchers and administrative staff members to report on international projects carried out at their institution	Writing a report after the physical mobility by teachers. - Write articles that involve teachers, researchers, and administrative staff to share their experience in international projects.	mid-term (2022-2023) long-term
Promote networking, round tables and seminars	Organising seminars and round tables in order to share experiences, initiatives	Organisation of international conferences. - Organising conferences to discuss the different scopes of international projects in which the UVT is a partner.	mid-term (2022-2023) long-term

Develop teaching methods and intercultural pedagogy for a multicultural classroom	Offering flexible teaching programmes (readings and exam formats) and practical methodologies (case studies, role plays, etc.) in order to support international students. Inclusion of diverse students' perspectives in the classroom	None	- Organise workshops of hands-on activities instead of regular class. - Organise webinars in which foreign teachers and researchers are involved as speakers. - Using online activities (on the platform, course spaces...) that may develop students' global citizenry skills such as sustainability, human rights, culture, environment. - Providing open access to open resources to widen UVT students' vision towards what researchers of the world publish. - Providing intercultural resources in the Mediatech of the Virtual University of Tunis	mid-term (2022-2023) long-term
Promote internationalising courses	Adapting teaching methods, references and materials to promote and develop intercultural awareness.	The Use of *Market Leader* textbooks that focus on the global side of Business English.	- Using authentic materials produced by members of other cultures in order to widen the vision of the students on the actual	mid-term (2022-2023) long-term

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			WILLING TO DEVELOP	
			- Evaluate the ESP material (textbooks, resources) from an intercultural stance by using evaluative cultural checklists.	

STUDENT SUPPORT AND SERVICES

OBJECTIVES	ACTION	ALREADY IN PLACE	WILLING TO DEVELOP	SHORT-TERM / MI-TERM / LONG-TERM
Offer the possibility of sharing accommodation buildings	Facilitating access to residences to international students. Enabling international and home students to share accommodation on campus	None	Provide an accommodation building with a restaurant to international students.	long-term
Integrate asylum seekers and refugee students on campus	Promoting projects for the integration of refugee students at university	None	- Organise open days for refugee students for more information and support.	long-term
Promote welcome week / orientation week	Organising events and initiatives at the beginning of each semester dedicated to welcoming and orientation activities for foreign students arriving in a country. The welcome week represents an opportunity for home students to meet international students	None	- Organise welcoming week to international students who participate in the organisation by presenting elements of their cultures such as clothes, food, festivities.	mid-term (2022-2023)

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			staff as well as the students communicate in English.	
Participate in student associations	Promoting international student participation in regular home student clubs/unions/associations	None	- Facilitate the integration of international students in the university clubs, unions, and associations.	mid-term (2022-2023) long-term
Celebrate cultural and religious festivities	Organising events and initiatives to raise awareness on cultural and religious festivities	None	- Encourage international students to celebrate their cultural and religious festivities with the support of home students and the financial support of the UVT.	short-term (2021-2022) mid-term (2022-2023)
Involve the local community	Organising events and initiatives aimed at raising intercultural awareness and involving the local community	None	- Involve local socio-economic partners in the international conferences organised by the UVT.	short-term (2021-2022) mid-term (2022-2023)
Buddy programmes	Organising Buddy programmes as an opportunity for linguistic and intercultural exchange between international and home students	None	- Facilitate engaging UVT students in well structured cultural and linguistic exchanges through the buddy project e-platform.	mid-term (2022-2023)
Informal meeting, events	Informal meeting, events initiatives offering both local and international students the opportunity to meet in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere	None	- Involve both international and local UVT students as partners in linguistic and intercultural exchange in the Friends Teahouses. - International and home students organise intercultural events in the	short-term (2022-2023) mid-term (2022-2023)

ACTION PLAN FOR THE INTERNATIONALISATION AT HOME

As mentioned under the « INTERNATIONALISATION AT HOME STRATEGIC PLAN » section of this document, the internationalisation at home strategy of the Virtual University of Tunis is based on some pillars:

- revitalisation of student life,
- adaptation of the programmes
- engaging the students into extracurricular activities and events
- development of virtual mobility
- development of cultural diversity on campus

The action plan to reach these objectives, detailed under the previous section « DETAILS OF THE ACTIVITIES TO BE CARRIED OUT TO REACH THE OBJECTIVES », could be summed up in this way:

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Short-term actions to be taken (2021-2022)

- Encourage local and international students to defend their master's or doctoral thesis in a foreign language, especially English by offering them a certain number of ECTs

- Making the students partners in the internationalisation strategy and process by asking them about their needs and preferences within well-structured questionnaires/ surveys

- Organise cultural days or festivals and involve the UVT international and local students in the organisation of these events

- Engage UVT students in more institutional virtual exchange programmes

- Integrate virtual exchange in the certification process of the students: Virtual mobility

Mid-term actions planned (2022-2023)

- Integrate developing the local students' global citizenry skills especially intercultural communicative competence as an official learning objective in the official curricula of the UVT

- Integrate 21st century skills in the students' certification process

- Boost research on methods to develop global citizenry skills

- Allow for cultural diversity within the student population. Being a virtual university will make it even easier to attract students from all over the world

- Organise cultural days or festivals and involve the UVT international and local students in the organisation of these events

- Encourage UVT students to participate in virtual exchange by offering them ECTs, certificates, and open electronic badges

- Include English language proficiency as a criterion for teaching staff recruitment
- Involve all UVT staff in Study visits in international universities
- Involve al UVT staff in job shadowing in international universities
- Involve all UVT staff in international projects

STUDENT EXPERIENCE (LEARNING AND EVALUATING)

Short-term actions to be taken (2021-2022)

- Provide teaching mobility programmes to the UVT under ERASMUS+
- Provide the systematic involvement of visiting teachers in non-permanent teaching staff
- Organise Workshops to students on intercultural awareness and communication in relation to their future profession

Mid-term actions planned (2022-2023)

- Organise language competition for UVT students
- Organise workshops of hands-on activities instead of regular class
- Organise webinars in which foreign teachers and researchers are involved as speakers
- Using authentic materials produced by members of other cultures in order to widen the vision of the students on the actual business practices across cultures
- Benchmark intercultural communication competence (ICC) assessment tools for ESP teaching

Long-term actions (after 2023)

- Integrate English certification (exp. TOEIC- TOEFL- IELTS- APTIS) in the credit system ECTS of students
- Provide systematic and regular online English and Spanish training sessions for the UVT students
- Engage UVT students in a dialog with native speakers through online channels or in the Friends Teahouses
- Organise study visits in international universities: Physical Mobility in order to practise the English language
- Use online activities (on the platform, course spaces…) that may develop students' global citizenry skills such as sustainability, human rights, culture, environment
- Provide open access to open resources to widen UVT students' vision towards what researchers of the world publish
- Provide intercultural resources in the Mediatech of the Virtual University of Tunis

Mid-term actions planned (2022-2023)

- Organise English language days during which UVT administrative and teaching staff as well as the students communicate in English

- Facilitate engaging UVT students in well-structured cultural and linguistic exchanges

- International and home students organise intercultural events in the Friends TeaHouses with the active involvement of teachers as mentors